

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 13th June 2017 Northumberland Park Supporters Group Deputation. Rev Paul Nicolson

The harmful impact of low incomes and debt on health is beyond doubt. Ground breaking reports after ground breaking reports over decades have produced the conclusive evidence. Professors Black 1980, Acheson 1999, Wanless 2002 and Marmot 2010 have all informed governments that low income impacts on health. The health of the poorest tenants in the Borough is an economic, legal and moral issue.

Dr Angel Donkin of the Institute of Health Equity on the 10th February this year opened a series of nine blogs on health equality on the Taxpayers Against Poverty website by stating "Income impacts on health directly; for instance insufficient money to heat your home or buy a healthy balanced diet. Cold homes increase rates of respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, excess winter deaths and mental illness. Inadequate diets increase the risk of malnutrition, obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Debt impacts on health indirectly through increased stress, depression and anxiety." The devil is in the detail.

Despite all that robust evidence £73.10 a week JSA the corner stone of the benefit system, on which all other unemployment benefits are built, has been allowed to lose value since 1979. It equals £317 a month under the Universal Credit (UC). It is paid to over 4 million people in the UK, and every benefit claimant in the borough. (ONS BEN01 Key out of work benefits).

Family and disability benefits are added to that bottom rung of the benefit system. It is so inadequate that parents need the children's benefits to survive and the disabled are forced into destitution when they fail the work capability assessment and their disability benefits are stopped.

£73.10 a week is incapable of providing a healthy diet and other necessities at any time in particular for a woman before and during the development of a child in her womb. Low birthweight is high in Northumberland Park.

Poor maternal nutrition and low birth weight have, since 1972, been called the strongest predictor of poor learning ability, school performance, behavioral disorders and crime by the Institute of Brain Chemistry and Human Nutrition.

Appendix 3

Sadly unaffordable rents needed for shelter compete with food, fuel and water for hopelessly inadequate unemployment incomes. The result is record increases in evictions, record admittance to hospital with malnutrition and unprecedented rises in mortality and infant deaths in 2015 at national level. I have asked the council to produce those figures for the borough and am shocked to discover they are not readily available to councillors or the public from the council

Northumberland Park is the most deprived ward in the Borough. You are required under the Health and Social Services Act 2012 to improve the health of local population. You are already making it worse by enforcing council tax against shredded benefits. In the HDV you will at best fail to carry out that duty by disrupting the tenants lives and their children's education.

You are destroying council housing for ever. Council Housing is the only housing whose affordability the council can control as landlords. You are abandoning your tenants to a housing market where rents are taking an ever increasing amount of the income needed for food fuel, clothes transport and other necessities. In fact to greater poverty and ill health.

I have raised this point about the link between low incomes and ill health with the council since 2012, in the magistrate's court, the high court, the supreme court and with the council's auditors. The Supreme Court noted that;

"Their income was already at a basic level and the effect of Haringey's proposed (council tax) scheme would be to reduce it even below that level and thus in all likelihood to cause real hardship, while sparing its more prosperous residents from making any contribution to the shortfall in government funding."

That is a rotten principle on which to base local government funding. The demolition of Northumberland Park will pile hardship on the existing hardship of the council's tenants, without the borough's more prosperous residents making any contribution to the shortfall in government funding.