

The cost of living in the New Forest

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The cost of living in the New Forest

'We probably live in an area of the greatest...I'm sure there's some wonderful term for this... sort of financial extremes.'

Oscar, service provider

'My feeling is that we will keep talking about poverty pockets in the forest. When you look at the stats, you can see that there's a pocket around a housing area like Butts Ash or or New Milton estate. But actually, I think if we scrape the surface a bit more, what we're talking about is a much wider thing going on, potentially, that is affecting people that are on a general low income, so they're working people who may have mortgages...and own cars, you know, but they're still struggling as well.'

Alicia, service provider

Executive Summary

- The New Forest is an area of great inequality, with many people unable to live comfortably on their current income living alongside notable wealth. This was the case before the Covid-19 pandemic and has become more apparent since 2020.
- Key drivers for these inequalities included private rented housing costs, availability of social housing, transportation, employment opportunities, childcare and the cost of food.
- More rural areas are especially sensitive to higher costs of transport and food, with difficulties accessing suitable employment; there is a double burden of higher costs for goods and an inability to access affordable alternatives.
- Mental ill-health affects many residents who find it difficult to live here comfortably on their incomes; in some cases, this contributes to low income, whereas elsewhere it is the result of low income.
- Key recommendations to address this inequality include mobile welfare support services, increased community resources/hubs, subsidised public transport or parking clocks and central service listings that are widely accessible.
- A working group needs to be established to look in detail at the issues raised in this report to agree a way forward, through a poverty action plan.

Background

The New Forest district is home to a National Park, a significant tourist attraction, as well as being a notable destination for the marine industry, given its location on the Solent across from the Isle of Wight. These characteristics have an impact on the resident population by influencing the cost of living, including the cost of housing, with the availability and type of employment available in an area also impacted by seasonal shifts in visitors. These factors, combined with the location and transport networks, will influence the opportunities available to residents.

Economy

The population in the New Forest is approximately 178,000 [1], with 55% of working-age (16-64) which is lower than Hampshire and England. An economic report compiled by the New Forest District Council (NFDC), using data from the Office for National Statistics, highlights the concentration of selected employment sectors in the New Forest. In this analysis, Care, Tourism, and Marine industries are all over-represented in the New Forest, while Knowledge Intensive industry is below the national concentration (at 0.59, where 1.0 is the national concentration). This same report uses data from the 2017 Annual Population Survey to demonstrate the high numbers of economically inactive people aged 16-64. Of the 20,000 estimated to be in the New Forest, nearly all (18,100) live east of Burley, Lyndhurst and Cadnam, in the Avon Valley region (Figure 1). 72.1% of New Forest residents live in areas classified as urban, with the remaining 27.9% living in rural [2]; note this reflects the population distribution, not spatial coverage of area type.

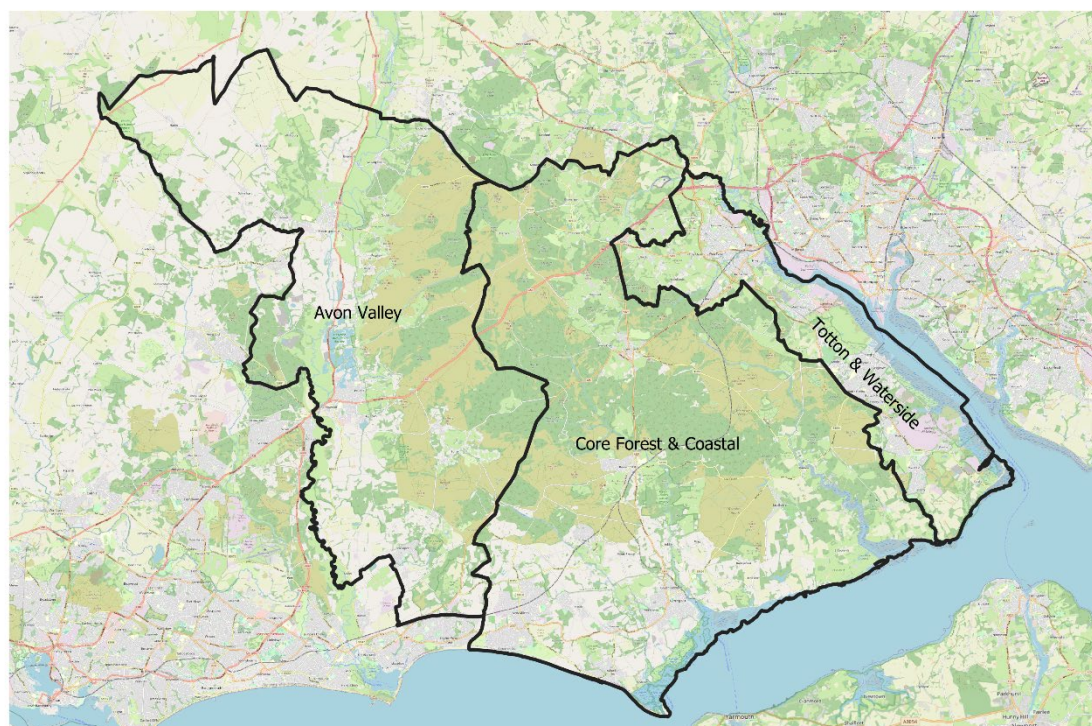


Figure 1: Regions of the New Forest

Income levels

Throughout this report, low income will be used to describe households having difficulties living comfortably in the New Forest without accessing income support such as welfare benefits or food aid. In contrast, the standard definition of low income applied by the UK government is households at or below 60% of median household income[3]. The median household income in the 2020 financial year

for the UK was £29,900[4]; 60% of this value is £17,940. From our survey respondents most (68.8%) earned less than £20,000 a year. We did not ask detailed questions of our participant's income, as we did not want to apply a threshold definition of low income that would not easily allow for household size, composition, and required living costs. For example, as we will see in this report transportation costs vary dramatically depending on the mode of transport and area of residence. Further, the costs of running a car vary based on driving experience (insurance), type of vehicle and place of residence. Rather than focus on an income threshold or definition of poverty, we chose to talk with people and collect data on their experience of living in this district. One population of interest was longer-term residents (> 20 years of lifetime residents), as with other rural areas there is a perception that they may be priced out of local housing and are unable to gain sufficient qualifications to improve employment and income.

Part of these additional costs can be described as a 'poverty premium' where low-income households pay a higher price for essential goods and services. There is an estimated additional cost incurred of £490/year for services like payday loans (rather than using mainstream credit options), paying bills monthly, or having to use electricity prepayment meters[5]. We add to the list the cost of shopping in local, smaller food stores and relying on public transport. There is a potential double burden of poverty premium and rural disadvantage[6], which could be described as a rural poverty premium, where limited access to affordable alternatives adds another layer of disadvantage where employment options are often limited and relatively poorly paid.

The cost of living in the New Forest was studied two decades ago, under the theme of poverty in the New Forest[7]. In 2021, we have set out to explore the cost of living in the New Forest, before and after the 2020-21 Covid-19 pandemic which has affected households across the UK differently depending on circumstances. Inequalities observed include increased borrowing, with parents, carers and young people all more negatively impacted[8], and lower-income households spending their savings more often while wealthier households saved money[9]. More recently the Nuffield Foundation has noted two underlying factors in child poverty: low pay and high private rents[10], situations which are both present in parts of the New Forest. There is potential gender inequality in this district with the median female salary in 2020 at £24.8K while the male median is £40.6K. For comparison, the same data for UK median salaries are £28.0K for women and £33.9K for men[11]. A report compiled by Citizens Advice in 2015[12] demonstrated the paucity of affordable housing (social or private rented) available in the New Forest, a situation that remains largely unchanged. Indeed, house prices in the New Forest are the highest in any national park[13].

While there are services to help people who need additional support, many of these organisations receive charitable funding and are therefore vulnerable to wider economic circumstances. The solutions proposed at the end of this report build on the evidence gathered with a focus on feasible opportunities for sustainable interventions. At the moment there is a 'postcode lottery' of support, as is often the case where third sector organisations operate and rely on the capacity of volunteers and building spaces[14].

This project aims to assess the scope of social and material disadvantage in the New Forest, drawing on existing data and collecting new survey and qualitative data to provide recommendations that better support the population. The focus is on food and fuel poverty as a starting point to identify households facing the greatest challenges and economic disadvantage. This report outlines the current situation for households in the New Forest, as an update to the previous report. We draw upon a variety of existing resources and new data to find out the main pressures on incomes in this district, look at the support services currently present and consider what changes may improve the lives of more economically vulnerable residents.

Four sections will support this aim:

1. A description of the population in the New Forest and socio-economic differences between areas.
2. Collection of data to describe the cost of living and challenges to live comfortably.
3. Register of available services that support residents in the New Forest, especially with food and fuel poverty as well as income maximisation.
4. Recommendations to improve quality of life in the New Forest for people on lower incomes

The report concludes with a series of case studies to illustrate the lived experience of lower-income residents in the New Forest.

Section 1: Life in the New Forest: populations, aid seeking and context

'Lots of them are born and bred in the forest...the forest people.' Lila, social prescriber

'Everything is so high: rent, travelling, council tax, water etc compared to other areas of the UK', part-time worker, female survey respondent

Before outlining the new data collected (surveys, and interviews), we will explore the context of life in the New Forest (Figure 2). As noted in the introduction the focus is on people who have asked for assistance over the last few years. This will underestimate the numbers of people who find it difficult to manage on their income in the Forest, however, it provides clear data on the distribution of households that are facing the more serious challenges with their financial situation.

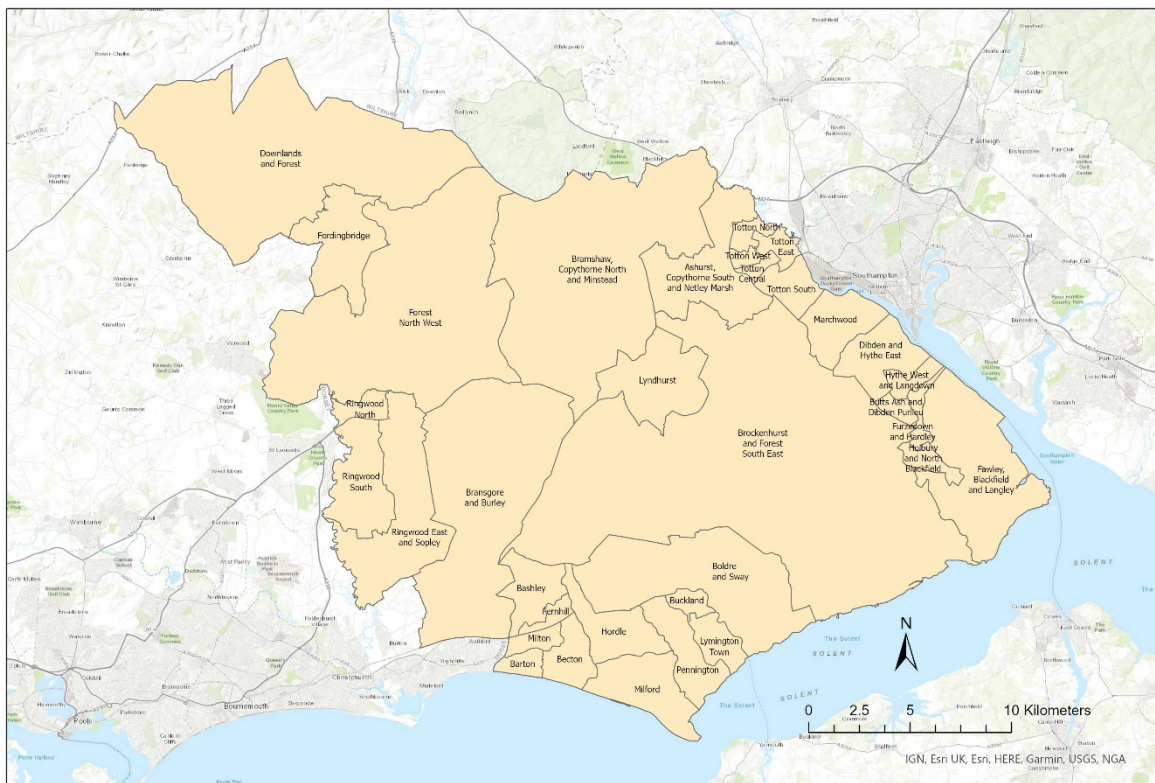


Figure 2: Map of the New Forest study area

Citizens Advice and Food Bank clients

Data on clients accessing aid for food and fuel, as well as financial concerns in the New Forest, are held by organisations including Citizens Advice (CA) and local food banks. The detail and dates covered by each of these resources vary, however, when collated they will provide a short historic overview of the trends in aid-seeking in the New Forest. Preliminary discussions have identified data held by food banks based in Totton, Ringwood, The Waterside and Lymington in addition to data on client access held by CA. In some instances, the data are only available from January 2020 in digital formats, or data collection practices have changed. For this reason, data from 2020 is prioritised for this report. As we will see in the qualitative results, there has been an increase in demand for support in 2020 due to the pandemic, but the reasons for aid seeking are consistent. All maps in the following section are produced to show quartiles or quintiles of data, easily identifying the top 20% or top 25% of the data displayed using the darkest colours.

Descriptive analysis of anonymised data identified trends in overall numbers seeking aid, wider indicators of social inequality such as people claiming benefits and selected health outcomes. The starting point is people who contacted Citizens Advice for help in the 2020-21 year (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021). Figure 3 demonstrates the reduction in numbers of clients contacting CA, but an increase in the issues raised during the discussion where help was required. Overall, there are fewer clients with more complex cases (more issues per client) to support.

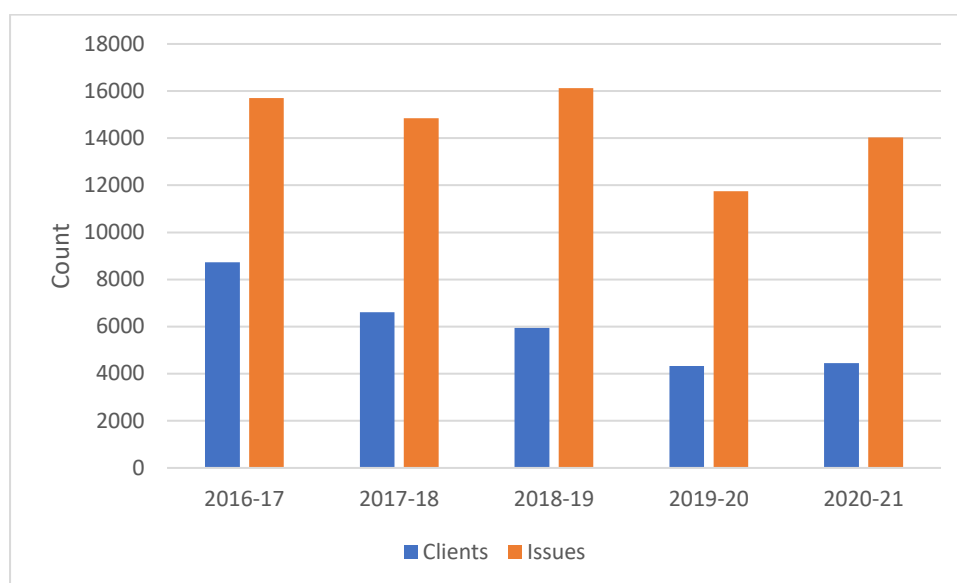


Fig 3. Clients accessing Citizens Advice New Forest from 1 April 2020-31 March 2021

There are also more people accessing help online rather than face to face, which is not always captured in these data. There has been a shift nationally in the way people access Citizens Advice: a 69% reduction in face-to-face contact but increases in phone (54%), email (45%), chat (83%) and online users (25%) occurred between 2019 and 2020.

There has been a greater focus on employment issues since the pandemic, previously there were more queries about welfare benefits. This is consistent across the New Forest wards, which is the level at which data are summarised, exploring the issues that are being raised with Citizens Advice. Leading topics in each ward between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 include **benefits, employment, housing, transport**. There were more requests for support in Milton (168), Holbury & North Blackfield (160),

Fernhill (157) and Pennington (154), followed by Ringwood (North & South combined, 243) and Fordingbridge (125) (dark blue areas in Fig 4).

