

PROGRAMME THREE Part 1

COMM

This series has been looking at the poor in Britain in the 80s through the eyes of seven families.

On the basis of a major survey, earlier programmes established the minimum standard of living to which everyone should be entitled in the view of society as a whole. We revealed that 7½ million people in Britain today are too poor to maintain this minimum standard.

In this programme we look at why some people end up poor.

When Kevin Cain left school, he wanted to be a solicitor. He asked his careers officer about it.

SYNC KEVIN

I had it all planned, you know. I'd see her, she'd tell me what to do. I seen her and she said well, you've got to go to college and further education and this, that and the other. But it all went wrong. I ended up not too badly off but, you know, I can't be what I want to be now. I mean I'm too old sort of thing like.

COMM

- Kevin far from becoming a solicitor has spent most of the five years since he left school unemployed. He left with just three CSEs. It ruled out a career in the legal profession. And living in Liverpool, with its soaring unemployment these meagre qualifications even rule out the few jobs that are around.

V/O KEVIN

When I, when I went in for this job, like, it was only to car sales person, you had to have about six 'O' levels and two 'A' levels. And I haven't got that.

I go to the job centre, I come in and have a look around there and know there's, there's nothing there for me personally.

COMM

For Kevin the high point of his week is a trip to the pub to play darts. It's a far cry from his schoolday dreams.

ACTUALITY

Pub

COMM

Why did Kevin fail to fulfill his ambition to become a solicitor? Were his chances in life less than that of others because he was born and brought up in decaying Liverpool?

ACTUALITY

Pub noises

SYNC PAMELA

Well I get the mice coming in through the bottom of the stove, they do their urine, their toilet inside the stove, they come up through here they do it all over the top, and they live in there sometimes, find, the last time we found a half a dozen in the cooker that one time. This is where they're living, in the bottom here.

COMM

Pamela Benn lives in an unhygienic attic flat in central London with her nine month old baby

V/O PAMELA

What I really like doing is cooking, that's my, mine thing that I like doing because when we were in school they took us once a week to the technical college in Aberdeen, every week we used to learn about baking and cooking and things like that.

COMM

Pamela feels that her life could have been very different.

V/O PAMELA

I used to say if I'd gone to college or got in a better standard in my school I maybe would've had a good job by now.

SYNC PAMELA

I came to London when I was 18. I was hoping to get a good job and a decent place to live and put everything behind me what happened to me before, just goint to start fresh. If I'd known I'd come to London, I had no job, no place to stay and I ended up in this place, in a rubbish dump, that's what I call it, it's just ridiculous. I've been landed with that baby, it's not good for the baby either, I don't know what future she's going to have.

COMM

So will Pamela's poverty today, trap baby Emma's future? Is it still the case that in Britain in the 80s, those who are born poor are likely to die poor?

At Oxford University, a major study has been in progress for many years into the chances of each generation of children since the turn of the century. Professor A.H. Halsey.

HALSEY SYNC

Since the war, Britain has become--a rather richer country, we must remember that. But even though that is true, those who are born at the bottom end, those who are poor, are the ones who are most likely to stay at the bottom end, and their chances of staying at the bottom end are no different now compared with those who start at the top end, than they were at the end of the second war.

ACTUALITY

Labour party's great victory ...  
new world conditions.

COMM

After the second war, Clem Attlee's Labour government laid the foundations for changes which it was thought would give the children of the poor an equal chance with others.

The aim was to create a fairer society where a child's future wasn't determined by where they were born and brought up. During the post-war years, action was taken on two main fronts to end the disadvantages suffered by poor children. First housing and the environment: the conditions children grow up in are crucial to their development. There was a massive programme of slum clearance. New council estates sprung up which at the time improved the housing of many poor families. And second, education. Schools were given more resources and higher education was swiftly expanded. The aim was to give all children the chance of better qualifications.

But these efforts have not succeeded. The disadvantages for a poor child still start from birth. Baby Emma still lives in housing which is chronic disrepair leading to damp and the infestations of insects and mice.

SYNC PAMELA

Just a couple of days ago I found one dead mouse lying in my child's cot when I went to clean it out. And I was disgusted.

