

7 Housing and neighbourhood

Introduction

In this chapter we present the changes in housing circumstances in Newcastle upon Tyne as they affected our Red Spot families over the 30-year study period. We first describe the housing conditions in 1952 when the Red Spot children were five years of age, then the changes they had experienced by 15 years, and finally the situation in their early thirties as the Newcastle housing authority advanced its housing development programme. We shall look at a variety of aspects of housing over that period: the decline of overcrowding, the change in the housing stock available, the increase in home ownership, and improvements in household amenities and neighbourhood standards. Finally, we shall review the attitudes expressed by families in 1979-80 towards their housing circumstances.

In the twentieth century the northern sector of Newcastle became a relatively prosperous and well-housed area, whereas the riverside districts, sharing as they did the housing of the mid- and late nineteenth-century expansion, contained, by the 1930s the oldest and poorest properties.

Until 1974 Newcastle was divided into 20 electoral wards. We grouped these into three broad categories (Table 7.1), among which there was appreciable variation. Those to the west of the city centre had a disadvantaged subcultural quality; those to the east also had poor-quality housing but displayed a less unsatisfactory community ethos. The northern wards had higher housing standards but did not share the homogeneous quality of living.

Despite the variation in environmental quality among the wards, and in the housing stock within them, Table 7.1 shows that in 1952 the families rated as non-deprived were evenly distributed throughout the three groups of wards. In comparison with the non-deprived, both deprived groups showed a statistically significant population distribution between the

Table 7.1

Electoral Wards

Families of

North District
East District
West District

Neighbourhoods
(other) 1980

Families categorized
criteria of deprivation

Poor-quality
Average-quality
High-quality
Rural neighbourhoods

Families categorized
criteria of deprivation

Poor-quality
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Note: Table 7.1

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Table 7.1 Families of origin 1952: electoral wards and deprivation

	Non-Deprived		Deprived		Multiply Deprived	
Electoral Wards (Newcastle) 1952						
Families of origin	(n=63)		(n=165)		(n=78)	
North District	21	33%	28	15%	10	13%
East District	21	33%	71	38%	21	27%
West District	21	33%	66	46%	47	60%
Neighbourhood (Newcastle and other) 1980						
Families categorized according to criteria of deprivation in 1952	(n=59)		(n=157)		(n=67)	
Poor-quality urban neighbourhood	1	2%	20	13%	6	9%
Average-quality urban neighbourhood	29	49%	104	66%	44	66%
High-quality urban neighbourhood	23	39%	26	17%	13	19%
Rural neighbourhood	6	10%	7	4%	4	6%
Families categorized according to criteria of deprivation in 1979-80	(n=73)		(n=184)		(n=58)	
Poor-quality urban neighbourhood	2	3%	23	12%	10	17%
Average-quality urban neighbourhood	41	56%	119	65%	43	74%
High-quality urban neighbourhood	29	40%	27	15%	1	2%
Rural neighbourhood	1	1%	15	8%	4	7%

Note: Table based on data available.

ward districts. Only 13 per cent of the multiply deprived lived within the desirable north district whereas 60 per cent were in the disadvantaged west district. By 1962 council rehousing development, chiefly in the north-west side of the city, had allowed many families in all three groups to move into the northern district. Yet 40 per cent of the multiply deprived groups still lived in the most disadvantaged wards as compared to 27 per cent and 23 per cent respectively of the deprived and non-deprived.

After the Local Government Act of 1974 it became impossible to pursue district comparisons on the same basis as before and we classified the now enlarged city area on the basis of housing density and standard of upkeep.

When we looked at our Red Spots as adults, classified into the three groups according to deprivation in their families of

origin, we saw that, as a result of the post-war rehousing programme, the greatest proportions of all three groups were housed in neighbourhoods of average quality while only a minority of the non-deprived lived in a poor-quality neighbourhood. These findings do not provide evidence of familial intergeneration continuity of residence within an unsatisfactory neighbourhood. Although immediately after the war most of the parents of our study children were living in an unfavourable district, by 1979-80 most of their offspring lived in acceptable neighbourhood settings.

When we looked at families of formation grouped according to current data and criteria of deprivation we found a similar pattern, with 17 per cent of multiply deprived and only 3 per cent of non-deprived living in a poor-quality neighbourhood. Furthermore, only 2 per cent of the multiply deprived group, compared with 40 per cent of the non-deprived families, lived in a high-quality neighbourhood.

