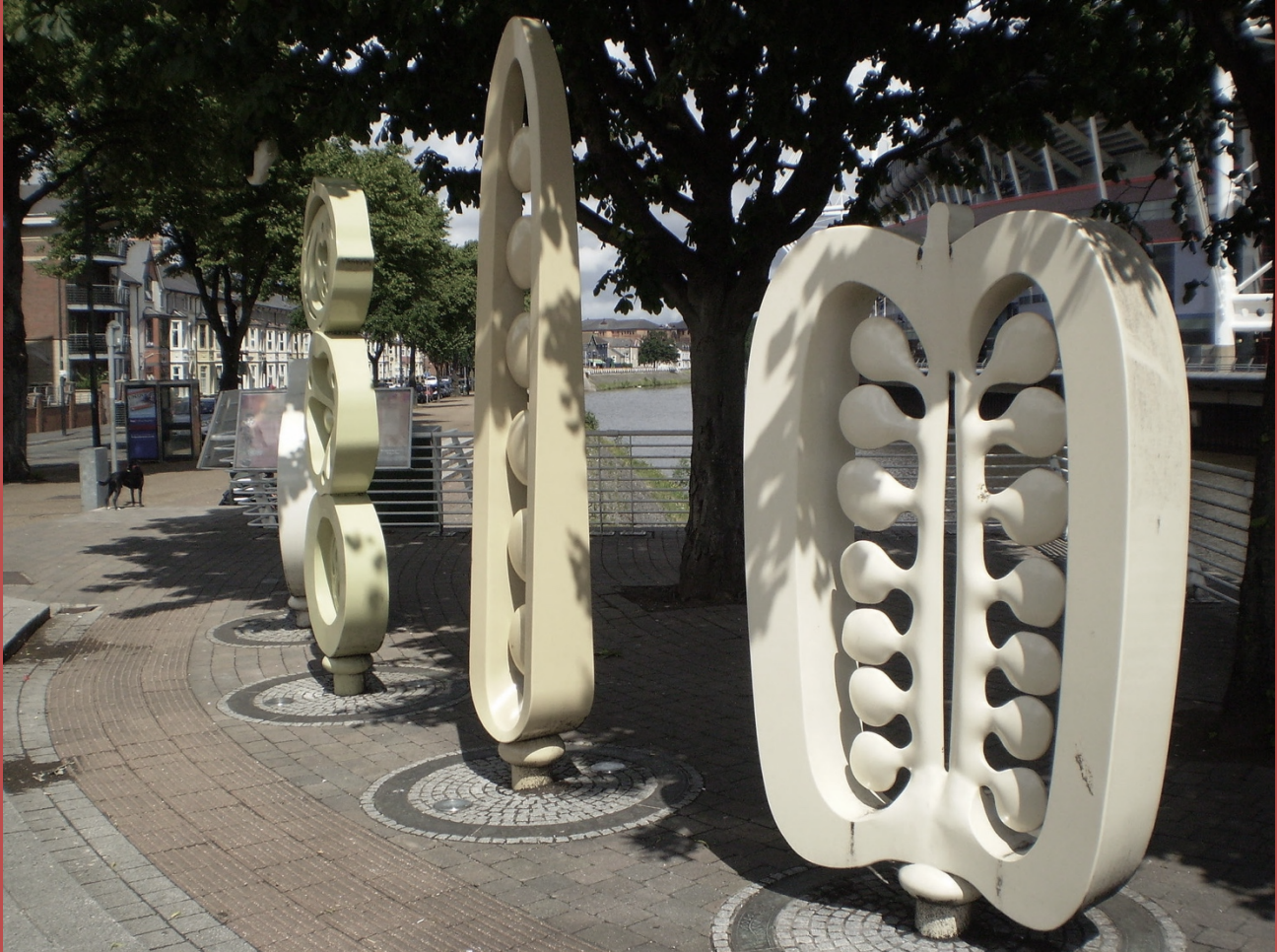

Social Mobility through Education.

2020
Felix Milburn





This report for the South Riverside Community Development Centre will aim to highlight how education can be utilised as an instrument for social mobility, providing the tools necessary for children and young adults from all walks of life to access the job market as well as further academic studies. The study will then address the findings within the area of Riverside, Cardiff, using the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation to analyse the Lower Super Output Areas found within the ward. Divisions in social mobility can take many forms: class, income, gender and race to name a few (Social Mobility Commission, 2017), and this report will explore these divisions primarily in the context of education. Studies into social mobility in the UK vary tremendously, as economists focus on household incomes, and sociologists on measures of class, status, and occupation (Buscha and Sturgis, 2017). This report will explore both approaches.

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“Consideration of the connections between community, culture, poverty, ethnicity, gender and educational achievement are all pertinent to any case study of young peoples’ social mobility”

(Collins, Collins and Butt, 2013:8).



Introduction and Context.

