



# TURNING THE TIDE

Social justice in five seaside towns

August 2013



THE CENTRE FOR  
SOCIAL  
JUSTICE

# Contents

About the Centre for Social Justice	2
Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	4
Case Study 1: Rhyl	7
Case Study 2: Margate	12
Case Study 3: Clacton-on-Sea	19
Case Study 4: Blackpool	24
Case Study 5: Great Yarmouth	29
Conclusion	33

# About the Centre for Social Justice

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) aims to put social justice at the heart of British politics.

Our policy development is rooted in the wisdom of those working to tackle Britain's deepest social problems and the experience of those whose lives have been affected by poverty. Our Working Groups are non-partisan, comprising prominent academics, practitioners and policy makers who have expertise in the relevant fields. We consult nationally and internationally, especially with charities and social enterprises, who are the champions of the welfare society.

In addition to policy development, the CSJ has built an alliance of poverty fighting organisations that reverse social breakdown and transform communities.

We believe that the surest way the Government can reverse social breakdown and poverty is to enable such individuals, communities and voluntary groups to help themselves.

The CSJ was founded by Iain Duncan Smith in 2004, as the fulfilment of a promise made to Janice Dobbie, whose son had recently died from a drug overdose just after he was released from prison.

Director: Christian Guy

Turning the Tide: Social justice in five seaside towns

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Published by the Centre for Social Justice,

4th Floor, Victoria Charity Centre, 11 Belgrave Road, SW1V 1RB

[www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk](http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk)

[@CSJThinktank](https://twitter.com/CSJThinktank)

ISBN: 978 0 9573587 5 1

Designed by Soapbox, [www.soapbox.co.uk](http://www.soapbox.co.uk)

# Acknowledgements

The CSJ would like to thank everyone who kindly gave their time to help us with our research. In particular we are grateful to: Claire Armitstead and Rhyl High School; Andrew Forrest and the Great Yarmouth Community Trust; Roger Gale MP; Councillor Clive Hart; Roma Hooper and Action for Children; Councillor Iris Johnston; Nicole McCartney and the Ormiston Venture Academy; Liz Meek; Mohammed Mehmet; Mark Pearson and the Margate Task Force; the Salvation Army; Councillor William Scobie; Councillor Jim Shrimplin; Dan Smith, Community Alcohol Partnership; Barry Speake; Ali Thomas; Paul Woodford, Turning Point; as well as the many who have asked to remain anonymous.

The report was produced by Alex Burghart, Harriet Crawford, Joseph Henson, Paul Langlois, Annette Pereira, Ross Reid, Ben Walker and Tom Wardle, with assistance from Toby Ovenden and Gabriel May.

# Introduction

Cities have come to embody how we view modern deprivation and poverty. Yet some of the most pronounced disadvantage in our country exists away from the big cities. This short study of five seaside towns – Rhyl, Margate, Clacton-on-Sea, Blackpool, Great Yarmouth – offers a glimpse of how social breakdown has affected some smaller communities, asks what factors continue to hold them back, and considers what more can be done to help them move on.

Many seaside towns are still flourishing. Bournemouth and Brighton in particular have successfully retained significant tourist industries whilst establishing robust business communities, in the case of Brighton its 'Silicon Beach' and of Bournemouth its financial sector. But many others, smaller and less well connected, are struggling and have been struggling for some time.

Although each town has its own particular issues, some common themes emerge. Most obviously, many seaside towns' economies were badly affected by the advent of cheaper foreign travel in the 1970s that decreased demand for traditional 'bucket and spade' holidays. Towns that had grown since the late nineteenth century found themselves losing their economic purpose.<sup>1</sup>

Economies that already had the disadvantage of being highly seasonal were hit by a permanent loss of business and jobs that deprived local people, particularly young local people, of entry-level employment.<sup>2</sup> These disadvantages have persisted. Benchmarking studies from 2008 and 2010 showed that both larger and smaller seaside towns are, on average, more disadvantaged than England as a whole when judged against a range of criteria.<sup>3</sup>

Today the proportion of working-age people on out-of-work benefits in the five towns considered here ranges from 19 to 25 per cent (against a national figure of 11.5 per cent for England, Scotland and Wales).<sup>4</sup> These figures obscure areas with intense problems. In one part

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1 Rickey, B, 'Solving the riddle of the sands: regenerating England's seaside towns', *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal*, 3, 2009

2 A number of detailed studies of these problems have been published in recent years, notably: Shaw, G, & Williams, A, *The Rise and Fall of British Coastal Resorts: cultural and economic perspectives: 1997*; House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, *Coastal Towns*, House of Commons: 2007; Fothergill, S, *England's Coastal Towns: a short review of the issues, evidence base and research needs: 2008*; Rickey, 'Solving the riddle of the sands'; Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), *England's Seaside Towns: a 'benchmarking' study*, London: DCLG, 2008; DCLG, *England's Smaller Seaside Towns: a benchmarking study*, London: DCLG, 2010

3 DCLG, *England's Seaside Towns: a 'benchmarking' study*, 2008; DCLG, *England's Smaller Seaside Towns: a benchmarking study*, London: DCLG, 2010

4 Office for National Statistics, *DWP Benefits: benefit claimants – working-age clients for small areas*, Nomis: November 2012 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29.07.13)]

of Rhyl, the figure is as high as 67 per cent.<sup>5</sup> Of the 20 such neighbourhoods with the highest rates of working-age people on out-of-work benefits, seven are in seaside towns.<sup>6</sup>

The financial cost of this unemployment is considerable. In the five towns we look at, the total working-age benefits bill is approximately £145 million a year.<sup>7</sup> This is by no means the full cost; housing benefit for people who are out of work – which is harder to calculate for these small areas – is likely to be over £220 million a year, making the total bill in excess of £365 million.<sup>8</sup> The out-of-work benefits bill for all principal seaside towns is about £750 million a year, and the housing benefit bill is likely to be in the region of £1.18 billion – a total of £1.93 billion.<sup>9</sup>

The human cost is more considerable still. In every town we visited, local people attested to families experiencing two, three or even four generations of worklessness. This entrenched unemployment has drained aspiration. Local employers have told us of the trouble they have finding local people with the skills or will to take up jobs, jobs that are then often filled by economic migrants.

This loss of aspiration is vividly reflected in high levels of educational failure. As Ofsted recently reported, coastal towns are now amongst the most educationally deprived parts of the country.<sup>10</sup> In Tendring District, only 13 per cent of young people go to university compared to 49 per cent nationally.<sup>11</sup> In Great Yarmouth, 33 per cent of people have no qualifications. In some parts of the town fewer than 30 per cent of pupils achieved five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics in 2009 compared to 54.8 per cent nationally.<sup>12</sup>

Nelson ward in the same town has the highest rate of 15-17-year-old pregnancy in the country.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, of the ten wards in England and Wales with the highest rates of 15-17-year-

5 Centre for Social Justice, *Signed On, Written Off*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013

6 Ibid, based on Lower Layer Super Output Area data, covering areas in: Rhyl, Clacton-on-Sea, Blackpool, Margate, Lowestoft

7 Figures are approximate and conservative. Calculations are based on lowest weekly payment rates for each of the following out-of-work benefits: (JSA; ESA; Carer's Allowance; and Income Support). We have then taken the number of people claiming each of these out-of-work benefits from Nomis/LSOA data for each of the principal seaside towns and multiplied it by the relevant payment rate and then by 52 to give an annual estimate, Office for National Statistics, *DWP Benefits: benefit claimants – working-age clients for small areas*, Nomis: November 2012 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]

8 Housing benefit figures are approximate. Calculations are based on out-of-work benefit claimant data from Nomis and average Housing Benefit award data for different claimant groups from DWP *Single Housing Benefit Extract* (SHBE) Table 7. We have then taken the number of people claiming out-of-work benefits from Nomis/LSOA data, multiplied the number of claimants for each group by the average award for each group and multiplied by 52 to give an annual figure. Please note, our estimates of Housing Benefit payments are based on claimant data which captures other local authorities paying for accommodation in seaside towns. This means that while the total cost of paying Housing Benefit in these towns is accurate, it does not reflect the Housing Benefit costs for each of the principal local authorities in which our case studies are located. Office for National Statistics, *DWP Benefits: benefit claimants – working-age clients for small areas*, Nomis: November 2012 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]

9 Principal seaside towns based on Beatty et al, *The Seaside Tourist Industry in England and Wales*, Sheffield Hallam University: 2010: Bournemouth, Barry, Bexhill, Blackpool, Bognor Regis, Bridlington, Brighton & Hove, Broadstairs, Burnham, Clacton, Colwyn Bay, Conwy, Dawlish, Deal, Eastbourne, Exmouth, Falmouth, Folkestone, Great Yarmouth, Hastings, Herne Bay, Heysham, Hythe, Ilfracombe, Llandudno, Lowestoft, Margate, Minehead, Morecambe, Newquay, Penzance, Porthcawl, Prestatyn, Ramsgate, Rhyl, Scarborough, Sidmouth, Skegness, Southend-on-sea, Southport, St Ives, Swanage, Teignmouth, Torbay, Weston-super-Mare, Weymouth, Whitby, Whitley Bay, Whitstable, Worthing; for working-age benefit calculations see n. 7, for housing benefit calculations, n. 8

10 Ofsted, *Unseen Children: access and achievement 20 years on*, Manchester: Ofsted, 2013

11 Councillor Peter Halliday in evidence to the CSJ; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), *Participation rates in higher education: academic years 2006-2007 to 2011-2012* (provisional), BIS: London, 2013 [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/192188/13-p140-HEIPR\\_PUBLICATION\\_2011-12.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192188/13-p140-HEIPR_PUBLICATION_2011-12.pdf) (31/07/13)]

12 Smithurst S, McKibben J & Reading C, *Weathering the Storm?, Great Yarmouth: Priory Research Services*, 2011, p57 [accessed via: [http://www.priorycentre.co.uk/assets/research/weathering\\_final%20report.pdf](http://www.priorycentre.co.uk/assets/research/weathering_final%20report.pdf) (12/07/13)]; Department for Education, *GCSE and Equivalent Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England, 2009/10*, London: Department for Education, 2010 [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/218842/sfr37-2010.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/218842/sfr37-2010.pdf) (31/07/13)]

13 Hansard, *Written Answers to Questions*, 7 January 2013 [accessed via <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130107/text/130107w0001.htm#13010716003417> (29/07/13)]; *ibid*, 25 April 2013 [accessed via [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130425/text/130425w0003.htm#130425w0003.htm\\_wqn29](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130425/text/130425w0003.htm#130425w0003.htm_wqn29) (29/07/13)]

old pregnancy, four are in seaside towns.<sup>14</sup> Dangerously high levels of family breakdown are a feature of many such areas. In many neighbourhoods in these towns, more than 40 per cent of families with dependent children are fatherless – greatly increasing the likelihood that those children will perform less well at school, become unemployed and face their own family instability.<sup>15</sup> In Blackpool about one in every 66 children is in care (compared nationally to about one in every 170).<sup>16</sup>

The stagnation that a depleted economy and a low-skills base has meant that the price of property has plummeted as demand has fallen. Buildings formerly used as tourist accommodation and small businesses, such as bed and breakfasts, have been turned into extremely cheap housing. This has served to turn some seaside towns into veritable dumping grounds for groups such as care leavers, people with substance abuse problems, those with mental health issues and ex-offenders, for whom placing authorities can easily find low-cost accommodation.<sup>17</sup> As this happens, towns develop a high density of need that places greater and greater strain on public services and risks increasing the vulnerability of these already vulnerable groups.

