

# ENDING CHILD POVERTY: WHY AND HOW

CHILD  
POVERTY  
ACTION  
GROUP



# ENDING CHILD POVERTY: WHY AND HOW

Kitty Stewart, Jane Millar,  
Alan Marsh and  
Jonathan Bradshaw

December 2023

## CONTENTS

Introduction 3

One: Why must we end child poverty? 5

Two: How do we end child poverty? 19

Three: Priorities for action 32

Notes 41

---

# INTRODUCTION

We face a national emergency of increasing child poverty. This report sets out the damage being done and how to stop it.

The average British class of 30 pupils now has nine children living in poverty; the harder-hit areas have 11. They add up to 4.2 million British children whose parents have too little income to support them properly – 29 per cent of our future generation. More families now fall below the poverty line, falling much further below it than before, many into very deep poverty and hardship.

Successive UK governments prescribed work as the best way out of poverty. It was true for some families, but now seven out of 10 children living in poverty have a parent in paid work. Some have two.

Decades of research have shown the damage poverty does to family life and to children's growth and development. Poverty means a lack of healthy food and homes that stay cold in winter – problems that have worsened sharply over recent months as food inflation and fuel costs have soared. If children arrive at school cold and hungry, they are less able to respond to even the best efforts to improve their education. Poverty means parents forgoing essentials while debts increase, creating anxiety and stress which profoundly affects family wellbeing. All these factors impede children's progress at school and cause their physical and mental health to fall steadily below that of children in better-off families.

This has to stop. It has to reverse. The number of families who fall into poverty is not somehow the product of natural forces, it arises from decisions made in Parliament. For example, among many other reductions in support for families, the real value of child benefit has lately fallen by a quarter. Poverty is a political choice.

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) works with families, seeking to understand what causes child poverty, its impact on children's lives, and how child poverty can be reduced, prevented and then ended forever. What follows sets out the damage being done and how to stop it.

**Chapter 1 sets out the evidence:** the impact on children, the extent of child poverty, recent trends, and the groups at highest risk. The conclusion is clear: this urgent problem deserves to be treated as an emergency demanding immediate government action.

**Chapter 2 focuses on what works:** highlighting the importance of the social security system in getting money to low-income families. There are examples of



***Nine pupils in an average class of 30 live in poverty.***

how other countries tackle child poverty, the approaches taken in the devolved nations, and what we can learn from experience in the UK.

**Chapter 3 sets out priorities for action:** including ways to rid the system of the measures increasing child poverty and the key measures to help reduce child poverty. We finish by imagining a society without child poverty – imagining what could, with political and popular will, become a reality.

## BOX 1: Defining and measuring poverty

Poverty means not having enough resources to meet household needs. The following core definition, written by the sociologist and anti-poverty campaigner Peter Townsend, is still very widely used:

*Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong.<sup>1</sup>*

Poverty is a relative concept: what a family needs to look after their children and ensure they can participate in society will depend on what others around them have. A child can have three meals a day, a roof over her head and clothes to wear to school, but still be poor because her parents don't have enough money to ensure her home is warm, that she has internet and computer access to do her homework and can go on the same school trips as her classmates.

The standard way to measure child poverty in the UK and across the European Union uses relative household income: a child is said to be living in poverty if they live in a household with income below 60 per cent of the contemporary median income, adjusted for household size. Income can be captured 'before housing costs' (BHC) or 'after housing costs' (AHC). Both indicators are informative but, given widely varying housing costs in the UK, often driven by factors beyond a family's control,

the AHC measure is arguably the more important of the two.

The 60 per cent median income approach to poverty measurement has its limitations, some of which are discussed further in Box 4. No single indicator is perfect and it is important to look at other supplementary indicators as well, including 'anchored' poverty (where the poverty line is held constant over time in real terms – sometimes called 'absolute' poverty); material deprivation indicators; wider hardship indicators such as food bank use; and measures of the depth and persistence of poverty.

Nonetheless, the 60 per cent median income measure also has very considerable strengths: it is a transparent and consistent indicator that allows us to make meaningful comparisons across countries and over time (especially over the medium and longer term), and to identify groups most at risk. It is also important to be aware that having a range of poverty indicators means politicians can cherry-pick the one that suits their agenda. For example, in recent years, UK prime ministers have repeatedly used the anchored measure to argue that child poverty has fallen, even while relative poverty has risen.<sup>2</sup> This is a good reason for choosing one indicator as the headline measure, backed up by supplementary indicators. We take the view that the relative income measure comes closest to capturing Townsend's definition of poverty and should be treated as the central indicator of poverty by which all governments are assessed, with other measures used alongside but not instead of this one.

# ONE WHY MUST WE END CHILD POVERTY?

*'I skip meals to share with my mum... for example, I skip my meal to wait for her to come back and at least we can have the same amount of food... [We] starve together through the whole day, so at least we will have had something to eat.'* (Amara, aged 15, London)<sup>3</sup>

*'The place where she was happy and thrived was in dance classes and I now can't pay for them and that was the thing she looked forward to every week, she made friends there; she doesn't have friends at school as such but at dance she had friends, yeah, and we've had, we've had to stop all that.'* (Jessica, single parent, York)<sup>4</sup>



***My niece didn't go on hers [school trip] and she was one of only two children in the whole class of 32 that didn't go and she cried when I picked her up from school because all her friends had been but she hadn't been.***  
(Parent of primary school child)<sup>6</sup>

---

## THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON CHILDREN

---

Poverty can mean children going without basic necessities – going to school or bed hungry, wearing shoes that are too small or let the rain in, or sleeping on a mattress on the floor because there is no money for a bedframe. It means missing out on everyday fun, play and relaxed time with family because family outings are too expensive, and being excluded from social activities with friends because there isn't money for a cinema ticket or birthday present. Poverty denies children chances to try new things and develop their interests and talents through extra-curricular clubs and even school trips and activities. For many children, poverty also means growing up too soon – having to deal with adult worries and anxieties when they are still children.<sup>5</sup>

Children's own accounts highlight how poverty penetrates deep into childhood, affecting not just the economic and material but also their friendships and opportunities, giving rise to 'shame, sadness and the fear of social difference and marginalisation'.<sup>7</sup> CPAG's research with children in low-income families found that the children reported missing out on many ordinary and everyday things: days out (78 per cent), buying things their friends have (78 per cent), trips





***If all of your friends or people you know go to the after school clubs, school trips, that kind of isolates you from them.***

***You're singled out, you're not with them, just a spare person.***

***(Boy, age 15)<sup>8</sup>***

to the cinema (73 per cent), family holidays (72 per cent), outings where there are transport costs (72 per cent), small treats (64 per cent), taking part in extracurricular activities (65 per cent), and toys and games (62 per cent).<sup>9</sup>

Childhood is important in its own right, and policy should reflect that.<sup>10</sup> In addition, what happens during childhood shapes children's opportunities and future trajectories. There is strong evidence that poverty harms children's health, social and emotional wellbeing, and educational experiences (see Box 2). These effects cast a long shadow; they have a long-term impact on future lives.

Children's experiences highlight their sheer dismay at living in poverty, particularly in early adolescence when they realise that other families have so much and theirs so little. Gazing up at a long and distant curve of inequality discourages them just as their hardships constrain them.

## **BOX 2: Poverty blights health, wellbeing and education**

**Health:** Poverty affects child health even before birth. Children born to parents living in poverty are more likely to be low birthweight and less likely to survive the first year of life.<sup>11</sup> They are also more likely to suffer from asthma and other childhood diseases, and to be overweight or obese.<sup>12</sup> Studies that track children into adolescence and adulthood find long-term effects of child poverty on later health.<sup>13</sup> For example, a recent study found that children who lived in low-income households during their early childhood were more likely to experience self-assessed ill health or obesity and to smoke at age 17.<sup>14</sup> Research able to take a very long-term view finds that policies providing additional financial support during childhood underlay improved life expectancy in adulthood.<sup>15</sup>

**Wellbeing:** Children in poverty are more likely to have poor mental health. They rate themselves lower on average on measures of happiness and subjective wellbeing and are at higher risk of psychological distress.<sup>16</sup> They tend to

score less well on indicators of socioemotional and behavioural development, including measures of both 'internalising problems' (including emotional symptoms such as being often unhappy or tearful and peer symptoms such as being bullied) and 'externalising problems' (including conduct problems such as fighting and hyperactivity or inattention).<sup>17</sup> As well as being of great concern in themselves, these effects may prevent children from fulfilling their educational potential.

**Education:** On average, children growing up in poverty do less well in education. Gaps open up very early – even before children start school – and are persistent and ever-widening after that.<sup>18</sup> Children from the lowest-income families are less likely to achieve the standard benchmarks at age 11, make slower progress in secondary school, and are much less likely to attend the most selective higher education institutions.<sup>19</sup> Inevitably, this has an impact on their level of educational attainment and later job opportunities and wages.<sup>20</sup>

## Why money matters



***I wake up every morning worrying about where the money is coming from to pay the next gas/electricity bill.***  
(Parent, Changing Realities)<sup>22</sup>

Unpicking the multiple factors contributing to child development is difficult, and income is just one part of the story. The findings summarised in Box 2 highlight average differences between groups, and there will always be some children who do better or less well. We know that parents (especially mothers) go to extensive lengths to protect their children from the impact of poverty and to try to meet their needs in difficult circumstances. Other factors associated with low income explain part of the association between income and wider outcomes but are not affected by a change in family income. For example, children growing up in poverty are more likely to live in neighbourhoods with higher pollution levels and more risky environments and are less likely to have access to good schools.<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless, the evidence is undeniable that money matters: if a family has sufficient income to meet their children's needs, it makes a big difference to their children's ability to thrive. When families in poverty have received an increase in income – for example, because of a change in the generosity of the social security system – research tells us that children's outcomes improve.<sup>23</sup> Box 3 highlights how money makes a difference.

### BOX 3: Money makes a difference

How does more money translate into better outcomes for children? First, and most obvious, having more money allows parents to spend on things that benefit children: buying nutritious food, keeping the house warm, replacing clothes and shoes, and paying for sports clubs, broadband, laptops or additional tutoring. There is strong evidence that this is what happens; when parents in poverty experience an increase in income, they spend it on their children. For example, in the early 2000s, the introduction of child tax credit gave considerably more generous support to low-income families with children. Researchers examining this change identified increased spending on fruit and vegetables and children's clothes, books and toys, while spending on alcohol and tobacco fell.<sup>24</sup>

Second, an increase in income can significantly impact the family's emotional environment and parents' ability to spend quality time with children. We know that poverty has a negative effect on maternal mental health, increasing the risk of maternal depression.<sup>25</sup> More generally, worrying about making ends meet absorbs parents' energy and mental bandwidth and can make it harder for them to give children their undivided attention.<sup>26</sup> Tension around money can lead to greater conflict in the household, both between adults and between adults and older children.<sup>27</sup> Living on a very low

income also simply takes up adults' time, leaving less time for children. For example, parents on very tight budgets might shop around to get the best offers, and return to the shops in the evening when goods are marked down.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, growing evidence shows that a lack of money affects children's emotional wellbeing. In part, this is because children are affected by parents' worries about money, but there are also direct effects of hardship on children's mental wellbeing. A large-scale study found that children's lived experience of economic pressure directly affected their psychological distress, independent of parental money worries.<sup>29</sup> This likely reflects that going without material items can have wider implications for young people than the material absence itself. Not having the right shoes prevents a child's feet from developing properly and may also mean a risk of being bullied. Not having a haircut before school photo day can make a child feel anxious.<sup>30</sup> Missing a residential school trip means a lost educational opportunity and may also have a lasting impact on social integration and motivation at school. It is easy to see how such deprivations affect the quality of children's day-to-day lives and can have knock-on consequences for their educational progress and attainment.

---

## HOW MANY CHILDREN LIVE IN POVERTY?

---

The urgency of the need to tackle child poverty in the UK is underlined by the scale of the problem – the number of children affected. The latest figures, for 2021/22, show 4.2 million children living in poverty.

These data come from the annual Households Below Average Income (HBAI) data series produced by government statisticians using the Family Resources Survey. This large household survey is the most reliable source on family incomes, although it is subject to limitations, including measurement error and non-response. It also excludes children not living in households, including homeless families, asylum seekers and children in institutional care.



**4.2 million British children live in poverty.**

The figure of 4.2 million children is based on the standard poverty line of 60 per cent of equivalised household median income AHC (see discussion in Box 1 and Box 4). Among this group, some children are living in particularly severe hardship. More than one in five – 900,000 children – live in households classified as food insecure.<sup>31</sup> Half a million children live in households that have relied on a food bank in the last year. It is worth noting that these data on food insecurity are new: until recently, it was not considered necessary to ask such questions in the UK, where hunger was thought to belong to the past.

The survey also asks about 21 goods and services that almost everyone agrees no one ought to go without because they cannot afford them – items ranging from keeping the house warm to being able to celebrate a special occasion. The government uses this information to define a category of ‘material deprivation’. In 2021/22, more than one in 10 UK children lived in families in both relative income poverty and material deprivation. The cost of living crisis will almost certainly have increased that figure.





## BOX 4: Strengths and limitations of the '60 per cent equivalised median' poverty measure

The relative poverty measure is widely agreed to be a robust and consistent measure of poverty which allows us to make meaningful comparisons across countries and over time, especially over the long term. Nonetheless, like any measure, it has disadvantages.

First, there is no strong justification for focusing on 60 per cent, rather than 50 per cent or 70 per cent of median income. The 60 per cent line may in fact be rather low. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation regularly calculates a 'minimum income standard' using a consensual approach in which focus groups and experts develop a budget for what different sized families need as a minimum in the UK today.<sup>32</sup> Since the exercise began, the budgets for families with children have repeatedly come up significantly higher than 60 per cent of median income. This suggests our current poverty measures give a conservative estimate of child poverty.

Second, while an 'equivalence scale' is used to adjust for differences in household needs due to family size (here we use the standard modified OECD scale), it is impossible to know exactly how household size affects poverty. The costs of children and of other needs such as disability may not be well captured in these scales. Alternative measures such as the material deprivation indicator may better identify the additional poverty risk faced by groups such as disabled children.

Third, the 60 per cent median measure is sensitive to short-term changes in median incomes but not price changes. In a recession, poverty can therefore fall simply because income has fallen. An 'anchored' poverty measure can provide a useful check in this case. In contrast, when purchasing power declines rapidly, as in the cost of living crisis, the number of households measured as poor will not increase. Here, indicators such as foodbank use can help give an immediate sense of what is happening.

