



## Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

*...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland*



# ***Child Welfare Inequalities: the role of deprivation in the NI child protection system***

**Dr Lisa Bunting (QUB)**  
**Dr Gavin Davidson (QUB)**  
**Claire McCartan (QUB)**

# Child Welfare Inequalities Project

## ➤ The CWIP

- Mixed-methods comparative study across the four UK countries, aimed at mapping and understanding inequalities in child welfare intervention rates

## ➤ What we mean by child welfare interventions?

- Children in need (CiN); children subject to child protection planning or registration (CPP/CPR) and Looked after children (LAC)

## ➤ What we mean by inequality?

- This occurs when children and/or their parents face unequal **chances**, **experiences** or **outcomes** of involvement with child welfare services that are systematically associated with structural social disadvantage



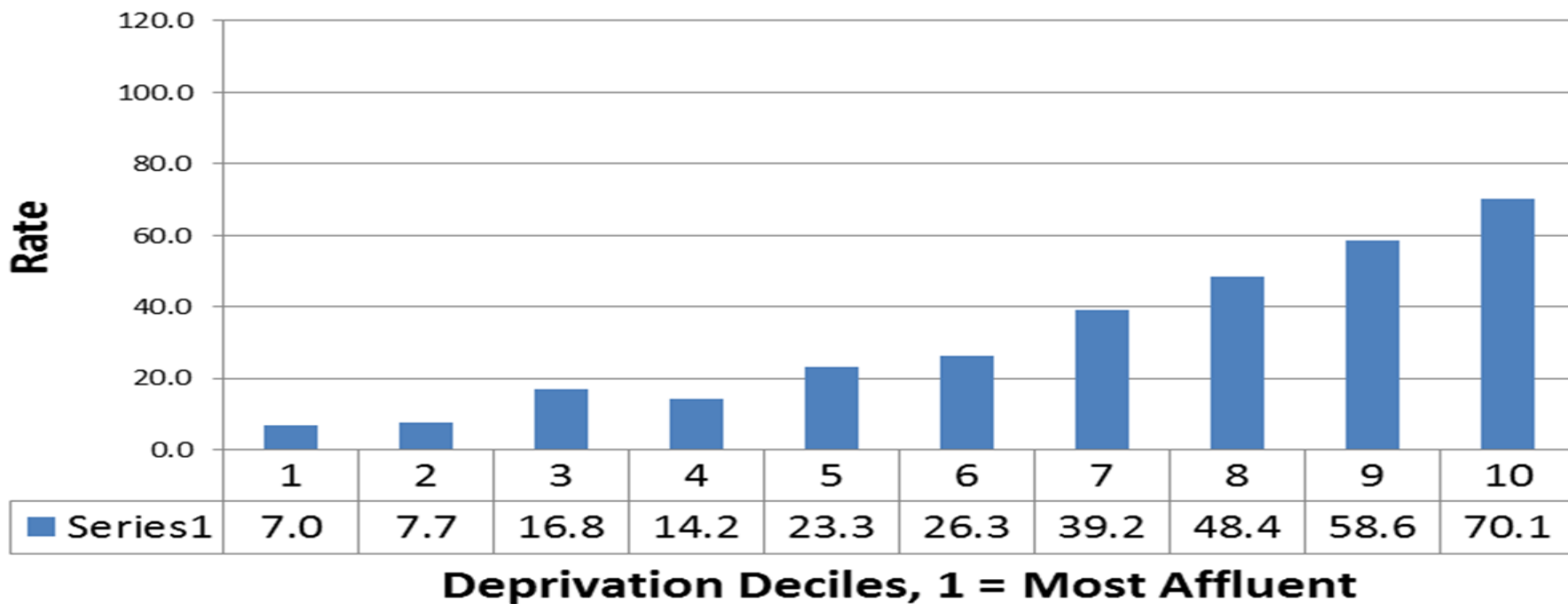
# About the CWIP

- It extends and tests findings of a study conducted in the English West Midlands by Prof. Paul Bywaters [Coventry University]
- Examined relationship of being on a CPP or LAC with area level measures of deprivation
- **Rationale**
  - Wealth of literature outlining relationship between poverty and CAN
  - No data collected about family circumstances in official statistics
  - Significant variation between LA's but no data at a level of geography below LA