These negative spirals, whereby disadvantage attracts and perpetuates further disadvantage, are the forces currently undermining many seaside towns.

For all these challenges, we have also found local people, services, schools, councillors and charities working hard to turn things around. Their inspiring commitment to change offers some powerful examples of the concerted effort needed to help give these towns fresh life. In the conclusion we discuss some of the lessons that emerge from their work.

The problems of seaside towns have not been ignored – studies done over the past decade have laid bare some of the problems they face – but nor have they been solved. This is part of a wider question with which the CSJ is engaged; that of how prosperity can be built throughout the country by means other than welfare payments, subsidies and grants. During the last, unprecedented boom, this conspicuously failed to happen. Between 1999 and 2006, the proportion of people on out-of-work benefits rose in a quarter of all local authorities.<sup>18</sup>

As the following examples show, there is a clear case for additional transport infrastructure, increased localism and renewed investment in struggling seaside towns. But prosperity will not spread unless people are given the aspiration, education and skills that they and the economy need, as well as a welfare system that supports more people back into work. Moreover, public policy must do what it can to nurture the strong families which, more than anything, are the basis of lifelong stability and opportunity.

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14 Ibid: Nelson, Great Yarmouth; Cliftonville West, Margate; Rhyl West, Rhyl; Folkestone Harvey Central; Folkestone

15 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS107EW, KS105EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]

16 Department for Education, *Children looked after by local authorities in England, including adoption*, Table LAA1: Children looked after at 31 March, by Local Authority, 25 September 2012 [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/167453/sfr20-2012lav2.xls.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/167453/sfr20-2012lav2.xls.xls) (29/04/13)]

17 BURA, 'The social challenges of the seaside,' London: BURA, 2007, in Rickey B and Houghton J, 'Solving the riddle of the sands: Regenerating England's seaside towns', *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal*, 3, 1, 31 March 2009, pp46–55

18 Centre for Social Justice, *Signed On, Written Off*, London: Centre for Social Justice 2013

# Case Study I: Rhyl



'The town centre is dead. It's lost its impetus'

Local market trader, Rhyl

## 1848

Rhyl railway station opens bringing visitors to the town.

## 1890s

Marine Lake Fairground sees thousands of visitors come to Rhyl.

## 1954

Ocean Beach amusement park opens.

## 1974

Rhyl pier is demolished.

## 2007

Ocean Beach amusement park closes.

## 2009

Plans to build a retail and leisure complex on the site of Ocean beach, called Ocean Plaza, are postponed.

Rhyl is a coastal resort in North Wales of about 25,000 people, situated just east of where the River Clwyd meets the Irish Sea.<sup>19</sup> The latest figures reveal that one neighbourhood in

<sup>19</sup> Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS102EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (31/07/13)]



Rhyl is the most deprived in the whole of Wales. Two other areas in the town are amongst Wales' 15 most deprived areas.<sup>20</sup>

Yet the situation in Rhyl has not always been so bleak – it was once one of the foremost tourist destinations in Wales, having derived its prosperity from the development of the national railway network in the 19th Century which made it accessible to the North Midlands and North West of England.

By the 1960s, Rhyl had reached its peak as a vibrant seaside resort for thousands of families each year. This was the core of the town's economy with a significant number of residents working in the local hotels, on attractions along the promenade and in nearby leisure facilities.

However, over time Rhyl's fortunes faded and the image of the area as a lively holiday destination is now little more than a distant memory. Along a quarter-mile stretch of the promenade, between Geronimo's Fun Palace and a blue bridge linking Rhyl to Towyn, most of the amusement arcades and the funfairs that defined the town have gone.<sup>21</sup> Many of the hotels and other tourist attractions have either been demolished or have deteriorated. Of the 18 properties across Rhyl's West Parade that functioned as tourist accommodation in the late 1970s, only four remained open for this purpose by 2000.<sup>22</sup>

Much of this decline can be traced to the rise of cheap air travel since the late 1970s, which resulted in many Britons choosing to spend their summers abroad. This has been nothing short of disastrous for Rhyl.

With less demand for hotels and guesthouses, a large share of this accommodation has been bought up by private landlords and converted into houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). This is typically cheap and of very poor quality, so has attracted those who are living on very low incomes and reliant on welfare. Many of these bedsits were advertised in prisons across the UK in the 1980s and 1990s, contributing to a disproportionately high number of ex-offenders in the town. This flow of people moving into Rhyl has intensified the town's problems.

One local leader told us:

*'The abundance of cheap accommodation has attracted young people with no skills or aspirations. Many are local to Rhyl but others come from Manchester and Liverpool. This has been a massive burden on the local authority.'*

Roma Hooper, Service Manager of Action for Children in Rhyl explained that the cheap housing has also attracted a large number of young single mothers to the town without any support networks.

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20 StatsWales, *Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2011* [accessed via: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation/WIMD-2011/WIMD2011> (29/07/13)]; the wards of Rhyl are: Rhyl East, Rhyl South, Rhyl South East, Rhyl South West, Rhyl West

21 Wales Online, *Rhyl West – the area of Wales most dependent on support from Westminster*, 20 October 2010

22 Gale T, 'Modernism, post-modernism and the decline of British seaside resorts as long holiday destinations: A case study of Rhyl, North Wales', *Tourism Geographies*, 7(1), 2005, pp86-112

*'We have lost the extended family scenario. Young single mothers arrive in Rhyl from other areas with no support. So that's where we come in.'*

The declining demand for Rhyl as a seaside resort means that job opportunities are now few and far between. As a result the town has an alarmingly high level of worklessness. More than a quarter of Rhyl's working-age population claims out-of-work benefits.<sup>23</sup> In one neighbourhood in Rhyl West it is as high as 67 per cent.<sup>24</sup>

Barry Speake, a welfare rights officer at the independent Benefit Advice Shop in Rhyl highlighted that:

*'Rhyl has suffered from a lack of investment since the 1980s when the pits, steel works and other large employers were closed down with nothing put in to replace them. There are people who have been out of work for many years who require positive and intensive support to find work, especially in this difficult economic climate.'*

This problem has escalated following the closure of a number of major retailers such as Marks and Spencer and Next in Rhyl, who have recently pulled out of the town and re-located in a new retail park in neighbouring Prestatyn. A new 'pound shop' has opened in their place. One local charity told us that:

*'This perpetuates the image of Rhyl as Prestatyn's poor cousin.'*

Where employment opportunities in Rhyl do exist, they are frequently of a low quality. Janet from Rhyl's Citizens Advice Bureau told the CSJ:

*'Zero-hours contracts are becoming a real problem here. A lot of places are doing them and people can't budget for that if they think they're getting 20 hours next week and it ends up being 10 or even none.'*

However worklessness is not a new issue in Rhyl. It has plagued the area for many years, as Rhyl High School headteacher Claire Armitstead told us:

*'Worklessness is a problem for a significant proportion of the population and has been for a number of generations. The issues and struggles Rhyl faces are not new; sometimes two or even three generations have faced the same challenges and this has a significant impact on family life. Limited opportunities exist for local access to high-skilled and higher work, meaning a number of families are just beyond the Free School Meals threshold and this creates further challenges as access to benefits are limited.'*

Similarly, Roma Hooper of Action for Children said:

<sup>23</sup> Office for National Statistics, *DWP Benefits: benefit claimants – working-age clients for small areas*, Nomis: November 2012 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

*'We work with families that are the second or third generation of benefit claimants. They often have no aspirations for themselves and ask 'what is there here for me?' We are trying to break that cycle and end the culture of dependency in Rhyl.'*

Over time, this long-term worklessness has depleted the local skills base. Around a third of people in Rhyl have no qualifications and consequently face a major barrier to employment.<sup>25</sup> Janet from Rhyl's Citizens Advice Bureau told us:

*'As an area of high unemployment many people have not been able to become skilled and therefore many unskilled people are competing for too few jobs. However many voluntary and statutory agencies in Rhyl are working in partnership to increase the skills of our unemployed population.'*

Others highlight a culture of dependency which is holding Rhyl back. A local leader told us that:

*'There is a 'welfare mentality' which has built up over the years – people who are not working often had no parent who worked. Such individuals tend to get ghettoised in places like Rhyl.'*

This lack of aspiration has led to poor educational attainment. In Wales, 51.1 per cent of pupils achieve the expected level at GCSE,<sup>26</sup> but educational attainment at Rhyl secondary schools is significantly below this.<sup>27</sup> However, local schools face significant challenges, as Rhyl High School headteacher Claire Armitstead told us:

*'While many of the children on Free School Meals don't reach the average attainment level for Wales, most do reach or exceed their individual targets, which are based on their attainment at primary school and this can't be understated. These children achieve an additional value in their education and exceed it and this deserves congratulations. We do see students joining us with a literacy profile that challenges how well they can access the curriculum at secondary school. Last year 70 per cent of our pupils arrived in year seven with a reading age below their actual age, and many have a reading age below functional literacy (9.6).'*