Finally, the 60 per cent measure is a 'headcount' indicator, which does not reflect the depth of poverty – how far below the poverty threshold a household falls. People already living below the poverty line could become worse off and this would not be recognised. Indicators of the 'poverty gap' – the average shortfall by which families in poverty fall below the line are therefore valuable.

One recent attempt to improve on the standard measure was developed by the Social Metrics Commission.<sup>33</sup> It makes adjustments to both the poverty line and the measure of household income to try to address some of the limitations set out here. But a core weakness of its indicator is that the adjustments make it more complex to interpret why poverty has or hasn't changed.. A suite of distinct indicators can shed clearer light on what is happening to child poverty and why.

## Trends in child poverty

The last 25 years have seen significant changes in UK child poverty rates. Figure 1 shows that in the years to 2010/11, progress was made against the standard relative income measure, albeit unevenly. Child poverty then increased across the following decade, from 27 per cent in 2010/11 to 31 per cent on the eve of the pandemic (AHC). The rate fell in 2020/21, mainly due to the extra £20 a week added to social security benefits during the pandemic, but it has subsequently risen again.

Figure 1: Relative child poverty: Children (%) in households below 60% contemporary median income (equivalised)

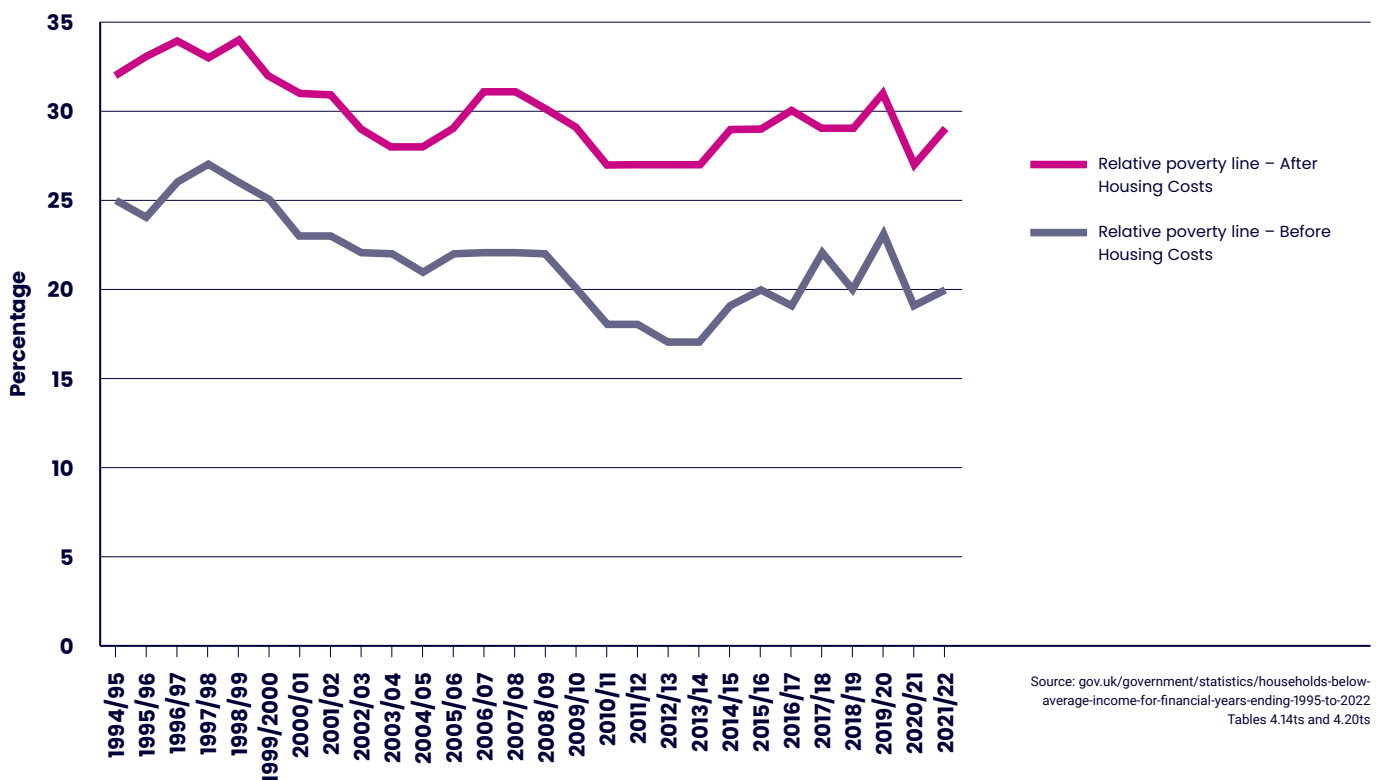
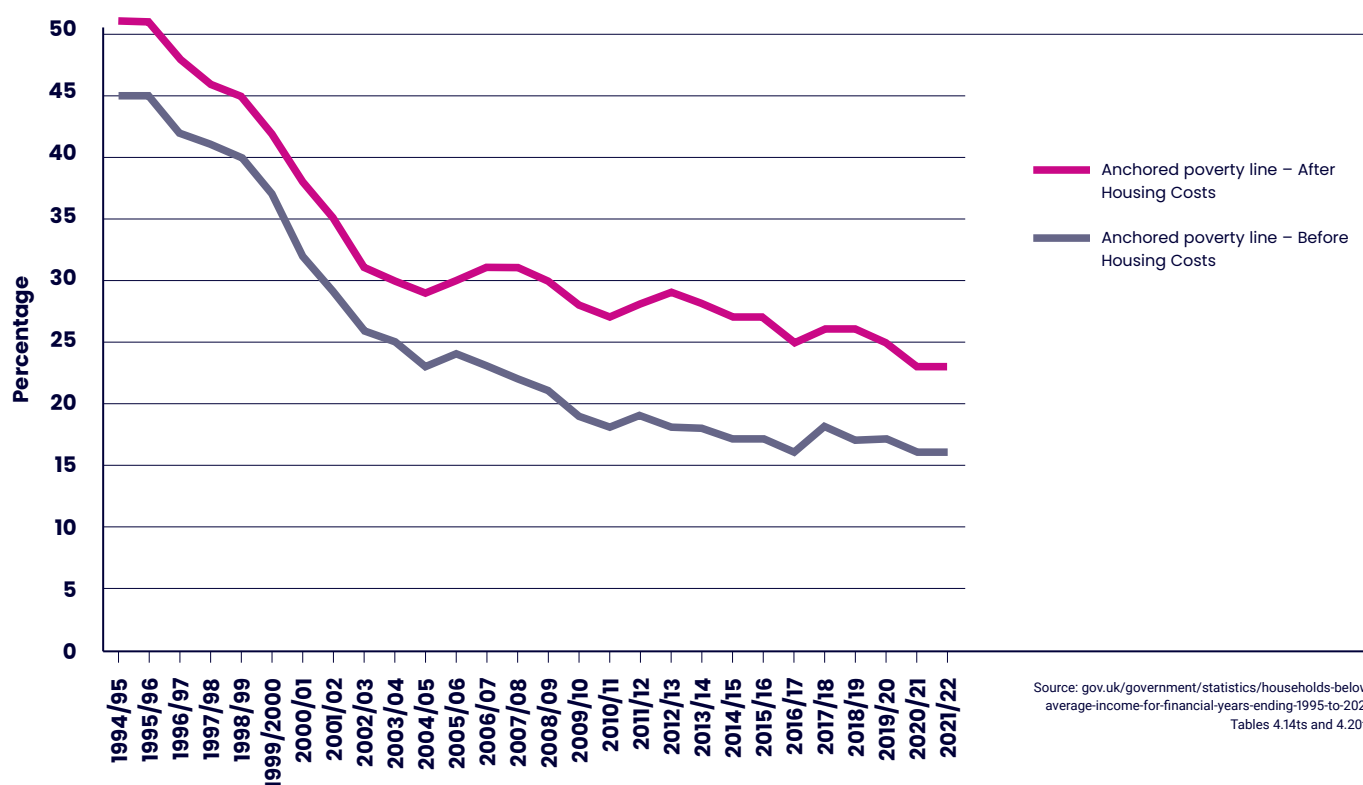


Figure 2 shows an alternative indicator: the share of children living below the 2010/11 poverty line held constant (or 'anchored') in real terms. Against this line, poverty fell rapidly in the decade to 2005 and has since improved, but much more gradually than in the previous period. It is very important that we see this line declining; it is the very minimum we should expect. But we should remember that children live in society as it is today, not as it was a decade ago. Figure 1 captures this much better.

Figure 2: Anchored poverty: Children (%) in households below 60% 2010/11 median income (equivalised)



## The depth of poverty

The poverty measures looked at so far are ‘headcount’ indicators: they count children living in households below the poverty line. But it is also important to keep track of the severity or depth of poverty in those households.

Indicators of the ‘poverty gap’ – the average shortfall from the poverty line for those living in poverty – point to increases in the severity of child poverty in the UK. For example, between 2010/11 and 2016/17, the median amount by which children fell short of the AHC poverty line increased from £52.80 to £67.00 a week.<sup>34</sup> Since then, the average position of those living in poverty has worsened. Between 2010 and 2019, there was an increase in households falling at least 50 per cent or at least 75 per cent below the poverty line.<sup>35</sup> One study focusing on ‘deep poverty’, defined as living in the bottom decile of the income distribution, found that the proportion of children living in deep poverty increased by 11 per cent.<sup>36</sup> The rise was nearly double (21 per cent) for children in larger families. More than a quarter of those in deep poverty are currently children.

## Which children live in poverty?

Table 1 sets out the different characteristics of families where children have a greater or lesser risk of living in poverty. Children are much more likely to be poor if they have parents who are not in paid work, if they live with a lone parent or if they have two or more siblings. There are also striking differences by ethnicity, with disturbingly high poverty rates for some groups in the UK: 62 per cent of Bangladeshi and 59 per cent of Pakistani children live below the poverty line, as do 53 per cent of Black children. These rates are more than double those for white children, 25 per cent of whom live in poverty. Poverty risk also varies across UK nations and regions, with the highest rates in the West Midlands and North East England, and considerably lower rates in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Eastern England.

We also need to consider the composition of poverty (see the last column of Table 1). This tells us about the characteristics of children living below the poverty line (which is not the same as the characteristics that increase the poverty risk). In the past, childhood poverty was most associated with parents' unemployment. As late as the mid-1990s, more than half of all poor children lived in workless families. Now, only three in 10 children in poverty (29 per cent) have no parent in work (at least, among the parents they live with). Most poor children (71 per cent) live with at least one working parent.



***71 per cent of poor children live with at least one working parent.***

It is only having two parents in paid work that offers any real protection from the risks of poverty. Among children with one parent in full-time work and one at home, 44 per cent live below the poverty line. This is an extraordinary figure. In post-war Britain, it was the norm for one parent (almost always the father) to work full time, while the other looked after the home and children. The 'family wage' was considered the key to family stability, even prosperity. Now, nearly half of these classical 1950s-style families live in poverty.

This change has been partly driven by disproportionate rises in housing costs, especially the rapid regrowth of the more expensive private rented sector. Half of all children whose parents are tenants live in poverty, compared with only 13 per cent of those whose parents are owner occupiers.

Differences in poverty risk by family characteristics are not inevitable and have changed considerably over time in response to policy changes. Figures 3 and 4 present changes in the risk of poverty for lone parents and children in larger families, showing that it is possible to narrow the gaps in poverty rates between children from families of different shapes and sizes. On the other hand, for larger families in particular, all of the progress made between 1994 and 2010 has been subsequently wiped out. One important reason for this is the 'two-child limit', which denies means-tested benefits (such as universal credit or working tax credit) to third or subsequent children in the family born since April 2017. Chapter 2 digs further into the policies and strategies that make a difference to child poverty, for better or worse.

Table 1: Rate and composition of child poverty (income less than 60% median (AHC) by household characteristics), 2021/22

	Rate: % of all children in the group who are poor	Composition: % of all poor children in each group
At least one adult in work	24	71
Workless families	61	29
Lone parent	44	35
In full-time work	26	6
In part-time work	37	9
Not working	61	21
Couple with children	25	65
Self-employed	29	11
Both in full-time work	7	5
One full-time, one part-time	8	5
One full-time, one not working	44	23
One or more part-time	63	11
No one in work	60	9
One child	23	17
Two children	22	34
Three or more children	42	49
Youngest child 0–4	31	45
Youngest child 5–10	30	35
Youngest child 11–15	25	16
Youngest child 16–19	24	5
No one in the household is disabled	25	54
Disabled adult, no disabled child	37	22
Households with a disabled child	35	24
England	31	85
North East	35	4
North West	34	11
Yorkshire and the Humber	31	8
East Midlands	33	7
West Midlands	38	9
East	24	10
London	33	14
South East	25	14
South West	27	8
Wales	28	5
Scotland	24	7
Northern Ireland	22	3



White	25	66
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	33	2
Asian/Asian British	47	17
Indian	28	4
Pakistani	59	8
Bangladeshi	62	3
Chinese	[u]	[low]
Any other Asian background	50	2
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	53	10
Other ethnic group	48	4
Home owners	13	26
Owned outright	23	7
Owned with a mortgage	11	18
Social rented sector tenants	49	38
All rented privately	50	36
<b>All</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: DWP (2023) *Households Below Average Income: For financial years ending 1995 to 2022*. Tables 4.3–4.6db. Note: data for region and ethnicity are a three-year average.