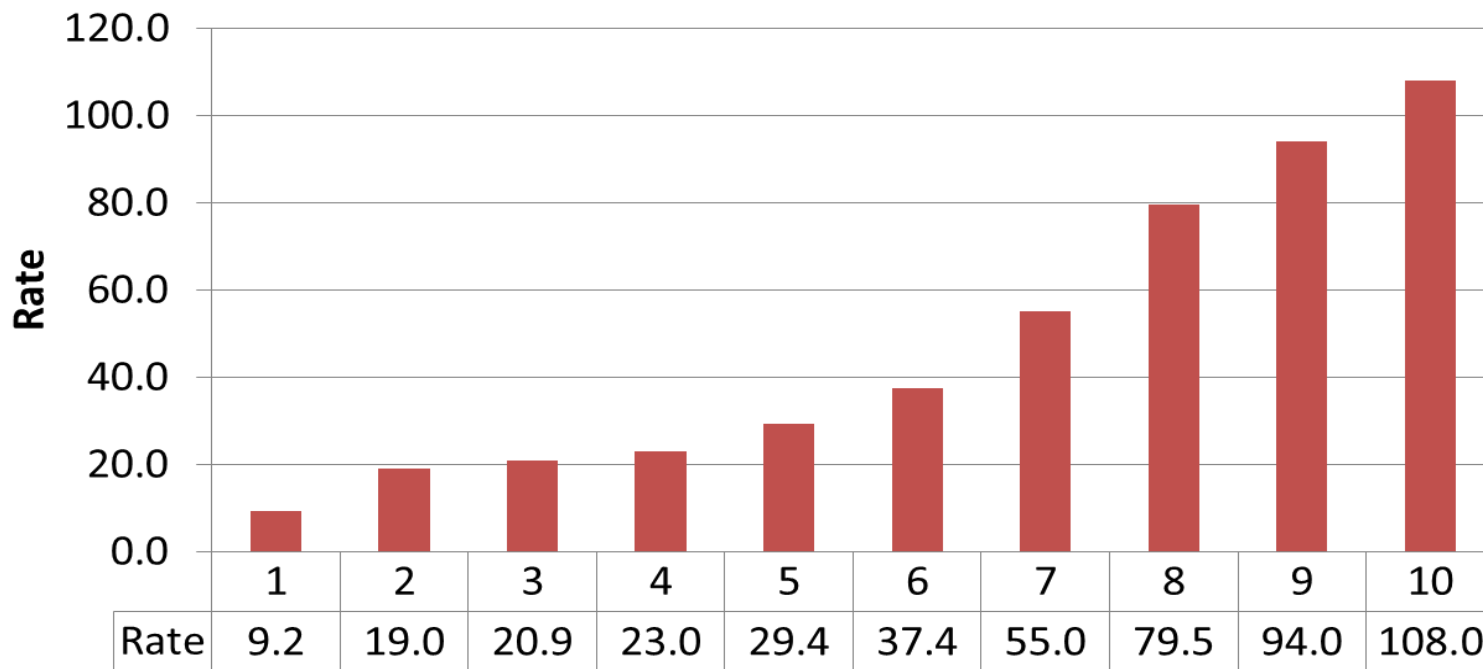
# Relationship between deprivation and intervention rates – social gradient

**Child Protection Plan Rates per 10,000 Children, by Deprivation Decile, Midlands Sample, 31.3.12**



# Relationship between deprivation and intervention rates – social gradient

Looked After Children Rates per 10,000 Children by Deprivation Decile, Midlands Sample, 31.3.12



Deprivation Deciles, 1 = Most Affluent

# Our Project :Research Methods

1. Background policy and trend analyses and literature review of the relationship between poverty and CAN (JRF)
2. Quantitative data on large samples of all children on child protection plans/registers (CPP) or in out-of-home care (LAC) at 31<sup>st</sup> March in each country. Age, gender, ethnic category, legal status, reason for CP concern, type of placement.
3. Linked with administrative data on Index of Multiple Deprivation scores of small neighbourhoods and population data to enable us to calculate rates per 10,000 children in the population.
4. Integrated methods case studies in England and Scotland



# THE NORTHERN IRELAND STUDY

- Data accessed via the Honest Broker Service
- All open cases at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 involving children (0-17 years old) recorded on SOS CARE
- Postcode at time of referral linked to Super Output Area (SOA)
- SOAs are a small area geography - 890 SOAs with an average population of 2,000 people.