Social mobility can be used to measure the movement and change of people's social position over time, often serving to provide equal life opportunities. In their *State of the Nation 2018-2019* report, the Social Mobility Commission (2019) found that levels of social mobility in the UK have stagnated since 2014 at virtually all stages of life. Social mobility in the UK is significantly lower than in many other economically developed countries (Blanden et al., 2005), and in the context of education, British students trailed behind those of other economically developed countries in terms of levels of their social mobility (Collins, Collins and Butt, 2013).

In contemporary Britain, where an individual begins life has a substantial influence on where that individual ends up in life (Social Mobility Commission, 2017), contrary to the principle of social mobility which is to ensure that every individual has the opportunity to reach their potential. In particular, major British cities, including Cardiff, underachieve substantially in a range of social mobility measures, including on education.

“Social mobility in the UK has stagnated since 2014 at virtually all stages of life.”

For context, it is vital to draw comparisons with other major British cities. Previous research by Collins, Collins and Butts (2013) explores the levels of academic achievement amongst young boys who attended a single sex, selective school (or 'grammar school') in Birmingham, focusing particularly on the impact that socio-economic background and ethnicity can have on academic results. Of the student population of the school in question, 45% came from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background at the time of the study. The research finds that boys from BME groups generally performed worse than White British (WB) boys, and that students raised in poorer communities of the city were more likely to underachieve academically. It is argued that grammar schools can actually be damaging to social mobility (Durham University, 2018). As highlighted by Elliott (2009), countries seen as having the highest levels of social mobility (Canada, the Scandinavian countries) have fully comprehensive education, as opposed to the selective grammar-school model.

“Children from lower-income households struggle far more than children from more affluent backgrounds in securing good GCSE results”
(Evans and Whitehead, 2011).



School models aren't the only indicator of how social mobility will be affected by education, as household incomes will inevitably effect a student's academic output (Cooper and Stewart, 2013). Children from lower-income households struggle far more than children from more affluent backgrounds in securing good GCSE results (Evans and Whitehead, 2011). However, the link between students from affluent backgrounds, and the achievement of academic goals, cannot simply be reduced to a higher family income, as there are many cultural factors which will also inevitably play a part (Collins, Collins and Butts, 2013). For example, the hours which parents work will affect, and be affected by, school hours and the travel time needed to access the school.

Other factors which may influence a pupil's academic achievements include the educational backgrounds of the parents, and the languages spoken at home (including the parent's grasp on the English language). Parents with lower English language skills may struggle to support their children with homework, and may struggle with letters and reports sent by the school. Along with this, a parent's experience with the British educational system will invariably effect their child's academic output. A 2010 study by the education charity The Sutton Trust found that in England, pupils whose parents had degrees performed in the top quarter of their peer group, whereas this was only the case for 9% of teenagers whose parents had not graduated secondary school (Shepherd and Stevens, 2010).

Travel time to school often has a substantial effect on the academic progress of a pupil. Collins, Collins and Butt's (2013) study of a Birmingham grammar-school found that the areas nearest the school had the lowest percentage of low achievers. 9 of the 10 pupils interviewed in the study who lived over 45 minutes away from the school agreed that living closer to the school would improve their educational progress. The link between geographical proximity to the school and educational achievement can be put down to a few things, namely: that pupils may be dissuaded from attending extra-curricular activities and after-school classes because of the need to travel on time, and students travelling further will have less time to reserve for homework and studying.

“There are now 500,000 more children living in poverty than in 2012.”

Along with these indicators, levels of child poverty have a substantial effect on educational attainment, and as a result, on social mobility among young people in the UK. There are now 500,000 more children living in poverty than in 2012 (Social Mobility Commission, 2019). Child poverty can have an effect on things such as pupil's need for free school meals. Only 16% of pupils on free school meals attain at least two A-levels by the age of 19, compared to 39% of all other pupils (Social Mobility Commission, 2019).

From this introductory study of social mobility and education in the UK, we can derive a few key points, namely that:

- **Regarding education, British students trail behind those of other economically developed countries in terms of social mobility levels.**
- **The grammar school system can be damaging to the potential for social mobility.**
- **Children from lower-income households struggle far more than children from more affluent backgrounds when it comes to securing good GCSE results.**
- **The educational background of a pupil's parents (as well as the parent's grasp on the English language) can have a substantial effect on a pupil's academic achievements.**
- **The travel time to and from a school can have a detrimental impact on a pupil's academic progress.**
- **Child poverty, and the need for free school meals, can effect a pupil's educational progress.**

This introduction has given us a context for how a number of variables can effect a child's educational attainment at primary and secondary school level, and from there we can explore how these variables can effect pupils in a post-compulsory education setting.

Access to Higher Education, and its effect on job prospects.

Education as a tool for social mobility doesn't begin and end with compulsory primary and secondary school education. Universities provide the chance for social mobility for students from all walks of life (Greening, 2019). However, in a report on young Londoner's access to higher education, Evans and Whitehead (2011) found that young people from poorer areas of London are significantly less likely to go to the most prestigious, research-intensive universities than their more well-off peers. In the report, they suggest that higher education is a gateway to social mobility, as the high-level skills attained through universities and colleges are often necessary for professional and highly-paid jobs.