Figure 3: Child poverty by family structure over time: children living in households below 60% median equivalised income AHC

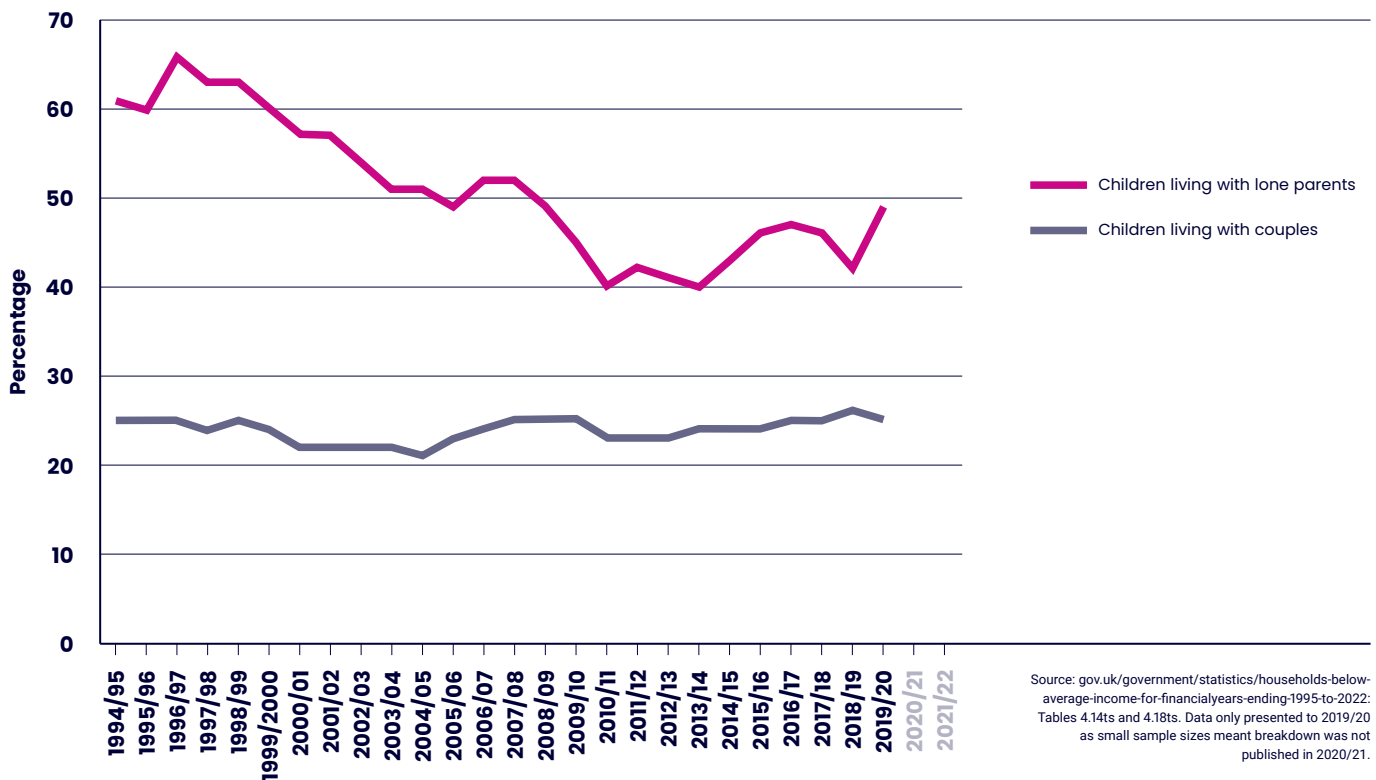
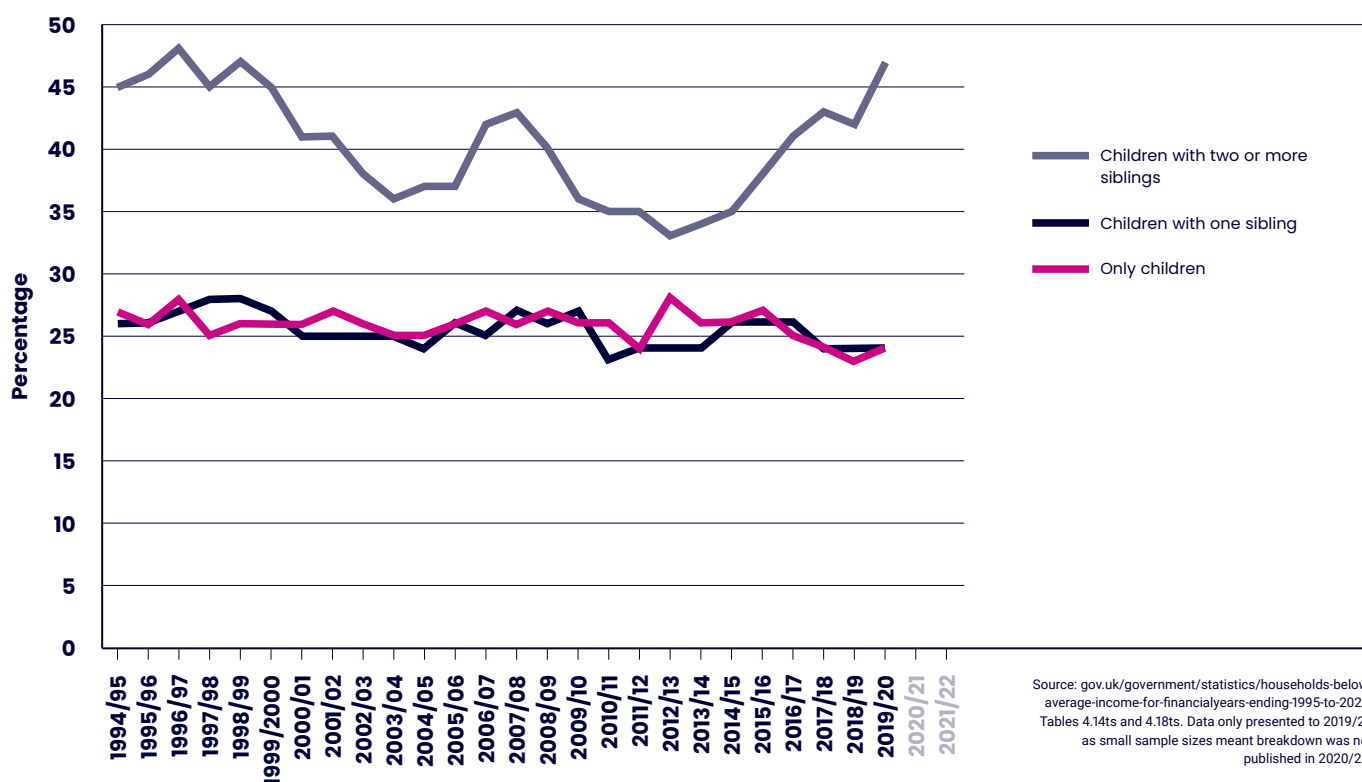


Figure 4: Child poverty by number of siblings over time: children living in households below 60% median equivalised income AHC



## ARE OTHER COUNTRIES DOING BETTER?

How is the UK doing on its child poverty record compared with other industrialised countries? Comparison allows us to see how we might do better. The main problem is that the data are not as up-to-date as we would like.

Figure 5 presents OECD data ranking countries by their child poverty rates. The OECD uses a very similar measure to the relative indicator described above, but using a lower threshold of 50 per cent of median income (BHC). The proportion of children in poverty by this measure varies from 3.5 per cent in Finland to 35 per cent in South Africa. There are broadly three groupings of countries. The best performing group, including mainly Nordic and some East European countries, has child poverty rates below 10 per cent. A second group has poverty rates between 10 and 15 per cent: this includes some central European countries, Portugal, Canada, Australia, Korea, Japan and the UK. A third group, including the USA, has child poverty rates over 15 per cent. Overall, the UK sits below mid-table: not the worst performer, but still with a child poverty rate more than double that of some European nations.

Figure 5: Child poverty rates in the OECD: children 0–17 (%) in households with equivalent income less than 50% median



Source: OECD, [data.oecd.org/inequality/poverty-rate.htm#indicator-chart](https://data.oecd.org/inequality/poverty-rate.htm#indicator-chart)



***The UK falls into the bottom third of the rankings with a child poverty rate of 23.5 per cent, more than double that of Iceland and Denmark.***

A second key source of comparative data on child poverty is the Eurostat Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC).<sup>37</sup> Table 2 presents four indicators derived from that source. Unfortunately, as a result of Brexit, the latest data for the UK are for 2018.<sup>38</sup> Countries are ranked by poverty headcount (column B), using the 60 per cent median income threshold in contrast to OECD's 50 per cent median. You can see by the shading whether countries fall into the bottom third of the rankings (darker shading), the middle third (lighter shading) or the top third (no shading).<sup>39</sup>

On the poverty headcount, the UK falls into the bottom third of the rankings with a child poverty rate of 23.5 per cent, more than double that of Iceland and Denmark. Among EU member states, only Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Romania and Bulgaria have higher rates.

The UK has a slightly higher rank on the material deprivation indicator (column A), with 16.8 per cent of children living in households lacking three or more socially perceived necessities. This places the UK in the middle third of countries. Nonetheless, the rate is three times higher than Iceland and is the worst performing of the richer countries of Europe.

The UK performs rather better on the persistence of child poverty (column C): 11.4 per cent of children had been at risk of poverty in at least three of the last four years. This places the UK nearly exactly mid-table and slightly better than Austria, Portugal, Belgium and France. Yet the rate for Denmark – just 0.8 per cent – shows that it is possible to structure society so that persistent poverty is almost non-existent. In contrast, in the UK, more than one in 10 children live in poverty year-on-year.

The poverty gap measure (column D) is where the UK's relative performance is best: an average gap between the household income of those below the poverty line and the poverty line itself is 21.1 per cent, meaning the UK falls just outside the top third of rankings. But this is still nearly double the size of the gap in Finland and Slovenia, which also have much lower poverty rates.

Table 2: Eurostat child poverty indicators 2018, sorted by headcount

	<b>A</b> <i>Material deprivation:</i> Percentage of children lacking three or more necessities	<b>B</b> <i>Poverty headcount:</i> Percentage of children in households below 60% median	<b>C</b> <i>Persistent poverty:</i> In poverty this year and at least two of the previous three years	<b>D</b> <i>Poverty gap</i>
Iceland	4.6	10.7	1.7	15.0
Denmark	8.5	11.0	0.8	16.4
Czech Republic	8.6	11.0	10.1	19.0
Finland	8.8	11.1	3.5	12.0
Slovenia	7.5	11.7	3.1	13.3
Poland	9.0	13.0	11.1	20.1
Netherlands	5.8	13.1	7.6	20.9
Norway	5.0	13.2	4.8	18.6
Hungary	28.4	13.8	6.4	36.9
Germany	8.0	14.5	7.9	17.8
Estonia	11.1	15.2	11.8	23.5
Ireland	15.3	15.8	10.2	14.1
Cyprus	32.2	17.3	6.3	21.7
Latvia	19.7	17.5	7.6	30.7
Switzerland	8.8	19.0	10.9	21.1
Portugal	16.3	19.0	12.9	26.1
Austria	8.3	19.2	12.5	21.8
Sweden	6.8	19.3	6.5	21.7
Croatia	21.9	19.7	13.8	29.5
France	13.4	19.9	14.4	16.4
Belgium	14.3	20.1	14.2	20.4
Slovak Republic	18.9	20.5	—	26.1
Malta	10.7	21.4	15.6	21.9
Luxembourg	6.0	22.6	22.5	21.2
Greece	35.3	22.7	17.3	30.2
United Kingdom	16.8	23.5	11.4	21.1
Lithuania	21.2	23.9	15.2	32.3
Italy	16.3	26.2	19.6	32.0
Bulgaria	28.0	26.6	18.9	39.7
Spain	15.4	26.8	20.2	31.6
Serbia	28.9	28.8	23.4	42.4
North Macedonia	45.2	29.3	28.6	40.7
Albania	58.3	29.6	—	33.8
Romania	35.2	32.0	33.2	40.1
Montenegro	37.4	32.4	21.8	40.9
Turkey	45.1	33.8	23.1	26.8

Sources:

Material deprivation rate by age group – EU-SILC [TESSI082]

At-risk-of poverty rate by detailed age group – EU-SILC [TESSI120]

Persistent at-risk-of poverty rate by age group – EU-SILC [TESSI022]. The indicator shows the percentage of the population whose equivalised disposable income was below the 'at-risk-of poverty threshold' for the current year and at least two out of the preceding three years.

Relative median poverty risk gap by age group – EU-SILC [TESSI030]. The indicator is defined as the difference between the median equivalised total net income of persons below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold and the at-risk-of-poverty threshold.



# TWO

# HOW DO WE END CHILD POVERTY?

We see the urgency of tackling child poverty. Chapter 1 showed how poverty blights children's lives and underlined how high child poverty rates are in the UK today, compared to the past and to other countries. In this chapter, we consider the key drivers of child poverty and what we learn from them about what the solutions might be. We explore what we can learn from other countries and past policies.

---

## WHY DO CHILDREN LIVE IN POVERTY?

---

At root, poverty means that a family does not have the resources to meet its day-to-day needs. This equation has two sides: needs on the one hand and resources on the other. We must look at both sides of the equation to understand why children tend to face particularly high risks of poverty compared with other members of society.

### Needs

While a family has dependent children at home, the household's needs are greater. Most obviously, and urgently, the family has more mouths to feed, so food costs are higher. Other expenditure also rises, including spending on clothes and shoes, books, fuel, public transport and childcare. A family outing, such as to a museum or the cinema, costs more. Housing costs and bills are also likely to be higher as the family has greater demands for space, and increased needs to use technology and the internet. Some core public services are free to all in the UK, such as the NHS and school education. But there are still many associated costs, such as school uniforms, trips and equipment, which parents need to meet.<sup>40</sup>

Many costs are beyond family control, as the cost of living crisis has clearly highlighted. Housing costs and childcare costs can take up the lion's share of the family budget and vary dramatically across the country: the median private rent ranges from 21–22 per cent of median income in the Midlands to 40 per cent of median income in London.<sup>41</sup> While rents in the social housing sector can be significantly lower than in the private sector, families can wait many years for

access. Rents are generally lower in rural and suburban areas (though these gaps have been narrowing),<sup>42</sup> but living outside a city means additional car costs or relying on often limited public transport. Further, as recent events have shown, the cost of adequately heating a home can also depend on factors well beyond individuals' control and can leave families with a choice between 'heating and eating'. For families in which an adult or child is disabled, energy costs may be particularly high, because more time is spent at home and because of greater use of washing machines and other equipment. Childcare costs have also risen significantly in Great Britain: for example, by 5.6 per cent for under-twos and 6.1 per cent for two year olds in 2023 compared to 2022. And there are wide regional variations: for example, costs for under-twos in Scotland rose by only 1.6 per cent.<sup>43</sup>

CPAG has published annual *The Cost of a Child* reports since 2012. This calculates 'the minimum cost of bringing up a child in the UK', based on research with the public to identify the items required for a minimum acceptable standard of living.<sup>44</sup> In 2022, the basic cost (excluding rent and childcare) to bring up a child to age 18 was estimated at nearly £70,000 for a couple and over £110,000 for a lone parent (as they cannot achieve some economies of scale that can help couples). The total cost (with rent and childcare) is over £150,000 for a couple and over £200,000 for a lone parent, which, as the authors note, 'presents a daunting challenge to any family'. For a family not in work, benefits cover less than half of what a family with two children requires in 2022.



