



THEME OF THE MONTH
JULY 2022

CHILD POVERTY



WHAT IS CHILD POVERTY?

Child poverty is when parents can't afford the basics of food, clothing and shelter.

There are millions of children living in poverty who have at least one employed parent. Low paid jobs and zero-hour contracts mean many working families live hand to mouth. The Covid-19 crisis - loss of jobs, closure of schools, bigger bills - will have pushed even more families over the edge.

Poverty can present in several different ways. If parents are struggling to afford food and rely on food banks, that is an indicator of poverty. Having to go without heating and electricity, facing childcare costs higher than earnings, or living in insecure housing because families can't keep up with the rent, are all indicators of poverty. Poverty can affect every part of a child's life.



HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE LIVING IN POVERTY?

Percentage of children in poverty, 2019/20, by country:

- UK – 31%
- Wales – 31%
- England – 30%
- Scotland – 24%
- Northern Ireland – 24%

Percentage of children in poverty, 2019/20, by English region:

- London – 38%
- North East – 37%
- West Midlands – 35%
- Yorkshire and the Humber – 33%
- North West – 31%
- East Midlands – 27%
- South West – 26%
- East of England – 26%
- South East - 24%

(Action for Children, 2021)

4.3 million

children live in
poverty in the UK

3 in 10

children live
in poverty

107%

increase in children
receiving emergency
food in 2020

THE TYPES OF POVERTY

Relative poverty compares the income of households with the average household income; in the UK, this is defined as 60% of the current median. After housing costs presents a more accurate measurement of poverty as the cost of housing is essential and unavoidable.

Absolute poverty considers the level of income needed to purchase basic goods and services. However, in the UK, this is not so simple, and the UK “absolute poverty” measure is actually defined as less than 60% of median income (anchored at 2010/11 values but adjusted for inflation). In other words, it is not technically an absolute measure at all per se, but a relative measure linked not to current median income but to the historical median income in 2010/11.

Low income and material deprivation. Material deprivation – the inability to afford basic resources and services – has arguably the greatest impact on children and young people. Low income and material deprivation is defined as household income lower than 70% of median income together with being materially deprived, while severe low income and material deprivation is income lower than 50% combined with high material deprivation. Material deprivation assessed a family’s ability to afford a list of basic children’s items, although each UK nation uses different indices of material deprivation.

Persistent poverty measures the prevalence of households that have lived in poverty for a prolonged period of time; in the UK, this is defined as households with an income less than 60% of the current median for at least three of the previous four years. One in four lone parents in the UK live in persistent poverty, signalling a concern that children and families struggle to move out of poverty.

HOW DOES POVERTY AFFECT CHILDREN?

Children from poorer backgrounds may not have the same opportunities as others the same age. Many will need to work part-time as well as attending school, they may not have access to the same learning materials, and they may miss out on trips because they simply can't afford it. They have to work harder to overcome the obstacles that modern life puts in front of them.

SCHOOL AND FRIENDS

Living in poor households can make children feel unequal to others. This can then make them less hopeful about getting the job they want. They may feel like they have to work twice as hard.

Children who get free school meals are less likely to get A*- C grades at GCSE than wealthier peers.

It can also be tricky to form proper friendships. Repeatedly moving homes can mean any bonds are short lived. If they do have friends, they may not be able to afford to do all the things they want to do.

MENTAL HEALTH

Money worries can make anyone feel stressed, anxious and depressed. Because of this, parents may argue more or lose their temper more easily. Young people often don't let it show but it's a difficult environment to grow up in.

In some cases, children with a mental health issue won't have the bus fare to get to a service that may help, so they have to battle it alone.

Children living around debt are five times more likely to be unhappy than children from wealthier families.

GANGS AND EXPLOITATION

Many children take on the family's money worries. Some feel they need to step up and put food on the table. Criminals take advantage of this. They recruit these young people into gangs.

BULLYING

Growing up in a household where money is tight can mean making do with a lot of things - second-hand clothes, basic food, hand-me-down textbooks. Children make the best of what they have but bullies often target those who look a bit different.

More than a quarter of children from the poorest families said they had been bullied because their parents couldn't afford the cost of school.

CHILD POVERTY FACTS & FIGURES

- **Lone parent families:** 49% of children living in single parent families are in poverty.
- **Black and minority ethnic families:** 46% of children from black and minority ethnic families are growing up in poverty, compared with 26% of children in White British families.
- **Work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty in the UK.** 75% of children growing up in poverty live in a family where at least one person is working.
- **Families with three or more children:** 47% of children in poverty live in families with three or more children.
- **Childcare and housing are two of the costs that take the biggest toll on families' budgets.** When you account for childcare costs, an extra 130,000 children are pushed into poverty.
- **Families experience poverty for many reasons, but its fundamental cause is not having enough money to cope with the circumstances in which they are living.** A family might move into poverty because of a rise in living costs, a drop in earnings through job loss or benefit changes.



IMPACTS OF CHILD POVERTY

Children and families living and growing up in poverty and low-income households experience many disadvantages. These can have negative health and social consequences during childhood and into adulthood.

POORER HEALTH AND WELLBEING

There are several ways in which living in poverty can lead to poorer health outcomes in children, as well as into adulthood.

Being exposed to some or all of the key factors below, as well as the accumulation of exposure over time, can adversely impact on child development and health outcomes.

- Limited money for everyday resources - including good quality housing
- Stress of living in poverty
- Unhealthy lifestyles
- Poorer education and employment opportunities

Children's experience of poverty can also lead to bullying, or feelings of exclusion, as they may have fewer friends and less access to the social activities of their peers.

HEALTH INEQUALITIES

When considering health inequalities, children growing up in poverty or in the most deprived areas are at greater risk of poorer health outcomes than children from better off families or from more affluent areas.

This can be seen in:

- higher infant mortality rate
- Low birthweight
- Risk of being overweight or obese
- Not being breastfed
- Tooth decay
- Unintentional injury
- Poorer general health and mental wellbeing
- Teenage pregnancy

ADVICE ON POVERTY

Here are some sources you may find useful if you are on a low income:

- [Turn2us](#) Turn2us helps people in financial need gain access to welfare benefits, charitable grants and other financial help.
- [Money Advice Service](#) (0800 138 7777) is a government-backed free money advice source.
- [National Debtline](#) (0808 808 4000) offers free advice over the phone to people in England, Scotland and Wales.
- [Step Change](#) (0800 138 1111) is a charity that gives advice to help people overcome debt problems.

LSP'S SAFEGUARDING & PREVENT TEAM

If you have any concerns at all, please don't hesitate to contact a member of our Safeguarding and Prevent team:

Safeguarding and Prevent Officer: Andy Hamer

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