Despite these problems, there are some encouraging signs. Under Claire Armitstead, Rhyl High School has dramatically improved its results and come out of special measures. The local authority too is playing an important role in the regeneration of the town. This is long overdue. The Chief Executive of Denbighshire County Council, Mohammed Mehmet said:

*'Up until now the strategy has been about 'managing deprivation' and just supporting poverty. There is now a recognition that the town needs major structural changes and a different social mix to transform it.'*

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25 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS501EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]

26 My local school [accessed via: <http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/school.htm?estab=6634601&lang=eng> (29/07/13)] (five GCSEs (or equivalent) at Grade A\*-C including one in English or Welsh first language and one in Maths)

27 Ibid

At the heart of this has been the Rhyl City Strategy (RCS), established in 2007 to develop and deliver locally tailored solutions to unemployment and economic inactivity in Rhyl and the surrounding area. It brings together representatives from the County Council, Jobcentre Plus, Clwyd Coast Credit Union, local colleges and others. Ali Thomas, Programme Manager of the RCS said:

*'RCS has provided a catalyst for partners to unite their efforts behind a shared vision for tackling worklessness in Rhyl and the surrounding area. Through the combined efforts of a strong and committed local partnership, RCS has levered over £7 million funding into the area since 2007, and has been successful in supporting over 750 people into sustained employment, over 2,000 people to gain work-based skills and qualifications, and over 900 people to return to work following a period of sickness absence.'*

Over the last few years the West Rhyl Regeneration Area has focussed its activity on significantly reducing the number of HMOs and generally improving the quality of housing and the surrounding environment. The aim is to work with private sector developers to build new homes that will attract and retain economically active people. Part of this involves the acquisition and demolition of existing obsolete housing (particularly HMOs) and other 'worn-out' buildings.<sup>28</sup>

Strategies such as these directed at the specific problems faced by Rhyl are its best chance for regeneration. The challenge will be in building a new economy which is not entirely dependent upon tourism and finding people with the right skills to power it.

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28 Denbighshire County Council, *Rhyl Going Forward: Neighbourhoods & Places Delivery Plan 2011/12* [accessed via: [http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/www/cms/live/content.nsf/lookupattachments/English~DNAP-8SSDHD/\\$File/Rhyl%20Going%20Forward%20Delivery%20Plan.pdf](http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/www/cms/live/content.nsf/lookupattachments/English~DNAP-8SSDHD/$File/Rhyl%20Going%20Forward%20Delivery%20Plan.pdf) (29/07/13)]

# Case Study 2: Margate

On Margate sands  
I can connect  
Nothing with nothing

T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land Part III - The Fire Sermon* (1921), written in Cliftonville, Margate

## 1820

The introduction of steamships brings countless day travellers to the Kent coast. Six separate steam ship companies operate out of Margate alone. The Penny Post writes that 'the inhabitants of Margate ought to eulogise the name of Watt, as the founder of their good fortune; and steam vessels as the harbingers of their prosperity'.<sup>a</sup>

## 1846

The railway comes to Margate, bringing additional visitors to the town.

## 1890

30 pleasure boats operate from Margate.

## 1900s

Four collieries open at Betteshanger, Chislet, Snowdown and Tilmanstone, marking the development of the East Kent coal fields.

## 1930s

The development of attractions such as Dreamland and the Winter Gardens draws crowds.

## 1980s

Number of UK residents holidaying abroad increases from 12 million to 20 million.<sup>b</sup>

The closure of the Kent coalfields and changes in agricultural, fishing and shipping industries accelerate the region's decline.

## 2000s

An in-migration of vulnerable people occurs as several London boroughs relocate their housing and care lists to Margate due to the low cost of accommodation. This leads to the establishment of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), a high density of looked-after children, ex-prisoners and people with mental health issues.

**2008**

The grade II listed 'Scenic Railway' in Dreamland burns down.

**2011**

37.4% of the shops in Margate town centre are boarded up.<sup>c</sup>

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- a Oulton, W C, *The Traveller's Guide; or, English Itinerary, vol. II*: James Cundee, 1805
- b Seaside History, *Holidays – the hard facts* [accessed via: [http://www.seasidehistory.co.uk/seaside\\_statistics.html](http://www.seasidehistory.co.uk/seaside_statistics.html) (29/07/13)]
- c The Guardian, Margate's miserable claim to fame, 18 February 2011 [accessed via: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/feb/18/margate-miserable-claim-to-fame> (29/07/13)]; the wards of Margate are: Cliftonville East, Cliftonville West, Dane Valley, Garlinge, Margate Central, Salmestone, Westbrook

Renowned in the early 19th century as the 'most fashionable and frequented watering place in the kingdom', the Kentish coastal town of Margate is today in an advanced state of decline.<sup>29</sup> Now more commonly known for high levels of deprivation, child poverty, drug addiction and educational failure, Margate has been struggling to stay above water since the 1960s, when its traditional tourist base dried up.

Today Margate is a town of over 43,000 people.<sup>30</sup> In terms of overall deprivation, approximately 30 per cent of neighbourhoods in Margate are in the poorest 10 per cent of the country.<sup>31</sup> A third of children live below the financial poverty line, more than a third of pupils at Margate schools are eligible for Free School Meals, and 70 per cent of households are recorded as being deprived according to at least one measure.<sup>32</sup>

The disappearance of tourism has had a wide impact. The city is now littered with old hotels, guesthouses and holiday flats that are unsuitable for families and declining in value. During the last housing survey Margate's two most deprived wards, where the majority of this housing is located, had vacancy rates of between 16-20 per cent, half of which were long-term.<sup>33</sup> Of those that are occupied, nearly half are only suitable for single-person occupancy.<sup>34</sup> The local sense of community is heavily disrupted by an annual turnover of more than 30 per cent of residents.<sup>35</sup>

Councillor Clive Hart told the CSJ that in his Cliftonville ward 'there isn't a day that goes by where you don't see a family pushing their possessions around in a shopping trolley, moving to their new home.' With every move people dump unwanted property, especially bulky items

29 Denne S, Shrubsole W, *The history and antiquities of Rochester and its environs: To which is added, a description of the towns, villages, gentleman's seats and ancient buildings, situate on, or near the road from London to Margate, Deal and Dover – second edition*, Wildash W, Rochester: 1817

30 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS102EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (31/07/13)]

31 Department for Communities and Local Government, *The English Indices of Deprivation 2010*, [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6872/1871524.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6872/1871524.xls) (29/07/13)]

32 End Child Poverty, *Poverty in your area*, End Child Poverty: February 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/poverty-in-your-area> (29/07/13)]; Office for National Statistics, *Census: QS119EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]; Department for Education, *Performance tables 2012*, Department for Education: 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/> (29/07/13)]

33 Thanet District Council, *Selective Licensing Designation: The profile*, 2011 [accessed via: [http://www.thanet.gov.uk/housing/selective\\_licensing\\_scheme/the\\_profile.aspx](http://www.thanet.gov.uk/housing/selective_licensing_scheme/the_profile.aspx) (29/07/13)]

34 Ibid

35 Thanet District Council, *Selective Licensing Designation: Introduction*, 2011 [accessed via: [http://www.thanet.gov.uk/housing/selective\\_licensing\\_scheme/introduction.aspx](http://www.thanet.gov.uk/housing/selective_licensing_scheme/introduction.aspx) (29/07/13)]

such as mattresses and furniture, placing a further burden on already strained council services and blighting the community.

A representative from Margate's Housing Regeneration Team told the CSJ how as property prices decreased investors bought up old properties to turn them into houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). However, these properties were often treated poorly by tenants and absentee landlords, leading to a further decline in both property values and the character of the community.

In Cliftonville West, as much as 85 per cent of the housing stock was found to be hazardous in at least one category during a recent housing survey.<sup>36</sup> In Margate Central ward one in 20 houses lacks central heating and almost one in five homes are overcrowded.<sup>37</sup>

Councillor Hart explained that 'most of Margate's problems can be traced back to housing.' Plunging rents have attracted new types of renters, many dependent on benefits: unemployed, long-term disabled, ex-offenders, children in care and migrants from outside of the UK.

Almost one in four working-age residents are in receipt of out-of-work benefits, with the numbers soaring to around 40 per cent in the most deprived wards.<sup>38</sup> More than one in ten working-age people claim some form of illness- or sickness-related benefit, which includes those claiming as a result of drug and alcohol dependency.<sup>39</sup> Nearly a quarter of the population is limited to some degree in their day-to-day activities because of a disability, half of which are working age, and eight percent claim Disability Living Allowance.<sup>40</sup>

Whilst the decline of tourism to Margate and other seaside towns has contributed to large increases in unemployment, yet on its own that analysis is too simplistic. As Councillor Iris Johnston puts it: 'it was crazy to have an entire economy based on tourism because it is seasonal.'

While this was true perhaps 20 years ago, the extent of Margate's decline means that since 2000 the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance has on average only decreased by five per cent during the summer months.<sup>41</sup> This is in sharp contrast to the overall trend which has seen a 76 per cent increase in the total number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance over that same period.<sup>42</sup>

Councillor Johnston argues that it is vital to 'bring in new all-year-round jobs' such as were previously available at Pfizer, a pharmaceutical company that employed 2,400 people, before its closure in 2011.<sup>43</sup> Such jobs are necessary to ensure there is continued investment in the local economy and to help establish long-term settlement in the area.

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36 Thanet District Council, *Selective Licensing Designation: The profile*, 2011 [accessed via: [http://www.thanet.gov.uk/housing/selective\\_licensing\\_scheme/the\\_profile.aspx](http://www.thanet.gov.uk/housing/selective_licensing_scheme/the_profile.aspx) (29/07/13)]

37 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS408EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]

38 Office for National Statistics, *DWP Benefits: benefit claimants – working age clients for small areas*, Nomis: November 2012 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]

39 Ibid

40 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS301EW*, Nomis: 2011; Office for National Statistics, *DWP Benefits: benefit claimants – disability living allowance for small areas*, Nomis: November 2012 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]

41 Office for National Statistics, *DWP Benefits: benefit claimants – working age clients for small areas*, Nomis: February 2000 – November 2012 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)], taking account of changes between February and August in each year

42 Ibid

43 BBC News, *Pfizer to close UK research site*, 1 February 2011 [accessed via: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12335801> (29/07/13)]

Steps have been taken to bring investment to Margate, but there appears to be a divide about how best to bring long-term sustainable change. Councillor Johnston believes that 'one example is the Turner Contemporary Gallery, opened in 2011, which is great for showcasing local talent and increasing year round sustainable tourism.'