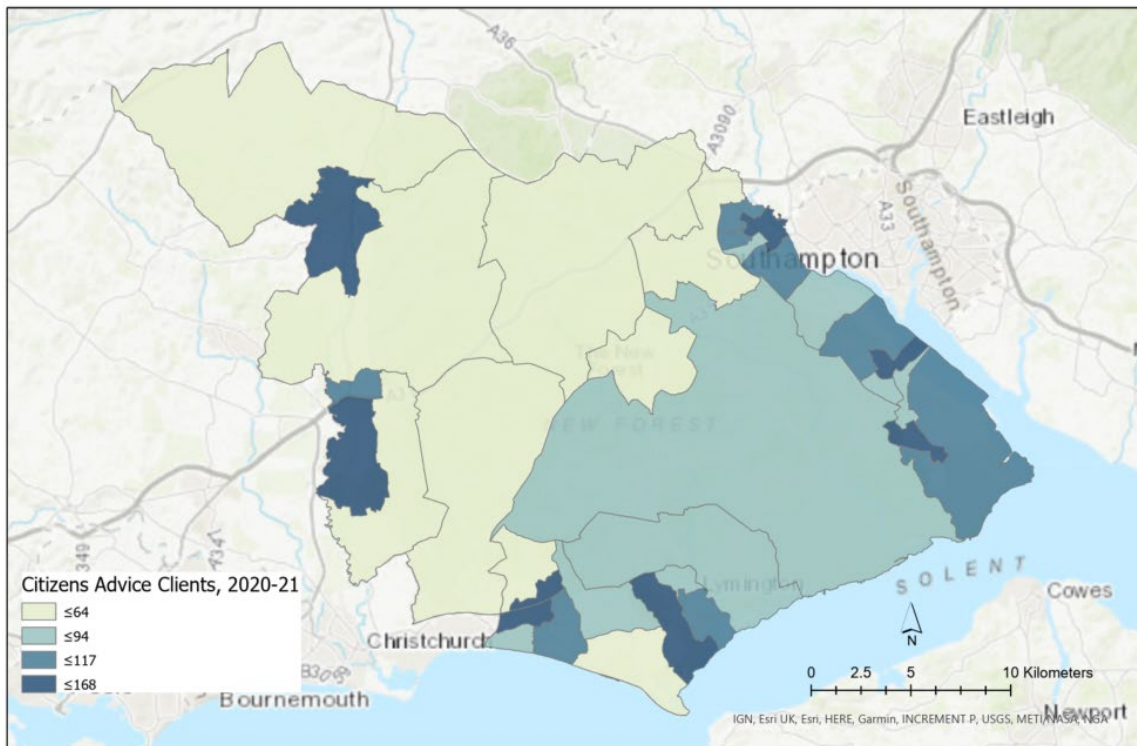
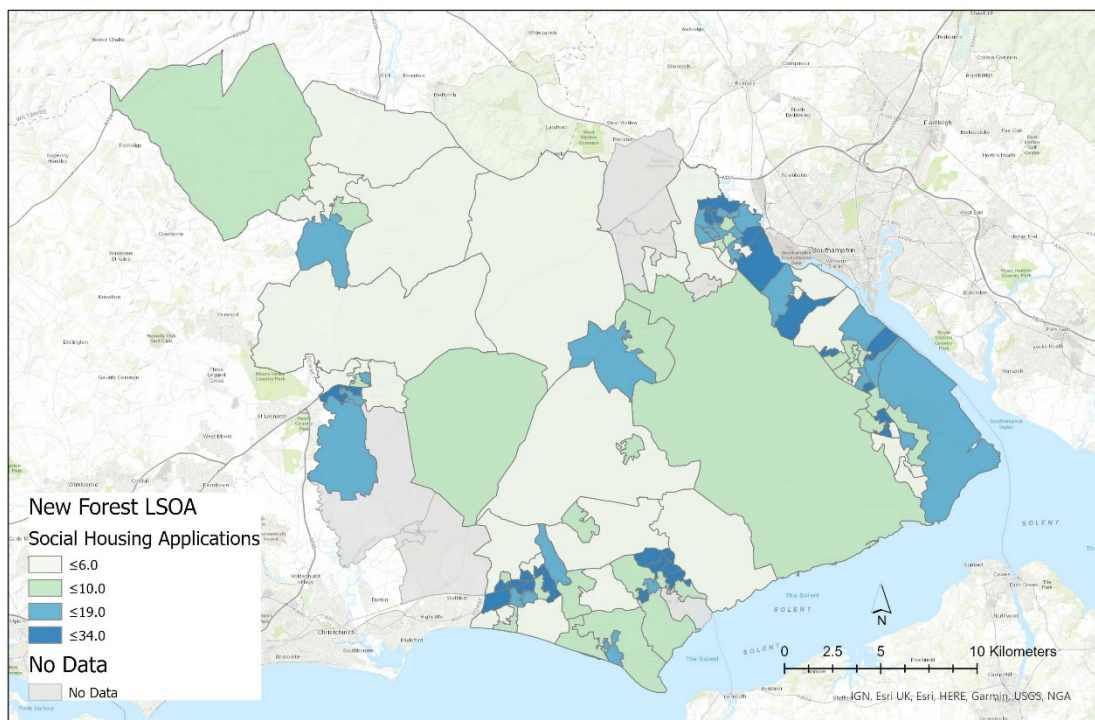


Figure 4: Distribution of Citizens Advice Clients by ward, 2020-21

Another form of support seeking is an application for social housing to the New Forest District Council (NFDC). Using data supplied by NFDC, we were able to map the distribution of live applications as of August 2021 (Figure 5). There are more active applications (20-34 per area) in parts of Ringwood, Totton, Marchwood and villages in the Waterside area, New Milton and Lymington. These data are mapped by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) which has approximately 1,500 residents. As we will see later in this report, housing cost and availability feature strongly in the data collected from residents as a challenge to living on a low income.



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Figure 5: Count of households on the social housing register by LSOA

Food aid requests: one indicator of those struggling with living costs

An ongoing challenge in the assessment of outcomes such as food and fuel poverty is the lack of consistent data collection at a national or local level. Alternative approaches use proxy data such as those noted in the first outcome (number of people using food banks). An additional difficulty is the changing landscape of aid within communities, where new projects emerge naturally in response to perceived need. One local example is the Brockenhurst Food Rescue Kitchen, which is now hosted at the Basics Bank in Lymington. Like similar organizations, they were looking for a new venue due to limited resources and availability of space. Another example is Helping Hands, which was active in Hythe for much of the Covid pandemic but is no longer available. The provision of support across the Forest was collected in interviews and will be presented in section 3, however, this will be an ongoing process of updating databases. To ensure a consistently collected dataset, we collated data from four main food banks; the Lyndhurst food bank did not provide data, but this has only been available since mid-2020. This food bank's website states that they are supporting 65 households a week, covering the area around Lyndhurst, Emery Down and Bank[15].

Food aid provision data were compiled across the New Forest from four food banks from 2018 to 2020, depending on available electronic records. (Table 1). Only parcels delivered to or picked up by people living in New Forest postcodes are included in this table. In all food banks, the main reason for referral was 'low income'. Overall, about 4% of residents in the New Forest accessed a food bank in 2020; this will represent only a minority of people experiencing food insecurity, as many people who are unable to afford or otherwise access food choose not to seek help[16].

Table 1: Food aid supplied to New Forest residents in 2020

| Food bank | Total parcels | Adults | Children | Duration of parcel |
|----------------------------------|---------------|--------|----------|--------------------|
| Youth & Families Matter (Totton) | 2,964 | 375 | 254 | 7 days |
| Ringwood | 664 | 1111 | 855 | 3 days |
| Waterside | 953 | 1680 | 1284 | 3 days |
| Lymington Basics Bank | 2,750 | 1033 | 679 | 7 days |

In Totton, Youth and Families Matter compiled detailed data for food bank referrals for 2020. Overall, 240 unique households received a food parcel that would last seven days. Typically, households are limited to three parcels a year, however, like all food banks, this was more flexible in 2020. Of those who provided the information, low income was the main reason for receiving a parcel followed by benefit changes and benefit delays. Most people who received a parcel were unemployed.

Where data were available in Ringwood and Waterside, there was a notable increase in food aid over the last few years. It is important to note that many families may have accessed support through schools rather than food banks, so these data will not show the true extent of demand.

The food bank based in Ringwood, which also covers Fordingbridge, is an independent bank affiliated with Trussell Trust. Data were provided for 2018-2021 to date. In 2020, 664 parcels were provided - an increase from 2019 (573) and 2018 (390). Waterside Food Bank is also affiliated with Trussell Trust. This site provided data for the same time period of 2018 to July 2021. The number of parcels in 2020 was 953, compared to 755 in 2018 and 752 in 2019. Lymington Food Bank supported 622 households in 2020 with food parcels, and a further 84 fuel vouchers, of which 50 were outside of the New Forest/address not available.

Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of unique food bank users in 2020, as a proportion of the usual resident population within LSOAs. This adjusts for the varying policies about the number of parcels allowed in a time period. The Waterside area, New Milton, Pennington, Totton, Ringwood and Fordingbridge all had a higher proportion of the population (up to 26.8%) accessing food banks at least once. From interviews with service providers, we know that some households have been supported by their local food bank over 60 times and all food banks reported exceeding the usual limits of parcels provided to households in a year (typically three or four) out of necessity.

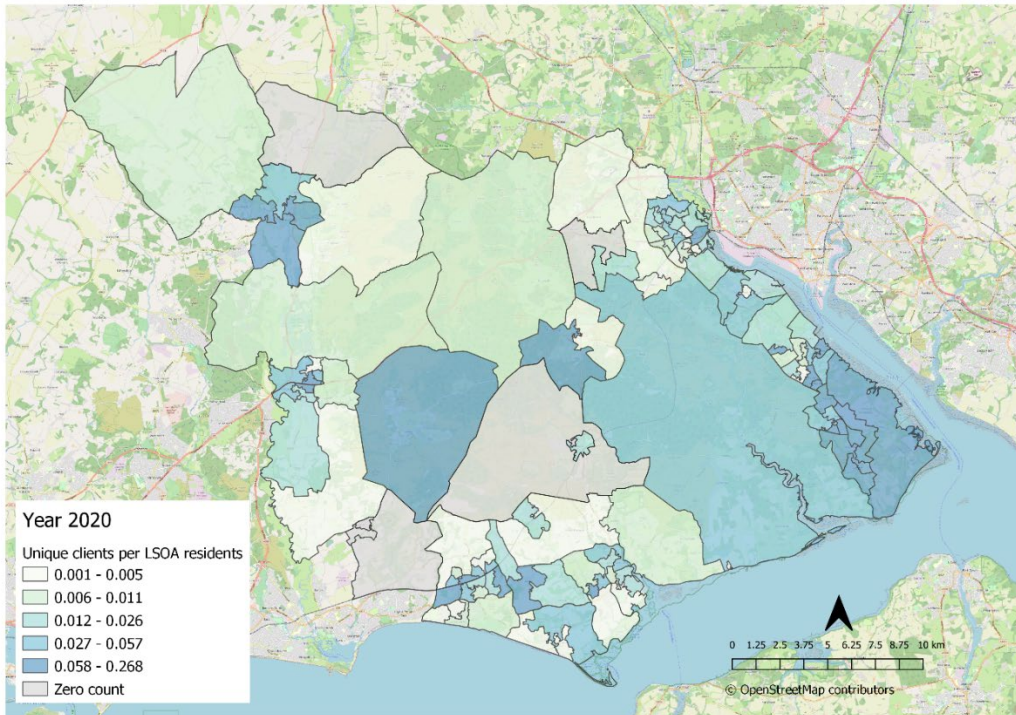


Figure 6: Count of unique food bank users (adults and children) per LSOA (Layer Super Output Areas) resident population

Socioeconomic influences

As noted above, low income is a key reason for accessing food aid through the food banks, all of which require a referral from another organisation. Often this comes from Citizens Advice, social prescribers, schools, GPs, health visitors and Job Centres. Overall, there has been an increase in the number of people age 16-64 claiming benefits in the New Forest from 2017-2021 (Figure 7); this increase is beyond the number of new residents each year. One clear indicator of low income is the percentage of people in an area (LSOA) claiming welfare benefits including Universal Credit. Data from the Department for Work and Pensions was mapped for all working-age (16-64 years) benefit claimants (any means-tested benefit[17]) (November 2020) and for those claiming Universal Credit specifically (November 2021) (Figures 8 and 9).

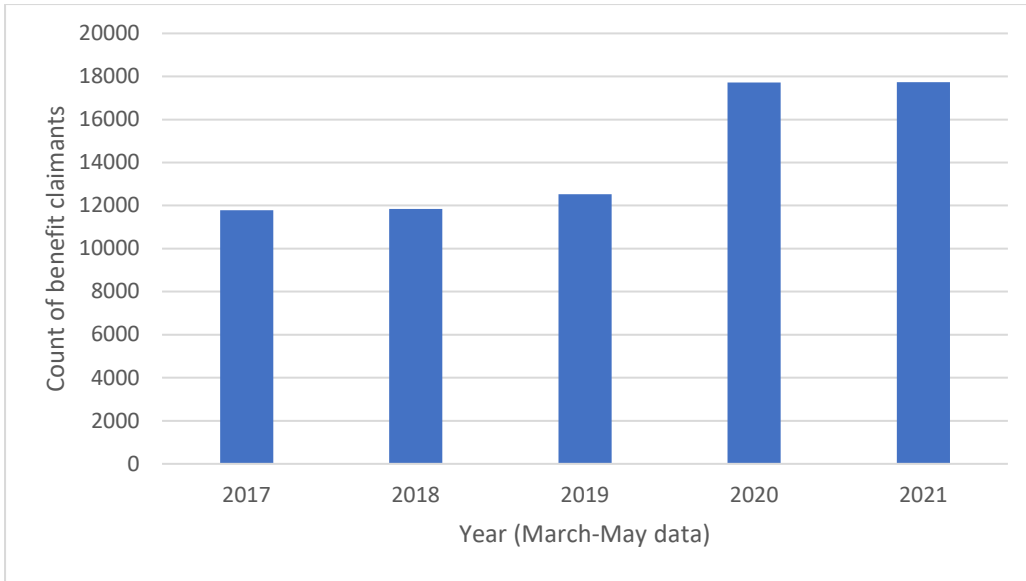
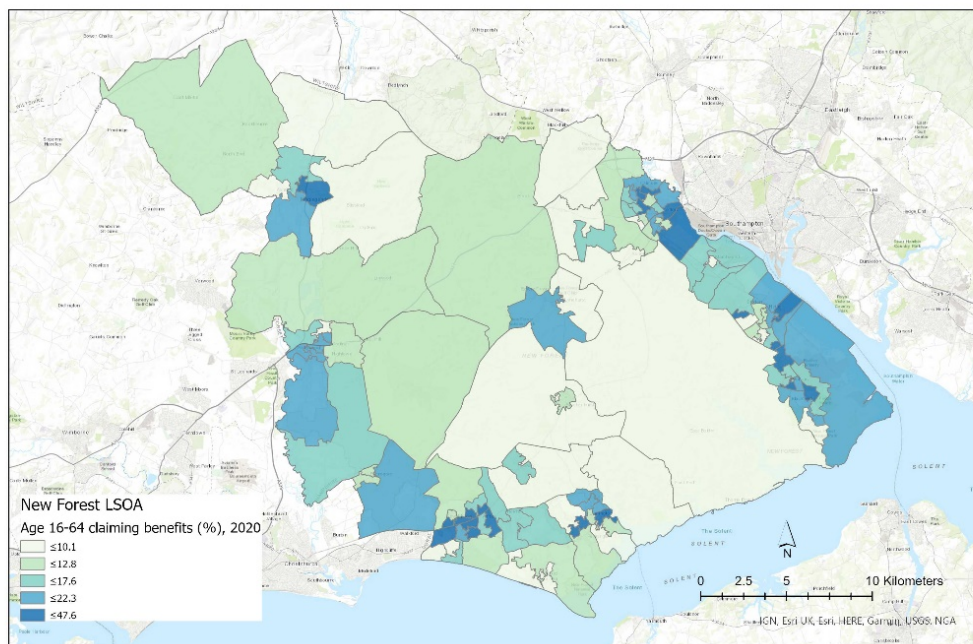
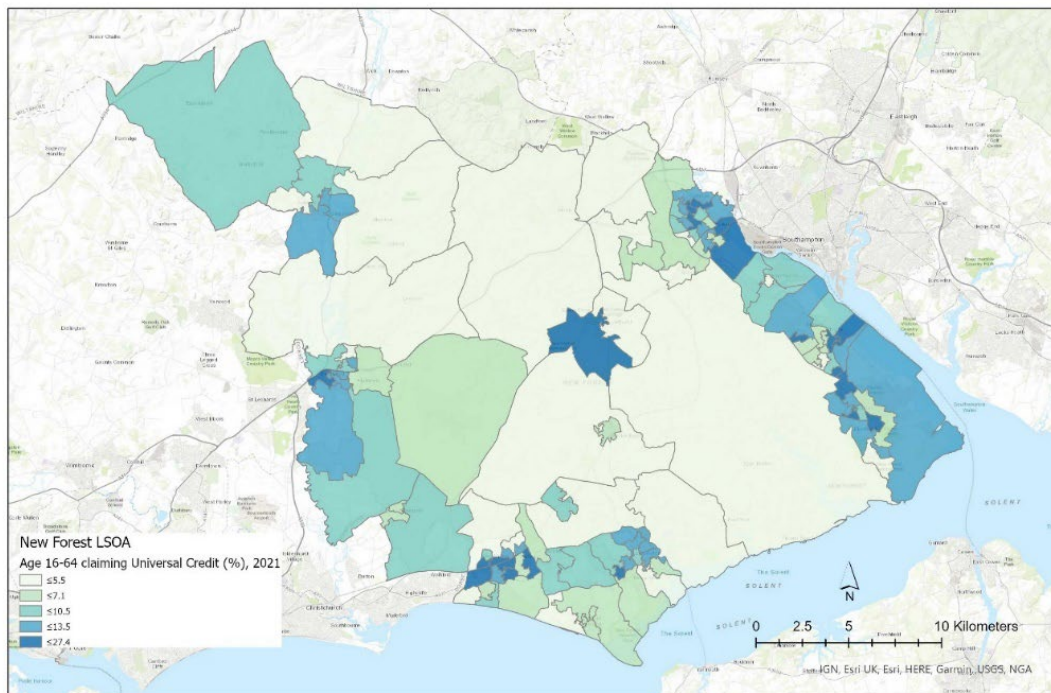