She won't stay in her cot, she won't sleep in her cot at night. Cos she's seen them running up and down in the cot. She starts screaming.

I can't leave her alone for five minutes - its like that every day and night. I can't leave her alone at all. I have to be with her all the time.

COMM

Housing conditions as bad as this lead to basic problems of tiredness and ill-health for baby Emma, but they also limit her opportunities in many ways.

SYNC PAMELA

Well its no place to bring up a baby, for a start because it's too small, she's got no room to play about in, because of the damp she can't go on the floor because the bugs crawl all over the place, she can't go on the floor at all.

ACTUALITY

Hello Pamela

COMM

Dr Tauquir Ahmad, the family's GP, has been concerned by these bad conditions. Even by the age of 9 months, Emma's chances in later life are likely to be diminished by the way her lack of opportunities today limit her development

SYNC DR AHMAD

Beside the bad health, the child's opportunity to grow in a free open environment are so badly lacking in an accommodation like this that the child's mental growth, the development which is in early years of the life is severely hampered and the child will lead into a bigger child or a grown-up which he'll be very much lacking in very many important aspects of the life in mental growth as well as physical health.

COMM

Pamela's flat is privately rented. She pays £22.50 a week.

SYNC PAMELA BENN

Well I look through the paper and I can't find anything, there is not anything that is suitable for me to go. Some saying its too expensive, other don't like to have children. They mostly like students or qualified people.

COMM

In the open market, the poor can only afford accommodation at the very bottom of the pile.

Though many of the privately-rented slum dwellings have been cleared away since the war, among the privately-rented housing that remains, a high proportion is in bad condition.

SYNC DR AHMAD

I know of the streets after streets where there are housing where in each house there may be 16, 20 tenants, 10 tenants, 12 tenants using the basic facilities of the house and leading to extremely unhygienic and poor housing conditions.

The situation is so bad that I am having to not only see so many patients unnecessarily but also I am desperate and in desperation I'm writing so many

different cases having writing a letter of recommendation for urgent medical priority housing, rehousing, council rehousing situation.

COMM

Priced out of good accommodation in the private sector, its to the council that the poor have to turn for any chance of decent housing. Nine months ago, Pamela received a reply from Hackney housing department.

SYNC PAMELA

Well I got this letter through saying, that they are thanking me for the application for the housing accommodation, and they are writing to tell me concerning my living accommodation has been assessed, and they classified me as requiring two bedroom accommodation and have awarded me a total of 81 points. And then they said at the end that they would as soon as there is any possibility of making me an offer of accommodation they will let me know in writing. I have been to the council and I've had no reply, they won't rehouse me or anything.

SYNC SHOULTS

Pamela Benn has 83 points which is quite a record of the high level of need but nevertheless it's probably not really high enough for us to visit unless we're told that the situation is more serious than we've got on her application form. When we visit we see whether there are any more serious points that we should've picked up. Now even if we find that conditions are very much worse and that would mean say for instance if she got another 20 points, in terms of the condition of the room and what rooms she can actually use, that would just about bring her up to the level where we would consider rehousing her

but you've got to remember there are some 250 350 other families in a very similar situation even at that high level and then she has to compete with people who are homeless and people who we have to rehouse from other council accommodation and the chances of her getting any accommodation at all are not good.

COMM

Despite the rapid expansion of council housing in the 50s and 60s, inner city councils like Hackney are still very short of accommodation.

There has never been enough money channelled into council housing to meet demand and recent government cuts have led to the lowest levels of council house building since the war.

Hackney's housing director, Tony Shoults:

SYNC SHOULTS

The situation is getting much worse and we're finding it harder and harder to house young families with children, partly that's because our own stock is old and a lot of it has to be revamped in some way or other, redeveloped, or rehabilitated, partly it is that we don't have enough money to do that and we haven't got any land now to build new housing on, we can't move people out to the outer boroughs, because of the right to buy has moved so much housing out of council stock, and we can't move out to the new towns because those new towns are no longer expanding so we're very much trapped within our own resources.