**Table 1.1 – Northern Ireland Child Population, SOS CARE and Official Data (2015)**

<b>At 31.3.15</b>	<b>Population 0-17</b>	<b>Children in Need</b>	<b>Children on Child Protection Register</b>	<b>Looked after Children</b>
<b>Northern Ireland published data</b>	433,161	23834	1969	2875
<b>SOS CARE cleaned data</b>	-	22706	1845	2882
<b>Cleaned data as % of published data</b>	-	95%	94%	100%



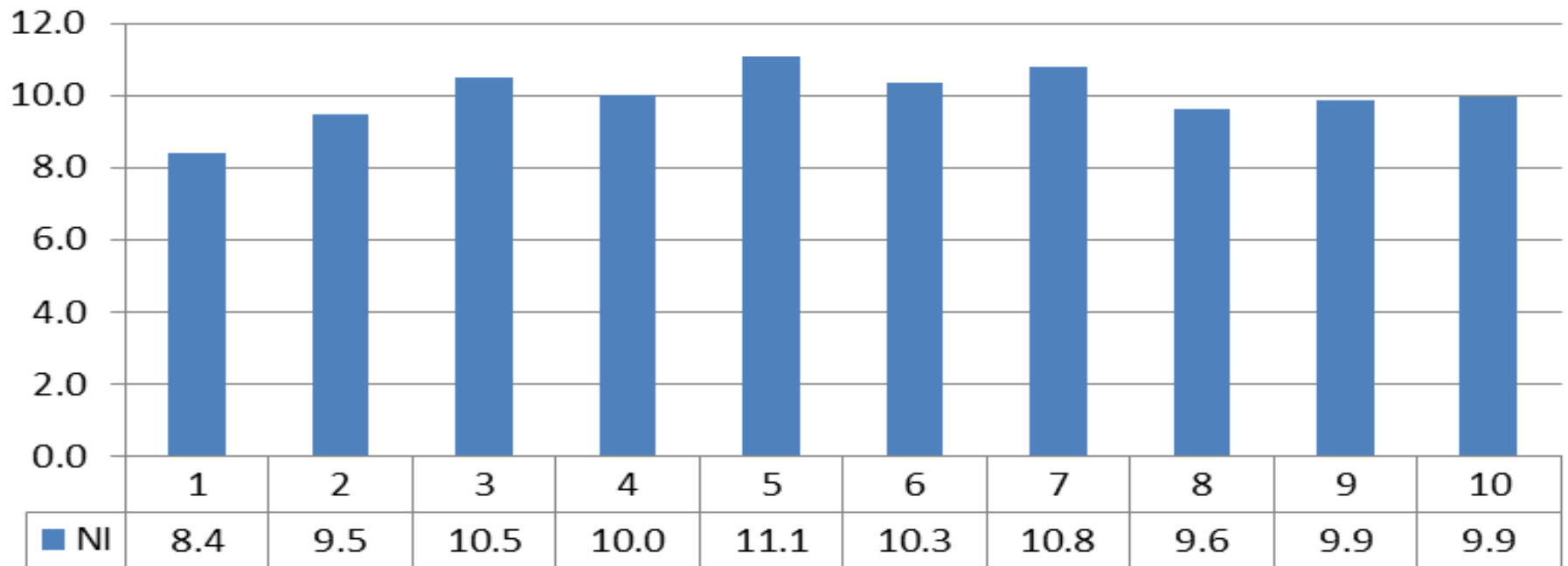


# SOSCARE and Official Statistics

- CPR – 100 less in BHSCT
- LAC – 200 less in BHSCT and 100 more in SEHSCT and WHSCT
- Family or origin postcode?
- Aggregate returns?