Many urban areas that lack in social mobility have limited access to higher education, which restricts choice for low-income young people who choose to stay at home whilst studying (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). In the ten worst-performing local authority areas for youth social mobility, parts of the locality are an hour from the nearest university by public transport, and even further from a selective university, limiting a pupil's education options. For disadvantaged students, proximity is one of the biggest factors in determining their choice of university, and disadvantaged young people are more likely to study at home than their better-off peers. For many, geographical remoteness can act as a barrier for entering higher or further education. Initiatives such as travel bursaries introduced by universities or local authorities can be used to counteract these boundaries.

Geography isn't the only barrier stopping disadvantaged young people from entering post-compulsory education though; young people from families and communities where higher education isn't perceived as a priority are less likely to consider accessing higher education (Evans and Whitehead, 2011). Individuals from lower-income areas may also be discouraged from accessing higher education as they currently face the toughest job market in decades, and a degree does not offer the guarantee of a career or well-paying job. However, research does suggest that attaining a degree will boost an individual's job prospects, as almost 90% of graduates are in work, whereas only 75% of individuals with A-level equivalent qualifications are in work (Evans and Whitehead, 2011).



Evans and Whitehead (2011) highlight indicators which may influence an individual's decision to access higher education as follows: finance and employment aspects (accessing higher education should pay off with better pay and better job prospects); effort (access to higher education should be straightforward and unburdened by bureaucratic processes), and habit (for many young people, going to university or college is not the default choice).

It is important to stress that while both a compulsory and post-compulsory education can be valuable when it comes to accessing the world of work, young people still struggle with an incredibly competitive and difficult job market, and the difficulty in finding work can be particularly pertinent with young people from working class communities. Previous research into social mobility has consistently exposed vast class differences within the realms of educational attainment and professional success across British society (Li, 2018). Individuals from affluent or middle-class backgrounds are almost 80% more likely to be in professional or high-skilled work than individuals from poorer or more working-class communities (Social Mobility Commission, 2019). Despite increases in employment across the UK, people from working-class backgrounds face higher levels of unemployment than their middle-class peers (Sellgren, 2017).

From this previous research on access to higher education, and its prospect for work, we can deduce a few things, namely that:

- **Young people from poorer areas are less likely to attend prestigious universities than students from more affluent backgrounds.**
- **Proximity to a higher-education facility will have a substantial effect for young people on deciding whether to attend a university or college (travel bursaries can be an effective way to combat this).**
- **Employment aspects, difficulties in the application process, and family education levels, will all play a part in determining whether a pupil applies to a higher education institution.**
- **A degree does not guarantee the prospect of a career, and pupils from middle-class backgrounds are more likely to access high-skilled work than pupils from working-class communities.**

This gives us a key indication as to how class and economic background can have an effect on a young person's desire to continue in education, but it is vital to explore how ethnicity and nationality (which are not mutually exclusive with class) can be a determinant in a person's educational levels and job prospects.

The effect of ethnicity and nationality on social mobility.

Research by Li (2018) finds that many ethnic groupings in Britain, with the exception of black Caribbean men and women and Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, are as likely or more likely than whites to have degree-level education. However, this research also indicates that although both first-generation and second-generation migrants have higher levels of education than white-British citizens, their proportions in high-salaried positions are generally lower than for white British citizens.

Concerning education, Li (2018) asserts that many setbacks which affect first-generation migrants can be negated with their children, as that generation were often born in, or grew up from a young age in the UK. As a result, second-generation migrants have lived experience of the British educational system, which Li argues is their passport to the British labour market. However, the research also indicated a clear immigrant class decline, as all second-generation groups parental class is lower than that of whites (apart from black Africans). **As Li (2018:276) puts it:**

“although both (first and second) generations have much higher levels of education than do white (except from black Caribbean men and Pakistani/Bangladeshi women), their proportions in salariat positions are generally lower than for whites (except for Chinese and Indians)”.



First generation migrants are expected to experience setbacks in the UK due to several things; language barriers, a lack of experience of both the British education system and the British labour market, and overt and covert forms of racial discrimination can result in social exclusion (Li, 2018). These setbacks, however, are less likely to affect the second generation. We can gather from this, that while ethnicity and nationality have little effect on a young person's educational levels, they can have an effect on a young person's job prospects.

The next stage of the report will explore a success story in social mobility, namely in how London managed to transform its state schools.

How the London Challenge Initiative tackled educational inequality.

It should be noted that there is a substantial geographical division in measurable social mobility; London provides more educational opportunities for its residents – including the poorest and most disadvantaged – to progress than elsewhere in the UK (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). London and its surrounding areas accounts for nearly two thirds of all social mobility hotspots in the UK, including Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Hackney. Policies adopted by local authorities can have a substantial constructive influence on disadvantaged residents. The *Social Mobility in Great Britain 2017* report offers a significant example of this:

“two decades ago, London’s state schools were routinely described as the worst in the country. Now they are the best. The education attainment of disadvantaged children has dramatically improved thanks to initiatives like London Challenge and the combined efforts of local councils, teachers and governors” (Social Mobility Commission, 2017: vi).