SYNC PAMELA

I'm trapped altogether. I'll just have to stay here. I'm trapped in what I've got, this room and the kitchen, nothing at all.

COMM

Melanie Bragg has had a better start to life than baby Emma. The family live in a council house, and like most council housing it does provide better conditions than the overcrowded, unhygienic slums it replaced, and which is still prevalent in the private-rented sector today.

The Braggs live on the Fallowfield Estate in Manchester. Built in the 30s, the houses are comparatively spacious and of pleasant design. But fifty years later, there are problems. Inside the houses suffer the consequences of lack of repair.

SYNC ELAINE

There is the damp in the living room and the bedroom. They did that two years ago, and it came back, but they just, I don't know, they just don't seem to care. It's as though they think oh, she's got repairs, we'll do them eventually. I mean they've had notes. I went down to the yard and they had a note for, to test the flue, and that was last January, and they still didn't come.

COMM

Graham Goodhead, Director of Housing, Manchester.

SYNC GOODHEAD

The Bragg family, in common with any of the other 106,000 tenants that we've got, are putting in demands for repair service to meet something like 250,000 to 300,000 repair notes each year, and that's a tremendous volume, notwithstanding that we are short of money this year we'll spend something like 40 million pounds on maintenance, and capital investment to sustain the fabric, but we know that it's not enough.

COMM

The problems of keeping up with repairs have intensified recently as public expenditure cuts have bitten. But lack of money is a problem that goes right back to the start of the post-war expansion plans.

SYNC GOODHEAD

After the war, the need to clear 85 thousand slums that were mainly landlord owned slums meant that the city couldn't go about its rehabilitation task. So there was some neglect, these inter-war estates started to deteriorate, the city had got a choice. Do we build houses for people who need them in slum clearance, do we build houses for people who have been in the army, who wish to return. Or do we use the money to go about rehabilitation.

And the choice was taken to build new. Let's get the housing started, let's get the slums, the worse first, the slums are undoubtedly the worst. And the Fallowfields of this world had to stand in abeyance.

And we started to do the Fallowfields of this world in 1973, and we set about to do 31,000 in ten years, we did 20,000 when the money supply was cut of places like Fallowfields are going to get worse unless we get more money..

COMM

Roy Bragg would like to be able to move the family away. The Fallowfield estate - once the pride of Manchester - has fallen to being among the bottom fifth of the city's housing. And as the estate has declined, vandalism has grown.

A few weeks back the house opposite was burnt out.

Roy's hopes of moving are however, in vain.

Though Roy works, the job is badly paid and when recently he was on short time, he built up rent arrears of several hundred pounds with the council. If you're in debt to the council, you're not eligible for transfer. Once again, the poorest are left at the bottom of the heap.

SYNC GOODHEAD

IN our poorest estates, that are on least demand, we've got the highest incidents of poverty, the highest incident of unemployment and generally social and economic problems. Usually there is fabric decay, that is people who feel that they haven't got much choice, tend to gravitate to such estates.

COMM

The Braggs house is, at last, being repaired.

V/O ELAINE

They've only just done it, and it's only because the television involved, that they have done it. I mean this past fortnight they have been doing them. All the major repairs have been done. Which I'm glad, because the house was so cold, cold and damp, we couldn't get the house warm, it was affecting Melanie's health.

COMM

For Melanie Bragg, the repairs have come too late.

V/O SYNC ELAINE

She's had bronchial pneumonia, she went into hospital, and a fortnight later she got it again, so she went back into the hospital, but they said the dampness in the house wasn't helping her health.

COMM

When Melanie was ill, she was very withdrawn.

ACTUALITY

"Do you want to help Mummy take the sheets off Darren's bed"

COMM

As a result her language is limited for a child of over three. She may catch up but it's been a bad start.

ACTUALITY

You're cheeky

COMM

For Tony Weston a rapid deterioration in his health - again caused by bad housing - has come at a critical time. At the age of 13 he's coming up to the exam years - but last year he could only attend school for a month. Now he's had to be sent to a special school

SYNC ANN WESTON

I got a letter from the Education regarding the school Tony's at, at the moment, which she reckons, the Health Education Officer reckons that he shouldn't be at the school. I've got a letter in the house, I'll go and fetch it. Excuse me.