While it is true that the gallery has undoubtedly been successful, with 850,000 visitors in the first two years, and could be complemented by plans to regenerate Dreamland, a historic amusement park which closed in 2005, some in Margate seem disillusioned by the idea that restoring Margate as a tourist attraction will halt its decline.<sup>44</sup>

Paul Woodford, the manager at Turning Point Margate – a local addiction support service – told the CSJ that 'bringing back Dreamland would be great, but it seems like it has been promised for a long time and never materialises.' Similarly, Councillor William Scobie noted that while the Turner Gallery was 'nice', such reforms were merely 'the facade of regeneration that went only as far as you could see from Turner and that didn't make a big difference for people living a block away, who still couldn't find work'. What he said was needed was more outside investment in projects like the London Array, an offshore wind farm opened in 2012, rather than tourist attractions.

The CSJ was also told by Councillor Scobie that for all intents and purposes 'investment stopped at Canterbury,' leaving Margate behind. He said a major concern was the large number of young people with skills who wanted to find work, but couldn't as there simply were no jobs. They added that one positive was the High Speed 1 train line that had made it possible to commute to London, reducing journey times to 90 minutes. Further improvements in transportation would help keep people in Margate, as they would be able to find well paying skilled jobs further afield, yet also benefit from housing prices that are a fraction of those in the capital.

An unskilled and demotivated workforce can contribute to a lack of investment and new employment opportunities. Almost one third of residents in Margate over 16 have no qualifications at all.<sup>45</sup> This educational failure begins early, as the number of primary school leavers meeting the expected standard is 14 percentage points lower than the national average.<sup>46</sup> At the local secondary school only 46 per cent of students achieve five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent (including English and mathematics) compared to 59 per cent nationally.<sup>47</sup>

A headteacher in Margate told the CSJ that the biggest problem they saw was children starting school behind in basic literacy, meaning teachers were always playing catch-up. Furthermore, an estimated 10-20 per cent of their students had almost no support at home, putting them at a severe disadvantage, and the school's Family Liaison officer often worked with parents who could not read or write themselves.

44 Turner Contemporary, Press release, *It's our 2nd birthday on Tuesday 16 April*, 12 April 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.turnercontemporary.org/news/it-s-our-2nd-birthday-on-tuesday-16-april> (29/07/13)]

45 Office for National Statistics, *Census: QS502EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]

46 Department for Education, *Performance tables 2012*, Department for Education: 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/> (29/07/13)]

47 Ibid



Family breakdown also inhibits children's learning and development. One in four adults not living in a couple are either divorced or separated and more than a third of families with dependent children are headed by a lone parent.<sup>48</sup> The CSJ was told by the headteacher that pupils were living in homes where no one had worked for two generations, and where there was a complete lack of aspiration making it harder for dedicated teachers to reach pupils.

Clearly the problem is more deep rooted than just a lack of jobs and skills. Councillor Johnston told the CSJ that the 'biggest thing is changing people's aspirations' and that 'people need to know they deserve better. This will hopefully go a long way to reversing a situation that has led to families who for three or four generations have never had a job.'

Drug and alcohol abuse is an immediate consequence of a lack of aspiration within a community. Paul Woodford, the manager at Turning Point Margate, told us that 'drugs are a concern in Margate.' This was echoed by Councillor Iris Johnston who is 'concerned by the drug dealing taking place in public and in broad daylight'.

For all the problems there is hope. The award-winning work of the Margate Task Force (MTF), which is specifically tasked with fighting poverty in Margate, has helped to ensure public services work together, respond to the community's needs and deliver better, more cost efficient services. Specifically the task force operates a joint office with representatives from 14 agencies including the police, social services, the housing regeneration team and Jobcentre Plus.

Mark Pearson, Deputy Lead Officer on the MTF, gave several examples of problems the MTF is confronted with and which he believes can only be tackled through such an integrated approach.

As other people have told the CSJ, children in care and other vulnerable people are being relocated to Margate due to overstrained services in other areas, and low rents. Mark Pearson noted that services relocate vulnerable children to Margate because 'they have the perception that it is by the sea, so it must be safe.'

However, too often adequate risk assessments from 'out of Kent' agencies are not conducted, and outside agencies do not communicate with local service providers, meaning that vulnerable children are often placed in areas with ex-offenders, high numbers of people with mental health issues, or near other vulnerable children who have had previous criminal involvement.

In one extreme example a small street in Cliftonville was home to mental health facilities, children's homes, independent fostering placements, a facility for young people classed as NEET and also a house suspected of being involved in prostitution and drugs. The integrated approach of the MTF has allowed similar situations to be successfully addressed and avoided.

The number of ex-offenders in Cliftonville is of specific concern, as it is an area with high numbers of looked-after children, high levels of crime, much of which is drugs related, and is

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48 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS104EW, KS105EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]

an area where London gangs are active. The Kent Probation Trust settle more ex-offenders in Margate than anywhere else. This is obviously an environment that is not conducive to reducing re-offending rates. Mark Pearson pointed out that as Cliftonville has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the country plus one of the highest levels of people on Jobseeker's Allowance, there are few practical opportunities for ex-offenders to find employment and turn their lives around..

As well as promoting cooperation, the MTF also takes great pride in its work to reverse 'the culture of negativity' that previously existed in much of Margate. In the past, people felt that local agencies had not helped the community and that even the basics, such as street cleanliness, had been given little consideration.

The results of the MTF in reversing this have been impressive. From a policing perspective, there was a four per cent crime reduction in Cliftonville during the last financial year, and so far this year there have been 160 fewer victims of crime and anti-social behaviour; significant achievements for an area with a crime rate and anti-social behaviour rate that is almost twice as high as the rest of Kent.<sup>49</sup> In addition, there has been a considerable improvement in the regeneration of local housing stock and street cleanliness, generating increased external investment into the area.

Part of Margate's renewal has been led by the Housing Regeneration Team. They have worked to bring in enforcement laws to ensure landlords adequately maintain their properties. Planning laws have been modified to limit the creation of new single occupancy flats and HMOs. Direct action has also been taken to restore several old hotels and convert them into family homes. The CSJ was told such projects were essential for changing the attitude of the community and to restore a sense of pride and aspiration.

There is no easy fix for Margate: several things need to change in order to reverse such severe decline. Tourism will always be part of the economy, but history has proved that tourism can be fickle and over-reliance on it can undermine an economy.

While the Turner Gallery and similar efforts are not an end in themselves, the CSJ was told that they have helped signal a change in attitudes and encouraged further government investment. Examples include £23 million for housing regeneration, £10 million from the Big Lottery Fund to regenerate Dreamland, and selection as part of the Portas Pilot programme to regenerate the high street.<sup>50</sup>

The combination of improved transport links to the capital and the development of a skilled local workforce will hopefully bring further private investment into the area and decrease unemployment rates. If properties are bought up by commuters a stronger housing market

49 Margate Task Force in evidence to the CSJ; Kent Police, *Crime Statistics April 2012 – March 2013* [accessed via: [www.data.police.uk](http://www.data.police.uk) (29/07/2013)]

50 The Guardian, *Margate set for return to Dreamland as part of seafront regeneration*, 7 June 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2013/jun/07/margate-dreamland-seaside-regeneration> (29/07/2013)]; Thanet District Council, *Live Margate* [accessed via: [http://www.thanet.gov.uk/business/live\\_margate.aspx](http://www.thanet.gov.uk/business/live_margate.aspx) (29/07/13)]; DCLG, Press release, *Portas Pilots to kick-start high street renaissance*, 26 May 2012 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/portas-pilots-to-kick-start-high-street-renaissance> (29/07/13)]

will deter government agencies from using Margate as a cheap dumping ground for its 'problem cases.'

Efforts at housing and community regeneration, led by the MTF, must be continued in order to tackle the problems of poverty already present. Perhaps most important is the efforts they have made to engage the local community and simply improve community cohesion, responsibility and decrease visual blighting of neighbourhoods.

The road to Margate's regeneration is long and there is no quick fix for the malaise of social and economic issues plaguing the area. However, there are dedicated people in education, local government and the community who are working to help revive the town.

To tackle Margate's problems there must be a continued and concerted effort to regenerate housing, drive-up skills and improve neighbourhoods. But with high levels of family breakdown it is also important that more is done to help keep families together. Doing these things will help to bring in additional investment and jobs, and will put Margate on a more stable footing for the next generation.

# Case Study 3: Clacton-on-Sea



## 1871

A pier is built for steamships operated by the Woolwich Steam Packet Company to dock at, bringing thousands of visitors from London.

## 1920

The London Road opens to deal with the influx of holiday makers.

## 1937

Billy Butlin opens an amusement arcade and a holiday camp to accommodate holiday makers.

## 1983

Butlins holiday camp closes down due to a change in tastes and the rise of package holidays abroad.

## 2009

A new 50-foot helter skelter opens on Clacton pier.

## 2010

A neighbourhood in Jaywick is named the most impoverished ward in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. 62 per cent of working age residents receive benefits, compared to a national average of 15 per cent.<sup>a</sup> Initially planned as a holiday destination for Londoners in the 1930s, many of the holiday-makers became permanent residents. Unlike other 'plotland' villages Jaywick was not demolished after the war.

## 2011

A new rollercoaster is added to Clacton pier to mark the start of British Tourism week.

