

WORKLESSNESS

'Worklessness' i.e. those not in work, has had increasingly more focus within both local and national government settings, with aims and initiatives created to reduce 'worklessness'. However there is a difficulty in measuring worklessness, as unless people are claiming out of work benefits they may not be counted, for example those looking after the home or family. One definition could be those who are economically inactive, however this includes those who are retired and full time students, both of which are typically NOT thought of as 'workless'.

In an evaluation of the **Working Neighbourhoods Pilot** (established in April 2004), the Department of Work and Pensions¹ said

"workless individuals included individuals who are unemployed and claiming unemployment benefits, individuals who are economically inactive and eligible for inactive benefits (who may or may not be claiming them), and individuals who are working exclusively in the informal economy (who may or may not be also claiming benefits)".

However they also acknowledged that there is not an easy way of monitoring worklessness if defined in this way as essentially we only really know about those who are claiming benefits.

The evaluation went on to say that:

"There are a range of groups that are disadvantaged in the labour market and that have a higher risk of being workless and living in deprived areas. These include: lone parents, minority ethnic groups, disabled people, carers, older workers, workers in the informal economy, offenders and ex-offenders. Not all individuals within these groups are workless, but being a member of these groups can increase the risk of being workless. Worklessness can be characterised by multiple disadvantage, where people face more than one barrier to participating in the labour market. While some disadvantaged people should not have their chances of working written off as impossible, for others it may be counter-productive to be pushed toward job-seeking before they are ready"

This is often where definitions of 'worklessness' get a little blurred, confusing those at risk of being workless, 'hidden' workless (i.e. as above those not claiming any out of work benefits) and those claiming out of work benefits.

For a recent **European Social Fund** bid to get additional money to tackle worklessness, Herefordshire's bid highlighted wards that were areas of 'high worklessness'. These were areas with a high number of people who were not in work for a variety of reasons and also those who are at risk of being or becoming 'workless':

- those actively looking for work (claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP))
- females and over 50's who are looking for work (claiming JSA)
- those who are economically inactive (retired, looking after home or family, permanently sick/disabled, other inactive as measured in the 2001 Census KS09)
- those unable to work because of disability (claiming incapacity benefit and severe disablement allowance)
- those who have low incomes but are not currently able to work (lone parents, carers and those on incapacity benefits) and claiming income related benefits from DWP

¹ <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pubs/summary.php?id=dwp255>

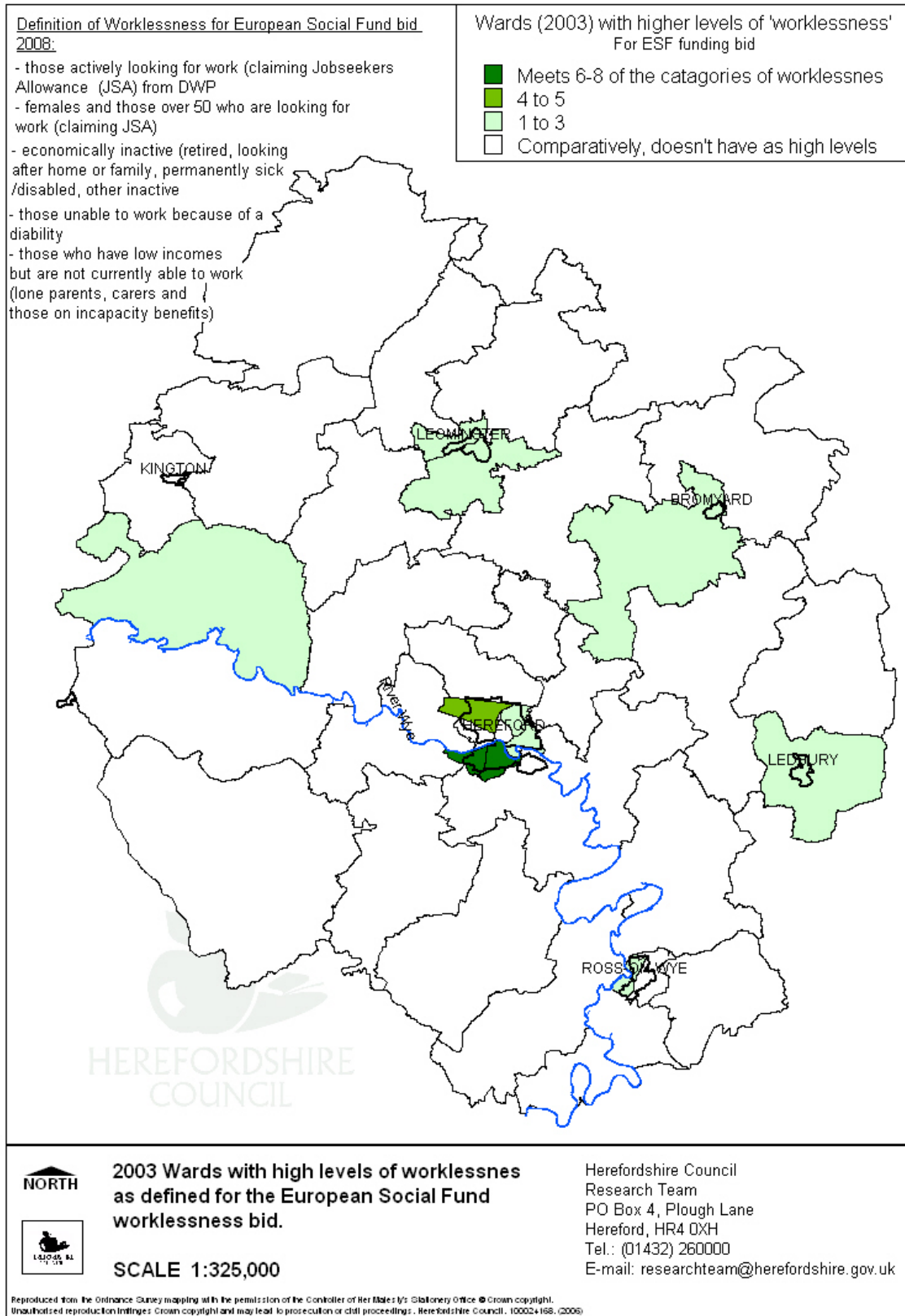
Three wards had quite strong evidence of high levels of 'worklessness': St. Martins and Hinton, Belmont and Three Elms, all in Hereford City. There were also a further eight wards with potential 'worklessness' issues. See Table 1 and Map 1 below.