COMM

Tony suffers from bronchial asthma, seriously exacerbated by the lack of heating in their inadequately modernise pre-war council house. He needs to live in a centrally-heated atmosphere and so the Westons have applied for a transfer.

SYNC ANN WESTON

Its from a Mrs, the head, senior social worker at the Education, she says I'm writing out of concern at the appalling unheated accommodation in which this family lives. Their son Anthony suffers from asthma which has and is being seriously aggravated by the cold house. This in turn has affected his education. As a result of a severe deterioration in Anthony's health over the last twelve months, when he can hardly able to attend his local school, we have had to arrange for him to transfer to a boarding school for delicate children. It should not be necessary to send him away from home. Because his parents look after him very well. It was solely due to the poor housing. I do strongly recommend that you give Mr Weston application for transfer upmost priority. To enable Anthony to be properly cared for at home. Yours faithfully etc.

COMM

The Westons are still waiting. For Kevin Cain the problems of bad housing stem from a very different cause to the lack of modernisation of pre-war estates. For this estate was built in the 50s. The final twist that limited housing opportunities for the poor is that a significant number of these new estates fell swiftly into disrepair.

Kevin and his cousin, Jimmy Disley have seen their failure at first hand.

SYNC JIMMY AND KEVIN

Remember years ago, Kevin, this wasn't here years ago, Right, these were all terraces, right, back to back houses. Now the thing was, the Conpy come along right, knocked all them terraced houses down, build this lot here, right, right, they put the people in it, right, OK, think its great, they've got a bath, right, they've never had a bath, before, that was great, OK, Now what they did, didn't think of, was anything on the outside. And look at the state of this lot here now. You see all these things on the television about the poverty abroad, you know, what I mean, the poverty they want to come here and take photographs here of the poverty.

COMM

Liverpool's housing of the 50s and 60s like that of many cities, has turned out, in part, to be a disaster. Built to experimental designs, they were unsuited to the needs of families Put up in the push for expansion, they were built on the cheap. They deteriorated quickly as the council failed to keep up with repairs. They started to be vandalised. Fewer repairs were done. They got in a downwards spiral and have now reached the bottom. Only the poor live here.

These flats are the slums of today.. This flat was occupied till three weeks ago.

The council haven't got round to boarding it off yet. It's been vandalised by the teenagers of the area And this in turn has left a danger to the young children of the tenants still living in the flat below.

SYNC TENANT

As you can see for yourself full of mice, rats as well, put all my rubbish here in the back heap.

COMM

Vauxhall today is in a state of total decay.

This was the solution to the housing problem offered by the 50s.

And today mile after mile stands awaiting demolition.

A costly mistake which has been paid for by the poor.

As the area deteriorated, the people that were left were just the poor.

The workers with the better paid jobs could afford to move out. And they did.

And as an area becomes poorer, the chances for those left behind diminish. The services provided by the state to give people an equal chance face such difficulties that the services themselves deteriorate.

After the break, we'll be looking at schools and how they fail the poor child, the child of the decaying inner city.

BREAK

SYNC PAMELA

I was about 10, 10½ but before that, I was in hospital for a couple of years I'd been badly beaten up through my father because he was always being drunk; after that when I got put into a home, it was a bit horrible at first but then I got used to it as I got older, they were a great help.

COMM

The first and in many ways the most important influence on a child is their family. By the age of ten, Pamela Benn had been scarred emotionally by a childhood of beatings. And in other ways the lack of concern at home laid the groundings for educational failure.

V/O PAMELA

When I was very small I didn't have very much schooling and both my parents kept me away from school most of the time. They just didn't like me going to school, they just wouldn't allow us to go to school

COMM

Life in the children's home brought more stability to Pamela's childhood. But it was not substitute for a caring family background. Like many girls brought up in care, Pamela has ended up unmarried with a young child, unequipped to cope, Pamela is now pregnant again - a mistake for the second time.