Housing type and quality

Overcrowding

Overcrowding is usually defined in terms of the ratio of household residents to the number of rooms in a property. A working definition adopted in the original 1947 study proved suitable for our purposes including, as it did, all persons within the household and all rooms within the property. This unofficial standard was termed the 'personal unit'; it included young children and infants on an equal basis with adults, and did not exclude kitchens, if large enough, or other small rooms able to accommodate one or more persons.

Overcrowding in 1952 was a basic criterion of deprivation in the study. Table 7.2 shows that no families had more than two persons per room in 1979-80 according to the 'personal unit' standard. By definition, no cases of overcrowding occurred in the non-deprived group. This was the basic level against which we made all subsequent comparisons.

In 1952 overcrowding, defined on the 'personal unit' criterion, was the most common of all criteria, affecting 18.7 per cent of the families. Table 7.2 shows that, in 1952, as many as six out of ten families in the multiply deprived

Table 7.2 C

Families of Origin

More than 2 persons per room (1952)

More than 2 persons per room (1962)

More than 1 person per room (1980)

More than 1.5 persons per room (1980)

More than 2 persons per room (1980)

Families of Formation

More than 1 person per room (1980)

More than 1.5 persons per room (1980)

More than 2 persons per room (1980)

** $p < .01$

group and found significantly different study children. priority allocated that the deprived were experiencing. By 1980 formation was different from more than two the criterion 1 per cent criterion was recorded some

Table 7.2 Overcrowding defined according to 'personal unit' according to severity of deprivation

Families of Origin	Non-Deprived Group (1952)		Deprived Group (1952)		Multiply Deprived Group (1952)	
More than 2 persons per room (1952)	0	—	76	41%**	48	62%**
	(n=63)		(n=185)		(n=78)	
More than 2 persons per room (1962)	2	4%	32	22%**	17	25%**
	(n=53)		(n=158)		(n=78)	
More than 1 person per room (1980)	4	7%	17	10%	9	13%
More than 1.5 persons per room (1980)	0	—	1	1%	1	1%
More than 2 persons per room (1980)	0	—	0	—	0	—
	(n=61)		(n=162)		(n=68)	
Families of Formation	Non-Deprived Group (1980)		Deprived Group (1980)		Multiply Deprived Group (1980)	
More than 1 person per room (1980)	4	5%	24	13%	13	22%
More than 1.5 persons per room (1980)	0	—	1	1%	1	2%
More than 2 persons per room (1980)	0	—	0	—	0	—
	(n=75)		(n=189)		(n=60)	

** p < .01

group and four out of ten families in the deprived group were significantly overcrowded. By 1962, however, when the study children were 15 years of age, the picture had changed appreciably. The families in the worst housing had received priority allocation of new accommodation with the result that the deprived and multiply deprived groups were both experiencing 20-25 per cent overcrowding.

By 1980 conditions had again changed, and families of formation were living in their own homes, in conditions very different from those of their childhood. Overcrowding, with more than two persons per room, had totally disappeared and the criterion of 1.5 or more persons per room identified only 1 per cent of families with multiple deprivation. If the criterion was merely more than one person per room, we recorded some overcrowding in all groups with more in the

deprived, but there were no statistical differences. We have to conclude that overcrowding *per se* as a social problem or potential health hazard has ceased to be a critical issue for the great majority of the population of Newcastle. This has been brought about by the trend towards smaller families, the local authority's large-scale rehousing programme and the growth of house ownership.

Type of housing

Post-war Newcastle contained a great deal of nineteenth-century housing. The chief example of this was the type of 'two up-two down' dwellings which were found everywhere on Tyneside. The oldest of these had a single shared entrance from the street approached through a dark unventilated passageway. Alternatively, downstairs flats had front entrances opening directly on to the street with a third street door leading to the dwellings above. Later dwellings all had

Table 7.3 Housing and deprivation 1952-79

Family of Origin		Non-Deprived Group (1952)		Deprived Group (1952)		Multiply Deprived Group (1952)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
1952	Adequate (Private & Council Detached, Semi, Terrace, Bungalow)	26 n=63	41%	40** n=184	22%	16** n=77	21%
1962	Adequate	36 n=52	69%	90 n=184	57%	40 n=77	58%
1979-80	Adequate	60 n=61	98%	162 n=162	100%	67 n=68	99%
1979-80 Adequate		Non-Deprived Group (1979-80)		Deprived Group (1979-80)		Multiply Deprived Group (1979-80)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
		75 n=75	100%	187 n=189	99%	59 n=60	98%

