

Key issues for consideration in developing a "Story of place"

Population

Population size

- The 2006 mid year population estimate for Blackburn with Darwen puts the population of the borough at 141,200

Age structure

- Blackburn with Darwen has the greatest percentage of young people compared to other authorities in England and Wales.
- 30.6% of Blackburn with Darwen borough are aged 0 to 19

Components of change

- Blackburn with Darwen borough experiences a greater number of births than deaths.
- With regard migration, between 2005 and 2006 the borough saw a net outflow of people due to greater out migration compared to in migration.
- Between 2005 and 2006 the net loss of residents from out migration cancelled out the net growth through natural change (births minus deaths), resulting in a stable population size.

Deprivation

Blackburn with Darwen is ranked as the 34th most deprived local authority in England (out of 354 local authorities). Around a fifth of the borough's residents live in areas that are classified as being in the 10% most deprived.

Blackburn with Darwen has one small area that ranks within the most 1% deprived of all areas in England, this area falls within the ward of Wensley Fold

Neighbourhood Structure

The borough of Blackburn with Darwen is currently split into five neighbourhood coordination areas. These are:

- Blackburn North East
- Blackburn North West
- Blackburn South East
- Blackburn South West
- Darwen and Rural

Background information for each of these areas can be found in the annual action plans published by the local Area Agency Partnerships.

Resident Perceptions

Satisfaction with public services

General satisfaction with the council has broadly remained the same over the past few years (43% in 2006) but is the lowest score among 4 star (high performing CPA) authorities.

Key challenges for the borough

Some of the headline data supporting the GONW feedback at the LAA Annual Review is detailed below.

Economic inactivity

General

Blackburn with Darwen remains a significant employer of manufacturing employment (almost 15,000), and its current trajectory suggests that the decline of manufacturing employment will continue, at least in the medium term. Managing this decline and ensuring that appropriate employment opportunities exist for those that lose their jobs are significant challenges.

Worklessness

67.1% of the working age population of the borough are in employment, a lower proportion than for the North West (72.5%) and Great Britain (74.3%).

However when looking at gender differences, the proportion of males of working age in employment in the borough is more in line with the North West figures (73.1% in Blackburn with Darwen, compared to 75.6% in the North West and 78.5% in Great Britain). The proportion of females of working age in employment in Blackburn with Darwen (60.7%) is lower than for both the North West (69.2%) and Great Britain (69.8%).

Between March 2002 and February 2003 4.9% of people of working age were claiming unemployment benefit, compared to 5.1% for England and Wales and 4% for Lancashire. More significantly however, the proportion of people of working age who are economically inactive (but not necessarily claiming benefit) is higher in the Borough than in the region, and significantly above the level for England. Compared to the North West, this is explained mainly by greater proportions of people looking after home or family, and permanently sick / disabled.

Wage levels

Official statistics highlight that the average earnings for people in employment in the borough are lower than for the North West and Great Britain. On average, the gross weekly pay for full time employees in the borough is £361.30, considerably less than for the North West; £421.90 and Great Britain; £449.60.

Male full time workers in the borough earn on average £390.80 a week (gross), compared to the Great Britain average of £490.50.

Although there has been an increase in the median gross weekly earnings for residents of the borough, this increase is lower than for the North West and Great Britain. The percentage increase for Blackburn with Darwen is 7.1%, for the North West 13.9% and for Great Britain 14.5%.

Health and well being

General health

Of the 42 areas in the North West, the North West Health Observatory ranks BwD 36th worst in terms of health.

Mortality rates

The borough-wide cancer mortality rate (2003-2005) is significantly higher than England and Wales for a) all cancers for women, b) lung cancer in men.

The rate of circulatory disease for both men and women (2003-2005) is also higher than the England and Wales average.

Reducing smoking rates will significantly impact on improving lung cancer; cardiovascular disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease mortality rates.

Smoking

Locally, smoking remains the single biggest cause of preventable ill health. The overall smoking prevalence in the borough is 27% (32% in men, 22% women).

