

Living through change in challenging neighbourhoods

There is a considerable body of research evidence on how poverty is experienced, on what it is like to live in socially and economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, on how neighbourhoods change over time and on the factors that shape residential mobility. But these have existed as largely discrete areas of study. This major research project, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation from April 2007 to December 2010, aims to bring together these topics to develop an integrated evaluation of:

- how the experience of living with dimensions of poverty in Britain varies according to space and time;
- the role of 'place' in the actions taken and decisions made by different types of household, in different contexts;
- how residential mobility over time affects the contours of spatial and social disadvantage in different types of neighbourhood;
- the implications of different responses for the development of policy solutions in the future.

The research is designed to review the salience of 'place' in debates about the future contours of poverty and how to respond to them, not least by listening to the accounts from those experiencing poverty in different ways and in different neighbourhood contexts. The research seeks to unlock patterns in these narratives about poverty, across time and across space. In this way, future policies may be able to respond better to the increasingly diverse geographical, demographic, social, cultural and economic picture of poverty in Britain today.

The research team is based in the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University, and is directed by Professor Ian Cole. The research material will consist of largely qualitative household and focus group interviews to be undertaken in six neighbourhoods, with different demographic, social and economic attributes. The interviews undertaken in the first year will be followed up two years later in order to assess how personal circumstances, attitudes and experiences have changed and how far this has been influenced by changes in the neighbourhoods where the households now live. This approach will be complemented by the collection of audio-visual material around specific research themes, and by reference to special diaries kept by residents in the neighbourhoods.

An innovatory dissemination programme has been conceived for the project which is varied in length and format and will be produced at different stages of the research. Concise *Community Profiles* will be produced for each of the case study neighbourhoods after the wave 1 and again after the wave 2 interviews. Professionally produced *audio-visual material*, put together by a creative practitioner working with residents, will highlight in visual form some of the challenges and experiences of life in these areas.

A series of short *Policy Briefings* will be produced during the research process and *Thematic Papers* will compare experiences across the case studies on particular cross-cutting topics. In addition, there will be an *interim* and a *final research report* and a *summary* of the research findings.