Figure 7: Count of benefit claimants living in the New Forest, March-May in each year



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Figure 8: Percentage of residents age 16-64 claiming any type of benefit by LSOA, Nov 2020

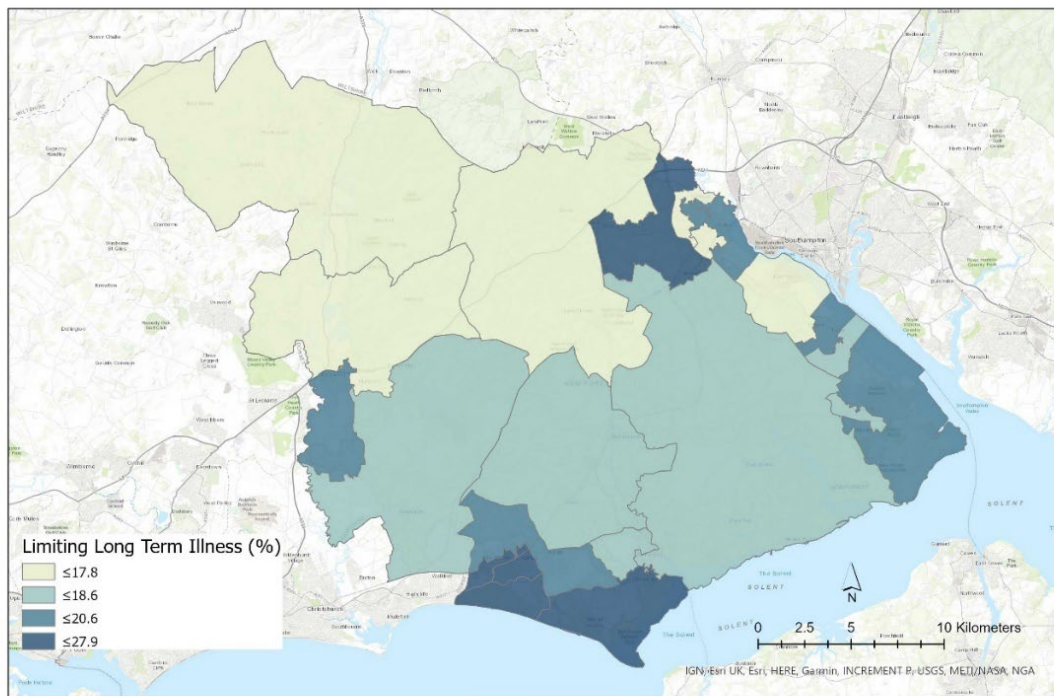


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Figure 9: Percentage of residents age 16-64 claiming Universal Credit by LSOA, Nov 2021

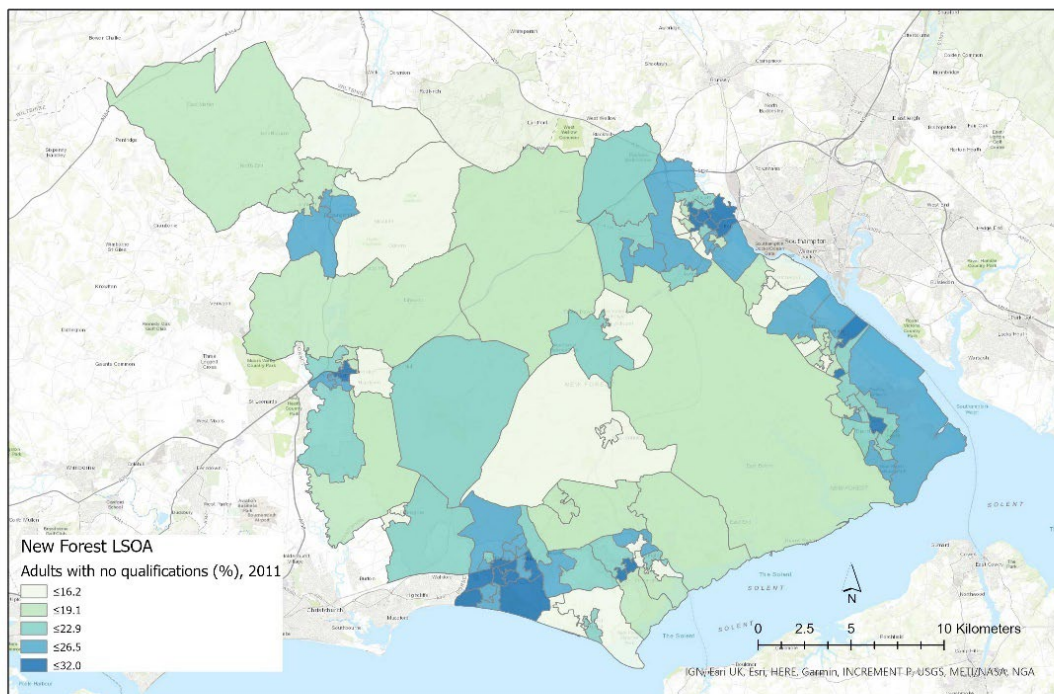
Looking at data from NFDC, there were 9,157 recipients of one either housing benefit or a council tax reduction (see also section 2). Of these, 1,673 are in work and 2,829 are claiming Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments. 6,552 are claiming a benefit such as Universal Credit or Job Seekers Allowance; overall there is much overlap in claiming multiple benefits.

There are many reasons why people may have a low income, and from the work presented later, this includes factors such as illness and educational qualifications. Using data from the 2011 Census, we mapped the distribution of residents reporting long-term limiting illness (LLTI) (Figure 10) and having no educational qualifications (Figure 11) to identify areas where these two risks for lower-income may be concentrated. Data were downloaded from Localhealth.org.uk [18], supplied by Public Health England. Here, a similar pattern emerges, highlighting Totton, Waterside, Pennington, New Milton and Ringwood for no qualifications. Ashurst, Milford and New Milton have higher levels of LLTI.



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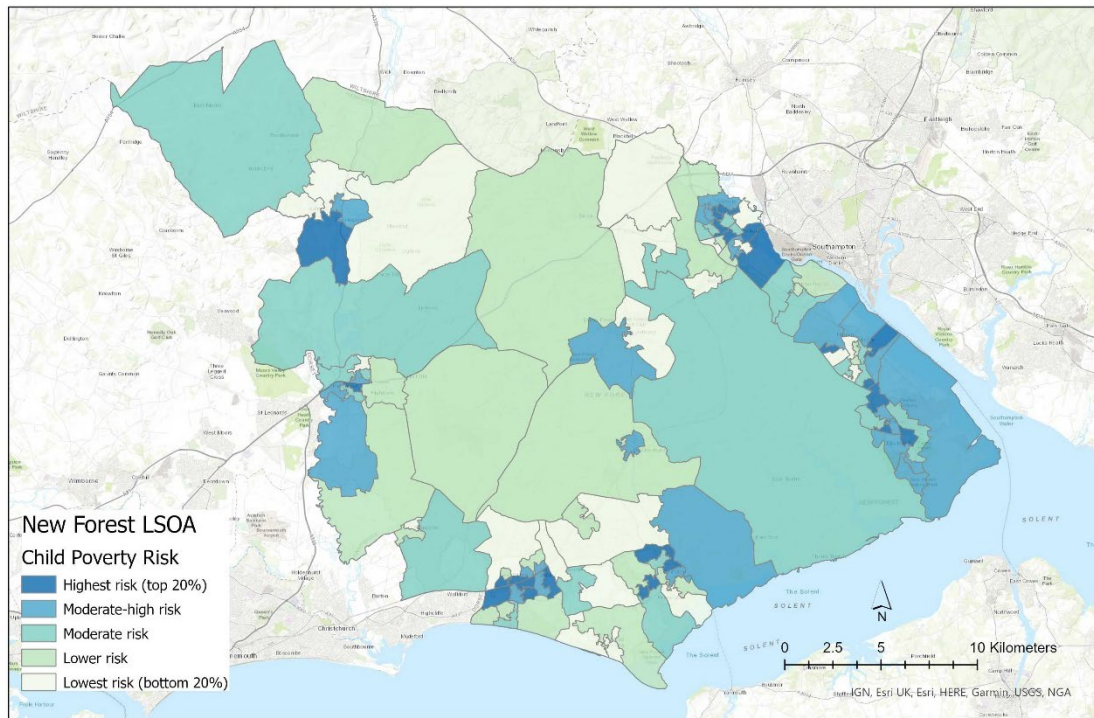
Figure 10: Percentage of the population with long-term limiting illness, by Middle Super Output Area MSOA (2011) level, which is about half the size of a ward (Average population 7000).



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Figure 11: Percentage of adults with no educational qualifications, by LSOA (2011)

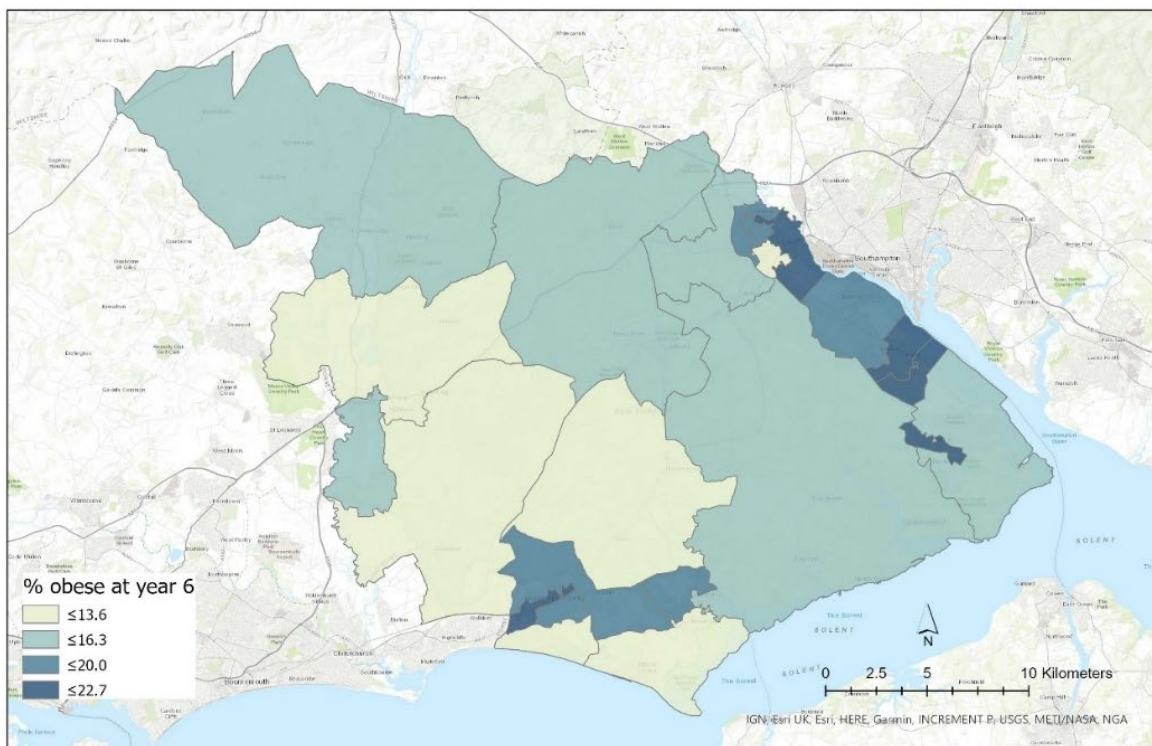
The combinations of low income and reduced access to amenities such as public transport, as we will see in the next section, contribute to a newer risk measure for child poverty (author's own), illustrated in Figure 12, again with areas in Totton, Waterside, Pennington, New Milton, Ringwood and Fordingbridge identified in the top 20% for the New Forest.



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Figure 12: Child poverty risk by LSOA

Low income and area deprivation are associated with poorer health outcomes, including childhood obesity. Data are collected annually through the National Child Measurement Programme for children in Reception (age 4-5) and year 6 (age 10-11) to monitor this outcome, as there is a strong possibility that obese children will become obese adults with the associated health concerns. Figure 13 presents a three-year average (2017-19) of children with obesity at year 6 by MSOA. Parts of New Milton, Totton, and Waterside have the greatest concentration of obese children.



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Figure 13: Year 6 children with obesity, 2017-19 data at MSOA level

This section has provided an overview of the current situation of aid seeking, social issues, low income as well as health outcomes in the New Forest population. Some areas are emerging as having more local residents who are likely to find it difficult to manage on their income in the New Forest. The next section will bring together new survey and interview data, as well as data on living costs to identify how we may explain the patterns evident in these maps and datasets.

Section 2: Cost of Living: themes from new research

“You know, I’ve spoken to a lot of my families that I work with and it’s just, ‘money doesn’t seem to go as far because the cost of living has increased’.” Lila, Social Prescriber

Events leading up to a household accessing aid are often not well known or well documented. What is understood are the low levels of engagement with some services, such as food banks; as little as 21% of people who are food insecure use food banks because of stigma, shame, or barriers to accessing them[19]. If more is known about the lived experience of people experiencing financial and social disadvantage in the New Forest, then more appropriate support can be provided to avoid such urgent situations. This includes understanding the ‘shock’ that led to an experience of fuel or food poverty; longer-term situations that deteriorated and created this need and the barriers to accessing help at earlier stages. Here we sought to identify the upstream factors (such as availability of social housing, cost of private rent, options for employment) that lead to disadvantage as well as the downstream influences that are more directly impacting people’s lives (cost of food, access to transportation).

Through a series of twenty interviews with clients of services across the New Forest and via ten service providers, clear themes emerged that reflected the results from an online survey (n=79, collected between June and August 2021). Specific attention was given to longer-term residents of the New

Forest in the survey, identified as those who lived here for at least 20 years, or their entire lives. In the following sections, we present the results as themes that we identified within the new data. Throughout this section, we will draw upon the new data sources and add detail from additional data collected to objectively assess the costs of food, transport, housing and school uniforms between June and August 2021 (by University of Southampton interns, Emily Lanham and Kate Beeslee).