**Going to school costs families £864 a year for primary school children and at least £1,755 for secondary school pupils.**

CPAG's Cost of the School Day project has shown that attending school comes with many hidden and often unacknowledged costs. From stationery, resources needed for homework, equipment and kit for school sports teams, to school trips and lunches, and having a school uniform that fits – it all comes at a cost. CPAG recently published research which found that going to school in the UK costs families of primary school children at least £864 a year and families of secondary school children at least £1,755 a year.<sup>45</sup> Beyond costs, children and young people living in low-income households have shared the many ways they can feel different and left out at school. Non-uniform days, excessive and expensive uniform policies, and being identifiable as a pupil in receiving free school meals can draw attention to differences in household income and negatively affect school life and learning.<sup>46</sup>

One of the first people to highlight the systematic increase in poverty risk faced by families with dependent children was the campaigner and researcher Seebohm Rowntree, son of Joseph Rowntree of chocolate factory fame. In the late nineteenth century, Rowntree conducted a major household survey in York – one of the very first of its kind.<sup>47</sup> He was struck by the 'life cycle' nature of poverty. It was clear that the risk of poverty was much greater in some phases of life: childhood, parenthood and old age. These higher-risk periods alternated with times when families were in a stronger position with lower demands on resources: the first few years of marriage before children came along, and the time after children had reached economic independence but while parents were still healthy and working. The argument that families are at a higher risk of poverty when they have dependent children at home was a key reason for introducing family allowances (now child benefit) back in the 1940s.

Rowntree's core insight – that we all face a greater risk of poverty and have an increased need for support at key times in the life cycle – remains true today. Most families have fewer children now than in Rowntree's time, but the period of dependency is longer because children spend more time in full-time education. The increases in needs as a family expands sharply increases pressure on household budgets when children are young. Yet wages do not adjust to meet these extra needs – and in fact labour market income is likely to fall during this period, as we discuss next.

## Resources

The second part of the equation is family income. While family needs increase when children are young and dependent, this is also likely to be in a period in which family income takes a hit because of the need to balance paid work with caring responsibilities.

For some families, the reduction in paid working time might be short-term, perhaps limited to a child's first year of life. Parents in stable employment before a baby is born will have access to paid maternity and paternity leave, which will help see them through this first year. But UK policy only provides close to full wage replacement for a very limited time: 90 per cent of pay for just six weeks for mothers, with a flat weekly rate for another 33 weeks, plus two weeks reserved for fathers. While some larger companies provide more – up to six months on full pay for both mothers and fathers<sup>48</sup> – most families face heightened challenges in making ends meet during these important early months, even if they have been in paid work up to the birth. For families without a stable employment history, perhaps because of disability, ill health or local economic conditions, the challenges of welcoming a new member of the household are greater still.

Beyond the first year, parents' ability to bring in money from the labour market varies vastly depending on family circumstances. Many families cope with care demands by having one parent – almost always the mother, who also faces a gender pay gap – reduce their working hours or leave employment altogether. The number of families in the UK with two adults working full time is slowly increasing: just over one in five children now live in such households.<sup>49</sup> But this leaves a large majority of children in a range of different situations.

First, around a quarter of children live with a lone parent.<sup>50</sup> Working full time while meeting children's wider needs can be particularly hard for these parents. Nine out of 10 lone parents are women.<sup>51</sup> Further, one full-time wage is still just that – a single wage.

Second, parents in larger families – those with three or more children – also face considerable challenges balancing paid work and care. Among two-adult families with three or more children, the most common working patterns are to have one adult working full time and one at home, or one working full time and one part time, and this has remained fairly stable in recent years.<sup>52</sup> These decisions are usually strongly gendered. Research talking to larger families sheds light on why

parents do not spend longer hours in paid work.<sup>53</sup> The cost of childcare is one key factor, as are childcare logistics when children have different drop-off and pick-up times, and schools and nurseries are rarely co-located. In larger families, there is also a higher likelihood that one child will be ill and need care at home, meaning parents must either have family or friends ready to help out or need to find work that is reasonably flexible. With more children, there is also more demand for adult input at home, such as listening to what happened at school and helping with homework. In addition to these practical considerations, some parents emphasise that children are young for a relatively short time and they want to spend time with their children during this phase, engaging more intensively in paid employment at a later stage. It is mostly mothers who make the 'choice' to leave the paid labour market for unpaid caring roles.

Third, parents with a child with a disability or health needs can find it much more difficult to work, especially full time. Organising childcare for disabled children is more complicated and there are other extra, time consuming, requirements such as managing additional needs and therapies, and attending appointments.

In addition, there are other reasons not directly related to the presence of children that prevent adults from working or mean earnings are low, which nonetheless impact children. Disability or sickness among adults is a significant risk factor for child poverty. Adults who are disabled or experiencing temporary or long-term sickness are less likely to be in paid work themselves, and may also need care from other adults, further reducing the possibilities of paid work for the household.



***Disability or sickness among adults is a significant risk factor for child poverty.***

Finally, even where parents are in employment, work does not always pay. Enduring weaknesses in the UK labour market, especially associated with earlier industrial disinvestment, have placed greater numbers of workers into insecure low-wage service sector jobs offering fewer prospects. Since 2006, there has been a 60 per cent rise in the number of people moving repeatedly between work and unemployment, while the proportion at or below the minimum wage has risen sharply. The minimum wage has become a maximum wage for more and more workers. Wage growth slowed and then almost flatlined in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, but the losses were not shared equally.<sup>54</sup> In the three years between 2017 and 2020, wages in the bottom fifth of the income distribution fell by 3.8 per cent per year, incomes in the middle stagnated, while incomes in the top fifth saw steady increases. More than a million workers now have only 'zero hours contracts' while 15 per cent of the workforce are self-employed, with median incomes lower than employees. Trade union membership has fallen partly because of deindustrialisation, and trade union bargaining power has been further weakened by legislation. Public sector wages, in particular, have been held below inflation.

---

## **WHAT CAN BE DONE?**

---

What can be done to reduce poverty risks for children? The most urgent priority is to guarantee adequate financial support for families through the social security system. Evidence tells us that this is how to make a real difference to children's

welfare. In addition, we need policies that make it easier for parents to find high-quality paid work and to balance this with caring responsibilities. We also need policies addressing housing costs and keeping core public services free.

First, social security. This is crucial for both sides of the equation we started the chapter with: the increased needs all families have when children are at home, and the greater constraints to paid work. As we will see below, many countries with low child poverty rates pay universal child benefit for all children, recognising that this is a time in the lifecycle when all families could use extra support. The social security system can also be used to provide help with costs such as housing, if wages are low and high housing costs have not been tackled directly. Even families in which both parents are working often need help from the social security system. For example, in two-parent families working full time and with three or more children, more than one in 10 children in the UK live below the poverty line, and this figure has increased in recent years.<sup>55</sup>

For families where parents are working few or no hours, for one of the many reasons discussed above, state financial support becomes particularly important. In principle, the social security system in the UK is designed to fill the gaps when income from employment is not enough. But in recent years, while real wages have fallen and costs are rising, cuts to social security support have meant the system is doing less just when it needs to do more. Since 2010, about £40 billion has been taken from the social security budget through freezes on uprating, the two-child limit, the bedroom tax and the overall benefit cap. A decade ago, out-of-work support for families with children was worth 80–90 per cent of the AHC poverty line for most family types. By 2019/20, the maximum amount available had fallen to 60–70 per cent, with further common deductions bringing the level of support down to 50 per cent or even less.<sup>56</sup> These deductions include the repayment of universal credit advances after the introduction of a five-week wait for support, and the need to make up the shortfall in rent due to cuts in housing benefit. These last cuts mean it is now arithmetically impossible for the benefit system to lift out of poverty any family who is paying a market rent.

Second, alongside adequate social security, we need policies that enable parents to choose the right balance of work and care for their family. This includes adequately paid maternity, paternity and reformed parental leave, rights to flexible and part-time working, and crucially – affordable and accessible childcare that parents trust, not only during the preschool years but also after-school and holiday clubs.

Third, policies that improve the quality and pay of work are also essential: in addition to minimum wages and policies that provide workers with guaranteed hours and employment security, this includes pathways that allow progression in work. Access to education, training and employment support can help ensure that adults can improve their skills and command better jobs with higher wages.

Finally, pressure on family budgets can be reduced by reducing cost pressures. An example is public transport policies that provide free travel for young people, such as London's Zip Oyster scheme and free bus travel for under-22s in



Scotland. Policies ensuring access to healthcare and education is fully inclusive, such as expanding free school meals, have the potential to make a real difference. Policies to address the costs of housing and utilities should also be given high priority. Government investment in home insulation can protect household income and reduce carbon emissions.

In sum, investment in services and infrastructure can help to improve families' experiences, make it easier to balance work and care, and provide a buffer from the effects of poverty. But there is no substitute for policies that support income directly.

---

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM POLICIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES?

---

Many other countries have lower child poverty rates than the UK, as shown in Chapter 1. Can we learn anything from their policy approaches? Of course, it is not possible just to import other systems wholesale as much depends on context – on history, economy, labour markets, housing, family patterns, inequality and so much else.

But there are two ways to get ideas about what to do and how to do it. First, we can look at countries with very low child poverty rates and try to understand what policy measures are effective in achieving this. Second, we can look at countries that have adopted explicit child poverty strategies and explore how these came about and their impact.

### Finland

Finland has one of the world's lowest levels of child poverty and is one of the few European countries where the poverty rate is lower for children than for adults.<sup>57</sup> Families with children in Finland receive financial support in several ways.<sup>58</sup> Child benefit is non-means-tested and paid for all children up to age 17, with higher amounts for lone parents and for second and subsequent children. There is a guaranteed maintenance payment for children in lone-parent families. Gender equality is a specific commitment and there are high employment rates for both fathers and mothers. Paid parental leave (up to 14 months) and a home-care allowance (up to three years) are available for parents taking time out of employment. Public day care is guaranteed for all children under seven, and the care costs are state-subsidised.

Although child poverty rates are low in Finland, some groups are at higher risk, including children of migrants, children in larger families and children in lone-parent families.<sup>59</sup> Rising food and energy prices have caused child poverty rates to rise recently, resulting in calls for increased support for children to help offset the price increases. A recent review examining child poverty in Finland in an international context found that Finland could do more to tackle energy poverty, provide debt relief measures for low-income households, enhance child support measures, and address the geographical concentration of poverty.<sup>60</sup>

In 2021, as part of the EU initiative to establish a European Child Guarantee,<sup>61</sup> Finland adopted a National Child Strategy to 'create a child- and family-friendly Finland that respects the rights of the child'.<sup>62</sup> The strategy takes a broad approach across various policy areas, including financial support for families. Adequate income, poverty reduction, and shared caring responsibilities are among the priorities in the implementation plan.<sup>63</sup> It commits to ensuring children's participation in the ongoing discussions about social security reform, so that children and young people have a direct voice as policy develops. There are requirements to develop indicators for monitoring the plan's effectiveness and for regular monitoring and reporting.

Tax rates on wages are higher in Finland than the average for OECD countries.<sup>64</sup> But Finland can achieve low child poverty rates through comprehensive family policy, including cash payments and services, and with a commitment to gender equality and children's rights.

## New Zealand

New Zealand has an explicit child poverty strategy, introduced in the Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 and championed at the highest level by the then Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern. The aim is to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in child poverty. The 2019 *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* focused on wider measures of wellbeing. Much like the UK's child poverty strategy of the 1990s (discussed below), the strategy includes a commitment to regular reporting on a set of key measures of progress. These include four primary measures of income poverty and hardship, for which the government must set targets and report on annually. The key target is over 10 years: to more than halve child poverty rates by 2027/28 compared to the baseline year of 2017/18.

The main policy changes to support this were also introduced in 2018, in the *Families Package*,<sup>65</sup> which was intended to improve income for low- to middle-income families with children. It included increases to the Family Tax Credit and a new Best Start Tax Credit (both part of the Working for Families tax credit payments), increased paid parental leave, increases to benefits for orphans and foster care, an accommodation supplement and support for winter energy costs. The 2023 Budget *Child Poverty Report*<sup>66</sup> outlines additional measures including increases to benefits, indexing benefits so they rise in line with wages, increases to the minimum wage and the introduction of a Healthy School Lunches Programme. There were also various temporary support measures put in place during the Covid pandemic.

New Zealand had made some significant progress against child poverty targets by 2021/22. The 'moving-line measure' (a relative poverty line based on current income BHC) fell from 16.5 per cent in 2017/18 to 12 per cent in 2021/22. The 'fixed-line measure' (based on an absolute poverty line AHC) also fell in the same time frame, from 22.8 per cent to 15.4 per cent.

Child poverty declined across all indicators, including among those in the most severe hardship, in the deepest income poverty, and for Māori children. But more

support is needed for specific groups such as 'working families teetering on the poverty line. Pacific families who may be less likely to qualify for support ... Families who may not be able to work, or whose work may be limited due to care needs...'.<sup>67</sup>

The child poverty strategy in New Zealand takes a long-term approach, with targets and milestones set, and a range of universal and targeted measures. It sits within a broader commitment to child wellbeing. The progress made demonstrates again the vital lesson: child poverty rates can be reduced by policy action.

## The USA

The USA may seem an unlikely choice to include in this section, with one of the highest child poverty rates in the OECD (as shown in Chapter 1).<sup>68</sup> But in 2021, the US government introduced an expansion of the Child Tax Credit system. More families were brought into the system, the amounts paid were increased, and the credit was made fully refundable for families with little or no taxable income. This meant more of the lowest-income families could benefit.

According to the Brookings Institute, this 'led to a historic reduction in poverty in the United States, particularly for children. Research showed that child poverty fell immediately and substantially'.<sup>69</sup> The US Census Bureau reports on an official poverty measure<sup>70</sup> that compares pre-tax cash income against a threshold that is set at three times the cost of a minimum food diet in 1963 and adjusted for family size. This is thus an absolute poverty line, similar to the anchored rather than relative poverty measure used in the UK. According to this measure, child poverty fell to 5.2 per cent in 2021, the lowest level on record, and compared with a rate of 9.7 per cent before the Child Tax Credit expansion. Child poverty fell for all racial and ethnic minority groups, especially for Black and Hispanic children. Analysis from the Economic Policy Institute shows that the changes to Child Tax Credits drove these falls in child poverty, rather than other factors.<sup>71</sup>

However, the Child Tax Credits were only in place for one year and expired at the end of 2021. Child poverty rose again up to 12.4 per cent in 2022, the largest one-year increase on record.<sup>72</sup> The expansion of Child Tax Credits worked in reducing child poverty, immediately and substantially. However, it seems there was not enough political and popular support for this effective measure to continue.