** = p < .01

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separate street entrances. While originally sound in structure, the majority of these properties had suffered dilapidation over the years. Almost without exception, they were unhygienic and were viewed as undesirable. We categorized these properties under the heading of poor housing together with the few other types of accommodation generally regarded as unsatisfactory for family living — for example, sublet rooms in larger properties or post-war 'prefabs'. All other types, detached or semi-detached, bungalows or terraces, whether private or council-owned, were considered to be 'adequate housing'.

Table 7.3 shows that, in 1952, at least half the non-deprived families and more than three-quarters of the deprived group lived in properties viewed as substandard. But the next decade saw a great expansion of housing provision, reflected by the reduction in the proportion of families living in poor housing in 1962, which became less than 2 per cent by 1979-80. Thus we could not use the quality of housing provision as a measure of deprivation in Newcastle in 1979-80.

House ownership

Table 7.4 shows the distribution and increase of home ownership from 1952-80 and the decrease of private renting over those 27 years; council renting decreased in the non-deprived and increased in the deprived groups. These figures were recorded before the legislation which enabled established council tenants to purchase their own property and, since then, the move to private ownership will probably have continued.

Household amenities

At the end of the war, only a minority of the population lived in an average family semi-detached property. In 1952 many houses had inadequate plumbing and lacked indoor sanitation. Only half the non-deprived families had their own fixed bath and one-fifth did not have an indoor lavatory. The multiply deprived fared much worse, only a quarter having a fixed bath and a half their own lavatory. By 1962 all but an occasional family possessed both amenities.

To this point we have described household amenities which were recorded systematically from 1947. During the

Table 7.4 *House ownership, household factors and deprivation*

		Non-Deprived Group (1952)	Deprived Group (1952)	Multiply Deprived Group (1952)
Families of Origin		(n=58)	(n=185)	(n=78)
1952	Owned – Personal	12.1%	4.9%	1.3%
	Rented – Private	67.2%	68.1%	73.1%
	Rented – Council	20.7%	27.0%	25.6%
		(n=52)	(n=157)	(n=68)
1962	Owned – Personal	25.0%	6.4%	—
	Rented – Private	32.7%	24.2%	20.6%
	Rented – Council	42.3%	69.4%	79.4%
1979-80	Owned – Personal	68.3%	43.8%	28.8%
	Rented – Private	10.0%	6.3%	7.6%
	Rented – Council	21.7%	50.0%	63.6%
		Group (1979-80)	Group (1979-80)	Group (1979-80)
Families of Formation		(n=74)	(n=186)	(n=59)
1979-80	Owned – Personal	73.0%	38.2%	11.9%
	Rented – Private	9.5%	7.0%	3.4%
	Rented – Council	17.6%	54.8%	84.7%
Tidy home		93.3%	78.2%	52.5%
Satisfactory furniture/equipment		93.3%	81.9%	52.5%
Dissatisfaction with neighbour- hood		9.3%	18.5%	30.0%

interviews in 1979-80, we gathered other information about current household amenities and expectations and sought to discover if home and neighbourhood were seen as satisfactory. At the same time we made our own assessment of the domestic equipment and state of tidiness of the home (Table 7.4). At this time only one in six of the non-deprived expressed dissatisfaction with their house or neighbourhood and usually their homes were tidy and had satisfactory amenities. In contrast, when classified according to the 1980 criteria of deprivation, the multiply deprived group were rated as being at a significant disadvantage, often with untidy, poorly equipped homes. They also voiced appreciably more criticism of their home conditions and the quality of

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Housing and deprivation

Type of deprivation and housing

The quality of housing was then compared in relation to each of the six criteria of deprivation in 1979-80. There was little difference one from the other except that those families deprived by parental illness appeared to be in better housing than any of the other five, with 50 per cent living in detached or semi-detached accommodation and 45 per cent in owner-occupied accommodation.