Methods:

All participants were at least 18 years old and able to consent to the survey or interview. We did not contact clients with known mental health problems, including anxiety and depression, however, these populations were represented in the service provider interviews. Ethics approval was granted by the University of Southampton (ref 64980).

Short surveys were shared via SurveyMonkey links between June and August 2021 with clients accessing services such as the FareShare mobile food larders, food banks and welfare advice services (n=79) to collect information about the pressures on their household budget and key issues that cause them to struggle financially. The survey questions were amended from a previous survey circulated by Citizens Advice in Rushmoor[20]. Responses to the surveys offered a broader range of perspectives and experiences of poverty in the New Forest. These included key barriers to higher incomes/more stable incomes, any health (mental or physical) concerns that contribute to their circumstances. The surveys were shared in person at the locations of services or emailed/texted to clients from the services they have used. Paper copies of surveys were destroyed after the data were inputted into a database held by Citizens Advice. This survey includes respondents from across the Forest.

Potential interview participants were identified by introductions to the research team through the services they use or by the inclusion of contact details on the survey. The interviews (n=20) were conducted by phone, recorded, and analysed for key themes by one researcher, LP. All client interviewees were given a £10 Tesco voucher after their interview, in appreciation for their time. The questions were similar, to gain insight into the key issues they face financially and to consider potential solutions.

To gather a wider perspective of the observations of life on a low income in the New Forest, DS held online recorded interviews with local stakeholders, such as those engaged in providing food and fuel aid (n=7) and social prescribers (n=3). The interviewees were asked to describe the demographics of people who use their services and what they observe to be the main challenges that people who are coming in to ask for support face; the questions were asked with a focus on the longer-term situation in the New Forest, with consideration of the more recent impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic. Service providers were asked to suggest possible solutions to help residents who struggle financially. The service provider interviews were valuable in adding detail around vulnerable populations, including those with mental health issues who were not able to be contacted for interviews or surveys.

Survey Demographics

There was a bias towards female responses (80% of the sample) and therefore outcomes will be more reflective of women's experiences. Participants were more likely to be under the age of 45 years (58%) despite the New Forest population demographics showing a below-average amount of young adults. Only 6% of respondents reported being over 65 (all female). Just over half of participants were married or partnered (53%) with 36% living alone. 61% of responders reporting they had dependent children (<18 years) with an average of two children, but some families reported up to five children. Of the families with dependent children, 33% described themselves as living alone/single parent (15 out of 45 responses). Over half of survey responders (62%) had lived in the New Forest for at least 10 years,

although it is unknown from this survey if these participants maintained the same financial situation across this time (Table 2).

Table 2: Survey respondent characteristics

| | n | % |
|---|----|------|
| Total responded | 79 | 100 |
| Male | 16 | 20.3 |
| Female | 63 | 79.7 |
| Age | | |
| 18-24 | 3 | 3.8 |
| 25-34 | 21 | 26.6 |
| 35-44 | 22 | 27.8 |
| 45-54 | 16 | 20.3 |
| 55-64 | 12 | 15.2 |
| 65+ | 5 | 6.3 |
| Household Composition | | |
| Living alone | 28 | 36.4 |
| Living with partner or spouse | 41 | 53.3 |
| Other | 8 | 10.4 |
| Has dependent children (Mean count: 2, range: 1-5) | 47 | 61.0 |
| Years lived in New Forest | | |
| 1-4 | 12 | 16.2 |
| 5-10 | 13 | 17.6 |
| 11-19 | 11 | 14.9 |
| 20+ | 15 | 20.3 |
| all life | 23 | 31.1 |
| Employment status | | |
| Full time | 8 | 10.5 |
| Part time or zero hours | 21 | 27.6 |
| Self-employed | 8 | 10.5 |
| Unemployed but actively looking for a job | 6 | 7.9 |
| Unemployed but terminally ill or not actively looking for a job | 17 | 22.4 |
| Student or other | 10 | 13.1 |
| Income | | |
| Less than 10k | 25 | 39.1 |
| £10-19.9k | 19 | 29.7 |
| £20-29.9k | 13 | 20.3 |
| £30k+ | 7 | 10.9 |
| Tenure | | |
| Owned outright | 6 | 7.6 |
| Mortgage or shared ownership | 16 | 20.2 |
| Council rent | 19 | 24.1 |
| Housing association rent | 15 | 19.0 |
| Private rent | 21 | 26.6 |
| Other | 2 | 2.6 |

Interviewee Demographics

The client interviewees were slightly older than survey respondents, with an average age of 50.5 (see Table 3). Most respondents were female, and nearly all lived in social housing. There was a good

spatial distribution of respondents, however, only one was from the central part of the forest (Brockenhurst).

Table 3: Client Interviewee characteristics

| Demographics | Count | Range / Stat |
|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Total Interviewed | 20 | |
| Female | 15 | 75% |
| Male | 5 | 25% |
| Mean Age | 50.5 | |
| Female Mean Age | 50.2 | (27 to 80) |
| Male Mean Age | 51.2 | (36 to 59) |
| Mean Household Size | 2.9 | (1 to 8) |
| Mean Children Per Household | 1.2 | (0 to 6) |
| Location | | |
| Ringwood | 4 | |
| Totton | 3 | |
| Ashley | 2 | |
| Hordle | 2 | |
| Pennington | 2 | |
| Lymington | 1 | |
| Sway | 1 | |
| Calmore | 1 | |
| Calshot | 1 | |
| Hythe | 1 | |
| Blackfield | 1 | |
| Brockenhurst | 1 | |
| Type of Housing | | |
| Council / Housing Association | 14 | 70% |
| Private | 6 | 30% |
| Work Status | | |
| Part-time | 8 | 40% |
| Carer | 4 | 20% |
| Retired | 3 | 15% |
| Disabled | 2 | 10% |
| Not discussed | 3 | 15% |

A total of seven service providers (those working in advice services or food and fuel aid) and three social prescribers were interviewed. A sample was collected to represent each of the food banks and support organisations, and recommendations from early interviewees extended the list to social prescribers working in the area. Social prescribers are a relatively new service, similar to Care Navigators for the over 65 population. Social prescribers work with GP surgeries to support people with challenges not directly related to health, though often mental health is a substantial focus of their support. As will be discussed later in this report, this type of intensive support for households in the wide range of areas they need help is a desired option for many of our client interviewees. A good

deal of the work done by social prescribers is signposting to services such as food banks and Citizens Advice.

All interviewees (clients, service providers and social prescribers) were assigned a pseudonym and details, such as the number of children, are grouped into categories to prevent accidental re-identification.

Challenges to living in the New Forest on a low income

The main themes which emerged from the research were concerns around the cost of transport and housing, including the availability of social housing, employment opportunities (including barriers to employment and issues with zero-hours contracts), cost of food and utilities. These themes were consistent from all sources. Mental health was a repeated concern from the service providers, as a substantial barrier to individual wellbeing and also employment. In fact, mental health was the most repeated theme from service provider interviews. Reports from Hampshire County Council corroborate this concern. Seven wards in the New Forest (Holbury & North Blackfield, Milton, Fernhill, Furzedown & Hardley, Pennington, Ringwood South and Totton East) are in the bottom 20% in Hampshire for rates of low mental health and wellbeing[21].

Service providers across the New Forest talked about families with children, particularly large families and/or single parents as being frequent clients of their support services. A noted change since the pandemic was more single adult, often male, households who were seeking support for food, benefit advice and housing. One reason may be that schools provided support to families they identified as struggling during the pandemic, and that single men are not prioritised for social housing following the end of a relationship. Households where no one drove, or only one adult drove, were another group who found it more difficult to live comfortably in the New Forest because of the impact transport has on accessing employment and affordable food.

Transport, housing and job opportunities were mentioned frequently by service providers with added detail around appropriate employment and problems with transport to work, and zero-hour contracts. There are overlapping barriers to a comfortable life on a lower income in the New Forest. The following sections will detail the challenges and note where multiple factors are leading to a problem. Among client interviews, the general cost of living (including housing, food, school uniforms and parking), transport, and employment were the main topics of concern. One non-economic concept that arose was the sense of community in the New Forest villages and towns, and isolation.

Community/place

One lifelong resident noted the acute differences in income within small areas which can create a sense of isolation, noted by eight of the client interviewees:

'I think there's a lot of pressure because a lot of the families are really well off, so if you've got children, there's that peer pressure that your child's not getting the same as everybody else's, you know because they've all got the laptops, the iPad, the phones because they can afford it' Camilla, Brockenhurst

As did several service providers:

'You know, we talked and is an unusual place, and it has a wide variety of people, so you do have people who've got really nice houses and decent amounts of money, drive nice cars, and all those kinds of things. And then you've got others who really, really struggle... There are a lot of families that struggle.' Kathy, service provider

Isolation is another consideration, for both new residents and people who have lived here their whole life. The lack of community is noted by several service providers, particularly in the more rural areas.

'There is no sense of community. When Hampshire County Council pulled the plug on children centers, that was the worst thing that ever happened for my area. Because people who needed support could just rock up, have a cup of coffee...something else they did, healthy eating. They did fitness.... And it was the harbour for (the) community. They're gone...and there's nothing to replace it.' Joan, service provider

The 2017 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment by Hampshire County Council identified social isolation and loneliness as a priority area. Selected populations of greater concern include mothers of young children and carers. The assessment noted the problems of not having a car[22]; all of these confirm what we noted from surveys and interviews.

Residents notice this isolation as well:

'I don't have a support network so that's very difficult. I don't have anyone to help me do the slightest thing. You know like, if a lightbulb goes then it stays like that for years, literally two to three years until somebody is here that could possibly change it' Jo, Totton

We focused at times on the experience of long-term residents, who are perceived to struggle more financially, despite having a wider social network:

'You know sometimes we have three generations of the same family coming down, sort of grandmother and mother and daughter coming down and doing all their sort of family.' Julia, service provider

A specific challenge to accessing help in small communities is the risk of being seen by friends and neighbours. For instance, one interviewee talked about not wanting to use the local food bank or food larder for fear of recognition. They travelled further afield to access services. Another talked about having food delivered by someone he knew, and being aware that living in a 'big house' he did not look like a typical recipient of this support:

'My parents are getting it [food] in during the Covid thing until money picks back up... if things don't pick up then obviously my parents can't keep doing that [buying his food] so I would definitely be going back to the foodbanks, which is very embarrassing to do' Allan, Ringwood

The location of the New Forest, with a mix of rural and small towns, can present problems for people who want to access services, employment or engage with more people. We will now focus on the issues which have a stronger link to economic situations or problems.

Financial Situation

'I think a lot people don't realise what it's like to live on a budget so they don't think anything of going to Costa to have coffee which is something I would never dream of doing' Jo, Totton

Several service providers commented on the level of income being low, compared to the cost of living in the New Forest. This was noted explicitly in terms of the recent Covid-19 pandemic and furlough scheme, which paid 80% of regular wages:

'Or being put on furlough so you know they were on 80% ... of not very much anyway.' Kathy, service provider

'...we had families who came to us because they've been furloughed but their incomes were at such a level that they were just keeping their head above water. So to lose 20% of it just pushed them into the area where they were having difficulty getting food.' Helena, service provider

As we will see in later sections, this is particularly noticeable when considering transport costs, food costs and opportunities for employment. There may be a challenge of under-employment, where people are qualified for better-paid work but none is available locally, consistent with the economic report compiled by NFDC in 2018 before the pandemic:

'To be honest there's only retail and care-work [job opportunities] because there's a lot of care companies round this area' Elodie, Hordle

'Job opportunities I think is lacking...this [job] coming for 2 weeks at the dental surgery down-town which is great but it's not a permanent position, do you see what I'm saying, I'm not having it after 2 weeks' Sophia, Cleaner working multiple jobs, Pennington

'A lot of the job opportunities, especially here in Brockenhurst, is hospitality basically which is all minimum wage isn't it? So, it doesn't matter, or its hospitality or care work, which is both, you know roughly the same wages. So, unless you travel out of the area, you're not gonna get any more money or a better job. And if you travel out you've got to take into consideration your travelling costs as well, so a lot of people are stuck in that situation' Camilla, Brockenhurst

'I think there's, you know, the two big industries are tourism and care, and they're both sort of shift patterns...don't really match up with local transport patterns. So, if you haven't got a car, then you know, you are severely at a disadvantage with accessing employment.' Alicia, service provider

'People who put these glamping sites up [in Calshot] don't ask the people in Calshot if they want the jobs going and things like that. So, the job opportunities are very poor in this area' Mike, Calshot

To extend this theme we will look at the evidence gathered for income generally, including debt. Many residents commented on their low income, that may not quite qualify them for some assistance. 78% of survey participants strongly agreed they would not be able to afford regular living costs if they had to pay an unexpected expense. There were 70% of the sample that suggested they would struggle to afford 1 to 5 basic items including gas/electric, water, kitchen utilities, a mobile and food for specialised diets - with fuel being the most mentioned (66%).

Within the survey data, of those who reported their income level, 39% indicated a gross income (including benefits) of only 10k per year and 69% below £20k per year. Using the UK definition of relative poverty as 60% below median (net) income for the country, this suggests well over half of the respondents were potentially in income poverty (using a median income of £30k). Of those earning under £20k, 16 participants were considered economically active. There were 76% of participants that suggested they felt out of money by the end of the week or month. Of these, 80% were earning under 20k per year with 92% of those under 20k suggesting they struggle, or really struggle, to live on their present income. Of those earning under 10k, almost half (45.8%) reported living alone.

There were 81% of survey respondents who mentioned having no access to savings. Most of those who did save were unable to do so regularly (91%). This was similar to interviewees:

'Always budgeting I'm finding, since I was twenty...I did save but I've gone through all my savings now' Sophia, Pennington

'I have to budget very carefully to make ends meet', retired female

'I had savings but I needed a large car repair', part-time worker, female

'Cost of living is too high and we have no money left over at the end of the month (quite often before the end of the month) so don't have capacity to save', full-time worker, female

68% of survey participants mentioned repaying debt. Of those in debt, 59% reported using a bank overdraft, 57% a credit card, and 32% a loan from a friend/relative as a way of borrowing money. Over half of those mentioning debt (62%) used two or more forms of borrowing method. Of those earning under £20k, 65% of participants mentioned repaying debt. Part-time and unemployed responders reported repaying debt more than other employment types (Fig 14). In the service provider interviews, debt was mentioned by two of them as a cause for concern. Client interviews also noted debt and the issues of falling further behind:

‘Going into debt but not on anything extravagant at all, simply on just trying to make ends meet in terms of food’ Debbie, Ashley

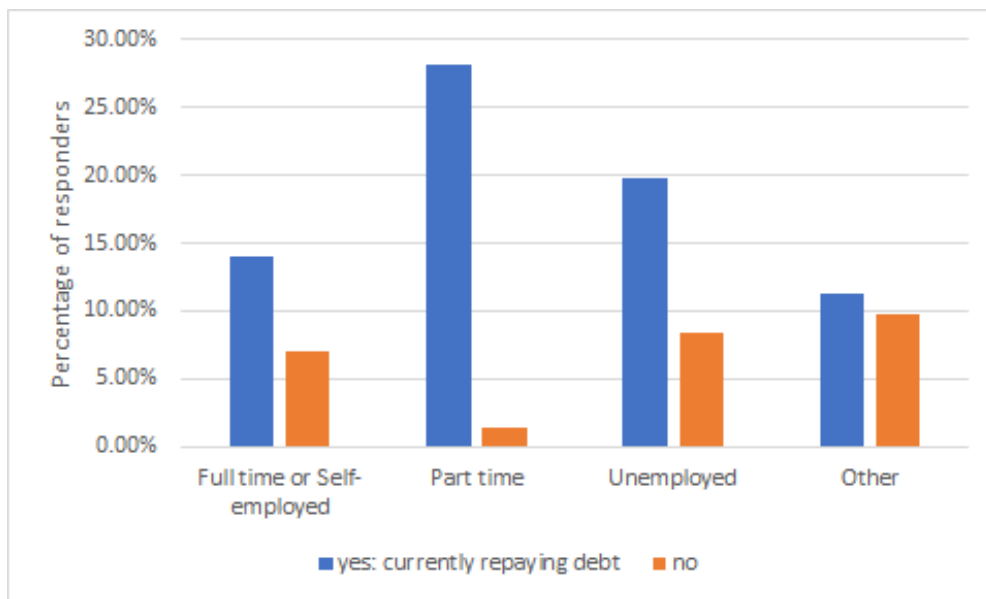


Figure 14: Responses to the question *Are you currently repaying any debt?*

There are resources to help with debt management, and some interviewees were engaging with these; Danielle has had 90% of her debt written off and makes monthly payments for the remainder. One recommendation from a service provider was to look ahead and offer advice on budgeting.