---

## TACKLING CHILD POVERTY IN THE DEVOLVED NATIONS

---

The devolved governments of the UK made commitments and developed strategies to reduce child poverty as required under the 2010 Child Poverty Act. The extent of the devolved powers varies across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and their room for manoeuvre is limited by national UK policies and provisions. But all three countries have maintained their focus on child poverty. The most recent Northern Ireland Executive's Child Poverty Strategy ran from 2016 to 2022. A final report is due to be published in 2023. The Welsh

government's most recent report was published in 2022 and shows how the child poverty strategy is set within wider objectives to promote children's rights and wellbeing, and measures to tackle inequality.<sup>73</sup> The Wales Centre for Public Policy has commissioned a series of reports to review poverty and social exclusion, including international comparisons of effective anti-poverty programmes.

Scotland is the only part of the UK which retains statutory targets for reducing child poverty and requirements for regular reporting on these. The Child Poverty Act (Scotland) Act 2017 sets four headline targets for 2030, including measures of relative and absolute child poverty, material deprivation and persistent poverty. The relative poverty target aims to reduce child poverty to less than 18 per cent by 2023 and less than 10 per cent by 2030.

The Scottish government has published two delivery plans: *Every Child, Every Chance* for 2018–2022 and *Best Start, Bright Futures* for 2022–2026. These cover a range of policy measures, including support through the benefits system, employment services for parents, expansion of childcare provision, school clothing grants and free school meals. The social security measures have been particularly notable. The Scottish government can introduce new benefits or top up reserved benefits through its devolved social security powers. The most significant of these is Scottish child payment, introduced in February 2021 at the level of £10 a week for every child aged under six, in families in receipt of one of the main means-tested benefits. By 2023, the level had increased to £25 a week and extended to children up to age 16 in families receiving means-tested benefits. The government estimates that about 50,000 children will be lifted out of relative poverty by 2023/24 by the Scottish child payment.<sup>74</sup>



***It is estimated that Scottish child payment will lift 50,000 children out of relative poverty.***

Families in Scotland can access other means-tested support through the Best Start grant (one-off payments for pregnancy and early years) and Best Start foods (pre-paid cards for healthy foods). Since 2021, free childcare (up to 30 hours a week) has been available for three and four year old children (and some two year olds) for all parents, regardless of employment status. The government expanded eligibility for free school meals in 2021, with universal provision for primary school children at early and first curriculum level, and targeted support during school holidays for children of all ages in low-income families. Scotland is also mitigating the effects of the UK-wide benefit cap through the discretionary housing payments system.

The latest Scottish data<sup>75</sup> on trends in child poverty show some falls in the rates, but these are not yet reaching the targets set. The relative child poverty rate was 24 per cent in 2017/18 and 23 per cent in 2021/22, and the absolute/anchored child poverty rate for the same years was 22 per cent and then 19 per cent. However, child poverty rates would probably have increased without the measures introduced.<sup>76</sup> Scottish government modelling suggests relative child poverty will now fall to 19 per cent in 2023/24, a five percentage point reduction from 2017/18. The Institute for Fiscal Studies concludes that as a result of recent Scottish tax and benefit policies, 'amongst the poorest 30 per cent of households, those with children will see their incomes boosted by around a sizeable £2,000 a year' compared to families in England and Wales.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, the Audit

Office Scotland concludes that much more needs to be done if the future targets are to be met.<sup>78</sup> It recommends that the Scottish government should ‘increase the focus on policies aimed at preventing children from experiencing poverty’ and that more attention and weight should be given to the views of children and families living in poverty.

As these examples show, policy does work. Child poverty can be reduced, and reduced quite quickly, and can be kept low. This requires political commitment, with universal and targeted measures to support family income embedded in a positive policy environment for children and families.

---

## CAN WE LEARN LESSONS FROM THE PAST?

---

The experience of other countries, and more recently Scotland, suggests that the UK can do better. At the same time, we can also find valuable positive lessons in the UK’s own recent history. Not so long ago, the UK had an extensive strategy to tackle child poverty, encapsulated in the Child Poverty Act 2010. This was introduced alongside several other policy measures aimed at supporting families, including the National Childcare Strategy, Sure Start children’s centres aimed at under-fives and their carers, the national minimum wage, health initiatives such as the Family Nurse Partnership, and employment support such as the New Deal for Lone Parents.<sup>79</sup>

The roots of the Child Poverty Act go back to the 1999 commitment made by then prime minister Tony Blair to eradicating child poverty: ‘Our historic aim will be for ours to be the first generation to end child poverty. It will take a generation. It is a 20-year mission. But I believe that it can be done.’<sup>80</sup> In pursuit of this commitment, the Labour government set itself a series of targets for reducing child poverty. During Gordon Brown’s premiership, these targets were enshrined into law under the Child Poverty Act 2010.

The Child Poverty Act was passed with cross-party support in March 2010. It established a legal requirement for the government to meet four child poverty targets by 2020/21 (see Box 5). It further required the government to publish a child poverty strategy every three years setting out the steps it was taking to meet the targets, and to report annually on progress. An independent Child Poverty Commission was set up to provide advice and guidance. The Child Poverty Act also placed new responsibilities for tackling child poverty onto a number of other stakeholders, including local government in England and the devolved administrations. The Scottish and Northern Irish Ministers were required to publish child poverty strategies.<sup>81</sup> Local authorities and other ‘delivery partners’ received new duties to work together to tackle child poverty. Local authorities were required to carry out a local child poverty needs assessment and to produce local child poverty strategies setting out the measures to be taken to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty in the local area.

Did the Child Poverty Act and the policies leading up to it make a difference? Policies that Labour pursued after Blair’s pledge contributed significantly to sharp

reductions in child poverty, especially for lone parents and children in larger families.<sup>82</sup> Most notably, the child tax credit system, introduced in the early 2000s, had a huge impact.<sup>83</sup> Between 1997/98 and 2013/14, when the policy approach began to change and cuts to tax credits started to take effect, child poverty fell against the headline relative income measure (which was a BHC measure) from 27 per cent to 17 per cent, and from 33 per cent to 27 per cent AHC.<sup>84</sup> Poverty for children living with lone parents fell from 48 per cent to 19 per cent BHC (63 per cent to 40 per cent AHC), and for children in families with three or more children from 39 per cent to 22 per cent BHC (45 per cent to 34 per cent AHC). In numbers, child poverty fell by over one million BHC and by 600,000 AHC. Much of this progress was already happening before the Act was passed, as the existing targets and progress measures were already in place, but the terms of the new legislation made the government more accountable. The Act ensured that eradicating child poverty remained high on the agenda and could not be shelved or overlooked in any year.

In addition, there is evidence that the wider strategy was having an effect. Research with London local authorities in 2012 found that the Child Poverty Act was useful in directing energy and resources towards child poverty, encouraging services to focus on child poverty, and raising the profile and understanding of the issue.<sup>85</sup> Significant features were the local child poverty needs assessments, providing a strong evidence base for action, and the push towards partnership working across services. While this research was done when it was still too early for many authorities to assess how far the Child Poverty Act had driven progress within their area, there was considerable optimism and a sense that with joined-up partnership working and a high level of political and strategic commitment, real progress could be made.

Ultimately, however, the Child Poverty Act was not able to achieve the aims set for it. After the change in national government in 2010, child poverty ceased to be given the same priority in policy. In 2012, the Child Poverty Act was retrospectively renamed the Life Chances Act 2010 and the Child Poverty Commission was renamed the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. A few years later, the Child Poverty Act was effectively dismantled altogether by the terms of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. The commission was renamed the Social Mobility Commission, and the term 'child poverty' was removed from the legislation. All requirements on devolved governments and local authorities were lifted. For national government, the legally binding targets were scrapped along with the need to have a child poverty strategy and to report progress to parliament. Instead, new reporting requirements (but no targets) were introduced relating to the number of children living in households with no member in paid work, and to educational attainment. Government ministers emphasised that eradicating child poverty remained a 'central purpose' but argued that the existing poverty indicators were 'deeply flawed and a poor test of whether children's lives are genuinely improving'.<sup>86</sup> The new measures were said to represent a shift towards focusing on the 'root causes' of poverty.

Academic researchers, local authorities and voluntary sector organisations strongly disagreed with the change.<sup>87</sup> Responses to a government consultation

on the issue repeatedly underlined the importance of adequate income to children's life chances and called for the suite of indicators in the Child Poverty Act to be retained. Only two out of 251 responses advocated removing income-based indicators from poverty measurement. Despite the near unanimity of views, the consultation had little impact. A House of Lords amendment ensured that government retains a statutory duty to measure and publish the four poverty indicators, but there is no longer any need to make or report on progress against them.

In 2020/21, the year Blair had set for the eradication of child poverty, but five years after that pledge was formally dropped, poverty rates were significantly higher than the targets on all four measures.<sup>88</sup> One in five children lived in relative poverty BHC: double the target of 10 per cent. One in 10 lived in combined low income and material deprivation: double the target of 5 per cent. Persistent poverty had hardly moved across the decade and stood at 10 per cent, considerably over the target of 7 per cent. The share of children living in 'absolute' poverty was 16 per cent, more than three times the target for that measure.<sup>89</sup>

The rapid dismantling of the Child Poverty Act shows us that legislation in itself is not sufficient; sustained political will and commitment is essential if poverty is to be eradicated. But the Act also provides hope for what can be done when the political will is there. While the UK currently has no child poverty strategy and no targets, we can see its influence reflected in other policies around the world. For example, in 2014 Ireland introduced a national target for reducing the number of children in 'consistent poverty' (combined low income and material deprivation).<sup>90</sup> In 2020, it added a target to improve Ireland's child poverty ranking within the EU from 20th to 5th or better.<sup>91</sup> New Zealand passed the Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018, as discussed above. The four measures it chose are very similar to the four UK measures shown in Box 5.

The UK's Child Poverty Act 2010 can be seen as a direct inspiration for these efforts, helping to make a difference to children on the other side of the world. Looking ahead, it can inspire us too.

### BOX 5: The 2020 targets in the Child Poverty Act 2010

- **Relative poverty:** to reduce the proportion of children who live in relative low income (in families with incomes below 60 per cent of the equivalised median, before housing costs) to less than 10 per cent.
- **Combined low income and material deprivation:** to reduce the proportion of children who live in material deprivation and in low income (below 70 per cent of the equivalised median, before housing costs) to less than 5 per cent.
- **'Persistent' poverty:** to reduce the proportion of children who experience long periods of relative poverty (three out of four years) to less than 7 per cent (as set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010 (Persistent Poverty Target) Regulations 2014).
- **'Absolute' poverty:** to reduce the proportion of children who live below an income threshold fixed in real terms (60 per cent of the equivalised household median in 2020/11) to less than 5 per cent.



---

## HOW WILL WE PAY FOR A NATIONAL CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY?

---

Child poverty is costing the country money, directly and indirectly. Having so many families and their children in poverty draws huge costs from other government budgets: poorer physical and mental health impacts the NHS, poorer educational attainment reduces workforce skills, and additional public services are needed to cushion poverty's effects.

CPAG produces regular estimates of these wider societal costs of high child poverty rates. In 2008, the total cost was estimated to be at least £25 billion a year in lost tax revenues and the costs of social provision. By 2023, this had risen to over £39 billion a year, due to both higher prices and higher rates of child poverty, but 'these are cautious estimates, and the true cost could be substantially higher'.<sup>92</sup> Abolishing child poverty is one of the most productive and worthwhile investments a country can make. Such an investment would be rewarded by greater productivity, higher tax receipts and lower social costs, enriching everyone financially, socially and morally.



***Abolishing child poverty is one of the most productive and worthwhile investments a country can make.***

This will, of course, cost money. In Chapter 3, we make some estimates of the direct costs of the various policy measures proposed. Some of that spending will be offset by the savings made, especially over time. But the money will have to come from somewhere and there are many demands on public expenditure. We need to look to our tax system to explore options as part of a wider discussion about income, wealth and inequality.

The UK tax total is high by historical standards but low compared to other advanced economies. In 2021, the UK's tax-to-GDP ratio was 33.5 per cent of GDP, which is 3.3 per cent of GDP below the average of other G7 economies, and 6.4 per cent of GDP below the average of 14 other western European countries.<sup>93</sup> There are various ways to increase taxes: reducing tax reliefs, equalising taxes on different forms of income, land tax, and clamping down on tax evasion. Windfall taxes have been used to fund specific policies, including Labour's New Deal programmes.<sup>94</sup> A wealth tax could also be introduced and would raise substantial revenue, with a recent estimate that £260 billion could be raised by a one-off wealth tax payable on all individual wealth above £500,000 at 1 per cent a year for five years.<sup>95</sup> Such a wealth tax could command public support.<sup>96</sup> CPAG's publication, *Let's Talk About Tax*, shows much could be done to reform the UK tax system, to increase corporation tax, to remove tax reliefs that benefit the better-off, and to ensure that unpaid taxes are collected in a timely fashion.<sup>97</sup>

# THREE PRIORITIES FOR ACTION: ABOLISH, EXPAND, IMAGINE

*'I work full time, my wife cares for our children and my elderly mother. We are doing everything right and yet we can't afford the basics. Even an extra £20 extra a week would allow us to buy vegetables and fruit for the kids. It's as if the government no longer cares for its people.'*<sup>98</sup>

Now is the time for action. Poverty is making lives hard for too many children and limiting their choices and options for the future. Parents need support to provide for their children with security and without constant worry. Here, we set out three objectives for action.

- Objective 1: Abolish policies that are increasing child poverty.
- Objective 2: Expand measures that will prevent or reduce child poverty.
- Objective 3: Imagine a society with no child poverty and build support to achieve that.

We must make progress on all three at the same time. We know that these policies can make a real difference. Below we set out CPAG's priorities for action under each heading, focusing on urgent, immediate, and specific actions. But we also need governments with the will to tackle the longer-term factors that are the major drivers of poverty, not least the high and growing levels of wage, income and wealth inequality in the UK.

---

## **OBJECTIVE 1: ABOLISH POLICIES THAT ARE INCREASING CHILD POVERTY**

---

Our current system is riddled with policies that have increased the risk, level and depth of child poverty. We must rid the system of the most damaging as soon as possible.