SYNC PAMELA

I didn't want to go through having an abortion so I had Emma and after that I didn't want to have any more children. But I couldn't take any contraceptive pills because the pill knocks me out and the coil's given me trouble before so I wouldn't take anything and I fell

pregnant again and this one's due at Christmas time but hopefully I'm going to ask the hospital if I could get sterilised because there's no way I don't want to have anymore.

COMM

Pamela takes baby Emma out, away from the dreadful conditions in their flat, as much as possible. But she fears that unless she's rehoused, her children will be taken away from her.

SYNC PAMELA

I don't want her to go into care. It's the last place I want, I don't want them to go through what I went through never.

ACTUALITY

Melanie calls Mum

COMM

Most children's futures are not blighted in such tragic ways. Melanie Bragg does have a caring family. Her mother Elaine does try to interest and stimulate her.

ACTUALITY

Elaine talks to Melanie about fingers etc.

COMM

But Elaine hasn't the money to take the children out to broaden their experiences and can afford very few toys to encourage learning.

ACTUALITY

Melanie shows fingers.

Elaine - "You're cheeky, you are"

V/O HALSEY

The poor child tends to be the child with fewer toys and stimuli in the environment, and it means therefore that the first school, that a poor child goes to which is the family itself, the kitchen if you like, is a poorer environment for learning. So that at the very beginning a poor child is being ill-prepared to take advantage of what formal schooling offers.

COMM

The hope, however, has been that schools would be able to overcome the early problems faced by poor children. Melanie's older brothers, Michael and Darren, are now at their local school, Wilbrahams Infants.

The headmistress, Susan Waterhouse.

SYNC WATERHOUSE

Michael and Darren - just typical young boys, fairly quiet, both of them but they can get up to mischief and they're quite interested in coming to school I think quite curious about things.

Quite a lot of the families that come to our school, the children that attend our school are on low incomes either through a poor job or no job at all. And the Bragg family are quite an ordinary sort of typical family from that estate.

ACTUALITY

Teacher asking children words on cards.

COMM

When Darren Bragg started school he was far behind. He'd had speech problems since birth.

ACTUALITY

Darren - "With"

COMM

The school's first priority is language. It's the basis of all learning and so the key to success in later life.

V/O WATERHOUSE

Some of our children start school, I would say, rather deprived in a language sense. The children usually come through our nursery so that means they're starting school at 3½ or 4 years of age. In the nursery we're trying to teach them to mix socially and to get on with other people, but we're also trying to develop their language and this is an area which we have to really work on.

ACTUALITY

"Mummy in the garden"

COMM

Darren's in the first year infants. He did have the benefit of attending the nursery school. Since the war, nursery education has expanded. In general, however, though children from poorer families are in need of extra help in their early years, they are no more likely than other children to receive it.

For Darren, his early start at school and the continuing intensive work on language is beginning to pay off. He's slowly learning to read and write.

ACTUALITY

Michael reading

COMM

Darren's older brother Michael is aged 7. He's grasped the basic skills of reading. The school next works on using this to extend the childrens'

intellectual development. But it's an uphill struggle.

V/O WATERHOUSE

Perhaps at home, when they get home, if the parents are tired from a busy day, they're not ready to answer questions, perhaps the television goes straight on, perhaps the children are not encouraged to question so much.

ACTUALITY

Teacher talks about trip to children

V/O WATERHOUSE

We're trying to widen their world, we make a point of taking the children out, we go out into the country because we perhaps want to show them a different way of life.

ACTUALITY

Michael talks about what he likes about the country.

V/O WATERHOUSE

Some of our children have little experience of the outside world apart from their own homes and families. A lot of poorer children don't get out for holidays, they don't get out for days out because there's no transport available.

SYNC ELAINE BRAGG

Well they take them out on trips and I can't afford to take them out on trips very often but they go out on trips quite a lot really. I mean Michael went to Ross .. on Tuesday and he came back and he said he really enjoyed it but they're going out in the summer with the school but otherwise they won't be going anywhere.

ACTUALITY

Do your story now

COMM

Most primary schools do, like Wilbrahams, make strenuous efforts to combat the disadvantages of children from poor families.