‘...maybe money management and, you know, budgeting and that kind of thing and we have in the past tried to kind of help people with that. I think there are quite a lot of people in debt actually, so helping people to manage their debt. We do refer people onto Christians against poverty...’ Kathy, service provider.

Employment and barriers to employment

‘It’s [job opportunities] not that good because most of the jobs are too far away for him [grandson]. It’s alright if he can get sort of local like Lymington, Pennington, New Milton but otherwise he’s got to get from here to say Christchurch or Southampton or whatever’ Maria, Ashley

As seen in the previous section, and as will be discussed in following sections, there are multiple and linked barriers to employment. The availability of appropriate employment that suits the level of qualifications or experience, access to transport that allows people to balance work with caring responsibilities and availability of working hours that fit around other responsibilities creates a complex web of issues that must be negotiated by someone seeking work. There is the additional

challenge of whether people are better off working or claiming benefits, when their personal constraints are taken into account. In a setting like the New Forest there are limited industries (Section 1 Economy) and the median salaries for women (see Section 1 Income Levels) especially reflect the available jobs.

From the survey, only 48.6% of the respondents were economically active (any form of employment), which is below the national average of 79% (Nomis[23], 16-64 years) and the New Forest population (82% in 2016 age 16-64 years). As seen in the NFDC economic report this economically inactive group are over-represented in our survey which we expected given the targeting for respondents. Similarly, among the interviewees only 40% of people we spoke with were themselves employed, however, sometimes they were in a relationship with someone who was working at least part-time. Of those survey respondents employed, only 22% were in full-time employment. Only 8% of respondents suggested their work was seasonal. Of those who were not actively looking for a job, seven mentioned this was due to being a full-time carer or childcare responsibilities. Among interviewees, 20% were full-time carers.

'We've got lots of families whose children are having to be home-schooled because there's no school place for them. And that straight away that you know has an impact on your financial situation.' Kathy, service provider

Childcare was also mentioned as a barrier to work by three respondents in part-time or zero-hour positions. When asked in the survey for their suggested barriers to working in the New Forest, a lack of affordable childcare was one of the most reported responses (60%), mentioned by 73% of those who had dependent children. One interviewee was unaware of childcare vouchers available through her work until the child was three. The problems with employment and childcare were raised by service providers as well, and often overlap with transport; 65.8% of survey respondents noted the cost of transport to and from work as a main barrier to employment.

'Because we're in a village we get a bus through every couple of hours or something and then obviously if you miss that bus I'm stranded over at New Milton for another hour or two hours, you know and I've got time limits because I've got to take child to school, pick child up from school' Camilla, Brockenhurst

Sixteen survey participants indicated they were unemployed due to illness or that illness had been a significant barrier to employment, and this is consistent with the observations of service providers:

'you would see people that were on benefits and a low income and were struggling. Health issues may, a lot of the time (mean), people couldn't necessarily work, so their income was capped as opposed to people that could potentially go out and get a job.' Alicia, service provider

From the survey, those who had lived in the New Forest their whole life were more likely to indicate that not having enough work experience or a lack of vacancies were reasons for not finding paid work, compared to those who had lived there less time (Figure 15). However, 22% of whole life residents classified themselves as unemployed for illness reasons, which is higher than those who had lived there less time. People living the forest for at least 20 years or their whole lives cited affordable childcare, cost of transport and lack of suitable vacancies as the three main barriers to employment.

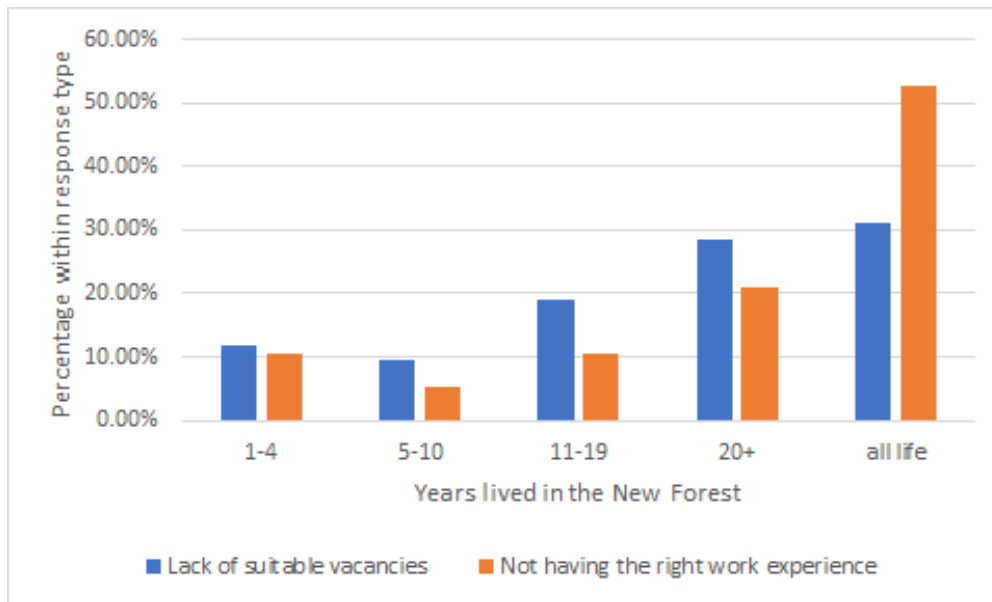


Figure 15: Responses to *What do you think are three main reasons why people in the New Forest may find it difficult to get paid work?* By years lived in the New Forest.

Among those who are working and finding it difficult, there are many examples of people working multiple low-paid jobs, often with some difficulty in moving between them. This was noted by service providers, along with the difficulty of working and claiming benefits:

'...they're holding down sort of three or four jobs with their families to make ends meet...' Julia, service provider

'...a lady in her 60s and she had six cleaning jobs, three in Lymington and three in New Milton, and she had a bicycle to cycle between the two...' Alicia, service provider

'...it is actually zero-hours contracts for the ladies or caring jobs which are extremely difficult Universal Credit despite what they said does not adapt to zero hours contracts' Joan, service provider

Claiming support

'It's a fairly consistent thing that comes up, the balancing between employment and benefits, or the possibility of very inconsistent employment as well.' Lila, service provider

Within the survey, 41% of the sample reported using a food bank (before covid) and 72% of these reported that food was one of their largest expenses. 80% of participants mentioned receiving some form of benefit with the most common being Universal Credit followed by Child or Housing benefit. Individuals who were unemployed due to illness or carer responsibilities were more likely to claim multiple benefits. Of those claiming benefits, half of the respondents experienced issues (51%) with 59% of these related to applying, understanding or managing benefits claims (Fig 16).

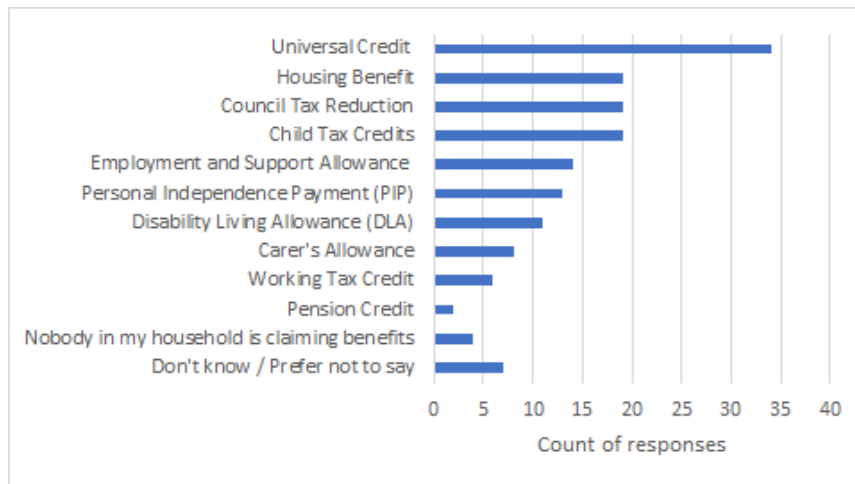


Figure 16: Count of responses to *Which, if any, of these benefits/tax credits are you or anybody in your household currently claiming?*

There were positive responses regarding help for finding and claiming welfare benefits. Support from charities who provide advice to people for a range of topics were favourably mentioned by several interviewees.

'There's a young lady from Citizen's Advice [at FareShare food larder] and she's actually fantastic to be honest and she did sort out for us that. I could phone up Citizen's Advice and I could get some help with my gas and electric at that time, so I got a voucher for that... which was great, it really really did help out because obviously I wasn't spending the money on the gas and electric then, so I could buy a bit more food or then we could pay a little bit more towards our rent' Camilla, Brockenhurst

'Youth and Families Matter, they're the only ones that help me, you know give me advice if I'm trying to find out things. Because one thing I think, no one don't tell you what you can claim for unless you know somebody' Bethany, Totton

Unavoidable living costs

Within the survey, 85% of the sample felt that the cost of living had increased. The three largest living expenses were considered to be Food (59% of the sample), Utilities (47%) and Housing payments (51%) (Figure 17). Of those who considered utilities as one of their largest costs, 60% felt the cost of utilities had increased and this was more likely to be mentioned by residents who had lived in the New Forest for at least 20 years/or their whole life (chi-sq p 0.028).

'It's [the New Forest] just a tourist attraction isn't it, so they make a lot of money from tourism but they don't actually consider the people that are struggling in the area because everything is hyped up, everything costs more in this area than anywhere else... it's almost like its pushing the local people out of the area because they can't afford to live here' Camilla, Brockenhurst, lifetime resident

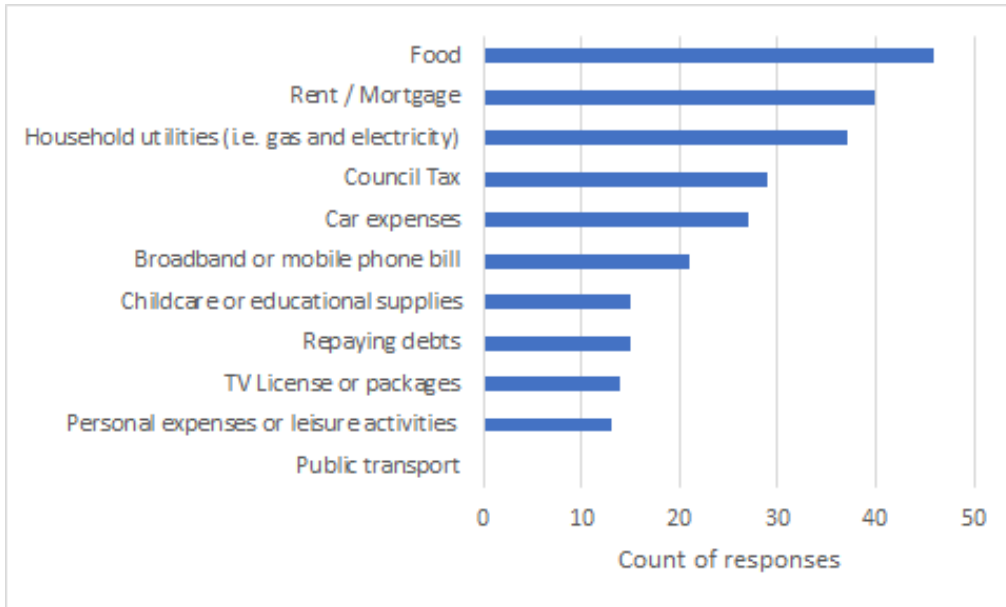
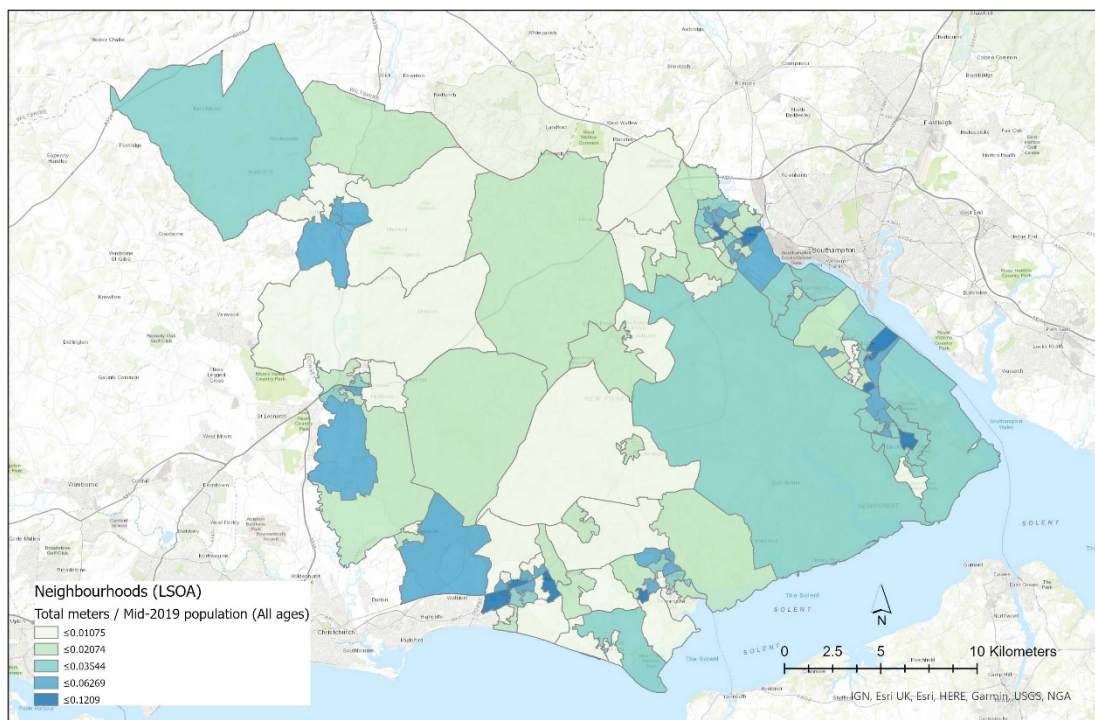


Figure 17: Count of responses to the question *Which of the following are your three largest monthly expenses? (Please select three only).*

One strong factor in the cost of utilities is the type of energy tariff a household has access to, from prepayment metres to paying by direct debit. This cost will become greater with the upcoming removal of the energy price cap. The distribution of prepayment meters across the New Forest (Figure 18, based on 2017 data) corresponds with areas of higher economic insecurity in Totton, Waterside, New Milton and Pennington. This contributes to the overall ‘poverty premium’ where households who are worse off financially pay higher costs for goods such as energy and food because they cannot commit to monthly direct debits, or have to shop locally where prices are higher (see below on food costs).