## Abolish the benefit cap

The benefit cap was introduced from 2013 and its level was reduced in 2016. It restricts the total amount of support a working-age household can receive from the social security system, for households with no work and households with earnings of less than the equivalent of 16 hours a week at the minimum wage. There are some exemptions, including for households receiving certain disability benefits, and people with recent earnings are not immediately capped. The cap is higher in Greater London than elsewhere. The benefit cap applies to a wide range of working-age benefits including universal credit, child benefit, housing benefit and maternity allowance.

In May 2023, 78,000 capped households included children: 63,000 lone parents and 15,000 couples with children.<sup>99</sup> Those most likely to be capped are lone parents, large families and families with young children. These are families in which parents are often not able to work/work more, especially if they also have a health condition. Over a third (34 per cent) of people on universal credit who are subject to the benefit cap – which the government claims incentivises work – are assessed by the DWP as not required to look for a job because they are caring for very young children.<sup>100</sup>

Scotland is already mitigating the benefit cap as fully as possible within its devolved powers. In Northern Ireland, a supplementary payment may be available for households with children affected by the cap.

Abolishing the benefit cap would cost around £0.25 billion per year, less than 0.1 per cent of total spending on social security. It would effectively target the poorest households, as almost all affected are in deep poverty (defined as living in the bottom decile of the income distribution). It would mean that about 250,000 children would live in less deep poverty, which is particularly damaging to children's life chances.<sup>102</sup>

## Abolish the two-child limit

The two-child limit was introduced from 2017 with the aim of ensuring that families on means-tested benefits would 'face the same financial choices about having children' as families in work. It restricts support in universal credit and tax credits to two children in a family, affecting third or subsequent children born after 6 April 2017. There are exceptions for multiple births, adoption and kinship care, and if the child is conceived as a result of rape or in the context of coercive control.

In 2023/24, 1.5 million children live in families affected by the policy. Working families are included in this, with 58 per cent of those falling within the cap being in work.<sup>103</sup> The two-child limit breaks the link between what children need and the support they receive. It means that some children get less support than others, simply by virtue of birth order and birth date. It hits hard for larger families. The two-child limit is now one of the main drivers of rising child poverty.

Removing the two-child limit would lift 250,000 children out of poverty and mean 850,000 children are in less deep poverty, at a cost of £1.3 billion per year.<sup>104</sup>



***The food's gone up,  
electric's gone up,  
everything seems to  
have gone up,  
everything's gone up  
and it was bad enough  
before but now it's just,  
your life ain't any life,  
we don't go out, we  
don't get to do  
nothing, we're just  
here... I can't afford to  
use the gas in this  
house is freezing cold.***  
(Ashley, single mum  
with four children)<sup>101</sup>



***When we decided to have a 3rd child we were comfortable, but by no means rich. We were frugal. Saved all clothes, toys, cots and re-used everything we could, for all children. We knew we could afford a 3rd child on our wages and also childcare to enable me to go back to work part time. The cost of living crisis has made our outgoings considerably more in the year since she was born. ...My partner works 40 hours a week and I work at least 20 yet we are struggling to feed our children and keep them warm...<sup>105</sup>***

## Reduce deductions from universal credit

Universal credit is the main form of social security support for working-age households with no or low earnings. Yet it is also used as a debt recovery service. Automatic deductions from benefits can be applied for a range of debts, including advances, overpayments, recoverable hardship payments, budgeting and crisis loans repayments, and third-party deductions (including debts to utility companies, council tax, child maintenance, rent, service charges and court fines). The maximum deduction rate is 25 per cent of the standard allowance but can be higher in some circumstances.

Government data show that in May 2023, there were 2.3 million children in universal credit households with some deductions – over half of all children in universal credit households.<sup>106</sup> These deductions reduce universal credit awards by £74 a month on average, but this could be as high as £145 a month for a couple with children with deductions at the maximum rate. Such high deductions contribute to financial hardship and make it even more difficult for families to make ends meet.

Lowering the maximum deduction rate from 25 per cent of the universal credit standard allowance to 15 per cent would provide up to £58 more a month for a couple and up to £37 more a month for a lone parent.<sup>108</sup> Reducing the deduction rate costs the government nothing as the debts are still collected, just in more manageable amounts over a longer period.

## Remove the five-week wait at the start of a claim for universal credit

When someone starts a new claim for universal credit, they must wait for at least five weeks for their first regular payment. Advance loans are available, but these must be paid back out of future payments. There is much evidence of the hardship, anxiety and debt that many experience as a result.<sup>109</sup>

Removing the five-week wait by making advances non-repayable would ensure no one in need has to struggle without any income. It would also avoid creating hardship further down the line through the repayment of advances.

## Review the support for housing costs in universal credit

Housing is a major element in the budgets of poor families. But the current system does not necessarily cover the full costs that families must pay. The local housing allowance sets the amount that claimants of universal credit and housing benefit who are renting from private landlords can receive towards their housing costs. The local housing allowance was frozen at 2020 rates and will not be increased until April 2024, when it will again be set by reference to the 30th percentile of local rents. The increase, announced in the 2023 Autumn Statement, will particularly benefit those living in areas where private rents have been rapidly increasing.<sup>110</sup>

But there is no commitment beyond 2024/25 and, if there is another freeze, many households in high rent areas will again fall behind.<sup>111</sup> For those receiving universal credit, the amount may be further reduced by the benefit cap and the earnings taper. In March 2023, 131,370 children were growing up in temporary accommodation, the highest figure on record.<sup>112</sup>

**Ensuring that the local housing allowance is increased annually in line with local rents would help families meet their actual housing costs and reduce the number of children who are homeless and growing up in temporary accommodation.**

## **Review support for children in migrant families**

'No recourse to public funds' is a condition attached to visa conditions for many migrants. It restricts access to most benefits, including universal credit and child benefit. Estimates for 2021 were that almost 1.4 million people were affected, including around 175,000 children. Many of these families struggle to make ends meet, dealing with debts, poor housing conditions, and cutting back on heating and food.<sup>113</sup> The House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee recommended that parents with children should have the no recourse to public funds condition removed after a maximum period of five years.<sup>114</sup>

Removing the no recourse to public funds condition for families with children would help lift those children out of poverty and destitution. Additional funding should also be provided to councils for discretionary welfare payments and councils should be reimbursed for the support that they provide through Section 17 of the Children Act. This would prevent councils from having to ration the support they provide to children facing extreme hardship.

---

## **OBJECTIVE 2: EXPAND MEASURES THAT WILL PREVENT OR REDUCE CHILD POVERTY**

---

Abolishing damaging and divisive policies is important, but we must do much more. Here we recommend further measures to help to prevent or reduce child poverty.

### **Increase child benefit and make it universal again**

Child benefit recognises that families with children face higher costs. Paid to the main carer of a child, in 2023/24 the weekly rates are £24 for the eldest child and £19.50 for each additional child. Originally it was a universal benefit, but since 2013 if someone in the household earns over £50,000 the high-income child benefit charge applies. Child benefit is withdrawn at a rate of 1 per cent for each £100 earned by the higher-income partner between £50,000 and £60,000 per year. Even families receiving universal credit might come within the remit of the child benefit charge. Over time, more and more families will be affected by the charge as wages rise, but the threshold remains frozen.<sup>115</sup>



***I'm not able to afford my rent this month. The debt from past benefit payments has been restarted, as a result we may become homeless... Fantastic! I'm so tired of this all. Destitution was never the plan.***

(Aurora, widow with two children)<sup>107</sup>

As a secure income source for families, which they typically spend on children's needs, child benefit helps to prevent and reduce child poverty.

Child benefit has lost 20 per cent of its value since 2010 and the higher income charge has undermined the universal principle of support for all children.<sup>116</sup> An increasing number of families and children are falling out of the system.

**Child benefit should be increased by £20 per child a week, at a cost of around £10 billion per year. This would lift around 500,000 children out of poverty. The higher-income child benefit charge should be removed to make child benefit universal again.**

### **Expand free school meals**

Free school meals are school lunches provided to children across the UK. The eligibility requirements differ across the devolved nations. In England, the provision is mainly means-tested, although children in Reception and Years 1 and 2 receive universal infant free school meals, and some local authorities provide free school meals for all primary school children. The provision is means-tested in Northern Ireland, although the earnings threshold is higher. Wales and Scotland have committed to universal free school meals for all primary school children and provide them on a means-tested basis for older children.

The current eligibility for means-tested free school meals is stringent, meaning 900,000 children in poverty in England alone miss out.<sup>117</sup> Free school meals support children in their learning, health and wellbeing. A universal system reduces stigma and enables all children to enjoy a shared meal. This investment is good for all children but has the greatest impact on those facing hardship.

**Free school meals should be available to all children at all stages of schooling. Rolling this out across England would cost about £2 billion per year.**

### **Ensure benefits for children are regularly updated to provide timely support**

The government is legally required to review benefit levels annually.<sup>119</sup> For some working-age benefits, the amount must rise by at least inflation. But the government can choose not to increase some benefits, including universal credit and child benefit.

Child benefit was frozen between 2010/11 and 2013/14, increased by 1 per cent in 2014/15 and 2015/16 and frozen again for four years between 2016/17 and 2019/20. The four-year freeze also applied to other working-age benefits, such as universal credit, including the child elements. Since 2020/21, these benefits have increased in line with prices and will do so again in 2024, as announced in the 2023 Autumn Statement.



***Sometimes people don't have anything to eat and they have to beg their friends for food... they should give one free meal to people who don't have money.***  
(Year 11 pupil)<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless, families with children have lost out substantially over the past decade, a situation which has significantly contributed to the rise in child poverty. Soaring inflation in 2022/23 has created further losses for those on the lowest income because poor families spend more on items where inflation is above average, such as energy and food.

**The value of working-age benefits and children's benefits should be substantially increased to provide an adequate standard of living and reflect the needs of children and families today. In addition, the government should introduce a statutory duty to uprate all benefits, and related thresholds, by prices or earnings, whichever is higher.**

## **Support childcare costs**

Childcare helps parents to manage work and care, and high-quality early education and care enhance child development and wellbeing. The UK system of subsidising childcare costs is complex, including some universal free childcare (being expanded to more working parents from 2024), some support through the tax system, and means-tested support through universal credit. Universal credit provides support for 85 per cent of a family's childcare costs, up to a cap (which was recently increased).

But the current system is complex for parents to negotiate, while support through universal credit leaves families with a shortfall and requires monthly reporting of costs. A simpler system would enable more parents to enter work or work more hours with more confidence that their childcare costs would be secure. This would help to reduce child poverty.

**The government should commit to reforming childcare to reduce the high costs and improve the quality of childcare for all families by moving towards a universal, publicly funded system. Steps to get to this system include increased support in universal credit, increased funding for provision of free pre-school childcare and extended schools.**

## **Increase the flow of child maintenance payments to lone parents**

Both parents are legally required to support their children. Child maintenance refers to payments towards the child's living costs when one of the parents does not live with the child. The current system includes private arrangements, court orders and the Child Maintenance Service. The Child Maintenance Service can calculate the amount to be paid and arrange payments. In 2023, some improvements have been made to the Child Maintenance Service, including removing the application fee. However, problems still remain.

Child maintenance can be an important source of income for lone-parent families and help to reduce poverty. It is estimated that if all maintenance due was paid in full, 60 per cent of UK children currently not benefiting from maintenance would be lifted out of poverty.<sup>120</sup>



**There should be a review of the Child Maintenance Service, including charges and enforcement measures, explicitly focusing on reducing child poverty in lone-parent families.**

## **Raise the minimum wage**

Low wages and job insecurity are important factors driving family poverty. Single-earner families, whether lone parents or couples, are often unable to escape poverty through their own earnings. The national minimum wage for 2024 is £11.44 per hour for people aged 21 and above, with lower rates for younger people. The TUC has proposed that this should be set at £15 per hour with a target to reach 75 per cent of median hourly pay, in the context of a more general strategy to raise wages across the economy.<sup>121</sup> The Resolution Foundation likewise calls for a higher minimum wage alongside improvements in employment rights and standards.<sup>122</sup> Higher wages would increase family income and reduce reliance on means-tested benefits.

**The Low Pay Commission should be authorised to set a new higher target for raising the minimum wage relative to median hourly pay.**

Where possible, we have provided some estimates of the annual costs of the measures proposed. In 2022 values, these total an annual amount of about £13.6 billion. Increasing child benefit makes up the bulk of this (£10 billion per year), followed by the expansion of free school meals (£2 billion), abolition of the two-child limit (£1.3 billion) and abolition of the benefit cap (£0.25 billion). It is more difficult to provide costs for the other measures, and there would be some overlap, so the overall cost is not simply the basic total of the measures. The government should commission the Office for Budget Responsibility to fully review the costs and benefits of these measures in the context of developing a national child poverty strategy.

It is also difficult to estimate the likely impact on child poverty. Increasing child benefit and removing the two-child limit would move about 750,000 children out of poverty immediately. These measures plus the abolition of the benefit cap would reduce the number of children in deep poverty by about one million.

---

## **OBJECTIVE 3: IMAGINE A SOCIETY WITH NO CHILD POVERTY AND BUILD SUPPORT TO ACHIEVE THAT**

---

Imagine the UK without any child poverty. Imagine no children worrying about how they live and what they miss out on with their friends. Imagine parents fulfilling their aspirations for their children. Imagine food banks inactive, no longer needing to help parents feed their families properly. Imagine schools able to focus on teaching children who are well nourished, well clothed, living in decent housing and ready to learn. Imagine every child able to play and participate in

whatever sports or arts they enjoy. Imagine school leavers choosing their futures without feeling constrained by lack of money. Imagine every child feeling secure, growing up confident, without feelings of exclusion and rejection, and entering adulthood in much better shape. Imagine how proud we would all feel.

All this is possible. It needs to start with a **vision**, with a **political statement that makes creating a good society for children and ending child poverty an urgent priority**. Such a vision could command popular support. The annual *British Social Attitudes Survey* maps attitudes over time and has noted ‘a more supportive attitude towards welfare’, with the public ‘more willing than they were a decade ago for the government to redistribute income from the better off to the less well off’.<sup>123</sup> The 2023 report shows that 69 per cent of people think there is quite a lot of poverty in Britain (compared with 52 per cent in 2006) and 37 per cent agree that the government should spend more money on benefits for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes (compared with 29 per cent in 2010).<sup>124</sup>

The vision should be made concrete in the form of a **comprehensive child poverty strategy** to ensure action across all levels of government. We have outlined some key policy measures regarding financial support for children. But we must also develop and commit to an all-embracing child poverty strategy across a broad range of policy areas, with key targets, timelines, and regular reporting. CPAG has long been making the case for such a comprehensive strategy. Box 6 summarises the policy areas and goals that could form such a strategy.

