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**CHILDREN CUT ADRIFT AS POVERTY LEAVES COVID-GENERATION FACING A PERILOUS FUTURE**

Even before the devastating impact of Covid-19 on household incomes, child poverty has been rising rapidly in some of the poorest communities in Britain, leaving growing numbers of children cut adrift and ill equipped to cope with the impact of the pandemic.

The End Child Poverty coalition is calling on the Government to take seriously how the steady four-year rise in child poverty – predominantly in working families – has pushed families to breaking point, and to commit to an ambitious strategy to end child poverty in the aftermath of Coronavirus. which campaigners fear will only have deepened child poverty and drawn more families below the poverty line.

The coalition, working with researchers at Loughborough University, has published a new analysis of Government data that documents how child poverty rates in many different areas across Britain have swelled over the last four years, even before housing costs are taken into account. The report highlights those parts of the country where children are most likely to have been swept into poverty since 2014.

The North of England and West Midlands have seen dramatic rises in the proportion of children living below the poverty line, with numbers rising by 6.5 percentage points in the North East over the past four years alone, in areas that were already among the most deprived. Diverse parts of the country have seen similar rises, with London and the South East only marginally behind the 3.5 percentage point increase seen in Scotland.

The steady rise in child poverty has been felt particularly among working families, with London constituencies dominating the list of areas where growing numbers of poor children are from families in employment. Some parts of the capital have seen the proportion of children growing up in poverty from working families increase by 14 percentage points or more.

A recent ONS analysis, carried out 17-27 April 2020, shows just under 1 in 4 adults (23%) said the coronavirus was affecting their household finances. The most common impact in this group was reduced income (70%), with nearly half saying they had used savings or borrowed to cover living costs.

Campaigners are fearful that the added impact of Covid-19 on household budgets could push struggling families over the edge and are urging the Government to immediately increase the amount of money in families’ pockets. The coalition is calling on the Government to set out an ambitious strategy to reverse the increases and make ending child poverty a priority for the nation’s future economic recovery.

The report’s analysis also shows how unequally child poverty affects the country, with children in some parts six times more likely to be growing up in poverty than their neighbours in less deprived areas. While child poverty is deteriorating across better and worse off areas of the country proportionately, those places starting off with a high rate see many more additional children pulled into poverty.

Anna Feuchtwang, Chair of End Child Poverty and Chief Executive of the National Children’s Bureau, said:

‘We may all be experiencing the storm of Coronavirus together, but we are not all in the same boat. The government’s data shows the extent to which over the past four years, children in low income families have been cut adrift and are already experiencing unacceptable hardship through cuts and freezes to the benefits system.

‘Our country’s children are now at severe risk of being swept deeper into poverty as a result of the pandemic and lockdown. This is why we are asking the government to strengthen the social security system which is there to hold us steady during tough times, by immediately increasing household income for those least well-off.

‘Ending child poverty must be at the heart of the Government’s plan for economic recovery, so that when this crisis is over all children can enjoy a life free from poverty in which they are healthy, can thrive at school and have opportunities for the future.’

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

1. An embargoed copy of the analysis is available on request via media@ncb.org.uk / 07721 097 033, and will be published at: [www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk) to coincide with the embargo date.
2. End Child Poverty is a coalition of 70 UK charities, faith groups, unions and community organisations campaigning for an end to child poverty in the UK [www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)
3. For spokespersons please contact the media team at The National Children’s Bureau on 07721 097033 media@ncb.org.uk
4. Report by Hirsch, D. and Stone, J., [Local child poverty indicators 2018/19 – distribution and trends,](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/local-child-poverty-data-201415-20189/) Centre for Research in Social Policy, 2020
5. The analysis is based on a data set for 2014/15-2018/19 available from Department for Work and Pensions, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/households-below-average-income-hbai--2>, March 2020
6. The data is a Before Housing Cost measure, so does not take account of the fixed costs of rent and mortgages that households face, and which vary across the country.
7. April ONS analysis available at [www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/7may2020](http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/7may2020)
8. A report by End Child Poverty published in 2019, found that child poverty in the UK is rising steadily. After a long period in which it fell, between the late 1990s and around 2010, the child poverty rate fluctuated in the first half of the 2010’s, but the trend is now upwards on all indicators. <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/child-poverty-indicators-2019-report-to-ecp-1.pdf>
9. There are a number of ways in which Government could increase household income during the crisis including:
	1. an increase in child benefit of at least £10 per child per week;
	2. an end to the benefit cap and the two child limit on benefits;
	3. an end to the five week wait for Universal Credit;
	4. an increase in the child element of Universal Credit and tax credits.

For more detail of the issues End Child Poverty members would like to see addressed by the Government during this crisis please visit <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/ecp-members-respond-to-covid-19/>