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Figure 18: Prepayment meters in the New Forest

Council tax was also noted by survey respondents as a high cost of living in the New Forest:

“Council tax is high and it doesn't seem to be justified for the services we receive.” Full-time carer, female

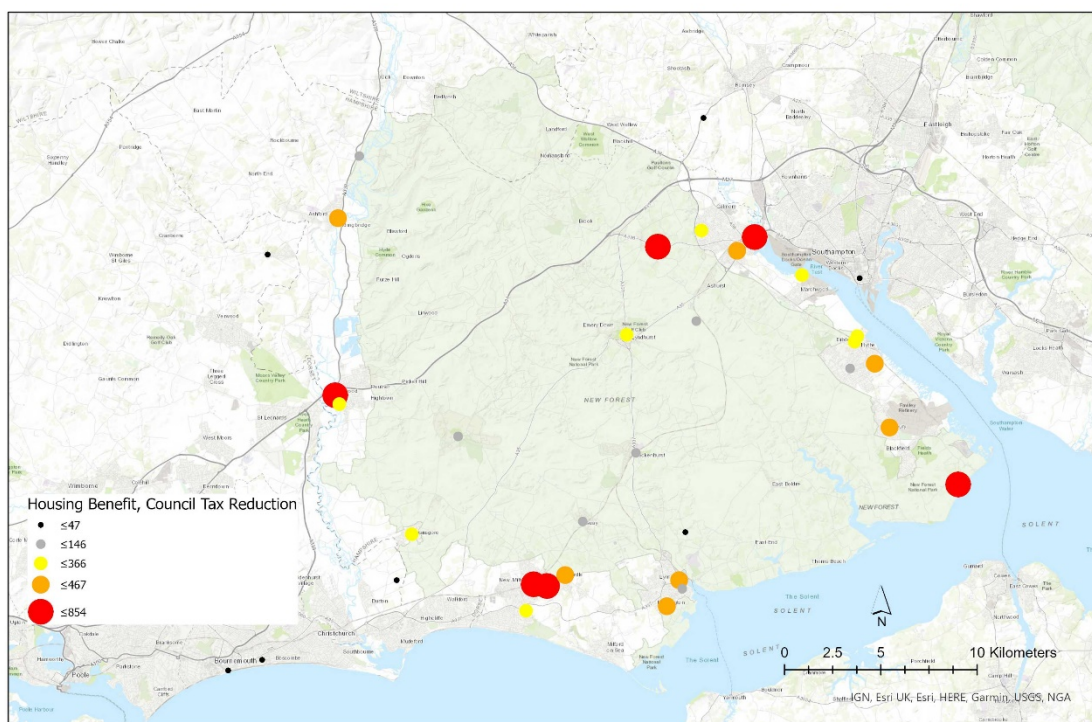
“It is so expensive! Council tax has gone up...” - part-time worker, female

The client interviewees also noted council tax as a large expense:

‘Council tax, oh my good grief, it is absolutely extortionate. It’s so much money it fills me with absolute horror...’ Debbie, Ashley

‘I cannot believe in a 2-bed flat that my council tax is £1400 a year which I think is just disgusting really. How can older generations afford that? What if in a year I want to move from that flat? It’s gonna be really hard for me to do a move from that flat because the cost, the banding in Ringwood is a lot higher than it is in Fordingbridge’ Tracey, Ringwood

There is the option to apply for Council Tax Reduction[24], it seems that many people are likely unaware of this opportunity. Data provided by NFDC shows the distribution of recipients to this scheme and/or housing benefit by postcode sector (e.g., SO41 8). Due to the nature of this geography we were not able to adjust the figures for the resident population so data are shown as count of recipients (Figure 19).



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Figure 19: Recipients of Council Tax Reduction or Housing Benefit from NFDC

Service providers noted that the concerns regarding costs of utilities fluctuated with the seasons, with water bills causing worry in the summer, and energy bills more problematic in the winter.

Housing

Housing and associated costs such as council tax are mentioned frequently. For people living in social housing, the cost of rent was lower, however, people living in private rented accommodation are concerned with this expense. Our client interviewees are more likely to live in social housing (70%) than survey respondents (43%).

There are fewer social housing applications in the New Forest now than in previous years, following an evaluation of the social housing register in 2019-20; there are currently 1,393 applications for social housing (Figure 4) with 544 households placed since January 2019. In the applications, 24 are in the highest priority of Band 1 and nearly half (690, 49.5%) are in the lowest priority band, 4. Most applicants were single people requiring a studio or 1 bedroom home (492, 35% of the total) followed by those needing a 2 bedroomed property (473, 34% of the total).

Among our interviewees, Jane has been on a waiting list for a council property for 11 years. As with every local authority, demand is high and people are prioritised based on need and demographic profile (see <https://www.newforest.gov.uk/homesearch>). There are approximately 9,000 properties held by New Forest District Council or Housing Associations such as Radian.

There are five people in the family, yet five people in the family living in a one-bedroom flat, and they've been on the housing register for four years now. Lila, social prescriber

A third of the survey sample (28%) owned, had a mortgage or shared ownership for their home, another third were private renters (27%) with 43% renting from the council or housing association.

There was no relationship between age and housing tenure in the survey, however, participants who mentioned they were unemployed were more likely to be using social renting services. Housing costs were more likely to be mentioned by those in private rent (86% of renters) or with mortgages (73% of those with mortgages) as one of their largest expenses. There were 85% of the sample that felt that housing costs had increased and this was not specific to any kind of housing tenure or length of residence in the New Forest. Of those who indicated they had lived in the New Forest their whole life, 39% lived in council housing and 30% in private rent with only one person owning their home outright. Rents are seen to be high:

“Nothing is being done in this area to help young people onto the property ladder, and the cost of rent is crippling.” Full-time worker, female

“Rents are very high” – part-time worker, female

Housing costs feature prominently in our interviews with clients and service providers, with four of the seven service providers talking about this cost.

‘House prices, I know I couldn’t buy mine, but they’re quite expensive for like younger people if they were to rent or buy it’s a lot dearer to live in the New Forest because my grandson, he’s been looking for flats and things and they’ve found some but the prices were too high, but if they went to the Isle of Wight, they’d get it £300-400 cheaper’ Maria, Ashley

These comments are in agreement with data collected for the average rent for properties in the Southampton, Bournemouth and Salisbury regions compared to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) which is a housing benefit for private sector tenants. As the New Forest does not have its own LHA, it is covered by neighbouring regions. Table 4 shows that the rates between Southampton and Bournemouth are similar and slightly lower in Salisbury.

Table 4: Maximum Local Housing Allowance (LHA) per month per market area for 1 to 4 Bedroom properties compared to average rental price (July 2021)

| Bedroom Type | Southampton | | Bournemouth | | Salisbury |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
| | LHA | Private Rent | LHA | Private Rent | LHA |
| 1 Bedroom | £594.99 | £732.50 | £598.51 | £657.50 | £575.01 |
| 2 Bedroom | £775.02 | £1,132.14 | £759.98 | £862.50 | £725.00 |
| 3 Bedroom | £925.01 | £1,445.83 | £950.00 | £1,405.00 | £830.02 |
| 4 Bedroom | £1,199.98 | £2,250.00 | £1,249.00 | Not found | £1,100.00 |

Using housing market search engines (Right Move, On the Market, Nestoria), these allowances were compared to market prices for two weeks of July 2021. For the Southampton market area, rental properties with a choice of 1 to 4 bedrooms were only available in Lymington and Hythe. Whilst the LHA covered 80% of the average rental prices for 1 bedroom properties, it only covered 50% of the rental price for 4 bedroom properties. For example, in Lymington, prices ranged from £700 for a 1 bedroom to £975 for a two-bedroom but were outside of the allowance for a three (minimum £1300) or four bedroom (minimum £1,850) property (see Table 5).

Table 5: Rental prices found for the Lymington area for 1 to 4 bedrooms compared to the LHA.

| Bedroom Type | LHA (Monthly) | Area | Price | Agency | Difference |
|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 1 Bedroom | £594.99 | Lymington | £700.00 | Right Move | -£105.01 |
| | | Lymington | £1,100.00 | Right Move | -£505.01 |
| 2 Bedroom | £775.02 | Lymington | £1,200.00 | Right Move | -£424.98 |
| | | Lymington | £975.00 | Right Move | -£199.98 |
| | | Lymington | £1,450.00 | Right Move | -£674.98 |
| 3 Bedroom | £925.01 | Lymington | £2,950.00 | Right Move | -£2,024.99 |
| | | Lymington | £1,350.00 | Nestoria | -£424.99 |
| | | Lymington | £1,300.00 | Nestoria | -£374.99 |
| 4 Bedroom | £1199.98 | Lymington | £2,400.00 | Right Move | -£1,200.02 |
| | | Lymington | £1,850.00 | Right Move | -£650.02 |

In the Bournemouth market area, 1 to 3 bedroom properties were available in Ringwood but no four-bedroom properties were available in general. Of the 8 properties found, only one in Ringwood was within the LHA. As with the Southampton area, coverage by the LHA reduced as the number of bedrooms increased. A 1 bedroom property in Ringwood costs £520 but a three-bedroom costs a minimum of £1200 (in this case, £250 above the LHA for a three bedroom property). Only two properties were found in Fordingbridge (Salisbury market area, both one bedroom), one with costs within LFA. This suggests a poor rental market for the area. Many of these outcomes are similar results regarding the challenges of housing affordability to those identified in 2016[12].

Food costs

'My main issue is how expensive everything is just in general, I mean food is really, the thing that really annoys me about living in the New Forest is where I've got two kids, it's hard for me to take both of them and go all the way down into Lymington town to go get food from that Tesco because it's a lot cheaper' Liam, Lymington

Food was another substantial cost for many households. This contributes to a large, necessary part of budgets when options such as food banks or the nine mobile food larders, which are present across the New Forest on different days, are not easily accessible to households. It is often seen as a more flexible budget area, where savings can be made with some effort:

'I have to ration like strawberries, raspberries all that kind of thing... I have to really restrict how much I buy and then make sure it's shared out amongst the children. I make sure I shop at low-cost supermarkets so, for example, I go to Lidl and not only do I go to Lidl, I make sure I go at 8pm at night because quite often they do 30% off like their meat and things like that and I always buy deals and put them in the freezer...I look for offers, but not offers on brands, offers on other things which make it cost-effective and then I store it and make sure I keep it, and then use it, I do a meal planner, I also look up books such as 'Eat Well For Less' to give me ideas on how I can just really try and save some money on our biggest expense' Debbie, Ashley

A comparative shopping basket of goods was priced at 43 shops across the New Forest during June and July 2021. There were a total of 20 items that were identified by looking at earlier research on the topic and discussing commonly purchased items with clients of Citizens Advice (See Appendix B). The items represent fresh and ambient food as well as sanitary products.

The list of items was priced for the lowest cost item, regardless of brand, that was the correct size. Where the correct size was unavailable, such as 1kg of frozen peas, a calculation was made based on the available size (e.g., 545 g). If an item was missing this was noted and the average price of the same item from a similar store chain and format was inserted. For instance, a substitution for a missing item

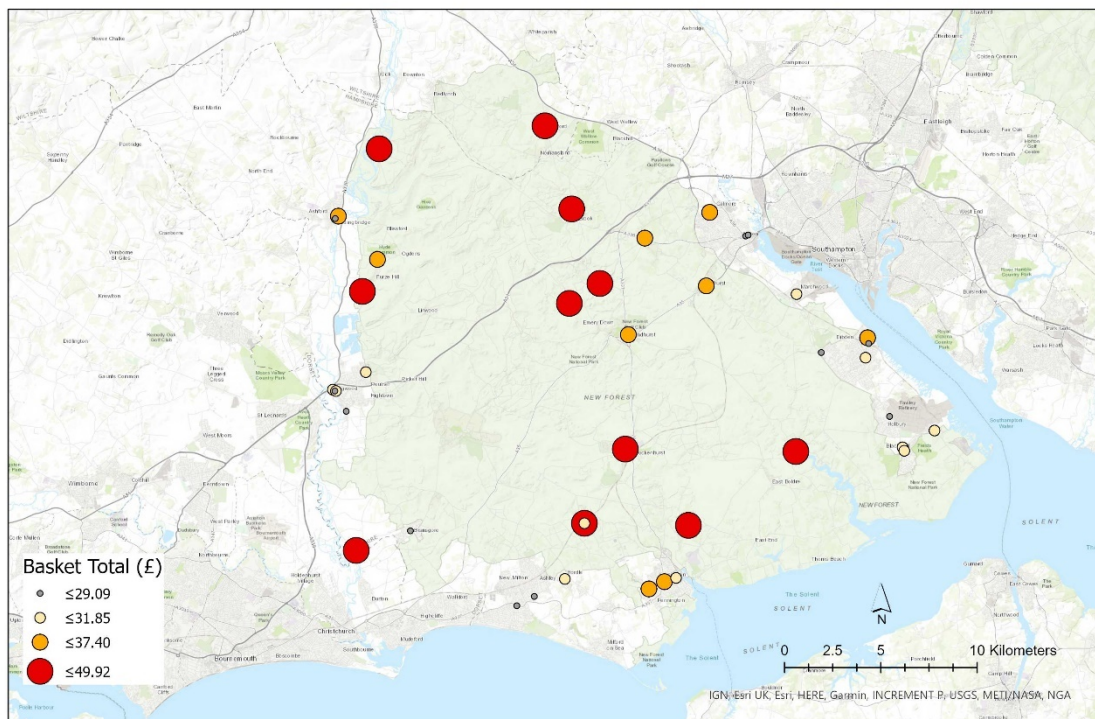
at Tesco Express was calculated based on the item costs at other Tesco Express outlets. All farm and community shops were grouped into a category for this purpose.

The results show a huge disparity in costs across the New Forest (Fig 20). The cost of the same basket of goods was lowest at Tesco in New Milton (£16.27) and highest at an independent shop (£49.92). The average cost, excluding farm or community shops, was £28.83. The large Tesco in New Milton is easily accessible by car, however, the nearest bus stop is 10 minutes walk, which will hinder access for people using public transport.

'For someone like me who doesn't drive, it's definitely the small shops that are quite expensive to live on' Gabby, Blackfield

Tesco is an appropriate point of comparison across the New Forest, with 11 stores in a variety of formats. While the assumption may be that costs will be consistent in this company there was wide variation. Already we noted that the most affordable option for the basket is the large Tesco in New Milton, at £16.27. The most expensive cost for the food basket at any format of Tesco was £38.70 at Tesco Express in Brockenhurst. The average cost at Tesco Express was £33.87, more than twice the cost of the same type of items at the larger store in New Milton. The main differences were for items such as sausages and nappies, which were £8.05 in some stores and £4.05 in others. The moderately sized Tesco Metro was £30.89, and the other large Tesco store in Dibden Purlieu cost £21.37; across the Forest there is a postcode lottery of food costs.

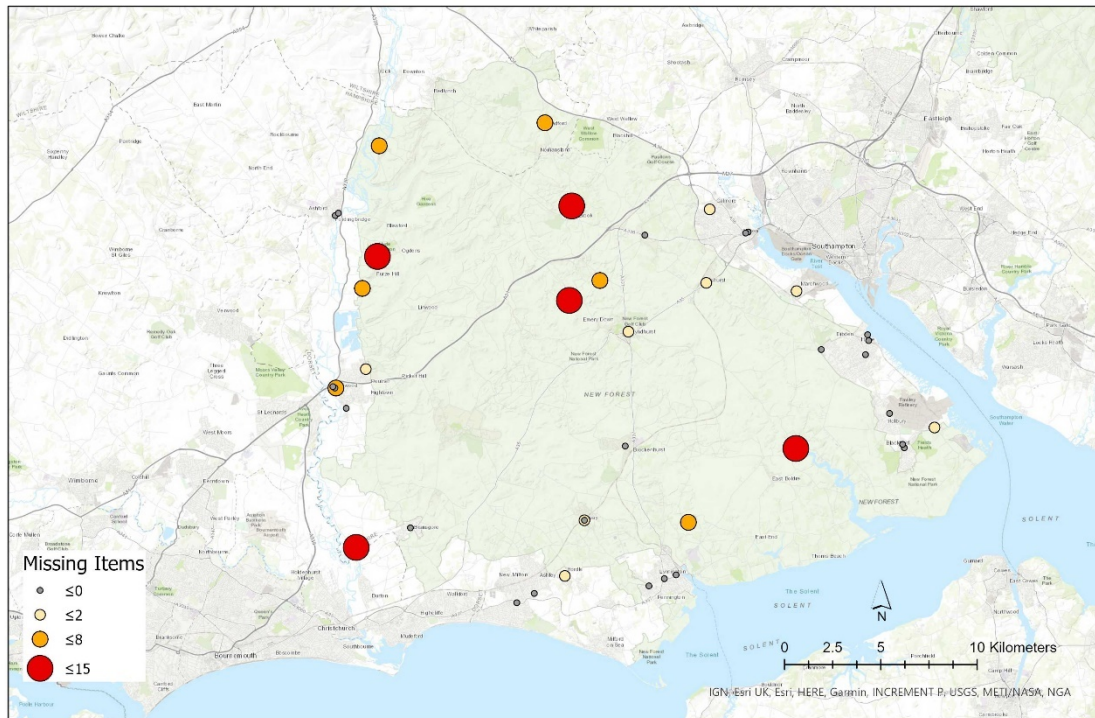
The Tesco example shows that size of a shop matters. The average price at a supermarket is £25.73 and at convenience stores the average cost was £32.88. Overwhelmingly, residents in New Milton were exposed to the lowest prices while people living in more remote locations would pay much more for the same type of items. This is one further example of the rural poverty premium.