The London Challenge initiative operated from 2003 to 2011, and at its peak had a budget of £40m per year, funding support for underperforming schools (Kidson and Norris, 2014). It invested in school leaderships, development programmes, delivered support for teachers, and worked with key boroughs to ensure robust local planning. Initiatives such as this one have overseen dramatic improvements in comprehensive state education in the capital. The *Social Mobility in Great Britain 2017* report proposes that every local authority develop an integrated strategy for improving disadvantaged pupil’s outcomes, and that pupil premium funds should be invested in evidence-based practice, with the hope of achieving similar results to those in London.



Although the London Challenge initiative can be measured as a social mobility success story, not all regions of the UK are as successful in progressing social mobility as the capital. Only 13% of disadvantages young people in former industrial areas, and 14% in remote rural coldspots (places with lower levels of social mobility) progress to university, compared to 27% in social mobility hotspots such as London (Social Mobility Commission, 2017).

The next section will take what has previously been explored in the report, and place it firmly in the context of Wales.

Social mobility in Wales.

In Wales, cities do not act as social mobility engines for their residents, and in Cardiff, there are higher proportions of young people not in higher education, employment or training after finishing school compared to rural areas, despite the city having numerous higher education institutions (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). Wales is the only UK nation to see an increase in child poverty in 2018 according to research by Loughborough University, commissioned for the End Child Poverty Network (Pollock, 2019). The research suggested that more than 206,000 Welsh children were living in poverty in 2017-18. The research suggests that 7 out of the 10 wards in Wales with the highest numbers of child poverty are in Cardiff. The wards of Butetown, Grangetown, Caerau and Adamsdown have the highest levels of child poverty in Cardiff.



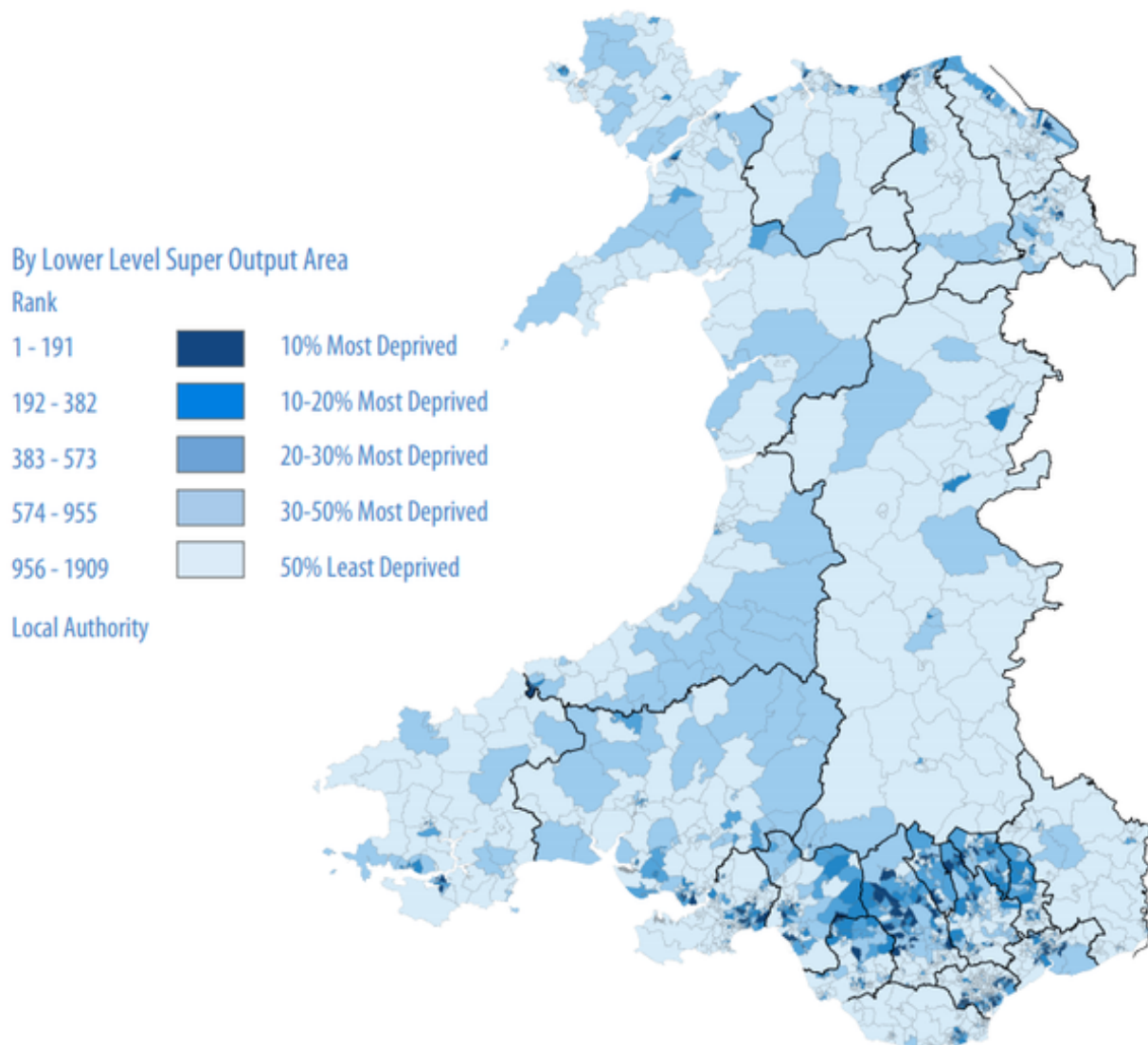
To tackle rising levels of inequality and poverty in Wales, the Welsh Government's (2019) Child Poverty Progress Report 2019 sets out strategies that have been implemented in Wales. These include:

- **A £5.1m Pupil Development Grant Access for families struggling to buy uniform, sports kits, and other equipment.**
- **Free school meals, funded by local authorities.**
- **A Free Breakfast in Primary Schools Scheme.**
- **A £3.2m School Milk Scheme.**
- **An £800k School Holiday Enrichment Programme to provide opportunities for 7-11-year-old children to make the most of school facilities during school holidays.**
- **A £3.1m Period Dignity scheme, providing free period products for young people in schools and FE institutions.**
- **A £100k Holiday Hunger – Playworks Pilot, run over the 2019 summer holidays and half terms, to extend provision of food for children and young people in areas of high deprivation.**

The Welsh Government (2019) has also commenced strategies for supporting training and employment in Wales, including:

- **A £40m Childcare Offer Wales, providing 30 hours of government funded early education and childcare for children of working parents.**
 - **£17m Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), providing £30 per week for 16 to 18-year-olds living in low income households to continue their education.**
 - **£5m Welsh Government Learning Grant for FE, offering grants of up to £1,500 for full-time courses or up to £750 for part-time courses for students aged 19 or over from low income households.**
 - **Support for Undergraduate Study, a non-means tested maintenance grant of £1,000 per annum for every student (up to £8,100 for students from low income households towards the costs of living away from home).**
 - **Postgraduate Masters support, a non-means tested grant of £1,000 and a means-tested contribution of up to £5,885 for students from low income households.**
-

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2019 (Welsh Government, 2019), measures relative deprivation for small areas in Wales, based on Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). There are currently 1,909 LSOAs defined in Wales, each having an average population of around 1,600 people. The WIMD measures 8 domains of deprivation, compiled from a range of different indicators, with those 8 indicators being: Income, Employment, Health, Education, Access to Services, Community Safety, Physical Environment and Housing. The WIMD ranks LSOAs from most deprived to least deprived on a numerical scale, with 1-191 being in the 10% most deprived, 192-382 being in the 10%-20% most deprived, 383-573 being in the most 20%-30% most deprived, 574-955 being in the 30%-50% most deprived, and 956-1909 being in the 50% least deprived.



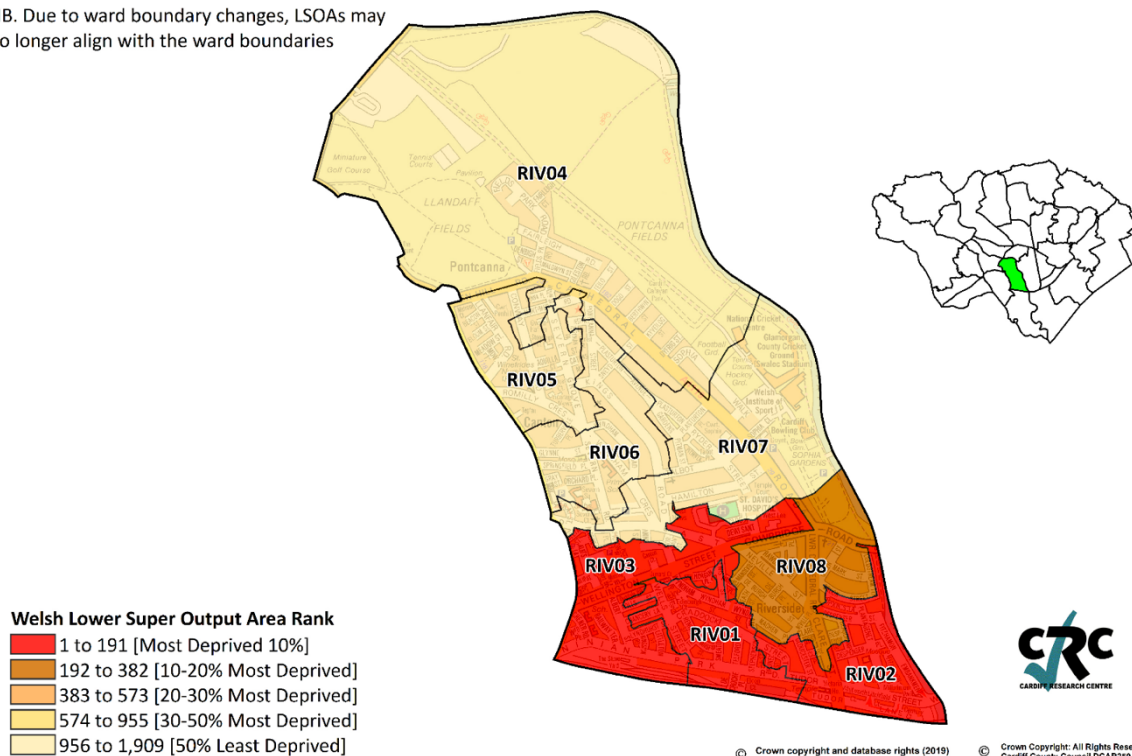
Social mobility in Riverside.