<sup>a</sup> The Guardian, *Essex resort of Jaywick named England's most deprived town*, 29 March 2011 [accessed via: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/mar/29/jaywick-essex-resort-most-deprived> (29/07/13)]; the wards of Clacton-on-Sea covered here are: Alton Park, Bockings Elm, Burrsville, Golf Green, Haven, Peter Bruff, Pier, Rush Green, St Bartholomews, St James, St Johns, St Marys, St Pauls

*'Clacton is the end of the line – it is not just the last station from the west but it's also where a lot of troubled people end up.'*

This charity worker's blunt description of Clacton-on-Sea epitomises the 'rise and fall' image that grips many seaside towns. But walking through its main streets the sense of decline is not obvious – on summer afternoons the beach is busy, cafes are trading and children enjoy the seaside attractions. Clacton appears to be a bustling town of over 55,000 people.<sup>51</sup>

'It's when you scratch below the surface that you start to see the problems Clacton has,' said a businesswoman who has run a bed and breakfast near the town's pier since the 1960s.

*'What has happened to Clacton is really sad, in fact it's disgraceful. The place was so vibrant through the 1960s and 1970s – you would see coaches streaming in for six months of the year. I couldn't walk down the pavement because the place was so busy. But there was no investment and the place has deteriorated, the Pier ward is now considered to be a place in poverty which would have been unthinkable.'*

Many see the 1980s as the point where things started to decline in Clacton. The Town and Country Building Society closed its head office, Butlins holiday camp shut down, and the emergence of foreign holidays meant a lot of Clacton's tourists became day trippers. Since then, Clacton's greatest problem has been a stagnating economy, fuelled largely by a lack of sustainable jobs and high levels of worklessness. As the CSJ highlighted in its *Signed on, Written off* report earlier this year, in one neighbourhood in the Pier ward, 54 per cent of people aged 16-64 are on out-of-work benefits – the fifth highest percentage in the country. Ironically, it was the Pier area that had previously provided so much of the town's employment.<sup>52</sup>

Just a few miles along the coast from Clacton is Jaywick, which according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010 has the most deprived neighbourhood in England.<sup>53</sup> Some of the people who use Clacton's emergency food services and the soup kitchen walk from Jaywick, a village that has suffered from isolation and deteriorating housing and now has high levels of economic dependency. Some 35 per cent of working-age people claim some form of out-of-work benefit<sup>54</sup> and 54 per cent of the population aged 16 and over have no qualifications.<sup>55</sup> One counsellor, who previously worked in Jaywick, said locals refer to it as 'Beirut' and that in recent years 'it has started policing itself'. She added: 'The problems in Jaywick seem to be a lot more concentrated than the rest of Clacton. I've heard some fairly nasty stories. If someone does something bad to you, the reaction is not to call the police but to deal with it yourself. It almost seems like a warped version of care in the community.'

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51 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS102EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (31/07/13)]

52 Centre for Social Justice, *Signed On, Written Off*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013, p42

53 Department for Communities and Local Government, *The English Indices of Deprivation 2010, Neighbourhoods Statistical Release*, 24 March 2011, p2 [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/68711/1871208.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/68711/1871208.pdf) (16/07/13)]

54 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS102EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (26/07/13)]

55 Office for National Statistics, *Census: QS502EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (26/07/13)]

Unlike many towns that suffer economic decline, Clacton's population has actually been increasing – rising by 29 per cent over the period of 30 years between 1981 and 2011 to 55,347.<sup>56</sup> Because property prices are considerably lower than London and other parts of Essex, Clacton has become an increasingly popular town to retire to. A recent survey found Clacton is the fifth most popular retirement coastal town in Britain, with nearly a third of residents claiming state pensions.<sup>57</sup> Compared to national figures, Clacton has a lower than average proportion of 25-44 year olds and higher than average number of people who are 65 and over.<sup>58</sup> This has created a situation where a large proportion of the population does not work, leaving the local economy struggling. Although this does include some pensioners, 43 per cent of Clacton's 16 to 74 year olds are economically inactive.<sup>59</sup>

A former employee of the regional tourist board said: 'It is difficult for a town when much of its work is seasonal, but it's a million times worse when you have large parts of the population that don't work at all. A lot of people moved to Clacton from London to retire and have priced locals out of good property, that is a source of tension.'

The local economy is further hindered by low pay. In 2010 the median household income in Clacton was £13,648,<sup>60</sup> compared to the median in England and Wales of £24,242. A major barrier to employment is a low skills base – 41 per cent of adults in Clacton have no qualifications, which is almost double the national average for England and Wales.<sup>61</sup> The number of children in Clacton passing five GCSEs at grades A\*-C including English and maths is only 43 per cent – below the national average in England of 59 per cent.<sup>62</sup>

Sue Peachey, who has lived in Clacton for 25 years, is team leader at Open Road, an addictions charity that has 11 centres for drug and alcohol treatment across and Essex and Suffolk.

She said: 'What we have seen with many clients is they have never worked, and some come from families where parents haven't worked. It is a generational issue and it is difficult when you are trying to help someone who has never been engaged with work.'

'We have a very good success rate but it is not easy. I think the problems affecting the local area do make it more difficult to help people. There is no industry here, no jobs and that lack of stability makes it very complicated for people trying to move off addictions – people want some kind of motivation.'

56 Office for National Statistics, *1981 census - small area statistics, 1991 census - small area statistics, 2001 census - standard tables; Census: KS102EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (22/07/13)] This number is a best-fit estimate as the ward structure of Clacton has changed over this period

57 Liverpool Victoria, Press release, *UK plans a retirement revolution*, 1 March 2013 [accessed via: [http://www.lv.com/adviser/working-with-lv/news\\_detail?articleid=3117318](http://www.lv.com/adviser/working-with-lv/news_detail?articleid=3117318) (15/07/13)]

58 Tendring District Council, *Tendring District Council Local Developmental Framework, Planning Services, Core Strategy and Development Policies Document, Technical Paper 4 – Spatial Portrait*, October 2010, p9 [accessed via: <http://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/planning/planning%20policy/TechnicalPaper4SpatialPortrait.pdf> (29/07/13)]

59 Office for National Statistics, *Census: QS601EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (26/07/13)]

60 Tendring District Council, *Tendring District Council Local Developmental Framework, Planning Services, Core Strategy and Development Policies Document, Technical Paper 4 – Spatial Portrait*, October 2010, p27

61 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS501EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (10/07/13)], this is for all people over 16

62 Department for Education, *2012 Performance Tables*, Department for Education: 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/> (22/07/13)]

Councillor Peter Halliday, Leader of Tendring District Council (TDC), said: 'It is a fact that Clacton has changed significantly over the years and, in keeping with many other seaside towns, its economy has altered dramatically. Like other resorts we face a number of difficult challenges with more people choosing to go abroad for their holidays. That said, we still get more than one million visitors a year spending almost a million pounds a day in the district. One of our biggest challenges is to find ways to encourage them to return so that we can make the very most of that spending potential. That is still very much a work in progress.'

The CSJ was told that one of the biggest social problems is that the town has a high number of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). One official referred to it as 'bedsit land'. The Essex town is home to a large number of bed and breakfasts, many of which have been turned into bedsits or other kinds of temporary accommodation. Another Pier B&B owner said: 'Because there aren't as many tourists staying overnight many of us B&B owners have started letting some of our rooms out to the council for emergency accommodation. It's not what you want to be known for, as it is hardly going to encourage business to your B&B, but you have to pay the bills.' A Government report said HMOs can have a negative social impact on areas and in some cases lead to crime and anti-social behaviour.<sup>63</sup>

There is a forum of frontline organisations and individuals, Clacton Central Community First, that comes together to discuss social problems and ways of countering them. One forum member said: 'One of the biggest problems is HMOs – overcrowding brings so many problems to a society. Clacton simply doesn't have the resources or things in place to help people. Local people are doing their best to fight this, but it's an uphill struggle and the council and local authority only seem to be acknowledging this now.' Concerns have been expressed that HMOs can be detrimental to people's health as well as the community. A report by the University of Essex's School of Health and Human Sciences recently looked at the mental health of vulnerable people living in bedsits in seaside towns and found that the living conditions can have a significant impact on people.<sup>64</sup>

Councillor Halliday said: 'There is an HMO problem in Clacton, especially in the Pier ward which is in the heart of the town centre. We are tackling this by introducing new licensing regulations to ensure that properties must come up to a certain standard before they can become HMO.'

Some officials in the town have said that there has been an increase of HMOs since the Tendring Night Shelter was opened in the town around four years ago. The shelter aims to provide support so clients can become independent. Residents, who are allowed to stay for 28 nights, are provided with support from Tendring Mental Health Support and local charities. After clients of the shelter complete their stay, many move into HMOs and need continuing support. The shelter has drawn in some people from other parts of Essex and further afield

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63 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Evidence Gathering – Housing in Multiple Occupation and possible planning responses - Final Report*, London: Department for Communities and Local Government, September 2010, pp6-7

64 Barratt C, Green G, Speed E, Price P, *Understanding the relationship between mental health and bedsits in a seaside town*, University of Essex School of Health and Human Sciences and Tendring District Council, 2012 [accessed via: [http://www.essex.ac.uk/hhs/research/files/bedsits\\_and\\_mental\\_health\\_report.pdf](http://www.essex.ac.uk/hhs/research/files/bedsits_and_mental_health_report.pdf) (16/07/13)]

who have then remained in Clacton and continued to use local services. One former shelter resident said: 'The night shelter is a life saver. It offers great support, but obviously it means there will be more people moving from different areas to Clacton so they can get help.'

Tracy Cooke, from Clacton, is the co-ordinator at the local Salvation Army Community Centre, which runs a food bank service. She said: 'The rise in food we hand out in recent years has been incredible and is no longer sustainable so we are having to move to another delivery model so we can cope with the demand. I have been here for seven years and in the first two years we would have the occasional family coming in for food on referral. But in the last four years we have seen a major increase. Our majority client base changed from older people to males aged 25-45 who may be staying in bedsits or are couch surfing. In the last year we gave out 2,500 food parcels, which I could never have expected.'

A frontline service provider said: 'The picture of life in Clacton and where the town is going is really frightening. What has happened here is indicative of many seaside towns, but much more could be done. We would like to see more done with the Big Society Fund. Many people lack the basics for getting into work or training, like something as obvious as a fixed abode. More funding to social enterprises could improve the situation.'

The TDC has said that if it was given greater powers to deliver services, the local area would benefit. Ian Davidson, Chief Executive of TDC, said: 'Giving greater power and accountability to the districts could help solve the problems in our local areas. We are on the ground and we have the local knowledge and an understanding of the local agencies. If it's done at a local level you can actually switch money to being less reactive and more proactive. We recently ran a 'families with complex needs' pilot and it worked very well because we could co-ordinate it better with the local agencies. We would like to see this delivery model used more in the future – it is better for the taxpayer, the community and people we want to help.'