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Many items were not available in the smaller format shops or the community and farm shops. Figure 21 demonstrates the number of missing items from the comparative basket, with a similar pattern to the higher-priced shops in the previous map.

The results are not surprising, given the comments from both service providers and interviewees about the cost of food being high, and challenges with access due to limited car access/bus services. A representative working in food aid in the Waterside area of the forest described the challenges: *‘(Going to the main shop) It will cost you £7.80 return on the bus.’* She goes on to elaborate that the cost to travel to Lidl in Hythe, starting at Calshot, is £5.50 return.



Closely aligned to the other issues raised so far is transportation – this offers a way to access employment, more affordable food and other resources.

Transportation, Commuting Availability and Costs

‘Public transport is what I rely on. I don’t drive. And it seems to be so expensive and I don’t understand why it is really’ Sharon, Totton

“I think the main problem is that a large area is rural and not easy to access to and from” female survey respondent

From the survey, five participants mentioned that they did not have good access to transport with 73% of the sample with access to a car. However, these five participants were those who had lived in the New Forest their whole life or at least 20 years.

Transportation is a key concern for client interviewees, service providers and survey respondents. Lack of adequate transport was mentioned as a barrier to work for six interviewees. When we asked the whole sample for their suggested barriers, the costs of travel (69%) and a lack of suitable vacancies were two of the most reported survey responses (57%).

'My daughter where she works at a school in Ringwood, I gotta take her there and pick her up because the bus service is pathetic... they [bus service] won't review it because it's Calshot, they're not interested' Mike, Calshot

'Because I can't drive, that is a big disadvantage basically because there is a lot of places where you could get a job but because it's further out than you can get to by public transport. Because like I've done care work in the past but if I wanted to get into that I would have to be able to get transport at all different times because they want you to be flexible about your shifts and stuff and that is quite hard finding how you would do it on public transport' Sharon, Totton

'If they can get a job locally and they can do everything on foot, then then they're in a reasonable position. But if they have got to travel at all for work, which they might easily have to do, they're not. Public transport links are not great, and they're not frequent. So they end up having to have some transport of their own, and that gets very difficult, so they might have a car, and they'll just about afford the petrol, but that's very difficult. And then, if there's something goes wrong with it that suddenly, because suddenly that has to be priority because otherwise mum can't get to work or whatever. And it just suddenly they have to find this lump sum money which they don't have.' Helena, service provider

Of those who reported travel costs, 44% also mentioned that their car was one of their biggest outgoing expenses.

'You cannot run a vehicle on Universal Credit.' Oscar, service provider

'Petrol is expensive, and you need to have transport to get most places in New Forest' full-time carer, female

To assess the scale of any issues with public transport, data were collected regarding public transport availability and costs, comparable to car requirements to major employment centres (Southampton, Bournemouth, Salisbury, and Winchester) from main towns within the New Forest region (Totton, Hythe, Ringwood, Brockenhurst, Lymington). Substantial discounts on travel fares can be made for regular commuters using monthly tickets (usually half of a day return on train and a third of a day return for bus). This may not be of benefit to flexible workers where 3 days of travel is usually less than a weekly ticket but still requires a full fare each time.

Apart from the Totton to Southampton route at £6 return, New Forest bus routes charge a flat rate of £8 return, which could be reduced to £3.30 per day for a monthly ticket despite variations in travel time. In comparison to this flat £99 monthly bus ticket, train routes within the New Forest cost between £136 (Brockenhurst to Southampton) to £186 (Lymington to Southampton or Bournemouth). Public transport routes from Hythe and Ringwood are dependent on bus travel which often do not provide efficient support to wider areas of the New Forest. Routes to Bournemouth are often dependent on train routes which, whilst efficient, can be expensive from the wider areas of the New Forest with a route from Totton costing £227 for a monthly ticket. See details in Appendix C.

Missing from these data are smaller villages, which face their own problems with public transport:

'Either way, if you got a job, you've still got to get transport to get to the job and you've got a rubbish bus service. If you work a 9-5 job in Southampton you aren't gonna get back to Calshot, you'll have to end up walking which is not very safe... there's no footpaths' Mike, Calshot

The cost details in Table 6 indicate the challenges of getting between mid and larger sized communities, but access to public transport that would facilitate living in the Forest and travelling for work is very

poor in more isolated communities. Again, this was a theme identified in the research completed in 1999 in the New Forest, under the newspaper headline ‘Poor and Isolated’[7].

Table 6: Summary of monthly ticket costs, feasibility and driving time. Inadequate represents excessive length or many transfers required.

| Start | Destination | Bus (Monthly Ticket) | Train (Monthly Ticket) | Drive time (estimated min, rounded) |
|--------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Totton | Southampton | £62-75 depending on payment location | £64.60 | 15 |
| Hythe | Southampton | £99.00 | No local station | 25 |
| Lymington | Southampton | £99.00 (infrequent) | £181.30 | 45 |
| Brockenhurst | Southampton | £99.00 | £136.40 | 40 |
| Ringwood | Southampton | Inadequate route | No local station | 40 |
| Totton | Bournemouth | Long transfers | £227.00 | 40 |
| Hythe | Bournemouth | Inadequate route | No local station | 50 |
| Lymington | Bournemouth | £99.00 | £186.70 | 50 |
| Brockenhurst | Bournemouth | Inadequate route | £164.00 | 40 |
| Ringwood | Bournemouth | £99.00 | No local station | 20 |
| Ringwood | Salisbury | £99.00 | No local station | 40 |
| Totton | Lymington | £99.00 | £149.80 | 20 |
| Totton | Winchester | £99.00 with transfers | £162.90 | 25 |
| Ringwood | Lymington | Inadequate route | No local station | 35 |

The cost of parking was mentioned by several interviewees as adding to the overall budget challenges:

‘Luckily every Christmas my dad gets me one of the parking clocks that you can use in certain areas in like Ringwood, Fordingbridge and Lymington, not that I go to Lymington, but yeah so I use the parking clock, but yeah I’d say, like when I have to take my husband to hospital especially, prices like that are just horrendous’ Jane, Fordingbridge

‘When I’ve gone to the New Forest with family and friends and because they’re providing the transport, I will pay for the parking and I think it’s quite expensive, I think it should be free because then it will get more people going to enjoy the beauty of the New Forest’ Florence, Calmore

‘Parking [prices] is disgusting especially in Totton now where they’ve put parking metres now when it used to be free’ Bethany, Totton

School Uniform Costs

School uniforms can add a further burden on already stretched household budgets. This review considers the cost of advised school uniforms for ten secondary schools within the New Forest area (New Milton, Pennington, Christchurch, Ringwood, Dibden Purlieu, Holbury, Totton, Fordingbridge).

The average cost for all mandatory school specified items for boys was £58.55 and £80.42 for girls (Table 7). When including all required items, using cheaper substitutes where allowed, the average cost was £85.44 for boys and £92.60 for girls. Not only does this suggest a difference in price requirements between genders, but that girls are required to own more school-specific items and therefore cannot as easily substitute with cheaper (for example) supermarket alternatives. For almost

all schools, required girls' skirts were more expensive than boy's trousers by about £5 on average. Girl's trousers were also found to be around £2 more expensive than boys on average.

Only four schools had a difference in total price between girls' or boys' uniform less than £10 (three within the Totton area, one in Pennington). Two of these schools had the cheapest available uniforms costing under £71 for girls and under £66 for boys (Priestlands, Hounslow). Notably, these two schools and Highcliffe are the only schools not to have blazer requirements that, arguably as a one-off cost, can be as much as 39% of the total cost of a required uniform.

Table 7: Estimated cost of a complete school uniform for boys or girls using mandated school-specific items and substituted market items where permitted.

| School Name | Boys | Girls | Blazer Cost |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Arnewood School, New Milton | £98.97 | £124.95 | £29.99 |
| Priestlands School, Pennington | £61.97 | £70.96 | None |
| Highcliffe School, Christchurch | £82.98 | £71.98 | None |
| The Grange, Christchurch | £109.96 | £99.97 | £34.99 |
| Ringwood School Academy, Ringwood | £104.50 | £117.50 | £37.50 |
| Noadswood School, Dibden Purlieu | £91.22 | £100.21 | £24.00 but Optional |
| New Forest Academy, Holbury | £73.72 | £87.22 | £28.50 |
| Hounslow School, Totton | £66.03 | £70.54 | None |
| Testwood School, Totton | £80.89 | £84.89 | £28.50 |
| Burgate School, Fordingbridge | £84.20 | £97.75 | £31.00 |
| Average Cost | £85.44 | £92.60 | £30.64 |

The cost of a school uniform was raised by Liam, a single parent of two boys. Clothes swaps are in place in Totton and less frequently across New Milton, Lymington and Pennington areas. More options for lower-cost uniforms is a necessity for families, especially with multiple children.

'that again is also something we have very occasionally given people money for, to help with school uniforms, shoes and stuff...just because you know comes the autumn. If you've got multiple children, they've all grown over the summer. It's a very expensive time. Even though you can get incredibly cheap school uniform and shoes. But, if you've got multiple children...' Helena, service provider

Survey summary

In this sample, mainly consisting of working-age women, 69% reported earning under 20k a year including benefits, the most common of which being Universal Credit. This was more likely to be reported by those who were unemployed. The majority of responders had difficulties related to their income with most reporting running out of money before the end of the month, having no savings and reporting current repayment of debts. Food, utilities, and housing costs were the three largest expenses with the majority of responders either private or council renters.

Most participants felt these expenses had increased over time, particularly housing and utilities. Whilst not reported as a top expense, cost of transport and lack of childcare were considered two top barriers to finding employment in the New Forest, so should be considered for intervention points to allow more people to find appropriate work.

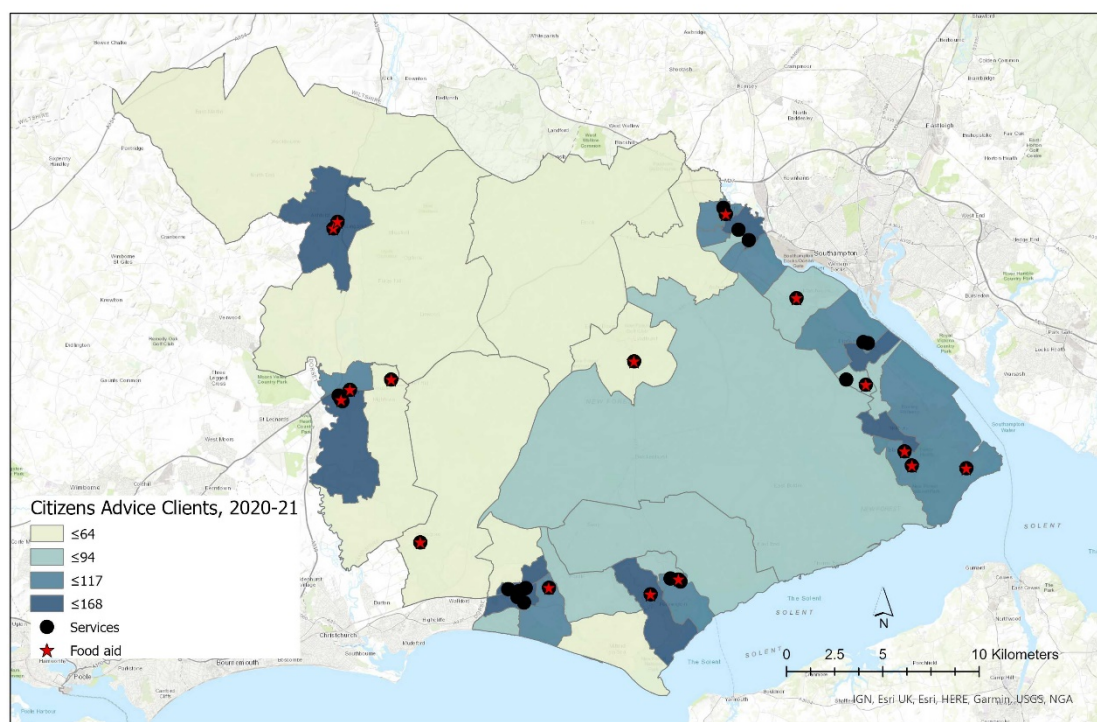
Overall, those who had lived in the New Forest their whole life did not report different sources of difficulties compared to those who had lived here for less than 20 years, other than concerns about raised utility costs. There should be some consideration about the cumulative impact of living just within or slightly beyond the household budget, particularly on mental health which has been noted by most service providers as a main concern.

Section 3: What is available? Services identified in the New Forest

'I found it very challenging to get support. There seems to be a gap, from an honest perspective there's a gap from when I knew I had a problem and until the social prescriber contacted me. In the worst time of my life I just couldn't find any support anywhere that was easy' Toby, Ringwood

'I do feel sometimes that we're just literally papering over the cracks.' Lila, social prescriber

As part of the service provider and client interviews, we asked about the resources available to residents, many of which are signposted from schools and social prescribers. In total there are 36 physical places available across the New Forest as well as a number of online resources. Figure 22 illustrates the distribution of services across the New Forest, with a full list available in Appendix D.



One of the most common resources were food banks and the frequently mentioned mobile food larders, that are in locations across the Forest. At each of these larders, people can self-refer and pay from £2.50 to £5.00 depending on household size for a bag of ambient goods as well as fresh produce, supplied by FareShare. This new initiative started in Spring 2021 and now includes a total of nine larders, each open between 1-2 hours once a week. The response from residents is extremely positive:

'To be honest, I'm so glad we have that food larder 'cause that's helped a hell of a lot' Carly, Hythe

'It's [FareShare food scheme] is the most amazing scheme and I wish every little area had a scheme like that', Tracey, Ringwood

'The FareShare one [larder] I do that weekly with my children because it helps us out so that we don't need to buy too much in the week, like especially with fruit and veg obviously that my kids eat like there's no tomorrow, so obviously it comes in handy', Gabby, Blackfield

This is a more economically sustainable food aid intervention as there is some income from the clients to support the ongoing costs. The larders offer an opportunity to signpost other support services such as Citizens Advice. In addition, there is less stigma associated with the larders because clients pay towards the food. Like the Food Rescue Kitchen, there is a narrative around reducing food waste; people may feel positive that they are accessing the services and taking food that would otherwise be wasted.

The mobile food larders help to overcome the postcode lottery of food aid, though all food banks reported offering deliveries to clients as well. The model of mobile services is one for expansion to other areas of support. A notable benefit of these mobile vans is the reduced need for resources, such as a permanent structure. Where newer support options have opened, like the community fridges in Ringwood and Fordingbridge, one aspect of their success is the location in a hub of the community. A community fridge is a location which may be shelves of goods or a refrigerator where food is placed to be collected from anyone who needs it. There is no referral needed. Usually, these fridges are stocked with food deemed surplus and donated by supermarkets or groups like FareShare. In the case of these community fridges, both are housed in a library. This will also improve the feasibility of longer-term implementation of support services/hubs.

There are further resources available online, particularly to support mental health. It must be noted that digital exclusion, where people have difficulty accessing the internet due to devices or service plans is more of a problem for lower-income and rural populations. There is also the issue of digital literacy. Whilst online options may work well for some populations, they are not the optimal solution for all, especially older generations. The pandemic and resulting closure of libraries to the public further prevented free access to the internet to explore online advice and help.

Section 4: Prioritisation for further action

'actually, if we can help people with those sorts of things, it may be that they don't need the food bank...' Helena, service provider

"What I'm helping people with can't be put in a pill packet or a bottle, and I tend to look at the overall aspect of their life. What is happening in their life to contribute?" Lila, social prescriber

This final section brings together outputs from all previous analyses to identify specific areas within the New Forest that may benefit from additional support for people experiencing food and/or fuel poverty, and more broadly, living costs. Proposed interventions are outlined based on the data collected in the project, and consideration given to appropriate activities for the areas and populations, possible sustainability and feasibility.

