Media release
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New child poverty data reveals true extent of levelling up challenge

* **More than half of children living in some constituencies are living in poverty after housing costs are factored in.**
* **Highest rates of child poverty in London and Birmingham**
* **Sharpest increases in child poverty in Midlands and northern cities.**
* **Local authority and constituency data available below.**

Child poverty has risen most sharply in parts of the Midlands and Northern towns and cities in the past four years, according to research published today by the End Child Poverty coalition showing the scale of the challenge faced by government if it is to realise its ambition to build back better and level up opportunities for children across the UK.

The research by Loughborough University shows that, before the pandemic, in some parts of the country the majority of children were growing up in poverty, once housing costs are taken into account.

The greatest concentrations of children living in poverty are in London, with London boroughs and parts of Birmingham dominating the list of local authorities where child poverty is highest. In a dozen constituencies in London and Birmingham, more than half the children are living below the poverty line.

Yet the research also shows that the problem is not confined to the UK’s two largest cities. In the last four years, child poverty has risen fastest in parts of the Midlands and Northern towns and cities. Middlesbrough and parts of Tyneside have seen child poverty rates soar by over 10 percentage points since 2014/15.

In the past, low incomes in these areas were counteracted by cheaper housing costs, but during the five years leading up to 2018/19, rents in other parts of the country have risen by the same amount as in the capital, so in places where incomes are being depressed, this is less likely to be offset by falling relative housing costs. Many of these families find, that once their housing costs are paid, they do not have enough money to meet their children’s needs and are left no option but to turn to crisis help, like food banks, and are increasingly reliant on free school meals.

The impact of poverty on children is well documented with children from low income families more likely to experience worse physical and mental health; do less well in school; and have fewer opportunities in the future. The coalition is calling on the Government to recognise the scale of the problem and its impact on children’s lives. They are urging the Government to set out an ambitious plan to tackle child poverty encompassing not only social security spending but the high cost of housing and childcare and investment in children’s services.

The report is based on data published by the Department for Work and Pensions in March 2020, and on estimates of the effect of housing costs on poverty rates produced by the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University, based on survey evidence. Earlier this year, Boris Johnson was rebuked by the statistics watchdog for his repeated misuse of child poverty statistics. The Statistics Authority upheld a complaint from the End Child Poverty coalition judging that on three separate occasions his statements on child poverty were ‘incorrect’.

Anna Feuchtwang, Chair of End Child Poverty which commissioned the research, said:

*“The Government can be in no doubt about the challenge it faces if it is serious about ‘levelling up’ disadvantaged parts of the country. This new data reveals the true extent of the hardship experienced by families on low incomes – the overwhelming majority of which were working households before the pandemic. The children affected are on a cliff edge, and the pandemic will only sweep them further into danger.*

*The Prime Minister must urgently admit to the true extent of child poverty in our country rather than resorting to his own inaccurate statistics. An ambitious plan to put this shameful situation right would be transformational for millions of children. As a matter of urgency we are calling on the Chancellor not to go ahead with planned cuts to Universal Credit which would see families lose out on £1000 a year. Given today’s data, this cut is unconscionable.’*

*End Child Poverty is calling for an urgent Government plan to end child poverty including*

* *Uprating of housing assistance in line with inflation;*
* *Retain the £20 uplift in Universal Credit introduced at the start of the pandemic, which the Government has indicated will end in April 2021(a move supported by over 63k people and counting who have signed a* [*petition*](https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/don-t-cut-universal-credit-lifeline) *to the Government);*
* *End the benefit cap and the two-child limit on benefits;*
* *Invest in all children with an increase to child benefit*
* *Extend Free School Meals to all families in receipt of Universal Credit and those with No Recourse to Public Funds*

***The full report ‘Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2018/19’, as well as tables with local data, are available at:*** [***www.endchildpoverty.org.uk***](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)