Neighbourhood factors and deprivation

The demographic, housing and economic characteristics of each of the wards of the city in 1973 and 1983 in relation to Census data of 1971 and 1981 respectively had been published by the Social Services Department of the Newcastle Corporation. This enabled us to prepare a rank order for each characteristic in each ward. For car ownership it was found that, on both occasions, all nine of the top third rankings coincided, but only seven out of nine of the bottom third. For unemployment the score was six out of eight and seven out of nine respectively. We concluded that there was sufficient stability from 1971-81 to presume the rankings would have been broadly the same from 1963-73.

On that basis we allocated each family to the top, middle or bottom third of the distribution for a variety of social and economic circumstances and grouped them according to their deprivation category in 1952. For 1962 we could allocate only 772 of the 847 families to a specific ward. Of that number 439 were non-deprived and 333 were deprived including 109 who were multiply deprived.

Table 7.5 gives the percentages of selected neighbourhood circumstances for these 772 families and shows that a significant proportion of our deprived families lived in neighbourhoods or wards which fell into the bottom third of the ranks on the following features:

- 1 less affluence, represented by a low percentage of households with their own cars;

- 2 high rates of male unemployment;
- 3 excess of children given free school meals;
- 4 financial difficulties as reflected by cut-off gas and electricity supplies (and by rent arrears, not listed);
- 5 more adult crime (and drunkenness, not listed);
- 6 higher incidence of concern to the local authority (and children in care, not listed).

In all these characteristics from one and a half to almost twice as many families from the multiply deprived group fell into the bottom third of the rankings compared with the non-deprived, and the deprived were usually intermediate. However, the differences in the case of the top third of the rankings were even more dramatic, with the percentages running from twice as high to about seven times as high when the non-deprived group is compared to the multiply deprived group.

Table 7.5 *Families, neighbourhood and ward rankings*

Ward Rankings and Neighbourhood Factors	Non-Deprived	All Deprived	Multiply Deprived
Size of sample	439	333	109
Neighbourhood affluence			
Top third	25.1%	17.1%***	11.9%***
Bottom third	33.9%	52.0%	59.6%
Adult males unemployed			
Top third	26.4%	11.1%***	3.7%***
Bottom third	45.3%	64.3%	61.7%
Free school meals			
Top third	21.9%	12.0%***	2.8%***
Bottom third	46.7%	65.8%	83.5%
Indicators of family financial difficulties - electricity and gas cut off			
Top third	24.1%	14.4%	10.1%
Bottom third	33.7%	51.7%	59.6%
Adult crime			
Top third	14.6%	9.6%***	2.8%***
Bottom third	44.9%	61.9%	75.2%
Families of concern to LA			
Top third	34.2%	20.4%***	11.0%***
Bottom third	33.7%	45.9%	45.9%

***Significant difference from 'non-deprived' at $p < .001$ (one-tailed).

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These findings demonstrate that families categorized as deprived in 1952 were likely to have lived in neighbourhoods with the highest incidence of poor social circumstances and to be exposed to a variety of adverse neighbourhood influences.

Discussion

Review of literature

Townsend (1979) identified three principal measures of poor housing circumstances: inadequate structure, poor amenities and inadequate space in relation to the number of users. The Morris (Parker) Committee (1961) established a standard definition of overcrowding of 1.5 persons per room. The General Household Survey (OPCS, 1973) stated that, in 1961, 2.1 per cent of households in England and Wales and 3.8 per cent in Great Britain were overcrowded by that standard but that, by 1966, the proportions had fallen to 1.2 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively. However, Townsend claimed that the true prevalence was underestimated by the use of outdated absolute standards. He held that:

- 1 politicians did not appreciate that the 'twilight' houses of one era become in time unfit for habitation;
- 2 standards change as society becomes more affluent;
- 3 disproportionate attention is given to the physical appearance of housing;
- 4 the term 'slum' is variously applied to houses unfit for human habitation or beyond repair at a reasonable cost.

Townsend developed his own 'housing facilities index' and, on this basis, identified 21 per cent of households as deficient in one or more respects and 22 per cent with structural defects. Many would be uneasy about such high rates since these are likely to include a high proportion of substantial housing with some minor defect.

The findings in our families

In the immediate post-war era the majority of houses were substandard by modern standards, and approximately 80 per cent of the multiply deprived lived in this type of house.

Home ownership was the exception in all groups - but particularly in the multiply deprived. Council housing was developing, but most housing was rented from private landlords. This was still a time when basic household amenities and facilities were not widely available, the general level of housing was low and there were vast inequalities.