The WIMD 2019 puts Riverside 3 at number 66 for overall deprivation, placing it in the 10% most deprived areas in Wales, and number 198 for education, putting it in the 10%-20% most deprived areas in Wales. Riverside 2 is ranked 108 overall, and 364 for education, and Riverside 1 comes in at 140 overall, and 522 for education. In comparison, Riverside 4 (which includes parts of Pontcanna) is ranked 1,316 overall, and 1,806 for education, making it one of the least deprived areas in Wales. The next section will use WIMD data to explore Riverside in further detail.

According to 2011 Census data, Riverside has a lower level of residents with either no qualifications or qualifications equal to one or more GCSE at grade D or below, than the national average (iLiveHere, n.d.). Riverside also has a higher level of residents with a higher education qualification than the national average. This suggests that on average, residents of Riverside have a higher educational level than the average Welsh citizen.

2019 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation Overall Rank: Riverside

NB. Due to ward boundary changes, LSOAs may no longer align with the ward boundaries



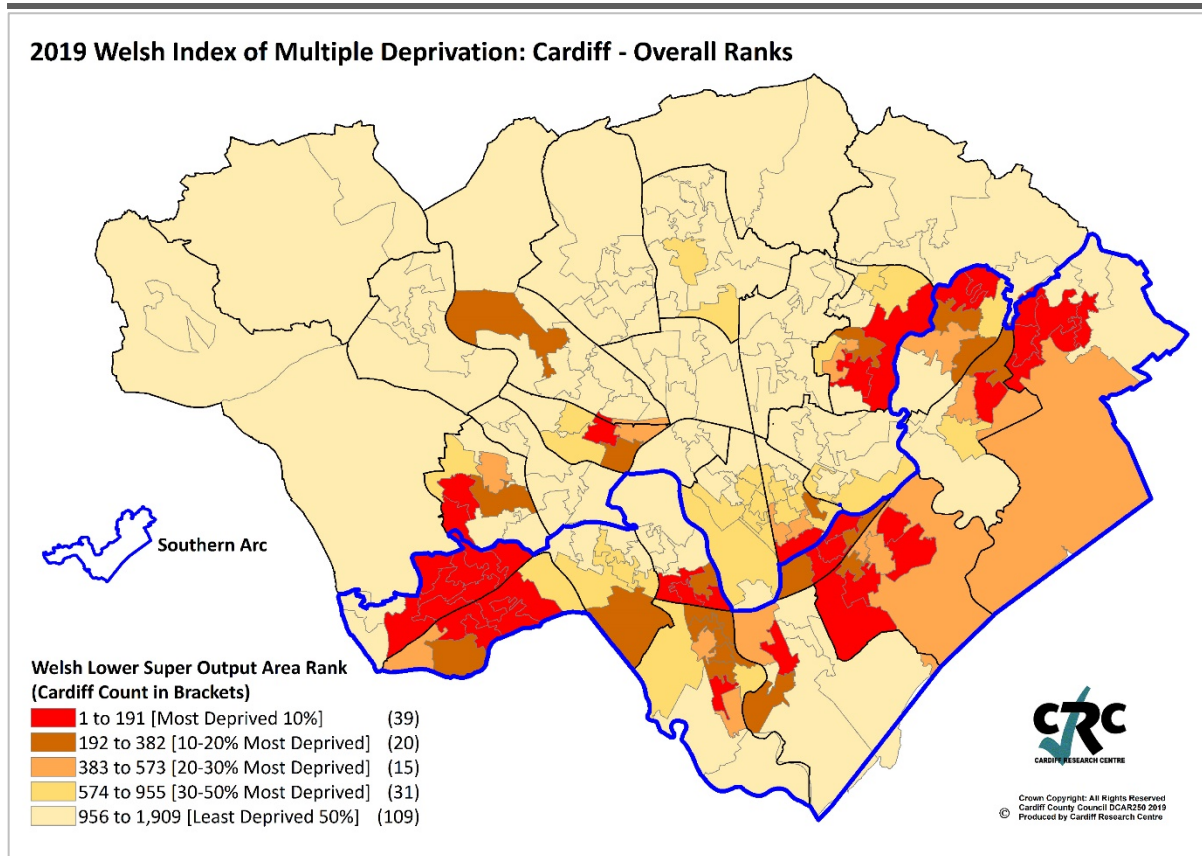
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Ordnance Survey (100023376)