ACTUALITY

The story of the three bears  
Michael - I want

COMM

As a result poor children today are more literate than in the past. And primary schools do manage to ensure that the gap between children of poor families and others in the field of literacy and reading does not widen. However, it's proved very difficult to close this gap, to help poor children actually catch up.

ACTUALITY

Teacher - I've heard that one, I want your own story

COMM

And in other skills, such as arithmetic the picture has been more disappointing. During the primary school years, there is a slight widening of the gap between the achievements of poor children and others.

ACTUALITY

You're matching the green to the green tray, are you?

COMM

For schools are faced with continuing problems, stemming from the children's poor circumstances.

V/O WATERHOUSE

The attendance at our school is not as good as it ought to be. We have quite a lot of absences and a lot of them seem to be through ill health. Children with sort of chest complaints, coughs, colds, that sort of thing.

ACTUALITY

Teacher - has anyone any news

V/O WATERHOUSE

The work the school can do is very limited. We have the children for what less than 40 weeks in the year and from ten past nine to half past three.

COMM

If the chances of poor children are to be improved, it's now recognised that there needs to be a concentration of resources on these children. In general, however, this has not happened.

Susan Waterhouse feels that with more resources she could do a much better job.

SYNC WATERHOUSE

Well obviously in a working class area you need a better teacher-pupil ratio because one of the things that these children need is extra language input and you can only get that if you've got either smaller classes or someone who can work with small groups of children.

COMM

In spite of the efforts of Susan Waterhouse, and Wilbrahams school, the Bragg children continue to carry the burden of disadvantage. It is, of course, impossible to know with certainty what the future holds for them. Some children from poor

backgrounds do manage to break out. But Michael and Darren will find that as they enter secondary school, the net of disadvantage tightens. At Archbishop Whiteside Secondary School, Kevin Cain started as a disadvantage. He's missed out on earlier education because of a series of major operations after he'd been hit by a lorry. But the school wasn't the sort that stimulated an interest in learning.

SYNC KEVIN

This used to be me classroom. Um, I, this is more or less where I sat. And when, like, used to sit down, and wait for a teacher to come. I was always, you know, wanting to leave, I couldn't wait until, till I was 15 and I could leave.

COMM

When Kevin was here the school was a secondary modern - a type of school which closed the door of opportunity for most poor children. The school is now going comprehensive. The hope of the switch to comprehensive education has been that by providing every child with equal access to the same sort of school they'd end up with equal opportunities. But it doesn't work out for schools are set in very different areas.  
Professor Halsey

SYNC HALSEY

Supposing that you have a comprehensive system, a comprehensive system by definition is one of equal access, all the children go to the same school. But supposing you also have in the same country, people of very unequal income, such that some can afford to live in one area, which has relatively better housing accommodation compared

with another, then that would mean that the catchment area of that particular comprehensive school will be made up of children who bring more resources into the school, whose parents support in material and attitudes in more ways, more than in the other area, and so what starts out as a formal equality becomes a substitutive inequality between two areas

COMM

Archbishop Whiteside Secondary, set in Vauxhall, with its urban decay and high unemployment, is at the very bottom of this pile. Liverpool's relentless decline compounds the problems for the school.

The head, Jim McCahy

SYNC MCCAHY

Well the effects on the children of the tradition of unemployment are that by and large they don't expect much of themselves in the school situation. Their parents don't expect much of them, and I think they place a very low priority on education and other things matter more. And I can quite see their point. Um, if your main worry is where the next meal's coming from, you know the question of whether a child's done homework or not is pretty unimportant.

So that there's very little opportunity for the children to aim at anything higher because they haven't seen anything higher from the previous generation. So it, it becomes, its a bit of a vicious circle in many ways.

COMM

With the children expecting little from the school, the school in turn expects less from the children - even down to the question of attendance.

SYNC MCCAHY

There's an awful lot of children who are absent with their parents' knowledge. Um, either because they have a minor illness which in many circumstances would not need a day off school, or because the, they're needed to go on messages or to look after the house while they're waiting for the corporation to come and repair their guttering or whatever it happens to be. Um, reasons which wouldn't have been accepted for absence in other schools that I've worked in but which are quite commonplace here.