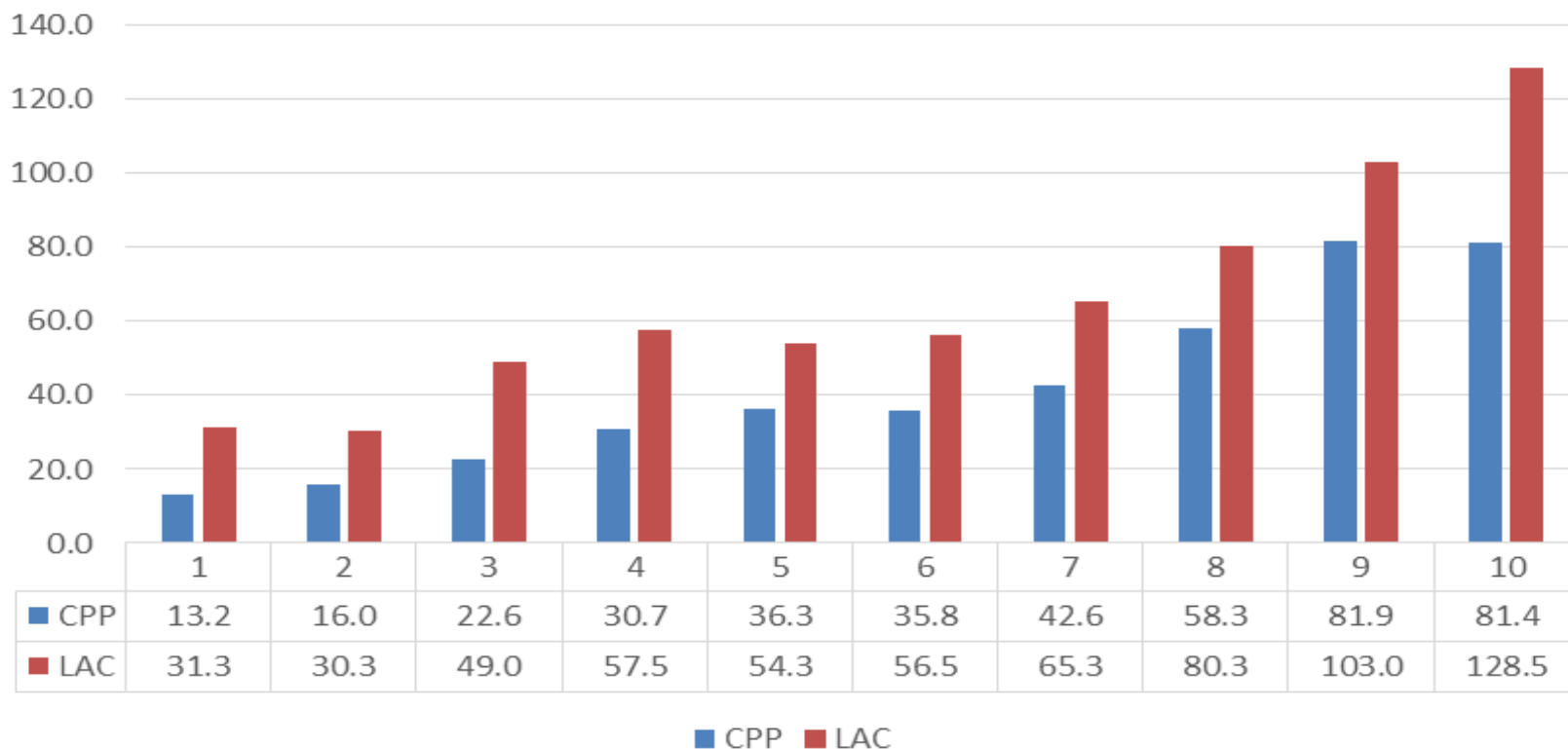
# Distribution of NI Child Population by Deprivation Decile

Northern Ireland, child population by NI deprivation decile, Mid Year Estimate, 2014