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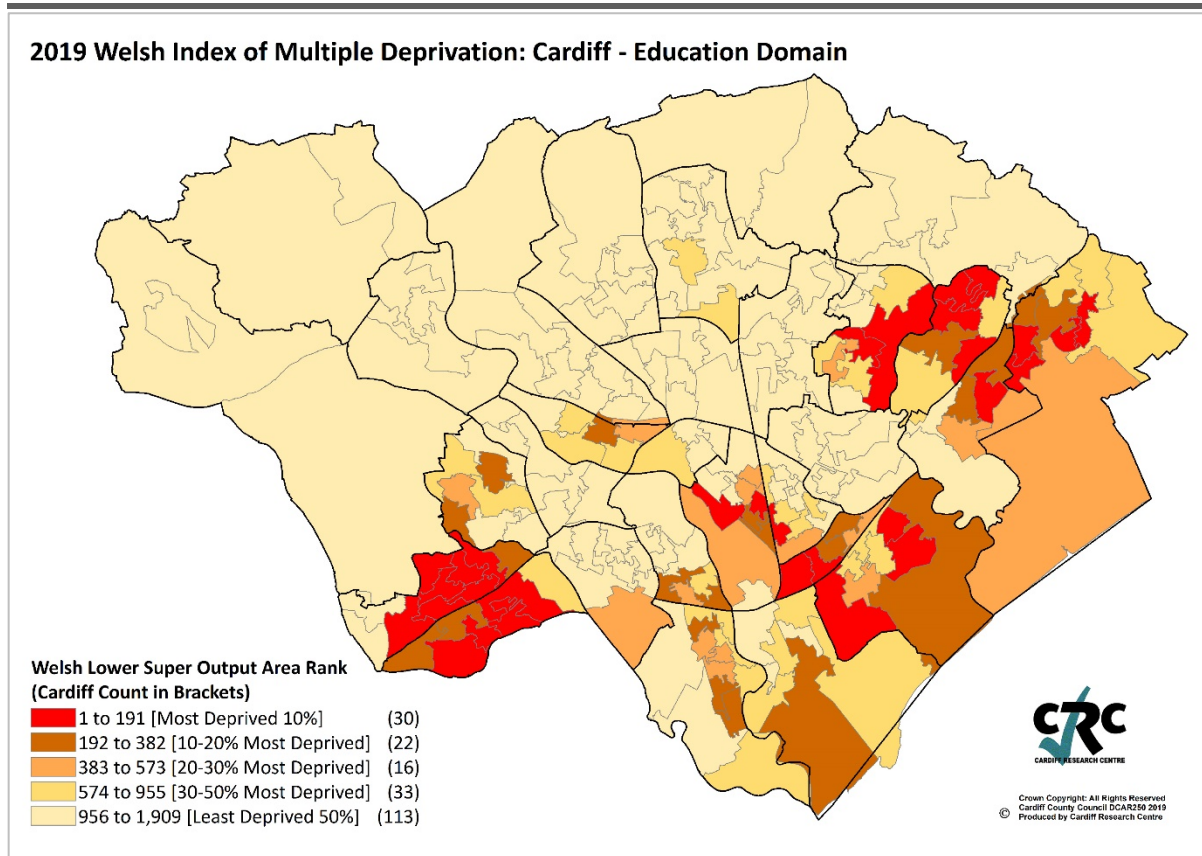
Above is the WIMD map of Riverside, showing that the LSOAs of Riverside 1, Riverside 2 and Riverside 3 are in the 10% most deprived areas in Wales overall. Regarding education, the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (Welsh Government, 2019) defines the education domain as having 6 key indicators:

- **Key stage 4 average points score in core subjects.**
- **Repeat absenteeism rate.**
- **Adults aged 25-64 with no qualifications.**
- **Key stage 4 leavers entering higher education.**
- **Key stage 2 average point score.**
- **Foundation phase average point score.**

Four of these indicators focus on capturing low attainment levels among children and young people, and the other two focus on capturing the lack of qualifications and skills in adults. Using this education domain, Riverside 1 is ranked 522 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, placing it among the 20-30% most deprived regarding education: Riverside 2 is ranked 364 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, placing it among the 10-20% most deprived regarding education: and Riverside 3 is ranked 198 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, placing it among the 10-20% most deprived regarding education (WIMD.gov.Wales, 2019). In contrast to this, the nearby LSOA of Riverside 6 is ranked 1800 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, and the nearby LSOA of Riverside 7 is ranked 1623 out of 1909 LSOAs, placing them both among the 50% least deprived LSOAs in Wales regarding education.