There are, on average, 257 smoking related deaths per year in Blackburn with Darwen this is significantly higher than the North West and national rate.

The borough's smoking cessation service has lower access levels in men, South Asian communities and communities in the Bastwell/Bank Top areas.

Alcohol

Based on an extrapolation of local and national figures, there are in the region of 25,000 hazardous and harmful drinkers and 3,000 dependant drinkers in the Borough.

In 2004 life expectancy in the Borough reduced by an average of almost 12 months for males and 7 months for females due to excessive alcohol consumption.

The rate of hospital admission for alcohol specific conditions in Blackburn with Darwen is above the average for England.

Substance misuse

There are an estimated 2000 problematic users in the borough and around 2000 children of problematic users, thus Blackburn with Darwen has the 4th highest number of problematic drug users in the North West

Blackburn with Darwen has among the lowest rates of engagement from BME communities.

A recent survey commissioned by the Drug and Alcohol Action Team highlighted the following issues

- Two-thirds of users surveyed admitted committing crimes to fund their habit,
- Around 80% of clients in treatment are unemployed and in receipt of benefits.
- Around half of cases on the child protection register cite drug problems.
- Around half (54%) of clients identify mental health problems (22% severe).
- 38% of clients had been in Local Authority care
- 55% had been expelled from school
- 75% had no formal qualifications.
- 68% live in temporary accommodation.

Community cohesion

Community cohesion is currently measured by a survey question about the extent people from different background 'get on' in a local area. In 2006 51% of people thought people in their area did get on and 27% thought people didn't get on.

The latest surveys and research indicate that the emerging cohesion issue nationally is between generations.

Children and Young People

Further data will shortly be available from Children and Young People's needs assessment, currently being drafted.

Be healthy

Local under 18 conception rates have been on a downward trajectory since 1998, with some annual fluctuation. Between 1998-2000 and 2003-2005 the rate fell by 16% from 56.7 to 47.6. However this rate still remains significantly above the national average. Teenage mothers and their children experience poorer health, social and economic outcomes than older mother, including 60% higher rates of infant mortality, 25% higher risk of lower birth weight, higher rates of smoking and lower rates of breastfeeding.

Stay safe

Enjoy and achieve

Educational attainment

Data showing the percentage of 15 year old pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent at level A* to C in 2006, highlights that the borough is performing below the England average (51.4% Blackburn with Darwen, 58.5% England).

However, over the period 2003 to 2006 the borough has seen an increase in the percentage of pupils achieving qualifications at this level, a 32% increase (12.6 percentage points) compared to an 11% increase in England overall (5.6 percentage points).

Make a positive contribution

Achieve economic well-being

In Blackburn, the Shadsworth and Whitebirk ward has 47.5% of children living in families on benefits, this compares with a national average of 21%.

Cross-cutting issues

Crime and community safety

An overall picture of crime levels in an area can be obtained using the British Crime Survey (BCS) comparator offences. This data shows that between 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 crime fell by 8% in Blackburn with Darwen compared to a 2% decrease in England and Wales. However, BCS comparator offences per 1,000 population in 2006/2007 for the borough (69 per 1,000) is just above the national figure (61 per 1,000).

Information required from CSP Strategic Assessment, when finalised.

Affordable Housing

The mean property price in the borough for the fourth quarter of 2006 was £114,169 compared to £210,557 in England.

Analysis comparing the lower quartile of earnings and the lower quartile of house prices in the borough highlights that in 1997 the lower quartile house prices were 2.13 times the lower quartile earnings in the borough. This has increased to 4.46 in 2006. For England the ratio was 3.65 in 1997 and now stands at 7.12.

Calculating the ratio of lower quartile earnings and house prices allows analysis of housing affordability for the lowest earners.

Fuel poverty

Blackburn with Darwen has 3920 (7.35% of total) households in fuel poverty, this is the highest number in the whole of Lancashire (further research currently being undertaken given age of some data used).

Fuel poverty is a major contributor to ill health.

References

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“Living better Living longer” – Health and Social Well-being Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
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