# NI CPR and LAC rates by deprivation decile

CPP and LAC Rates by Deprivation Decile, Northern Ireland, NI IMD,



# Key Findings

## Clear social gradient:

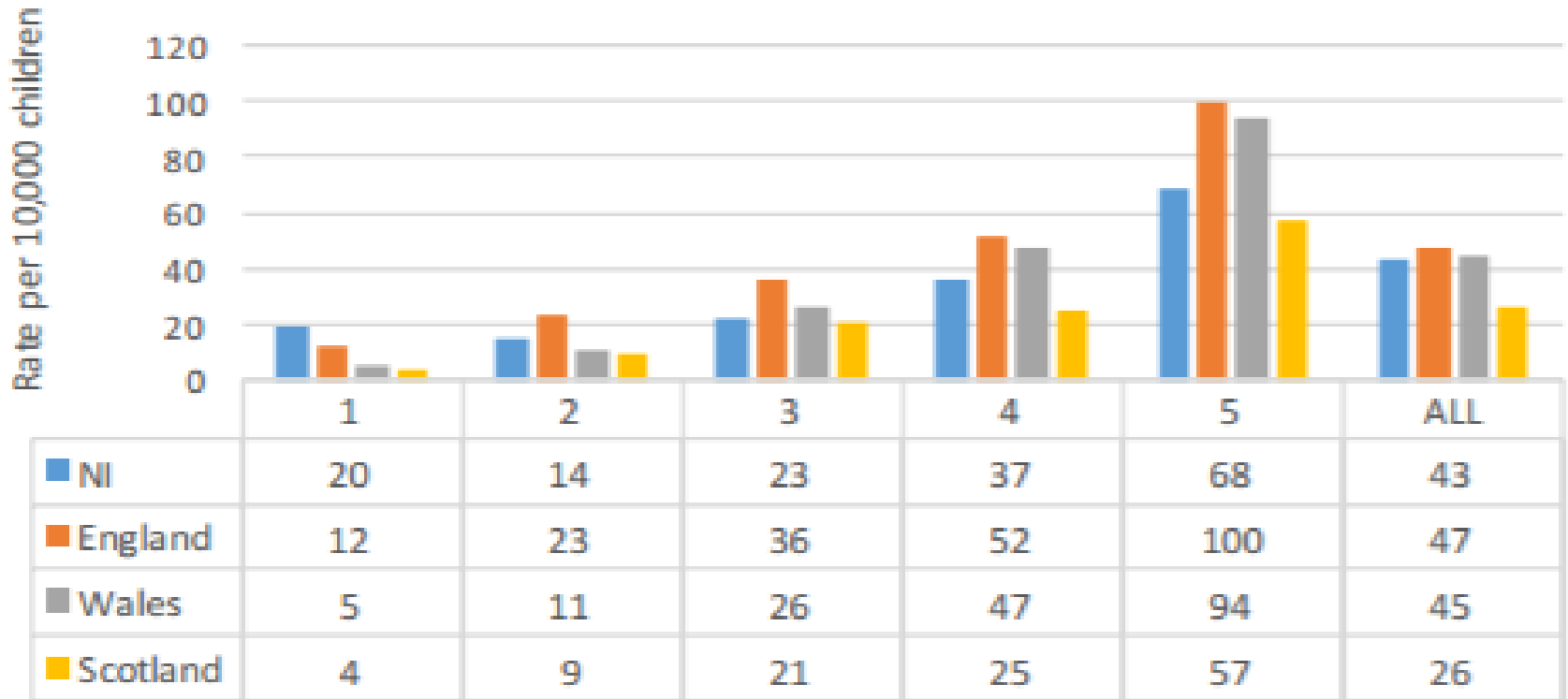
- children in most deprived areas in NI have 6 times higher chance of being placed on CPR and 4 times higher rate of becoming LAC
- Impacts males and female similarly
- 0-4 year olds in deprived areas have even greater chance of being placed on CPR than other age groups
- 16-17 years greater chance of becoming LAC than other age groups

# Key Findings cont.

- Children in deprived areas more likely to come into care under involuntary arrangements (CP measures)
- Rates vary by HSCT – lower CPR rates in most deprived HSCTs, mixed re LAC but more deprived HSCTs tend to have lower rates