**The 20 constituencies with the highest increases in AHC (after housing costs) child poverty 2014/15 -2018/19**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Constituency | **% of children below 60% median income AHC** |
| 2014/15 | 2018/19 | %age point increase |
| **UK** | **28%** | **30%** | **2%** |
| Middlesbrough  | 31.2% | 47.2% | 16.0% |
| Newcastle upon Tyne Central  | 31.7% | 45.2% | 13.5% |
| Birmingham Hodge Hill  | 40.5% | 53.8% | 13.4% |
| Bradford West  | 34.9% | 47.8% | 12.9% |
| Birmingham Ladywood  | 41.8% | 54.5% | 12.7% |
| Birmingham Yardley  | 32.4% | 44.7% | 12.4% |
| South Shields  | 28.2% | 39.3% | 11.1% |
| Bradford East  | 36.4% | 46.9% | 10.5% |
| Newcastle upon Tyne East  | 27.1% | 36.8% | 9.7% |
| Bolton South East  | 37.1% | 46.7% | 9.6% |
| Sedgefield | 23.5% | 33.0% | 9.5% |
| Hartlepool | 27.6% | 37.1% | 9.5% |
| Oldham West and Royton  | 38.5% | 48.0% | 9.4% |
| Gateshead  | 26.0% | 35.3% | 9.3% |
| Blackburn  | 38.1% | 47.3% | 9.2% |
| Jarrow  | 23.5% | 32.6% | 9.1% |
| Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland  | 24.2% | 33.2% | 9.0% |
| Manchester Gorton  | 38.6% | 47.6% | 9.0% |
| North Durham  | 24.3% | 33.3% | 9.0% |
| Easington | 25.8% | 34.6% | 8.8% |

**The 20 constituencies with the highest AHC compared to BHC (before housing costs) poverty rates, 2018/19**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Constituency** | **% of children below 60% median income AHC** |
| AHC | BHC | %age point difference |
| **UK** | **30%** | **20%** | **10%** |
| Bethnal Green and Bow  | 60.6% | 30.1% | 30.5% |
| Hackney South and Shoreditch  | 52.0% | 23.9% | 28.1% |
| Bermondsey and Old Southwark  | 50.3% | 22.3% | 28.0% |
| Holborn and St Pancras  | 47.9% | 19.9% | 28.0% |
| Vauxhall  | 49.7% | 22.2% | 27.5% |
| Poplar and Limehouse  | 52.4% | 25.1% | 27.3% |
| Islington South and Finsbury | 46.2% | 19.4% | 26.8% |
| West Ham  | 52.5% | 25.9% | 26.6% |
| Walthamstow | 50.8% | 24.5% | 26.3% |
| Tottenham  | 50.2% | 24.0% | 26.2% |
| East Ham  | 51.3% | 25.5% | 25.8% |
| Camberwell and Peckham  | 46.1% | 21.1% | 25.0% |
| Hackney North and Stoke Newington  | 44.6% | 19.6% | 25.0% |
| Greenwich and Woolwich  | 45.9% | 21.0% | 24.9% |
| Mitcham and Morden | 48.5% | 23.8% | 24.7% |
| Leyton and Wanstead  | 46.0% | 21.3% | 24.7% |
| Lewisham West and Penge  | 45.9% | 21.5% | 24.4% |

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

For further information, please contact the National Children’s Bureau media office: media@ncb.org.uk / 07721 097 033.

For urgent enquiries out of office-hours call: 07721 097 033.

1. The research was carried out by Dr Juliet Stone and Professor Donald Hirsch at the Centre for Research in Social Policy, at Loughborough University using Before Housing Cost data produced by the Department for Work and Pensions in March 2020, together with housing cost data from the Valuation Office Agency and income data from the Understanding Society survey. The report and data is available at [www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)
2. Note that the total number of children in poverty shown in the data tables only includes those aged under 16 and is therefore lower than in the main poverty statistics, which also includes 16-19 year olds in full-time secondary education.
3. For more information about End Child Poverty’s complaint to the Office for Statistical Regulation and their judgement visit [www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/pms-use-of-child-poverty-statistics-misleading/](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/pms-use-of-child-poverty-statistics-misleading/)

**About End Child Poverty**

End Child Poverty is a coalition of organisations from civic society including children’s charities, child welfare organisations, social justice groups, faith groups, trade unions and others, united in our vision of a UK free of child poverty. For more details visit: [**www.endchildpoverty.org.uk**](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.endchildpoverty.org.uk%2F&data=02%7C01%7Crnewson%40ncb.org.uk%7Ca868bf4030b64fad74fe08d833bf8720%7Cadc87355e29c4519954f95e35c776178%7C0%7C0%7C637316244992028784&sdata=VZ147meKF9s%2BnshrN2xOjlL3Ml20%2F3iF%2BwMFVTR06vg%3D&reserved=0)

**About the National Children’s Bureau**
For more than 50 years, the National Children’s Bureau has worked to champion the rights of children and young people in the UK. We interrogate policy and uncover evidence to shape future legislation and develop more effective ways of supporting children and families. As a leading children’s charity, we take the voices of children to the heart of Government, bringing people and organisations together to drive change in society and deliver a better childhood for the UK. We are united for a better childhood.

For more information visit [**www.ncb.org.uk**](http://www.ncb.org.uk/)