Table 1: wards with high levels of worklessness

	St Martins and Hinton	Belmont	Three Elms	Leominster North	Central	Ross-on-Wye West	Ledbury	Tupsley	Leominster South	Aylestone	Bromyard
Unemployment levels (numbers and rates of JSA claimants)	✓	✓			✓	✓					
No. of people who are inactive	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			
No. and % of females who are looking for work (claiming JSA)	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓		
No. of job seeker allowance claimants who are over 50 years old	✓	✓	✓								
No. of income support claimants who are lone parents	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓		
No. of income support claimants who are also entitled to Incapacity benefits	✓	✓					✓				
No. of income support claimants who are also entitled to carers allowance	✓	✓	✓								
No. of incapacity benefit and severe disablement allowance claimants	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓
Total criteria they met out of the 8.	8	7	5	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	1

This approach was taken to highlight specific areas that had high levels of worklessness or a higher risk. Actual numbers of workless can not be obtained from this as individuals may be counted more than once, given that data was drawn from different sources: the 2001 Census and benefit claimants from the Department of Work and Pensions.

Map 1: Wards with some aspects of 'worklessness' identified



Communities and Local Government (CLG) have introduced a set of 198 indicators that every Local Authority in England will be required to measure and report on from 2008-09². Within this set is an indicator that aims to measure the “percentage of working age population who are claiming out of work benefits” (National Indicator 152). This includes the main out of work client group categories, grouped into a statistical group:

- Unemployed people on Jobseekers Allowance
- Lone Parents on income support
- Incapacity Benefits customers
- Others on income related benefits (Income Support claimants not included in one of the three groups above)

The aim of these Statistical Groups is to present each person by the main reasons why they are claiming benefit. Each client is classified just once. Benefits are arranged hierarchically and claimants are assigned to the top most benefit which they receive. Thus a person who is a lone parent and receives Incapacity Benefit would be classified as incapacity benefits, whereas someone receiving both Bereavement Benefit and Disability Living Allowance would be classified as disabled. For this reason the group lone parent, for example, will not contain all lone parents claiming Income Support. Some will be included in the incapacity benefits group instead.

	then allocated to ...
	Jobseeker
	Incapacity benefits
	Lone parent
	Carer
	Other on income related benefit
	Disabled
	Bereaved

As of November 2007, Herefordshire had:

- 1,320 working age people claiming Job Seekers Allowance
- 5,790 working age people claiming Incapacity benefits
- 1,320 working age people claiming benefits that were classed as lone parents
- 410 others on income related benefits

In total **8,840 people** within Herefordshire were claiming out of work benefits, which is **8.6%** of the working age population³

In addition, 1,020 working age people are carers claiming out of work benefits. If these carers were included this gives a total of 9,860 or 9.5% of the working age population claiming out of work benefits.

² For more information about the national indicator set visit the [Communities and Local Government website](http://www.communities.gov.uk). (www.communities.gov.uk)

³ As a proportion of the 2006 MYE of 16-59 females and 16-64 males

For further information on the data in this article, please contact the Research Team on 01432 383634, or e-mail researchteam@herefordshire.gov.uk