The proportion of people aged 60 and over living in income deprivation is significantly lower in the South West compared to the England average of 16.1% (Figure 1). Despite this, there are an estimated 197,604 people aged 60 and over living in income deprivation in the region (Figure 1), equating to 13.4% of the population of that age group.

The proportion of people aged 60 and over living in income deprivation varies considerably across the South West; ranging from 8.3% in the Isles of Scilly to 19.8% in Torbay (Figure 2).

Four local authorities in the South West (Torbay, Bristol, Bournemouth and Plymouth) have a significantly higher proportion of people aged 60 and over living in deprivation compared to England (Figure 2).

Six local authorities (Torbay, Bristol, Bournemouth and Plymouth, Cornwall and Swindon) have a significantly higher proportion of people aged 60 and over living in deprivation compared to the average value for the South West (Figure 2).

Compared to the rest of England, of the 3,281 LSOAs in the South West, 1,873 (51%) have a significantly lower proportion of income deprivation among people aged 60 and over, 861 (26%) have a similar proportion of income deprivation among people aged 60 and over and 747 (22.8%) have a significantly higher proportion of income deprivation among people aged 60 and over (Figure 3). LSOAs with significantly higher levels of income deprivation among people aged 60 and over are mostly located in urban areas - Bristol, Bournemouth, Torquay and Plymouth (Figure 3).

The proportion of hospital deaths is highest in LSOA’s where income deprivation is significantly higher compared to England and lowest in LSOA’s where income deprivation is significantly lower (Table 1). The proportion of deaths at home, and in hospices, is lowest in LSOA’s where income deprivation is significantly higher compared to England and highest in LSOA’s where income deprivation is significantly lower (Table 1).

This work highlights the further need to reduce the numbers of older people living in income deprivation across the South West, ensuring equity in terms of accessing services and understanding individual needs at the end of life.

REFERENCES
1. ONS annual mid-year population estimates, 2014.
2. ONS Regional Profiles - Population and Migration - South West, March 2013.

DISCUSSION

Within the South West, place of death varies with the level of income deprivation associated with the area of residence. This reflects the findings of other studies which suggest that where you live, and the relative levels of deprivation in your area, can have a significant impact on how likely you are to access the right care and affect your family’s views of the quality of care you receive1-6.

The present study indicates that the proportion of people dying in hospices is lowest in areas where income deprivation is significantly higher. This may reflect inequalities in terms of access to end of life care services such as hospices, something identified by the Quality Care Commission4.

Although this study estimates that 197,604 people aged 60 and over in the South West live in income deprivation, true numbers could be even higher as some pensioners are eligible non-recipients of public benefits including pension credit. In 2013/14, the level of pension credit take-up was between 61% and 64%, while take-up of the Guarantee Credit, paid to the poorest pensioners, was between 73% and 80%5.

Future analysis could look at the demographic characteristics and geographical variation of these eligible non-recipients as well as looking at patterns of hospital admission and re-admission towards the end of life. Work undertaken by the National End of Life Care Intelligence Network has shown that cancer patients from areas of higher income deprivation spend more time in hospital in the last 6 months of life compared to people from less deprived areas5.