### BOX 6: 20/20 Vision: Ending child poverty for good

*A child poverty strategy needs to take a **wide, coordinated and long-term approach**... based on the **best interests of the child**..., to take into account **children's rights**..., to focus on **children at risk**..., to balance **universal and targeted support**....<sup>125</sup>*

1. Clear leadership, infrastructure and targets to work towards.
2. Social security that supports us all.
3. Decent work, pay and progression.
4. Quality, affordable childcare when families need it.
5. Inclusive education.
6. Secure homes for families.
7. Services and support.

*By addressing childcare, housing, education and parenting support, a child poverty strategy can ensure children have enriching childhood experiences and good life chances.<sup>126</sup>*

There is already much support for developing and implementing a national comprehensive child poverty strategy. The all-party House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee made this recommendation in its 2021 report on child poverty measurement and targets: 'The Government should commit to developing and implementing a long-term, cross-departmental strategy to address child poverty now and in the future'.<sup>127</sup> This recommendation resulted from several submissions to the Committee, including, for example, from the Social Mobility Commission, the Legatum Institute, the Children's Commissioner for England, the Church of England and CPAG. Getting such a commitment into the general election manifestos of all the main political parties would be a significant move with the potential to be a real driver for change.

Involving families and children in developing the strategy and plans is crucial. CPAG's Cost of the School Day project has developed successful and practical anti-poverty measures for schools based on direct input from children. The recent campaigns to keep the £20 uplift to universal credit and to get benefits increased by inflation shows that working together across the voluntary sector, with groups and individuals, can effectively build support and make change.

A national child poverty strategy is the minimum that is needed. Ending, not just reducing, child poverty needs broader societal and structural measures as well as the specific changes and measures outlined above. Child poverty must be at the centre of our thinking about major societal challenges such as climate change and the future of work and care.

**Ending child poverty is urgent, but it is possible. We must start now.**



# NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

1. Townsend, P. (1979) *Poverty in the UK*. London: Penguin, p31.
2. For example, Rishi Sunak 10 May 2023, see [hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-05-10/debates/4C4C2408-4EFA-47E4-9700-87EE1A74264A/Engagements?highlight=child%20poverty#contribution-48D99990-0528-4627-A87D-C6F30EA09D62](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-05-10/debates/4C4C2408-4EFA-47E4-9700-87EE1A74264A/Engagements?highlight=child%20poverty#contribution-48D99990-0528-4627-A87D-C6F30EA09D62).

## ONE

3. O'Connell, R., Knight, A. and Brennan, J. (2019) *Living Hand to Mouth: Children and food in low-income families*. London: Child Poverty Action Group, p43.
4. Participant in the Benefit Changes and Larger Families research project, available at [largerfamilies.study](https://largerfamilies.study).
5. All these examples are from research with families affected by the benefit cap and/or the two-child limit as part of the Benefit Changes and Larger Families research project (see, for example, Andersen, K., Patrick, R. and Reeves, A. (2022) *Needs Matter: How the two-child limit and the benefit cap harm children*) and from research into children and food in O'Connell, R., Knight, A. and Brennan, J. (2019) *Living Hand to Mouth: Children and Food in Low-Income Families*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.
6. Pedley, M. and Davis, A. (2023) *The Minimum Income Standard: Understanding the cost of education to households in the UK*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.
7. Ridge, T. (2011) *The Everyday Costs of Poverty in Childhood: A review of qualitative research exploring the lives and experiences of low-income children in the UK*. *Children & Society*, 25: 73-84. See also Ridge, T. (2002) *Childhood Poverty and Social Exclusion: From a child's perspective*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
8. Cost of the School Day project, available at [cpag.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day](https://cpag.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day).
9. Child Poverty Action Group press release, 'Poverty's threat to childhood revealed by new research', 20 June 2023. Available at [cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/poverty%E2%80%99s-threat-childhood-revealed-new-research](https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/poverty%E2%80%99s-threat-childhood-revealed-new-research).
10. See British Academy. (2022) *Reframing Childhood: Final Report of the Childhood Policy Programme*. London: British Academy.
11. Weightman, A.L. et al (2012) 'Social inequality and infant health in the UK: systematic review and meta-analyses,' *BMJ Open*; Martinson, M L. and Reichman, N E. (2016) 'Socioeconomic Inequalities in Low Birth Weight in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia,' *American Journal of Public Health* 106, No. 4 (April 1, 2016): pp748-54; Taylor-Robinson, D. et al (2019) 'Assessing the impact of rising child poverty on the unprecedented rise in infant mortality in England, 2000-2017: time trend analysis,' *BMJ Open*.
12. Nikiéma, B., Spencer, N. and Séguin, L. (2010) 'Poverty and Chronic Illness in Early Childhood: A Comparison Between the United Kingdom and Quebec,' *Pediatrics*, March 2010; 125 (3): e499-e507. [10.1542/peds.2009-0701](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2009-0701); Lai, E. et al (2019) 'Poverty dynamics and health in late childhood in the UK: evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study,' *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 104:1049-1055.
13. Mensah, F. and Hobcraft, J. (2008) 'Childhood deprivation, health and development: associations with adult health in the 1958 and 1970 British prospective birth cohort studies,' *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 62:599-606.
14. Villadsen, A. et al (2023) 'Clustering of adverse health and educational outcomes in adolescence following early childhood disadvantage: study in the UK Millennium Cohort'. *The Lancet Public Health*, Vol.8 (4), ppe286-e293.
15. Aizer, A., Shari, E., Ferrie, J. and Lleras-Muney, A. (2014) 'The long-term impact of cash transfers to poor families,' NBER Working Paper 20103; Bailey, M., Hoynes, H., Rossin-Slater, M. and Walker, R. (2020) 'Is the social safety net a long-term investment? Evidence from the Food Stamps Program,' NBER Working Paper 26942.
16. Main, G. (2014) 'Child Poverty and Children's Subjective Well-Being,' *Child Indicators Research* 7, pp451-72.
17. Fitzsimons, E., Goodman, A., Kelly, E. and Smith, J. (2017) 'Poverty dynamics and parental mental health: Determinants of childhood mental health in the UK,' *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol 175, pp43-51; Kofi Adjei, N. et al (2022) 'Impact of poverty and family adversity on adolescent health: a multi-trajectory analysis using the UK Millennium Cohort Study,' *The Lancet Regional Health - Europe*, Vol 13.
18. Bradbury, B., Corak, M., Waldfogel, J. and Washbrook, E. (2015) *Too Many Children Left Behind: The US*

- Achievement Gap in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
19. Farquharson, C., McNally, S. and Tahir, I. (2022) *Education Inequalities*. London: Institute of Fiscal Studies.
  20. Blanden, J. and Gregg, P. (2004) 'Family income and educational attainment: A review of approaches and evidence for Britain,' *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 20(2): 245–63; Hoynes, H., Whitmore Schanzenbach, D. and Almond, D. (2016) 'Long-run impacts of childhood access to the safety net,' *American Economic Review* 106(4): 903–34; Bailey et al (2020) – see note 15.
  21. Ucci, M. et al (2022) 'Exploring the Interactions between Housing and Neighbourhood Environments for Enhanced Child Wellbeing: The Lived Experience of Parents Living in Areas of High Child Poverty in England, UK,' *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 2022, 19, 12563; Harford, S. (2019) 'Our latest statistics,' Ofsted Blogpost, available at [educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2019/12/16/our-latest-statistics-a-first-look-at-the-eif](https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2019/12/16/our-latest-statistics-a-first-look-at-the-eif).
  22. Covid Realities project (2021), see [covidrealities.org](https://covidrealities.org).
  23. Cooper, K. and Stewart, K. (2021) 'Does household income affect children's outcomes: A systematic review of the evidence,' *Child Indicators Research*, 14: 981–1005.
  24. Gregg, P., Waldfogel, J. and Washbrook, E. (2006) 'Family expenditures post-welfare reform in the UK: Are low-income families starting to catch up?' *Labour Economics*, 13(6): 721–746.
  25. See review in Cooper, K. and Stewart, K. (2021) 'Does household income affect children's outcomes: A systematic review of the evidence,' *Child Indicators Research*, 14: 981–1005.
  26. Conger, K., Rueter, M. and Conger, R. (1999) 'The Role of Economic Pressure in the Lives of Parents and their Adolescents: The Family Stress Model,' in Crockett, L. and Silbereisen, R. (eds) (2000) *Negotiating Adolescence in Times of Social Change*. Cambridge University Press.
  27. Stock, L., Corlyon, J., Castellano Serrano, C. and Gieve, M. (2014) *Personal Relationships and Poverty: An Evidence and Policy Review*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Cooper, K. (2017) *Poverty and Parenting in the UK*, PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science; Chzhen, Y., Howarth, C. and Main, G. (2022) 'Deprivation and intra-family conflict: Children as agents in the Family Stress Model,' *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 84: 121–40.
  28. Examples from interviews conducted for the Benefit Changes and Larger Families research project, see [largerfamilies.study](https://largerfamilies.study).
  29. Chzhen, Y., Howarth, C. and Main, G. (2022) 'Deprivation and intra-family conflict: Children as agents in the Family Stress Model,' *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 84: 121–40.
  30. Examples from interviews conducted for the Benefit Changes and Larger Families research project, see [largerfamilies.study](https://largerfamilies.study).
  31. DWP (2023) *Households Below Average Income: For financial years ending 1995 to 2022*. Table 9.3a.
  32. A government consultation found an overwhelming majority of support for the relative income measure among academics, local government and third sector organisations; see Stewart, K. and Roberts, N. (2019) 'Child Poverty Measurement in the UK: Assessing support for the downgrading of income-based poverty measures,' *Social Indicators Research*, 142: 523–42.
  33. Social Metrics Commission. (2020) *Measuring Poverty 2020: A report of the Social Metrics Commission*. Available at [socialmetricscommission.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Measuring-Poverty-2020-Web.pdf](https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Measuring-Poverty-2020-Web.pdf).
  34. Bradshaw, J. and Keung, A. (2018) 'UK child poverty gaps are still increasing,' in *Poverty*, 162, Child Poverty Action Group.
  35. Edmiston, D. (2021) 'Plumbing the depths: The changing (socio-demographic) profile of UK poverty,' *Journal of Social Policy*, 51(2), 385–411.
  36. *ibid.*
  37. Bradshaw, J. and Nieuwenhuis, R. 'Poverty and the family in Europe' in Schneider, N.F., and Kreyenfeld, M. (eds) (2021). *The Sociology of the Family – towards a European perspective*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
  38. The Office of National Statistics has not supplied Eurostat with the matching data for EU SILC since 2018.
  39. This technique is borrowed from the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre 'report card' series.

## TWO

40. Padley, M. and Davis, A. (2023) *The Minimum Income Standard: Understanding the cost of education to households in the UK*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.
41. Pateman, T. and Richardson, N. (2022) *Private rental affordability: England, Wales and Northern Ireland: 2021*. Office for National Statistics.
42. Ray-Chaudhuri, S., Walters, T., Wernham, T. and Xu, X. (2023) *Living Standards, Poverty and Inequality in the UK 2023*, Report R265. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.
43. Jarvie, M., Shorto, S., Kunwar Deer, L. and Goddard, E. (2023) *Childcare Survey 2023*. London: Coram Family and Childcare.
44. Hirsch, D. and Stone, J. (2022) *The Cost of a Child in 2022*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.
45. Padley, M. and Davis, A. (2023) *The Minimum Income Standard: Understanding the cost of education to households in the UK*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.