COMM

Kevin did attend secondary school regularly but gained little academically. The school puts the emphasis elsewhere.

ACTUALITY

Sports master talks to boys about training.

V/O MCCAHY

We try in the school in our limited way to encourage qualities other than just academic. I'd be happy if at the end of 5 years here we were producing boys and girls who were honest, reliable, good attendance, punctual and all the other qualities that go to make up a decent person.

COMM

To encourage these qualities, there's a full programme of sport. But there's another more pragmatic side to this emphasis on games. Most of these teenagers will leave school to go, like Kevin, into unemployment.

SYNC MONAGHAN

Because of the high higher unemployment if they have covered a lot of the sport in school, they can, given the opportunity, carry on with these once, once they have left. It, its a means of er relieving boredom. The stress of the unemployment.

COMM

On the academic side, performance is predictably bad as a result of the low expectations from the school and lack of interest from the pupils.

ACTUALITY

Don't forget when you get to question 76 go straight on to question 86.

COMM

In general, while children from poor backgrounds obtain more qualifications than they did after the war, the gap between the level of qualifications obtained by poor children and others has not changed. And its this gap that's important. For as educational standards have risen, so have the qualifications required for the better paid jobs or even nowadays any job at all.

SYNC MCCAHY

I believe that this country has become far too exam ridden for its own good. Certainly its almost impossible to get into any trade or profession now without 'O' levels and 'A' levels and that is effectively chopping off something like 60% of the population of this country from getting a foot on the bottom rung of the ladder. Now that's wrong.

The fact that you know what the capital of Hindustan is, is irrelevant in most jobs and yet we still, we're still getting employers who are insisting on academic standards for entry to their jobs which are irrelevant.

COMM

But the world is dominated by exams and most children from poor families find that they do leave school without a foot on even the bottom rung of the ladder.

What's more, one major study, which made independent measures of pupils' abilities, found that children of high ability from poor families were over twice as likely not even to be entered for O level exams as children of similar ability from other backgrounds.

Archbishop Whiteside school only enters their pupils for CSEs and many end up with only a few passes.

SYNC KEVIN

I thought I was going, going to do alright in the exams. You see, before hand I was you know, I was asking teacher how you do this and what did that mean. But when, when you're actually taking the exam, and you you're on your own, you know, you know I got er I got more tense and afraid.

You see I, if I was, like, I, I, took 8 well I went in for 8 CSEs and ended up only getting three.

SYNC HALSEY

The process of teaching children who already come unequal means that those who are in some sense deprived are very unlikely to be deprived cumulatively through their school experience. It's not mechanical. I mean people can shift and start moving in the opposite direction, but life is a bit like self loading dice. You throw them and the way they fall weights the probability that they'll fall in the same way the second time round. So that every day in school every week in school, every term, every year, you've got an increasingly loaded set of dice for each

individual so that the probability is that those who start out disadvantaged will do relatively poorly in school.

COMM

For Kevin Cain a life of being brought up in a city that's decaying has contributed to forming his life today. He lives, with his widowed father, in the council flat where he was born. He doesn't want to leave his father or the area.

The experience of having failed to find any lasting job in five years, has left Kevin without the self-confidence to elave. But left here, he's left with little chance of work. The time he has on his hands is filled to little useful purpose. With a background of failure at school, it's difficult now for Kevin to start studying for qualifications. He's abandoned his ambitions.

V/O KEVIN

I thought that when I left school, I, I knew it would take a few years to be a solicitor. Like, since, like after the first, the first year, I'd just thought, I won't bother about solicitor now, I'll just go in for office work, you know, if I can. Or I, also be a clerical officer in a factory or a big office, like, you know.

COMM

Kevin can't even find clerical work. With the welfare state's failure to put enough resources into the services aimed at giving all children an equal chance, children like Kevin have ended up with very little. He's poor today and increasingly likely to remain poor for the rest of his life.

Even his luck seems ill-fated. The last job he had was in a job centre

COMM

- and even that closed down.

SYNC KEVIN

I thought I would have got longer than three months, but they just said to me, you know, Oh I'm sorry, like, you know, Happy Christmas!

END CREDITS