The local authority has agreed the town 'is not fulfilling its potential' and that it 'lacks a distinctive quality tourism/visitor offer'.<sup>65</sup> As well as improving current facilities, the council has said it needs to develop new ones. It has been reported in local media that a £30 million development may be outlined soon.<sup>66</sup>

While fresh investment in the Pier area will be widely welcomed, it is becoming clear that seaside towns, like Clacton, can no longer afford to rely solely on tourism and will need to build a more stable economy.

65 Tendring District Council and INTend, *Celebrate-on-Sea, Putting the fun back into Clacton*: 2010, p12 [accessed via: <http://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/business/regeneration/clacton/Celebrate%20on%20sea%20reduced%20file%20size.pdf> (29/07/13)]

66 This is Total Essex, *Cause for optimism in Essex 'benefit ghetto' says council*, 23 May 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.thisistotalessex.co.uk/Cause-optimism-Essex-benefit-ghetto-says-council/story-19068629-detail/story.html#axzz2ZmR4gTSD> (22/07/13)]



# Case Study 4: Blackpool

## 'The problem-family capital of the North'

Liz Meek, former Regional Director at Government Office North West (2008-11)

### 1781

A newly built road allows stagecoaches to reach Blackpool, bringing visitors to see its 11 km-long sandy beach.

### 1840s

The railway brings thousands of visitors from the north of England.

### 1850

The practice of shutting down the mills for one week a year sees thousands of workers visit Blackpool from Lancashire's cotton mills.

### 1920

Four million people visit Blackpool, 11 per cent of the population of England and Wales, with a high proportion of visitors staying for several days or a week.<sup>a</sup>

### 1975

The construction of the M55 motorway makes Blackpool more feasible as a day trip destination reducing the number of overnight visitors.

### 1990

Blackpool reaches 17 million visitors a year; this number falls to 10 million over the next decade.<sup>b</sup>

### 2006

TVR moves production of its sports cars away from the Bispham factory, resulting in the loss of 250 jobs.

a Cross G, Walton J, *The Playful Crowd: Pleasure Places In The Twentieth Century*, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2005

b BBC News, *Blackpool: 'It's like someone has died'*, 30 January 2007 [accessed via: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/lancashire/6313439.stm> (29/07/13)]; the wards of Blackpool covered here are: Anchorholme, Bispham, Bloomfield, Brunswick, Claremont, Clifton, Greenlands, Hawes Side, Highfield, Ingthorpe, Layton, Marton, Norbreck Park, Squires Gate, Stanley, Talbot, Tyldesley, Victoria, Warbreck, Waterloo

Blackpool, by far the largest town considered in this report with a population of 142,000, is an example of a community blighted by family breakdown and the wider social problems which can be associated with it.<sup>67</sup> In tandem with the town's economic decline as the tourism industry has receded, families in Blackpool have come to face some of the most pronounced problems in the UK today. The social problems Blackpool faces are not only economic, but also familial, and supporting vulnerable families will be key to tackling Blackpool's difficulties.

Blackpool Tower, based on Paris' more illustrious Eiffel Tower, was completed in 1894 as the town's popularity blossomed as a seaside resort for the industrial workers of Lancashire. However, Blackpool has struggled to keep hold of its identity as traditional British coastal holidays fell out of popularity from the 1960s. Today Blackpool fits the model of a declining seaside resort.<sup>68</sup> It has the prerequisite beach promenade and pier, accompanied by other specialist seaside infrastructure, bed and breakfast accommodation and a stagnant economy dependent upon holiday-makers who are dwindling in number. Blackpool is the ninth most deprived local authority district in England, with an increase in overall deprivation of a marked 17 per cent since 2007.<sup>69</sup>

Social problems plague Blackpool, despite efforts by the now-abolished Regional Council for the North West to regenerate its sagging fortunes and to address the town's 'people problem' – family breakdown, crime, drugs, poor education attainment, low aspiration'.<sup>70</sup>

Family breakdown here is acute. Across Blackpool, one in three families with dependent children is headed by a lone parent; in three neighbourhoods it is more than one in two.<sup>71</sup> The area also tops the local authority teenage pregnancy chart, with 58 under-18 conceptions per 1,000 young women.<sup>72</sup> This level of family instability is closely related to the considerable social challenges the area faces.

Unemployment in Blackpool is above-average and increasing. No industry has taken the place of tourism. As of June 2013, more than one in 20 working-age people were on Jobseekers' Allowance – 50 per cent higher than the national average.<sup>73</sup> At the end of last year unemployment stood at over 10 per cent.<sup>74</sup> In eight neighbourhoods, more than 40 per cent of all working-age people are on out-of-work benefits.<sup>75</sup> These problems are compounded by the fact that 14.5 per cent of working-age people in Blackpool have no educational qualifications.<sup>76</sup>

67 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS102EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (31/07/13)]

68 Rickey B and Houghton J, 'Solving the riddle of the sands: Regenerating England's seaside towns', *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal*, 3, 1, 31 March 2009, pp46-55; Fothergill S, *England's Coastal Towns: A short review of the issues, evidence base and research needs*: 2003

69 DCLG, *English Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010* [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/68711/1871208.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/68711/1871208.pdf) (13/02/13)]

70 Liz Meek, former Regional Director, Government Office North West, in evidence to the CS, January 2013

71 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS105EW*, Nomis: 2011; LSOAs 009D, 011A, 013A [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]

72 Office for National Statistics, *Conception Statistics, England and Wales, 2011*, Nomis: 26 February 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-294336> 29/04/13]]

73 Office for National Statistics, *Labour Market Profile: Blackpool*, Nomis: June 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038432052/report.aspx?#tabwab> (31/07/13)]

74 Office for National Statistics, *Unemployed, Blackpool – Time Series*, Nomis: 2012 [accessed via: [http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038432052/subreports/ea\\_time\\_series/report.aspx?](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038432052/subreports/ea_time_series/report.aspx?) (31/07/13)]

75 Centre for Social Justice, *Signed on, Written Off*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013

76 Office for National Statistics, *Labour market profile: Blackpool*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038432052/report.aspx#tabempunemp> (04/01/13)]

Unemployment sits alongside underemployment. Nearly a third (31.4 per cent) of Blackpool's residents are employed in distribution, hotels and restaurants, and 16.4 per cent are employed in tourism-related industries.<sup>77</sup> Many of these jobs are seasonal and poorly paid, part-time and often associated with the night-time economy. Workers in Blackpool, earn on average £120.50 a week less than the national weekly wage and £82.80 less than the regional average.<sup>78</sup>

Economic problems have resulted in very low property prices – at the time of writing one five-bedroom, terraced house was on the market for £50,000. Cheap housing has led to depressed seaside towns becoming 'dumping grounds for people facing problems such as unemployment, social exclusion and substance abuse'.<sup>79</sup> Blackpool is no exception – the town's tourism industry and the availability of low-cost accommodation, much of which is sub-standard, has attracted a vulnerable and transient population.

The CSJ has learnt that prisons in the north west of England, such as those in Manchester, have sign-up sheets for Blackpool accommodation for offenders on release:

*'People are advised [on leaving prison]...if you have nowhere to go, you can go to Blackpool.'*

Liz Meek, former Regional Director at Government Office North West (2008-11)

Blackpool has one of the highest levels of population mobility of children and young people in England. Indeed, in some of Blackpool's schools the annual turnover of pupils can reach 30 per cent.<sup>80</sup> Research on family migration into the town recognises that along with the attraction of cheap accommodation and 'actual or supposed availability of employment', peoples' 'positive memories and perceptions of the resort' pull them to Blackpool.<sup>81</sup> The CSJ was told how the strength of 'fond memories' is an attraction for people who think that having enjoyed Blackpool on holiday, it offers promise and opportunity. The common 'push' factors were found to be a variety centring on family breakdown, 'including domestic and other violence, the break-up of relationships and the establishment of new ones'.<sup>82</sup> Correspondingly, many of those families arriving in Blackpool arrive with entrenched complexities – and contribute to a sense of general family instability in the town.

The transience of the population affects the severity of family breakdown and the issues presented to the council's services. Indicative of this, '30 per cent of high-risk domestic abuse referrals involved families who had lived in Blackpool for fewer than three months' in 2010.<sup>83</sup> This is closely associated with the area's alcohol and drug problem: Blackpool has the highest

77 Office for National Statistics, *Employee Jobs*, Nomis: 2008 [accessed via: <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038432052/report.aspx#tabeinaact> (11/01/13)]; these two groups overlap statistically

78 Based on the national average gross weekly pay of £507.60, a regional average of £469.90 and a Blackpool average of £387.1 from Office for National Statistics, *Official labour market statistics: Labour market profile: Blackpool*, Nomis: 2012 [accessed via: [http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038432052/subreports/ashew\\_time\\_series/report.aspx?](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038432052/subreports/ashew_time_series/report.aspx?) (05/07/13)]

79 BURA, 'The social challenges of the seaside', London: BURA, 2007, in Rickey B and Houghton J, 'Solving the riddle of the sands: Regenerating England's seaside towns', *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal*, 3, 1, 31 March 2009, pp46-55

80 Ofsted, *Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children: 2012* [accessed via: [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/filedownloading?file=documents/local\\_authority\\_reports/blackpool/052\\_Inspection%20of%20local%20authority%20arrangements%20for%20the%20protection%20of%20children%20as%20pdf.pdf&refer=1](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/filedownloading?file=documents/local_authority_reports/blackpool/052_Inspection%20of%20local%20authority%20arrangements%20for%20the%20protection%20of%20children%20as%20pdf.pdf&refer=1) (13/02/13)]

81 Dobson J & Pooley C, *Mobility, Equality, Diversity: a study of pupil mobility in the secondary school system*, London: UCL, 2004 [accessed via: [http://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/research/transnational-spaces/migration-research-unit/pdfs/dobson\\_report\\_pupil\\_mobility\\_04.pdf](http://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/research/transnational-spaces/migration-research-unit/pdfs/dobson_report_pupil_mobility_04.pdf) (13/02/13)]