What emerged from the qualitative research, supported by the data collation from other sources, is that while some challenges are consistent across the forest (housing), other concerns are more place-specific, such as public transport. Solutions need to be discussed with the communities they will

impact to ensure the options offered are acceptable. One example is the proposed bus to affordable food stores in the Waterside villages. Further, many of the opportunities to reduce the negative impacts of (relatively) high living costs need to consider the feasibility of implementation, in terms of economic costs and time from those delivering support. As noted previously, some third sector/civil society organisations may lose funding or volunteer capacity; engagement with local government will improve the success rates and longevity of proposed actions. Suggestions for future monitoring, based on resources used and developed for this report, are provided.

Recommendations:

By collating information on objective measures including the everyday costs of living – food, housing, transport – and other necessities like school uniforms, we were able to assess where there were clear inequalities in cost, based on where a person lives. Combining these results with the responses to our new survey and interviews, we are well placed to suggest actions that can have a positive impact on households struggling to live without external (direct or indirect) financial aid. In some instances, these suggestions are more immediate interventions, while others focus ‘upstream’ to provide assistance that prevent further need for support like food banks.

The main recommendation from this report is a plan for further action, defined in collaboration with the communities and people who will benefit from changes. Further, there needs to be ongoing monitoring of the situation in the New Forest: unavoidable living costs, engagement with support services. The resources compiled for this report including the survey and interview guides, and process for data collation from partners, provides a starting point for follow-up research. All of these monitoring activities and co-developed activities or prioritisation can be formatted as a Poverty Action Plan. A working group can be established, with representation from the communities of focus, to drive the recommendations forward. Feasibility of proposed actions should be a primary consideration. Engagement with local government and third sector representatives will address this consideration. Examples of the activities that form the action plan, enacted by the working group are outlined below.

Mobile support & community hubs

- In more remote areas, consider mobile advice services similar to the popular food larders. Suggestions included 'form specialists' who'd help people complete paperwork, mobile CA help centres, community cafes and drop-in centres.
- Accessible/mobile debt advice services to support face to face support for clients
- Mental health was highlighted by nearly all interviewees who worked in service provision. Further support, peer support may be a response to this such as the Ashley Family Hub, Youth and Families Matter or the closed Sure Start centres. This is also critical for young people, as highlighted by all social prescribers.

‘There’s a centre down here that never gets used now...[if it opened] people could sit, have a cup of tea and talk to people. Because some people don’t like talking in public, they like to talk privately. If you think about it, you wouldn’t talk about your financial difficulties with a load of people around, you’d like to go somewhere private, wouldn’t you? If they got the centre open, you could go into a room and talk’ Mike, Calshot

‘The resources that are available, can they be advertised better?... Could there be a mobile CA bureau? Maybe there already is? That people could queue at and actually sit there and say ‘ok right, you can go into the system, you can get a ring back or an appointment or you need to go see the universal benefits or whatever’ Tracey, Ringwood

Transportation and living costs

- New Forest discount cards for residents with a focus on necessary amenities rather than attractions. These could support (corporate) social responsibility for local branches of national businesses. Similar activities have been observed during Covid-19 lockdowns where restaurants advertised free meals for children (for example Hoxton Bakehouse and Rivaaz in Lymington).
- Maintain mobile food larders
- Means-tested free parking clocks for eligible residents
- Local car share schemes where residents can hire cars for a day such as Zipcar
- Vouchers for fuel (petrol or diesel)
- Discounted car repairs for eligible residents (those receiving welfare benefits)
- Discounts on public transport for residents receiving welfare benefits

'Maybe have a different pass that you can apply for as a means-tested thing in the same way that people can apply for concessionary bus travel if they've got the highest level of disability you can apply for a concessionary bus travel pass. So that sort of pass that you could display in your car and not pay for parking and then it would be means-tested and then it would be targeted at people who are really struggling financially and then it would mean that they could access places that they can't currently'
Jo, Totton

Information dissemination

- A website to show what services and support are available, organised by themes of welfare, housing/homelessness, transportation, food and fuel support. Include a section on mental health support and for all topics include referral pathways if required. Monitor for necessary updates quarterly.
- Sharing low-cost meal ideas (see Lois' Cooking with the Basics)
- Supporting households in budgeting skills, where requested.
- Explaining technology and utility switching websites would be helpful. Informing and reminding about services available (some form of leaflet/website) that's updated with information that addresses client challenges would be helpful.
- Aid organisations come together to work collaboratively

'...threads are all there ready to sew together.' Alicia, service provider

'Over time, I think that the more that we start working with other people in partnership, the better our outcomes.' Christine, referring to social prescribers

Data collection

- Adapt client survey to collect household-level data on employment
- Repeat data collection at annual intervals for the survey as well as rental and transportation costs to monitor changes
- Monitor food parcel distributions and food larder attendance quarterly
- Update the food cost comparison list and repeat comparisons for a sample of the original list: chain shops that were least expensive at this time point, minimum of one per town.

Conclusion

There remains, ten years on, observed inequalities across the New Forest with regards to public transport, affordable housing and living costs. People we spoke with were consistent in their experiences and observations about the barriers to living comfortably on a low income in the New Forest and offered thoughtful, practical solutions to these challenges.

Overall, there is an appetite to investigate these issues and work together to find solutions to these challenges. A poverty plan, setting out actions and monitoring, will put in place a strategy that can be

implemented by a working group. The post-pandemic period is an optimal time to develop proactive activities to support more vulnerable populations and communities. With the combination of upcoming changes to policy – the loss of £20 per week Universal Credit uplift, end of furlough payments and removal of the price cap on energy – there has rarely been a more critical time to work collaboratively across public sector and civil society with a focus on improving the lives of all people living in the New Forest.

Case studies

Liam, 36, Lymington. Father of two living in a council maisonette. Full-time dad.

Challenges: The biggest cost is children and food, school uniform in particular. Income is hugely reduced since becoming a single dad, and he's had to provide for his two children. He runs out of money at the end of the month and has had difficulty adjusting to Universal Credit. Accessing cheap food is an issue. He doesn't drive so has to walk to find cheaper food options. This is difficult with two young children.

'My main issue is how expensive everything is just in general, I mean food is really, the thing that really annoys me about living in the New Forest is where I've got two kids, it's hard for me to take both of them and go all the way down into Lymington town to go get food from that Tesco because it's a lot cheaper'

'The main problem I usually have with my finance is Universal Credit, they change or screw up...it's just not handled very well from my experience'

Ideas for solutions: More information about what benefits he could get/services he could use – in the form of a website that is easy to navigate

Gabby, 33, lives in Blackfield with her partner and two children in a housing association house. Works part-time as a dinner lady.

Challenges: Neither Gabby nor her husband drive, and the cost of food is difficult for her family as there are not any affordable options nearby. Council tax is also very expensive for them. The FareShare mobile larder has been a big help for the family and they use it weekly. They get the warm home discount and her children receive free school meals.

'[I would like] having some help or even a little bit of help with like the main bills like the council tax, like especially obviously with my husband being a carer, I feel like by the time we've done everything, you've got really nothing left of it, so we've got to budget throughout that whole month'

'Lidl in Hythe is very cheap, I find going there shopping is very, very, a lot cheaper than coming to these little local shops...I think we need something more closer to Blackfield so that people like me that don't drive, its hard to get there... it would be nice to have something [like Lidl] even if it was at Holbury just up the road, it would be nice to have something that we could go and do shopping and not have to spend a fortune'

Ideas for solutions: Have somewhere nearby for coffee mornings, for parents to have a cheap cup of tea and make friends. Also have more equipment in the parks for children to have free options to play. Bring back the free bus to allow people who don't drive to get cheaper food, by providing transport to Tesco or Asda.

Sharon, 48 lives in Totton with her children, both on the Autism spectrum, in a housing association terrace. Works part time. Has lived in Totton her whole life.

Challenges: Finds internet very expensive (biggest cost), as well as electricity, water and mobile. Kids both have autism, she struggles to afford the right diet for them. Finds it hard to replace goods that her son breaks. Transportation: relies on public transport which she finds very expensive – doesn't drive – reliance on bus means that she cannot get some jobs which only offer flexible shifts e.g. care work.

'I'm trying to provide healthier stuff [food] and sometimes the amount what you spend on food seems to increase because of that sometimes. If you buy the things that are more healthier like the Quorn stuff and the milk that, you know if you've got children or young people on the spectrum its quite common for them to have intolerances, and if you have to buy the milk that's a special milk and special cheese, you see what I mean, it all gets quite expensive'

'I think now there's a lot of things that make it that people have to be dealt with on a more individual level rather than trying to sort of pigeon-hole people and not realising necessarily that they've got these different needs and there's real reasons for those needs'

Ideas for solutions: Explaining technology and utility switching websites would be helpful. Informing and reminding about services available (some form of leaflet/website) that's updated with information that addresses client challenges would be helpful.

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Appendix A: Client interview characteristics

| Pseudonym | Gender | Age | Location | Household size | Household Type | Employment |
|-----------|--------|-----|--------------|---|---------------------|---|
| Maria | F | 69 | Ashley | 3 (grandson and his partner) | Council | Retired |
| Debbie | F | 42 | Ashley | 8 (partner and 6 children) | Privately owned | Part-time |
| Gabby | F | 33 | Blackfield | 4 (partner and 2 children living at home) | Housing association | Part-time |
| Camilla | F | 55 | Brockenhurst | 3 (partner and youngest child) | Council | Part-time |
| Florence | F | 75 | Calmore | Lives alone | Private rented | Retired |
| Mike | M | 56 | Calshot | 4 (partner and 2 children living at home) | Social Housing | Disabled |
| Danielle | F | 42 | Hordle | 4 (partner and 2 children living at home) | Private rented | Full-time carer |
| Elodie | F | 31 | Hordle | 3 (partner and child) | Housing association | Part-time |
| Carly | F | 27 | Hythe | 3 (partner and 1 child living at home) | Council | Full-time carer |
| Liam | M | 36 | Lymington | 3 (1 year old and 8 year old) | Council | Full-time dad |
| Arthur | M | 59 | Pennington | 2 (partner) | Council | Full-time carer |
| Sophia | F | 49 | Pennington | 3 (partner and 1 child living at home) | Housing association | Part-time |
| Tracey | F | 47 | Ringwood | 2 (1 child living at home) | Social Housing | Currently sick but will get a job when better |
| Toby | M | 52 | Ringwood | Lives alone | Private rented | Full time |
| Allan | M | 53 | Ringwood | Lives alone | Privately Owned | Currently out of work due to COVID |
| Jane | F | 47 | Ringwood | 2 (partner and 1 child living at home) | Private rented | Self-employed part time |
| Ada | F | 80 | Sway | 2 (1 child living at home) | Social Housing | Retired |
| Sharon | F | 48 | Totton | 3 (2 children living at home) | Housing Association | Part-time |
| Jo | F | 56 | Totton | Lives alone | Council | Disabled |
| Bethany | F | 52 | Totton | 10 (partner, 6 children, 2 grandchildren) | Council | Full-time carer |

Appendix B: Shopping Basket Contents

| Item | Standardization |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Sausages | Chilled, pack of 8 |
| Mince | 15% fat, 500g |
| Bread | White, 800g |
| Cornflakes | 500g |
| Pasta | 500g |
| Tinned Tomatoes | 1 can |
| Baked Beans | 1 can |
| Tea | 80-piece box, breakfast tea |
| Biscuits | Custard Creams |
| Milk | 4 pints, semi-skimmed |
| Butter | 500g, dairy-based |
| Fish Fingers | 10 pack |
| Frozen Peas | 1kg |
| Potatoes | 2kg, all-purpose potatoes |
| Bananas | Pack of 5, or 500g |
| Carrots | 1kg, pre-packed |
| Apples | Per pack of 6, or 600g |
| Nappies | ~30 count, size 3/4 |
| Toothpaste | 100ml |
| Toilet Roll | 9 pack |

Appendix C: Transportation Costs

To Southampton

Connections to Southampton from Totton are well established with relatively frequent options via bus at as little as £2 return per day for the cheapest monthly bus or train ticket. Direct train routes to Southampton are available from New Milton, Sway Brockenhurst, Ashurst, taking under 30 minutes at around £4.50 per day using a monthly ticket, comparable to travel times by car. Travel times from Lymington are similar across public transport and car (around 40 minutes) but rely on transfers using train routes which add to costs (£6 per day for cheapest monthly) due to the inefficiency of the bus route (1hr 30 minutes).

Routes from other towns are more reliant on car services due to the comparable inefficiency of available bus services. A car trip from Hythe would take around half the time of the 40-minute bus route which costs £3.30 per day for the cheapest monthly ticket.

To Bournemouth

A direct train route from Brockenhurst is the fastest route into Bournemouth costing about £5.50 for a monthly ticket. However, both car and bus routes have not been well developed, with a car drive taking double the time of a train. A similar situation is available from Lymington where direct bus travel is poor, although train and car travel times are similar, but rely on a transfer at a minimum of £6.20 a day.

Routes from Totton to Bournemouth are slow, taking an hour by car. Whilst a route by train can take 50 minutes with a change at Brockenhurst, the minimum cost would be £7.50 per day for a monthly ticket. Similarly, travel from Hythe is an hour by car, but without direct access to the train station it takes substantially longer to transfer, with routes relying on the bus alone taking over 2 hours.

From Totton

Transport from Totton to Winchester by train is comparable to a car route at around 30 minutes with a direct route available at £5.40 a day for a monthly ticket. A bus-only route would take at least twice as long. Similarly, a drive from Totton to Lymington would take 30-40 minutes with a train route taking 50 minutes. A direct bus route is available but would take over an hour, although this is cheaper at £3.30 verses £5 minimum for the train per day.

From Ringwood

Public transport from Ringwood to the New Forest is generally poor with direct routes only available by bus to Bournemouth or Salisbury with no local train station. Whilst a driven commute to Bournemouth from Ringwood requires only 15-25 minutes, bus routes are less efficient, requiring 30-45 minutes at a minimum of £3.30 a day. Similarly, travel to Salisbury takes an hour by direct bus at a similar rate but only 40 minutes by car.

In comparison, whilst a car trip from Ringwood to Southampton takes 30-45 minutes, a public transport option is essentially unavailable, taking multiple changes and over 1hr30 minutes. A similar situation occurs for those travelling to Lymington where a car drive would take 30-40 minutes, but a bus route would take over two hours (Table 5).

Appendix D: Services in the New Forest

| Name | Area |
|---|----------------|
| Age Concern | Dibden Purlieu |
| Ashley Family Hub | Ashley |
| CAP Debt Help | Online/phone |
| Citizens Advice | Lymington |
| Citizens Advice | New Milton |
| Citizens Advice | Totton |
| Communities First | Ringwood |
| Community Fridge | Ringwood |
| Community Fridge | Fordingbridge |
| Dibden Allotments Fund | Dibden Purlieu |
| Every Mind Matters | Online/phone |
| Food Rescue Kitchen | Lymington |
| HomeStart | Totton |
| Hythe Job Centre | Hythe |
| It's Your Choice | Online/phone |
| Lymington Basics Bank | Lymington |
| Lymington Job Centre | Lymington |
| Lyndhurst Food Bank | Lyndhurst |
| Mobile Food Larder | Ashley |
| Mobile Food Larder | Blackfield |
| Mobile Food Larder | Bransgore |
| Mobile Food Larder | Calshot |
| Mobile Food Larder | Hythe |
| Mobile Food Larder | Marchwood |
| Mobile Food Larder | Pennington |
| Mobile Food Larder | Ringwood |
| Mobile Food Larder | Fordingbridge |
| Mobile Food Larder | Totton |
| New Forest Disability Information Service | New Milton |
| New Forest Mencap | New Milton |
| New Milton Carers' support group | New Milton |
| Outreach team | Marchwood |
| Ringwood Food Bank | Ringwood |
| Ringwood Job Centre | Ringwood |
| Shouts | Text service |
| Silver line | Online/phone |
| Solent Mind | Hythe |
| Solent Mind | New Milton |
| The Crossings | Blackfield |
| Time bank | Totton |
| Waterside Food Bank | Waterside |
| Young Minds | Online/phone |
| Youth and Families Matter | Totton |