The map above shows overall deprivation in Cardiff, with the Southern Arc (which comprises Adamsdown, Butetown, Caerau, Canton, Ely, Grangetown, Llanrumney, Riverside, Rumney, Splott, and Trowbridge) is highlighted in blue. 18.2% of Cardiff's LSOAs are in the 10% most deprived areas in Wales, but the Southern Arc alone has 36.7% in the 10% most deprived.



This map of Cardiff shows deprivation in the Education Domain, signifying that none of the Riverside LSOAs are in the 10% most deprived for education. Cardiff contains 30 LSOAs in the 10% most educationally deprived in Wales, with the most educationally deprived LSOAs being Caerau (Cardiff) 3 at 22, Ely 2 at 23, and Caerau (Cardiff) 6 at 27. The least educationally deprived LSOA in Cardiff is Whitchurch and Tongwynlais 1, at 1,906 in the index.

Riverside 1, 2, and 3 in 10% for overall deprivation, and Riverside 1 in 20-30% most educationally deprived, Riverside 2 and 3 in the 10-20% most educationally deprived. With neighbouring Riverside 4, 5, 6 and 7 being in the 50% least deprived overall, and the 50% least educationally deprived, this signifies a substantial imbalance in the ward of Riverside. This imbalance is not uncommon in urban areas. However, Riverside as a whole has a lower level of residents with no qualifications than the national average, and in light of this it is worth exploring the successes of the local schools in Riverside.

Local Schools.

Fitzalan High School, in the ward of Canton, includes parts of Riverside in its catchment area. The school draws on an overall catchment area where 70% of pupils come from a minority ethnic background and speak English as an additional language (Hitt, 2020). Around 60% of the school's pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales with 32.7% eligible for free school meals, far higher than the 17.4% national average (Wightwick, 2017). Despite these level of deprivation, the proportion of pupils achieving five A – A* grades at GCSE is consistently higher than in similar schools in Cardiff.

The school was awarded “double excellent” standard by Estyn inspectors in 2017, who stated the school had a “clear vision”, and promoted “outstandingly high levels of aspiration and ambition” (Wightwick, 2017). In January 2020, it was revealed that every pupil in a class of 30 received an A* result in their maths GCSE, despite taking the exams six months early (BBC News, 2020). The Year 11 class had the same teacher, Francis Elivie, since starting at the secondary school. Just 14% of pupils sitting the exam achieve an A* grade in Wales.



Around 60% of Fitzalan's pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales with 32.7% eligible for free school meals, far higher than the 17.4% national average.

The school is due to be rebuilt, as part of a £284m investment which is jointly funded by the council and the Welsh Government as part of the 21st Century Schools programme for Cardiff (Powney, 2018). The new building will hold 1,500 Year 7 to Year 11 student, plus a sixth form.

In terms of primary schools, Kitchener Primary School, also in Canton, counts Riverside in its catchment area. In 2016, the school received the "double excellent" Estyn inspection report (Evans, 2016).

Conclusion.

The aim of this report is to highlight education as a tool for social mobility, by underpinning the social demographic which make up Riverside, exploring the educational institutions within the ward, and looking further afield to examine how social mobility has been facilitated by schools, higher education institutions, and local authorities. With social mobility stagnant since 2014 (Social Mobility Commission, 2019), and British students lagging behind those of other economically developed countries (Collins, Collins and Butt, 2013), this is a topical and significant area of research, and the report has brought up some important findings.

On average, the residents of Riverside have higher educational levels than the average Welsh citizen, as the ward has lower levels of residents with no qualifications than the national average (iLiveHere, n.d.), and a higher level of residents with a higher education qualification than the national average. Despite the levels of educational deprivation within the ward (Riverside 1 is among the 20-30% most educationally deprived, and Riverside 2 and 3 are in the 10-20% most educationally deprived), local secondary school Fitzalan is succeeding in turning out well-educated pupils, with the proportion of pupils achieving five A-A* GCSEs consistently higher than in similar schools in Cardiff.



Another advantage Riverside has is its proximity to higher education facilities, including numerous universities, as research has indicated that proximity to a higher-education facility will have a substantial effect for young people on deciding whether to attend a university or college. Despite this, in Cardiff there are higher proportions of young people not in higher education, employment or training after finishing school compared to rural areas (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). To tackle this, the Government has laid out a few programmes, which can be found on page 13 of this report.

Programmes supported by the Welsh Government, such as Education Maintenance Allowance, the Welsh Government Learning Grant, and a non-means tested maintenance grant for Undergraduate study, are helping to drive for a high standard in Welsh education, and by learning from initiatives such as the London Challenge Initiative, schools in Cardiff and across Wales can achieve the high standard seen in comprehensive schools in London. This would include investing in school leaderships and development programmes, delivering support for teachers, head teachers and other school staff, and work with local authorities to ensure robust planning.

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