46. Child Poverty Action Group (2022) *The Cost of the School Day in England: pupils' perspectives*. Briefing available at [cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/cost-school-day-england-pupils-perspectives](http://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/cost-school-day-england-pupils-perspectives).
47. Rowntree, S. (1901) *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*. Macmillan and Co. Centennial Edition: The Policy Press.
48. Ten companies in the FTSE100 were found in 2023 to offer at least six months leave on full pay to both mothers and fathers. At the other end of the FTSE rankings were companies offering little more than statutory pay: such as six weeks at 90 per cent pay for mothers and one week on full pay for fathers. All FTSE companies are likely to be in a stronger position to offer more generous pay than smaller businesses because of their size. See [parentpromise.co.uk/ftse100-companies-ranked-by-parental-leave-offer-2023](http://parentpromise.co.uk/ftse100-companies-ranked-by-parental-leave-offer-2023).
49. DWP (2023) *Households Below Average Income 2021/22: Children Time Series*. Excel files, Table 4\_1ts.
50. Ibid.
51. Dixon, J., Ruby, F. and Clery, E. (2023) *Single parents in 2023*. London: Gingerbread.
52. Stewart, K., Patrick, R. and Reeves, A. (2023) 'A time of need: Exploring the changing poverty risk facing larger families in the UK,' *Journal of Social Policy*, First View, 1–25.
53. Reader, M., Andersen, K., Patrick, R., Reeves, A. and Stewart, K. (2023) 'Making work pay? The labour market effects of capping child benefits in larger families,' CASE paper 229 May 2023. London: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion.
54. Resolution Foundation, press release '15 years of economic stagnation has left workers across Britain with an £11,000 a year lost wages gap', 20 March 2023.
55. Authors' calculations from Households Below Average Income data.
56. Stewart, K. and Reader, M. (2020) 'The Conservatives' Record on Early Childhood: Policies, Spending and Outcomes from May 2015 to pre-COVID 2020,' SPDO Research Paper 8. Based on figures in Cooper, K. and Hills, J. (2021) 'The Conservatives' Record on Social Security: Policies, Spending and Outcomes from May 2015 to pre-COVID 2020,' SPDO Research Paper 10.
57. [ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Children\\_at\\_risk\\_of\\_poverty\\_or\\_social\\_exclusion#Children\\_at\\_risk\\_of\\_poverty\\_or\\_social\\_exclusion](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion#Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion).
58. [sgi-network.org/2017/Finland/Social\\_Policies](http://sgi-network.org/2017/Finland/Social_Policies).
59. Itla Children's Foundation, blog 'Expanding horizons to find solutions to child poverty in Finland: what can we learn from other countries?' (17 March 2023). Available at [itla.fi/expanding-horizons-to-find-solutions-to-child-poverty-in-finland-what-can-we-learn-from-other-countries](http://itla.fi/expanding-horizons-to-find-solutions-to-child-poverty-in-finland-what-can-we-learn-from-other-countries).
60. Bucelli, I. and McKnight, A. *Child Poverty Solutions for Finland: A review of international policies in selected countries*. Helsinki: Itla Children's Foundation.
61. [europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/734003/IPOL\\_BRI\(2022\)734003\\_EN.pdf](http://europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/734003/IPOL_BRI(2022)734003_EN.pdf).
62. Finnish Government (2022) *National Child Strategy: Committee report*. Available at [julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163977](http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163977).
63. Finnish Government (2022) *Implementation plan for the National Child Strategy*. Available at [julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164040](http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164040).
64. OECD (2023) *Taxing Wages – Finland*. Available at [oecd.org/tax/tax-policy/taxing-wages-finland.pdf](http://oecd.org/tax/tax-policy/taxing-wages-finland.pdf).
65. Ministry of Social Development (2021) *Families Package: 2021 update*. Statistics New Zealand. Available at [msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/evaluation/family-packages/2021/2021-overall-update.pdf](http://msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/evaluation/family-packages/2021/2021-overall-update.pdf).
66. New Zealand Treasury (2023) *Child Poverty Report 2023*. Available at [budget.govt.nz/budget/2023/wellbeing/child-poverty-report](http://budget.govt.nz/budget/2023/wellbeing/child-poverty-report).
67. Prickett, K. (2023) 'NZ is finally making progress on child poverty – but a 'no frills' budget puts that at risk', *The Conversation*. Available at [theconversation.com/nz-is-finally-making-progress-on-child-poverty-but-a-no-frills-budget-puts-that-at-risk-205559](http://theconversation.com/nz-is-finally-making-progress-on-child-poverty-but-a-no-frills-budget-puts-that-at-risk-205559).
68. Curran, M. (2021) 'Child poverty and policy in the US and the UK', *Poverty*, 169, London: Child Poverty Action Group, p7–10.
69. Collyer, S., Hardy, B. and Wimer, C. (2023) *The antipoverty effects of the expanded Child Tax Credit across states: Where were the historic reductions felt?* Washington USA: Brookings Institute.
70. Institute for Research on Poverty, *How Is Poverty Measured?* University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA, see [irp.wisc.edu/resources/how-is-poverty-measured](http://irp.wisc.edu/resources/how-is-poverty-measured).
71. Gould, E. (2022) *Child Tax Credit expansions were instrumental in reducing poverty rates to historic lows in 2021*. Washington, USA: Economic Policy Institute.
72. Center for Law and Social Policy, press release 'Child Poverty More Than Doubled in 2022, Underscoring Need for Better Policy', 12 September 2023. Available at [clasp.org/press-room/press-releases/child-poverty-more-than-doubled-in-2022-underscoring-need-for-better-policy](http://clasp.org/press-room/press-releases/child-poverty-more-than-doubled-in-2022-underscoring-need-for-better-policy); Parolin, Z., Collyer, S. and Curran, M. (2023) 'Absence of Monthly Child Tax Credit Leads to 3.7 Million More Children in Poverty in January 2022', *Poverty and Social Policy Brief*, Vol 6, no 2, Center on Poverty and Social Policy, Columbia University, New York, USA.
73. Welsh government (2022) *Child Poverty Strategy: 2022 progress report*. Available at [gov.wales/child-poverty-strategy-2022-progress-report-html](http://gov.wales/child-poverty-strategy-2022-progress-report-html).

74. Scottish government (2022) *Scottish Child Payment – estimating the effect on child poverty*. Available at [gov.scot/publications/scottish-child-payment-estimating-the-effect-on-child-poverty](https://gov.scot/publications/scottish-child-payment-estimating-the-effect-on-child-poverty).
75. See [data.gov.scot/poverty/cpupdate.html](https://data.gov.scot/poverty/cpupdate.html).
76. McKendrick, J.H., Dickie, J., McHardy, F., O'Hagan, A., Sinclair, S. and Treanor, M.C. (2021) *Poverty in Scotland 2021*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.
77. Institute for Fiscal Studies, press release 'Scottish Budget changes to tax and benefit system widen gap with rest of the UK, with higher taxes and more redistribution to poorer families', 9 February 2023. Available at [ifs.org.uk/news/scottish-budget-changes-tax-and-benefit-system-widen-gap-rest-uk-higher-taxes-and-more](https://ifs.org.uk/news/scottish-budget-changes-tax-and-benefit-system-widen-gap-rest-uk-higher-taxes-and-more).
78. Audit Scotland (2022) *Tackling Child Poverty*. Edinburgh: Audit Scotland.
79. Millar, J. and Ridge, T. (2002) 'Five: Parents, children, families and New Labour: developing family policy?' in *Evaluating New Labour's welfare reforms*. Bristol: Policy Press.
80. Tony Blair, Beveridge Lecture, Toynbee Hall, 18 March 1999.
81. Published: Scotland (2011), Wales (2015) and Northern Ireland (2016).
82. Waldfogel, J. (2010) *Britain's War on Poverty*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
83. Stewart, K., Patrick, R. and Reeves, A. (2023) 'A time of need: Exploring the changing poverty risk facing larger families in the UK,' *Journal of Social Policy*, First View, 1–25.
84. DWP (2023) *Households Below Average Income: An analysis of the income distribution FYE 1995 to FYE 2022*. Available at [gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2022/households-below-average-income-an-analysis-of-the-uk-income-distribution-fye-1995-to-fye-2022](https://gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2022/households-below-average-income-an-analysis-of-the-uk-income-distribution-fye-1995-to-fye-2022).
85. Child Poverty Action Group and 4 in 10 (2012) *The implementation of the Child Poverty Act: Examining Child Poverty Strategies in London Local Authorities*. London: Child Poverty Action Group and 4 in 10.
86. Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith speaking in the House of Commons, 1 July 2015.
87. Stewart, K. and Roberts, N. (2019) 'Child poverty measurement in the UK: Assessing support for the downgrading of income-based poverty measures,' *Social Indicators Research*, 142: 523–42.
88. DWP (2023) *Households Below Average Income: An analysis of the income distribution FYE 1995 to FYE 2022*. Available at [gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2022](https://gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2022); DWP (2023) *Income Dynamics 2010-2021*. Available at [gov.uk/government/statistics/income-dynamics-2010-to-2021](https://gov.uk/government/statistics/income-dynamics-2010-to-2021).
89. 2020/21 was an unusual year because of the global Covid-19 pandemic. However, the picture was very similar on the eve of the pandemic in 2019/20.
90. Government of Ireland (2014) *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children and young people 2014–2020*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
91. Government of Ireland (2020) *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020–2025: Ambition, goals, commitments*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
92. Hirsh, D. (2023) *The Cost of Child Poverty in 2023*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.
93. Office for Budget Responsibility (2023) *The UK's tax burden in historical and international context*, Economic and Fiscal Outlook. Available at [obr.uk/box/the-uks-tax-burden-in-historical-and-international-context](https://obr.uk/box/the-uks-tax-burden-in-historical-and-international-context).
94. Hills, J. and Stewart, K. (eds) (2005) *A More Equal Society? New Labour, Poverty, Inequality and Exclusion*. Bristol, The Policy Press.
95. Advani, A., Chamberlain, E. and Summers, A. (2021) *A Wealth Tax for the UK: final report of the Wealth Tax Commission*. London: London School of Economics.
96. Tax Justice UK, blog 'Brits back an annual tax on the super rich to help rebuild the NHS and public services', 13 March 2023. Available at [taxjustice.uk/blog/brits-back-an-annual-tax-on-the-super-rich-to-help-rebuild-the-nhs-and-public-services](https://taxjustice.uk/blog/brits-back-an-annual-tax-on-the-super-rich-to-help-rebuild-the-nhs-and-public-services).
97. Bradshaw, J. (2019) *Let's Talk about Tax: How the tax system works and how to change it*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.

### THREE

98. Child Poverty Action Group, End Child Poverty, the Church of England Benefit Changes and Larger Families (2023) *Six years in: The two-child limit is pushing 1.1 million children deeper into poverty*. Briefing available at [cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/six-years-two-child-limit](https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/six-years-two-child-limit).
99. [gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/benefit-cap-number-of-households-capped-to-february-2023](https://gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/benefit-cap-number-of-households-capped-to-february-2023).
100. Child Poverty Action Group, press release 'FOI data debunks benefit cap "work incentive"', 3 March 2023. Available at [cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/foi-data-debunks-benefit-cap-work-incentive](https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/foi-data-debunks-benefit-cap-work-incentive).
101. Child Poverty Action Group (2022) *Falling Further Behind: hardship among benefit capped families as prices rise*. Briefing available at [cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/falling-further-behind-hardship-among-benefit-capped-families-prices](https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/falling-further-behind-hardship-among-benefit-capped-families-prices).
102. The results presented here are based on UKMOD version B1.03 UKMOD is maintained, developed and managed by the Centre for Microsimulation and Policy Analysis at the University of Essex. The



- process of extending and updating UKMOD is financially supported by the Nuffield Foundation (2018–2021). The results and their interpretation are the author’s sole responsibility.
103. Child Poverty Action Group, End Child Poverty, the Church of England Benefit Changes and Larger Families (2023) *Six years in: The two-child limit is pushing 1.1 million children deeper into poverty*. Briefing available at [cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/six-years-two-child-limit](http://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/six-years-two-child-limit).
  104. The results presented here are based on UKMOD version B1.03 UKMOD is maintained, developed and managed by the Centre for Microsimulation and Policy Analysis at the University of Essex. The process of extending and updating UKMOD is financially supported by the Nuffield Foundation (2018–2021). The results and their interpretation are the author’s sole responsibility.
  105. Child Poverty Action Group, End Child Poverty, the Church of England Benefit Changes and Larger Families (2023) *Six years in: The two-child limit is pushing 1.1 million children deeper into poverty*. Briefing available at [cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/six-years-two-child-limit](http://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/six-years-two-child-limit).
  106. House of Commons Written questions, answers and statements, *Universal Credit: Deductions*. 1 September 2023. See [questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-01/196260](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-01/196260).
  107. Covid Realities project (2021), see [covidrealities.org](http://covidrealities.org).
  108. Child Poverty Action Group press release ‘2.3 million children in households receiving less universal credit than they’re entitled to’, 22 September 2023. Available at [cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/23-million-children-households-receiving-less-universal-credit-they-re](http://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/23-million-children-households-receiving-less-universal-credit-they-re).
  109. Work and Pensions Committee (2020) *Universal Credit: the wait for a first payment*. House of Commons, HC 204.
  110. HM Treasury (2023) *Autumn Statement 2023*. Available at [gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2023](http://gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2023).
  111. Aref-Adib, C. et al (2023) *A pre-election Statement: Putting the Autumn Statement 2023 in context*. London: The Resolution Foundation. Available at [resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2023/11/A-pre-election-Statement.pdf](https://resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2023/11/A-pre-election-Statement.pdf).
  112. [gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-january-to-march-2023/statutory-homelessness-in-england-january-to-march-2023-infographic#temporary-accommodation](http://gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-january-to-march-2023/statutory-homelessness-in-england-january-to-march-2023-infographic#temporary-accommodation)
  113. Smith C., O’Reilly, P., Rumpel, R. and White, R. (2021) *How do I survive now? The impact of living with No Recourse to Public Funds*. Citizen’s Advice, available at [citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/welfare%20publications/How%20do%20I%20survive%20now\\_%20November%202021.pdf](http://citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/welfare%20publications/How%20do%20I%20survive%20now_%20November%202021.pdf).
  114. Work and Pensions Committee (2022) *Children in poverty: No recourse to public funds*. House of Commons, HC 603.
  115. Brewer, M., Handscomb, K., and Kelly, G. (2022) *Inconsistent Incentives: How the overlap between Universal Credit and the High Income Child Benefit Charge limits work incentives*. London: Resolution Foundation.
  116. Authors’ calculations using CPI All Items Index, Office for National Statistics (2023); child benefit rates; Economic and fiscal outlook – March 2023, Office for Budget Responsibility (2023).
  117. Child Poverty Action Group (2023) *Free school meals: third of kids in poverty miss out*. Briefing available at [cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/free-school-meals-third-kids-poverty-miss-out](http://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/free-school-meals-third-kids-poverty-miss-out).
  118. The Cost of the School Day project [cpag.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day](http://cpag.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day).
  119. Kirk-Wade, E. and Harker, R. (2022) *Benefits uprating 2023/24*, House of Commons Library research briefing number 9680.
  120. Hakovirta, M. et al. (2020) ‘Child Poverty, Child Maintenance and Interactions with Social Assistance Benefits Among Lone Parent Families: A Comparative Analysis’. *Journal of Social Policy*, 49(1), 19-39.
  121. TUC (2022) *Raising Pay for Everyone: A plan for a high wage economy and a £15 minimum wage*. Available at [tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/raising-pay-everyone](http://tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/raising-pay-everyone).
  122. Cominetti, N. et al. (2023) *Low Pay Britain 2023: Improving low-paid work through higher minimum standards*, London: Resolution Foundation. Available at [economy2030.resolutionfoundation.org/reports/low-pay-britain-2023](https://economy2030.resolutionfoundation.org/reports/low-pay-britain-2023).
  123. Butt S., Clery E. and Curtice J. (eds) (2022), ‘Broken Britain?’, *British Social Attitudes 39*. National Centre for Social Research.
  124. Baumberg Geiger B., de Vries R., O’Grady T. and Summers K. (2023) ‘The rise and fall of anti-welfare attitudes across four decades: politics, pensioners and poverty’, *British Social Attitudes 40*. National Centre for Social Research.
  125. Tucker, J. (ed) (2020) *20/20 Vision: Ending child poverty for good*. London: Child Poverty Action Group, p104.
  126. Tucker, J. (ed) (2020) *20/20 Vision: Ending child poverty for good*. London: Child Poverty Action Group, p108.
  127. Work and Pensions Committee (2021) *Children in poverty: Measurement and targets* House of Commons, HC 930, para 77.

Child Poverty Action Group works on behalf of the more than one in four children in the UK growing up in poverty. It does not have to be like this. We use our understanding of what causes poverty and the impact it has on children's lives to campaign for policies that will prevent and solve poverty – for good. We provide training, advice and information to make sure hard-up families get the financial support they need. We also carry out high-profile legal work to establish and protect families' rights. If you are not already supporting us, please consider making a donation, or ask for details of our membership schemes, training courses and publications.



© Child Poverty Action Group  
30 Micawber Street  
London N1 7TB

[cpag.org.uk](http://cpag.org.uk)