We have described the three broad geographical areas in Newcastle - north, east and west - with the north area, which could be described as inner city, having the least poor housing, the east having more and the west having most of it. One in three of the non-deprived group and three in five of the multiply deprived were living in the west area.

Since by 1962, three-quarters of all the families were free from overcrowding and the majority were in adequate circumstances, we therefore also looked at home ownership as a possible alternative criterion of housing deficiency. Here, there were great inequalities with none of the multiply deprived living in their own houses and 80 per cent of them in council-owned property. There had been a major movement in housing in the case of the non-deprived, 25 per cent of which owned their houses by this time. Overall, the major difference between 1952 and 1962 was that less than one-third of all groups lived in privately rented accommodation - a 50 per cent decrease over the 10 years. However, despite the increase in council housing, the growth of private ownership for the non-deprived seems to have given rise to a different type of inequality. Similarly, an analysis of the available facilities and amenities indicate how much had changed between 1952 and 1962.

The City Profiles

From the Newcastle *City Profiles* we know that, in 1971, 32 per cent of households were living in owner-occupied premises and, in 1981, 39 per cent. These rates were lower than those reported in our study groups even when we estimate rates for our whole population. However, the figures are not comparable as, by 1980, a substantial proportion of our families had moved outside the city boundaries. Similarly, our estimated rates for council-rented houses were below those for the *City Profiles*. The census data did reveal a significant fall in overcrowding within the city which the *City Profiles* attributed to smaller families and

improved housing, since there were more than 1.5 persons per room in 1952, but only 1.2 per cent in 1981. This is no longer a useful indicator.

While the grosser differences have clearly been reduced, using relative criteria of deprivation, the answer must be that the housing is of a different type. While it is important to modify the criteria, it cannot be denied that the housing is the better in Newcastle than in the poorest housing areas.

We studied household characteristics and information classified according to area of origin and identified continuities. The data indicated a higher percentage of families with no access to a garden, no central heating, decor and furnishings in those from deprived areas, particularly in those from the inner city. It is interesting to note some of the differences in these circumstances. In those listed above, a small number of the multiply deprived background had access to housing and the area in which they lived.

In summary, the housing conditions of the multiply deprived in Newcastle in 1981 still remained very different from those of the non-deprived and the type of accommodation, type of housing and frequency of home ownership.

We also had an opportunity to compare the housing conditions of our study groups with the national standard and the circumstances of families in 1952. The families were more likely to live in council housing than in higher-status housing.

improved housing, since the frequency of families with more than 1.5 persons per room dropped from 2.2 in 1971 to 0.7 per cent in 1981. This supports our claim that 'overcrowding' is no longer a useful indicator of housing inequality.

While the grosser deficiencies of household circumstances have clearly been reduced, the question arises whether, when using relative criteria, there would still be inequalities. The answer must be that the inequalities remain but are of a different type. While we agree with Townsend that it is important to modify one's standards according to the times, it cannot be denied that there have been great changes for the better in Newcastle and, in particular, for those who had lived in the poorest housing circumstances.

We studied household facilities of the families of formation classified according to deprivation in the families of origin and identified discrepancies between groups which indicated continuities across generations. A significantly higher percentage of the previously multiply deprived had no access to a garden or yard; the quality of care and the decor and furnishings of the homes were substantially poorer in those from deprived circumstances in early life and particularly in those from multiple deprivation. We were interested to note some of the attitudes of the families living in these circumstances. Despite all the evidence of inequality listed above, a small proportion of those from multiply deprived backgrounds were apparently satisfied with their housing and the area in which they lived.

In summary, the grim and unhealthy housing and living circumstances of those families who were deprived or multiply deprived improved over the period 1952-62, but there still remained considerable inequalities between the non-deprived and the multiply deprived in terms of type of accommodation, type of district in which the families lived and frequency of home ownership.

We also had an objective standard in the Acorn Classification (see again Table 7.1, p. 91) which allowed us to compare the housing situations of our three groups with a national standard and to examine the 1980 housing circumstances of families who had experienced deprivation in 1952. The families who remained in Newcastle were more likely to live in council housing and less likely to live in higher-status housing compared with the national norm.

However, the picture was not all bleak, with 44 per cent of Red Spots who were not deprived in 1952 located in higher-status housing in 1980; the comparable percentages for the deprived and multiply deprived were 26 per cent and 17 per cent respectively.

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