83 Ibid

84 Community Care, *Sun, sea, sand and sexual exploitation in Blackpool*, 21 February 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/articles/21/02/2011/116312/sun-sea-sand-and-sexual-exploitation.htm> (13/02/13)]

alcohol-specific mortality rate for men and the second highest for women in the UK; and 47 per cent of cases of domestic violence in the town are alcohol-related.<sup>84</sup> Blackpool has the highest rate in England of alcohol abuse related incapacity benefit claimants and has the second highest prevalence of opiate and/or crack use.<sup>85</sup>

Such issues contribute to the Blackpool local authority having the highest rate of children looked after by a local authority in the whole of England – 150 per 10,000 population – far exceeding the English average of 59 and North West average of 76. This means that about one in every 66 children in Blackpool is in care – up from one in every 107 in 2008.<sup>86</sup>

Blackpool has poor results for young adults leaving care, and tops the table for the highest percentage of young people aged 19 who were looked after aged 16 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in England. Over 2010-12, 62 per cent of care leavers aged 19 who were looked after in care at 16 were NEET, compared with the English average of 34 per cent.<sup>87</sup>

The CSJ has learnt that families are fleeing child protection investigations in other local authorities, coming to Blackpool and contributing to the transience issue – and consequently, the town is picking up other local authorities' problems. In order to stabilise the community, Blackpool Council plans to increase the minimum length of time to establish a 'local connection' and receive statutory support from six months to three years. To have a local connection, someone must have either:

- Lived in Blackpool for six of the last 12 months;
- Lived in Blackpool for three of the last five years;
- Have close immediate adult family who have lived here for the last five years;
- Have permanent employment in Blackpool.<sup>88</sup>

Evidence received by the CSJ suggests that this is driven by the economic imperative of strengthening Blackpool's community which is so undermined by the population transience. One voluntary sector organisation expressed concern that the local connection threshold already 'drives families under the radar', until their problems are picked up by schools, which may worsen with its extension.

Many of the issues outlined here exacerbate and are exacerbated by family breakdown. Yet although some attempts have been made to stimulate the local economy, a coherent and

84 The Guardian, *Blackpool: the heart of England's drinking culture*, 1 March 2013 [accessed via: <http://m.guardian.co.uk/uk/2013/mar/01/blackpool-heart-englands-drinking-culture> [01/03/13]]

85 Local Alcohol Profiles for England, Local Authority profile, Blackpool [accessed via: [http://www.lape.org.uk/downloads/LapeLADatasetNWPFO\\_01\\_08\\_12.xlsx](http://www.lape.org.uk/downloads/LapeLADatasetNWPFO_01_08_12.xlsx) (31/07/13)]; The National Treatment Agency for Substance Abuse, *National And Regional Estimates Of The Prevalence Of Opiate And/Or Crack Cocaine Use 2010-11*, London: Department of Health, 2013 [accessed via: [http://www.nta.nhs.uk/uploads/prevalence\\_estimates\\_201011bylocalauthority\[0\].xlsm](http://www.nta.nhs.uk/uploads/prevalence_estimates_201011bylocalauthority[0].xlsm) (31/07/13)]

86 Department for Education, *Children looked after by local authorities in England, including adoption*, Table LAA1: Children looked after at 31 March, by Local Authority, 25 September 2012. [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/167453/sfr20-2012lav2.xls.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/167453/sfr20-2012lav2.xls.xls) (29/04/13)]

87 Department for Education, *Children in Care and Adoption Performance Tables*, 30 November 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/a00199753/children-in-care-and-adoption-performance-tables> (30/01/13)]

88 Blackpool Council, *Do I have a local connection and what does this mean for me?* [accessed via: <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Services/G-L/HomelessnessAdviceandSupport/FAQs/Dolhavealocalconnectionandwhatdoesthismeanforme.htm> 18/02/13]]

holistic approach to rebuilding family stability in Blackpool has, so far, not been attempted. This is clearly one of the missing pieces in the puzzle. As Liz Meek, former Regional Director at the Government Office North West told the CSJ, despite regeneration efforts and other initiatives in Blackpool, her office 'were conscious that we had not tackled the family problem'.

# Case Study 5: Great Yarmouth

'It was well known ... that Yarmouth was, upon the whole, the finest place in the universe.'

Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (1850)

## 1734

The author Daniel Defoe describes Great Yarmouth as: 'the finest key in England, if not in Europe, not inferior even to that of Marseilles itself.'<sup>a</sup>

## 1844

The first railway reaches the town, opening it up to visitors from the North and Midlands.

## 1853

The Wellington Pier is built to cater for thousands of holiday makers.

## 1960s

The discovery of North Sea oil leads to a growing oil rig supply industry.

## 1970s

The number of holiday makers in the UK reaches 40 million.<sup>b</sup>

## 1980s

The number of UK residents holidaying abroad increases from 12 million to 20 million.<sup>c</sup>

## 1990s

Industrial decline and increased running costs forces the closure of the ferry link between Great Yarmouth and Gorleston.

a Defoe, D, *Curious and Diverting Journeys Thro' the whole island of Great Britain*:1734

b British Tourist Authority, *Digest of Tourist statistics* cited in Seaside History, *The British Seaside Holiday*, [accessed via: [http://www.seasidehistory.co.uk/seaside\\_statistics.html](http://www.seasidehistory.co.uk/seaside_statistics.html) (18/07/13)]

c Ibid

On the eastern edge of England, tucked between the North Sea and the expansive rivers of the Norfolk Broads is Great Yarmouth – a coastal town with just over 71,000 residents.<sup>89</sup> Great Yarmouth once ranked highly on lists of popular destinations but today it ranks highly on all the wrong sorts of tables – poor health, high unemployment and poor education.

An elderly resident who has lived in the town and run small businesses through decades of change describes Great Yarmouth from its pre-war era. 'You could walk across the river just standing on the drifters that were moored there. There would be four boats deep across the way. If you took a snapshot of 1960 and compared it to today, you'd be appalled,' he says. 'Today our rivers and moorings are basically empty.'

The geography of the town is a reminder of a once-thriving past. Beautiful old buildings still stand. They were erected during the flush days when Great Yarmouth was at its peak. But today many of those buildings are tired and worn. They are a reminder of good times that no longer exist.

The elderly resident added: 'Places that were very upmarket when I was young are no longer safe for older people to go to. The beautiful old buildings are now occupied by residents whose rent is paid by the council.'

The local economy of Great Yarmouth was built around two industries; herring fishing and tourism. The first of those disappeared entirely in the 1960s when appetites turned away from herring and the stock of fish declined. The second is only seasonal and it is also eroding with the growth of affordable packaged holidays to overseas destinations attracting working families. Just over 19 per cent of working age adults were on out-of-work benefits in November 2012.<sup>90</sup> However unemployment in the town rises and falls with the seasons. On average between 2000 and 2012, the number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance decreased by over 20 per cent during the summer months.<sup>91</sup> Today, the workforce that does exist in Great Yarmouth is primarily made up of people in wholesale and retail, motor mechanics, and health and social work. Fishing now makes up less than one per cent of the jobs.<sup>92</sup>

Local initiatives to turn things around have included sprucing up the town to make it more desirable for tourism. Though there is little that they can do to control whether or not Great Yarmouth comes back into vogue. As a local resident stated 'the tourism board have done a good job but people still aren't coming as much as we need.'

Another major new plan is being created to try and capitalise on the booming energy industry. Plans are underway for an Energy Production Innovation Skills Centre (EPIS Centre)

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89 For the purposes of this case study, Great Yarmouth is defined as the central town rather than the whole borough. Wards included as part of the Great Yarmouth town are: Bradwell North, Bradwell South and Hopton, Central and Northgate, Claydon, Gorleston, Lothingland, Magdalen, Nelson, Southtown and Cobholm, St Andrews and Yarmouth North. Population calculated using: Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS102EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (10/07/13)]

90 Office for National Statistics, *DWP Benefits: benefit claimants - working age clients for small areas*, Nomis: November 2012 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (29/07/13)]

91 Office for National Statistics, *DWP Benefits: benefit claimants - working age clients for small areas*, Nomis: February 2000 – November 2012, taking account of changes between February and August in each year

92 Office for National Statistics, *Census: QS605EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (10/07/13)]

to be built in Great Yarmouth. This centre would be a hub for training people to work in the energy industry. The plan is for the centre to be funded partly by grants for regional development, partly by local councils and partly by the energy industry. If the centre achieves its aims, 20,000 people a year would learn or improve skills through the centre.<sup>93</sup> This could be a remarkable development for Great Yarmouth. But whether or not it will lead to the requisite change is anyone's guess.

While the death of industry may have lit a fuse in Great Yarmouth, it is no longer the only challenge the town has to contend with. One in three adults has no qualifications at all.<sup>94</sup> 22 per cent of all households with dependent children in Great Yarmouth have no one in the household working and 19 per cent of children in the wider Primary Care Trust of Great Yarmouth and Waveney are obese by the time they reach year six.<sup>95</sup>

Alcoholism and drug abuse are also problems in Great Yarmouth. Significantly more men from the borough of Great Yarmouth die from alcohol-specific causes and liver disease than the national average.<sup>96</sup> Within Norfolk, the borough has one of the highest rates of young people in drug or alcohol treatment, and alcoholism in the town fuels a high rate of alcohol-related violent crime.<sup>97</sup>

In one ward, Nelson, the picture is particularly bleak. The mean household income for the ward in 2010 was just £20,280 and the lack of basic education for children in Nelson is particularly alarming.<sup>98</sup> In 2009, in some parts of the ward, fewer than 30 per cent of pupils obtained five or more GCSE grade A\* to C including English and mathematics, against 54.8 per cent across England.<sup>99</sup> The same ward has the highest rate of pregnancy for 15-17-year-olds in England.<sup>100</sup>

A recruiter for a major employer in the region says that despite unemployment in Great Yarmouth, he struggles to find locals he can employ. Many locals come 'with the wrong attitude' and can't be relied on to turn up for their first day of work. Each year he recruits 450 workers from Portugal to work for him during his busiest season. He pays their airfares and they stay in otherwise empty hotels so they can work for him. He would rather employ locals. 'But it costs more if I try and hire locals and they don't show up. Frankly if I relied on the local job market I'd be out of business.'