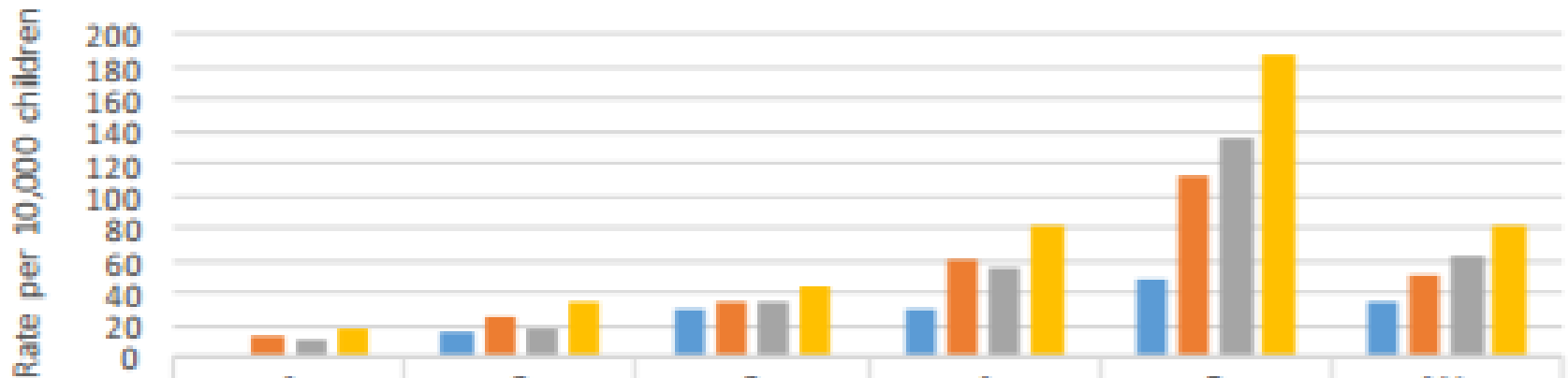
# UK Comparisons

Chart 2: CPP Rates by Deprivation Quintile and Overall, Adjusted, 4 UK countries, 2015



# UK Comparisons

Chart 3: LAC not at home or with relatives or friends by Deprivation Quintile, UK Countries, 2015



■ NI		17	29	31	48	35
■ England	13	26	35	61	112	52
■ Wales	10	19	35	57	135	62
■ Scotland	18	34	45	82	188	82

# The NI Child Protection System

- Same broad legislative base – Children Order(NI) 1995
- Child in need and child at risk of significant harm are key threshold criteria
- Similar regional guidance – Co-operating to safeguard
- Similar assessment processes
- Has an integrated health and social care system in operation since 1973.



# The NI Child Protection System

- Significantly higher referral rates - 65% higher than England in 2013/14 and 48% higher in 2015/16
- Significantly higher levels of deprivation
- Deprivation drives referral rates (Hood et al., 2016)
- High demand LAs tend to screen out more referrals and divert more cases to non-statutory services
- Much lower proportion of cases in NI proceed to investigation- 50% less
- Assessment – difficulties with comparability but lower in NI

# The NI Child Protection System

- Well developed community and voluntary sector
- Development of integrated Family Support Hubs since 2009 which cover all of NI
- Links with anti-poverty policy, family support and area level initiatives (e.g. neighbourhood renewal areas)
- Practitioner recognised the impact of poverty and highlighted value of hubs
- High levels of support for the research at policy, service provider and practitioner levels



# What can we do?

1. **At a policy/provision level** - ensuring that families get direct help with income maximisation, debt management and housing difficulties and
2. **At a practice level** - Pay attention to ensuring that the indirect impact of money worries on relationships, health and behaviours is both understood and communicated.
3. **At a data level** – ensure we routinely collect data on family circumstances and area level deprivation

# To Find Out More

- Visit the Project Website

<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-directories/current-projects/2014/child-welfare-inequality-uk/cwip-project-outputs/>

- **Contact** - Dr Lisa Bunting, 02890 971482  
[l.bunting@qub.ac.uk](mailto:l.bunting@qub.ac.uk)