93 BBC News, *Great Yarmouth energy skills centre plan 'needs financing'*, 4 July 2013 [accessed via: <http://bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-23182991> (11/07/13)]

94 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS501EW and KS102EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (10/07/13)]

95 Office for National Statistics, *Census: KS106EW and KS102EW*, Nomis: 2011 [accessed via: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) (10/07/13)]; NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney, *Great Yarmouth and Waveney Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2009/2010*, p169 [accessed via: <http://www.phi.gywpct.nhs.uk/Images/Uploads/Great%20Yarmouth%20and%20Waveney%20SNA%20v1.1.pdf> (22/07/13)]

96 Generally health problems are worst in the wards considered here. NHS Norfolk and NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney, *Great Yarmouth Borough District Health Picture*, December 2011, p4 [accessed via: [www.norfolkinsight.org.uk/resource/view?resourceId=510](http://www.norfolkinsight.org.uk/resource/view?resourceId=510) (23/07/13)]

97 This is for Great Yarmouth as a whole Borough. Generally health problems are worst in the wards we are examining. *Ibid*, p5

98 Smithurst S, McKibben J & Reading C, *Weathering the Storm?*, Great Yarmouth: Priory Research Services, 2011, p39 [accessed via: [http://www.priorycentre.co.uk/assets/research/weathering\\_final%20report.pdf](http://www.priorycentre.co.uk/assets/research/weathering_final%20report.pdf) (12/07/13)]; Department for Education, *GCSE and Equivalent Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England, 2009/10*, London: Department for Education, 2010 [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/218842/sfr37-2010.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/218842/sfr37-2010.pdf) (31/07/13)]

99 *Ibid*, p57, LSOAs: UD625, UD624, UD622, UD623

100 Hansard, *Written Answers to Questions*, 7 January 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130107/text/130107w0001.htm#13010716003417> (29/07/13)]; *ibid*, 25 April 2013 [accessed via: [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130425/text/130425w0003.htm#130425w0003.htm\\_wqn29](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130425/text/130425w0003.htm#130425w0003.htm_wqn29) (29/07/13)]



The company has some great local staff who have worked for them for many years. If a person's attitude is right the company is able to work with them and train them. Sadly this is not the norm among those they recruit from the local area.

The recruiter added: 'Something has gone wrong in this country in the last 20 years. ... A lot of young people can't see past £6.30 an hour. They don't look at the fact that if they get their skills up they could be doubling their money in five years.'

There is a sad irony to the situation Great Yarmouth finds itself in. Holiday-makers who used to fill the hotels now jet across to Portugal while Portuguese workers wing their way over to Great Yarmouth to work.

The recruiter hints at the fact that as generations go by these problems are exacerbated. If parents haven't seen the value of education themselves they can't pass it on to their children. 'It's self-perpetuating.'

This view is backed up by a local headteacher who told the CSJ that when the school holds parent's evenings only a quarter of parents turn up and 'they aren't the 25 per cent you need to be seeing.' The school has responded by visiting parents in their own homes.

Despite it all, community spirit is not dead in Great Yarmouth. A Community Alcohol Partnership that was initiated in 2012 has seen local retail outlets, community organisations and the police working together to tackle underage and street drinking. A range of community initiatives exist in the town and there seems to be a willingness for agencies and groups to work together to find solutions.

The challenge for Great Yarmouth is to take that strength and initiative and turn it into visionary action for the future of their town. If they can do this there is the hope that one day their moorings and streets will be full again.

# Conclusion

Whilst the challenges facing many of Britain's seaside towns are substantial, they are not insurmountable. The beauty on which these towns' success was originally founded remains. The skies and sands that drew in visitors are still there. Most still have housing stock with potential, inherited from Victorian heydays, many are well connected by rail to larger urban areas.

All still have considerable potential as tourist destinations.<sup>101</sup> But it is unlikely that any will become as popular as they were prior to the advent of cheap international air travel. To truly develop, these towns must build economies which are dependent neither on tourism nor welfare.

Whilst each town has its own particular problems, a recurring theme has been that of poverty attracting poverty. As employment has dried up, so house prices have fallen and so less economically active people – such as single-parent families and pensioners – have moved in, seeking cheaper accommodation and living costs. Similarly, vulnerable people – such as children in care and ex-offenders – have been moved in as authorities take advantage of low-cost housing as large properties have been chopped into houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). Parts of these towns have become dumping grounds, further depressing the desirability of such areas and so perpetuating the cycle.

This can place substantial strain on local services and, ultimately, put people at risk as vulnerable groups end up living in the same neighbourhoods. In Margate, the CSJ saw the particularly impressive work of the Margate Task Force (MTF) that has brought together a range of services in order to better understand the needs of the community. Their success in a particularly complex area provides a model of joined-up working which other authorities should consider emulating.

Central government initiatives also have potential to make an impact. Since 2010 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has given councils additional freedoms to control high concentrations of HMOs where the local authority decides there is a problem.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Walton, K, & Browne, P, (ed.s), *Coastal Regeneration in English Resorts: 2010*, Coastal Communities Alliance: 2010

<sup>102</sup> DCLG, *Communities and Local Government Circular 08/2010*: November 2010 [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/5678/1759707.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5678/1759707.pdf) (31/07/13)]

The Department for Education's (DfE) drive to ensure that more children in care are placed closer to home may reduce the density of vulnerable young people in such places. This alone will not solve the more substantial problem of why so many children need to be taken into care, but it will help to prevent too many vulnerable children being placed in close proximity to each other and so straining services' capacity to serve their needs.

Similarly, there is potential in the DCLG's Coastal Communities Fund (CCF), which has, until 2015, pledged 50 per cent of the revenue generated by the Crown Estate's marine assets to give funding to create sustainable economic growth and jobs.<sup>103</sup> Both Great Yarmouth and Rhyl have been granted awards, £600,000 and £300,000 respectively, to help develop local businesses and skills.<sup>104</sup>

This focus is vital. Without additional sources of income, struggling coastal towns will not flourish. Either industry must be brought into the area or people will need to be encouraged to move in and commute out.

The roll out of Universal Credit (UC) will encourage more people to take minimum wage employment and progress in work. By allowing people to keep more of their benefits when moving into work and working more, UC will help to ensure that employment always pays. However the taper rate for the removal of benefits should be adjusted – from the planned 65 per cent to 55 per cent – so as to make work more viable.<sup>105</sup>

As the CSJ has heard, employers sometimes have difficulty finding people with the skills or the willingness to take even entry-level work. There is a strong case – recently made by the CSJ – for overhauling the way in which Jobcentre Plus (JCP) operates so that its central focus is on removing the barriers faced by people to work.<sup>106</sup> An improved JCP would be measured on its success in getting people into sustained employment by finding them the training and skills they need.

The poor level of skills and qualifications found in many seaside towns was recently highlighted by Ofsted.<sup>107</sup> The onus must now be on the inspectorate and the DfE to drive up standards in local schools and on the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to improve Further Education colleges so that they can provide people with the skills appropriate to local employment. In some areas we looked at, such as at the Ormiston Venture Academy in Great Yarmouth or the Hartsdown Academy in Margate, the academies programme has brought in dynamic new leadership and is starting to deliver better results for young people. Similarly, a new headteacher at Rhyl High School (which was previously in special measures) is making a great difference to local children's attainment.

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103 Department for Communities and Local Government, Press release, *Supporting economic development projects in coastal and seaside areas*, 11 February 2013 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/supporting-economic-development-projects-in-coastal-and-seaside-areas--4/supporting-pages/the-coastal-communities-fund> (29/07/13)]

104 Business in the Community, *Great Yarmouth is awarded £600,000 to boost the local economy*, 22 February 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.bitc.org.uk/news-events/news/great-yarmouth-awarded-grant-boost-local-economy> (29/07/13)]; Rhyl City Strategy, *Coastal communities grant success*, 18 June 2012 [accessed via: <http://www.rhylcitystrategy.co.uk/news-events/> (29/07/13)]

105 Centre for Social Justice, *Dynamic Benefits: towards welfare that works*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2009

106 Centre for Social Justice, *Up to the Job?: how reforming Jobcentre Plus will help tackle worklessness*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013

107 Ofsted, *Unseen Children: access and achievement 20 years on*, London: Ofsted, 2013

Better schools may also encourage professional families to settle in seaside towns and commute out. Where commuting to major centres of employment is a possibility – as it is in all the towns considered here for those on higher or middle incomes – unitary and district authorities should seek to re-develop housing to meet their needs, as is being done in Margate.

Once the skills gap starts to close, government should look at how it can incentivise business to set up in areas of low employment. This will be the subject of a future paper by the CSJ.

Central initiatives, however, can only do so much. As we heard from an official in Clacton, there is a case for devolving greater powers to district level so that they can invest in more proactive services. Allowing local areas to step up and take power and responsibility for local regeneration could create opportunities for action based around the particular needs of the locality.

Both local and central government need to give urgent consideration to how family breakdown can be reversed. This is a problem that seriously affects many of the communities here discussed, just as it affects the country as a whole. Instability at home affects children's chances at school, in work and in future relationships.<sup>108</sup> If we are to help communities achieve long-term resilience and upward mobility, it is essential that we help more people get together and more couples stay together. This means tackling teenage pregnancy, improving relationship education, removing the couple penalties that exist in the welfare system and recognising marriage in the tax system.

The challenges our coastal towns face are not unique, they are different versions of the problems found elsewhere in the UK. Wherever long-term worklessness, family breakdown and educational failure loom large, so too do more complex social problems. These pathways to poverty are currently the subject of a major policy review being conducted by the CSJ as part of *Breakthrough Britain II* which will present ideas on how to tackle many of the issues that affect the towns considered here. Yet it is already clear that by removing barriers to work, drawing in new investment and industry, increasing local responsiveness to issues, and strengthening education and families, Britain's troubled coastal towns can be revived, not just as wonderful places to visit, but also as wonderful places to live and work.

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108 Centre for Social Justice, *Fractured Families*, London: Centre for Social Justice, 2013

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The Centre for Social Justice  
4th Floor, Victoria Charity Centre,  
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ISBN: 978 0 9573587 5 1

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