

**EMBARGOED: 00:00 19th May, 2021**

**Interviews, further briefing and stats available. Images** **available** [**here**](https://we.tl/t-E8fOJUFnRm) **(please credit Save the Children). Local authority and constituency data available below.**

**STILL NO PROGRESS MADE ON CHILD POVERTY IN NORTHERN IRELAND,**

**POVERTY LEVEL HIGHEST IN BELFAST, DERRY AND NEWRY**

* As many as one in four children were growing up in poverty in Belfast (26%), Derry (26%) and Newry (26%), figures likely to rise as a result of the pandemic
* Stark inequalities in Belfast, with almost one in three (30%) growing up in poverty in the north, 50% higher than in the south of the city (20%)
* One in four children (24%) overall are growing up in poverty in Northern Ireland, with two thirds (66%) growing up in families were parents are in work
* Even before the pandemic, 4.3 million children were living in poverty in the UK, up 200,000 from the previous year – and up 500,000 over the past five years.

New figures released today highlight again that nearly a quarter (24%) of children in NI live in poverty according to research published today by the End Child Poverty coalition.

A new analysis that factors in housing costs estimates that more than 95,000 children are living below the breadline, with overall numbers showing no signs of improvement in recent years. The study emphasises the scale of the challenge faced by the NI Executive if it is to realise its ambition to deliver a fair and compassionate society as promised in New Decade, New Approach.

The research by Loughborough University shows that before the pandemic, the rate of child poverty in the NI had flatlined, with very little change in the past five years up to March 2019, despite growing employment and earnings, which the End Child Poverty coalition explains presents a real risk that things will get worse a result of the pandemic.

Looking across Northern Ireland, the research found the highest rates of poverty in Belfast (26%), Derry (26%) and Newry (26%), with the lowest rate in Lisburn (19%). In Belfast, the researchers found stark levels of inequalities, with almost one in three children (30%) growing up in poverty in the north of the city, compared to one in two (19%) in the south. Campaigners are warning that many more families could be swept into poverty once the full effect of COVID-19 is felt and more needs to be done sooner rather than later.

The coalition, with several members based in Northern Ireland is calling on the NI Executive to recognise the urgency of the problem and its long-term impact on children’s lives. They argue early action is crucial and the current timelines for policy developments addressing poverty are inadequate. They are calling on the Executive to:

* Expediate the implementation of the recommendations on Child Poverty by an Expert Panel to the Department of Communities[[1]](#footnote-1).
* Strengthen the welfare mitigations package and drop two-child limit within Universal Credit.
* Support an extension of the £20 uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits beyond September 2021.
* Deliver better jobs with better wages, encouraging employers to offer more flexible working environments.

Speaking on behalf of ECP coalition, which includes Action for Children, Save the Children and National Children’s Bureau, Lorna Ballard, National Director Northern Ireland Action for Children said: *“Every day we see families struggling to make ends meet, worrying about providing for their children’s’ basic needs and making decisions like whether to heat their homes or pay for food, and the situation is only getting worse.*

*“Child poverty is not inevitable, and with the right policies and commitment from government, we would see positive long-lasting change. Our children are our future and they deserve the best start in life. We must invest in them for a better future for all of us.”*

While recent policy developments within the Executive are welcome, such as the joint-support of the Free School Meals payments being extended and the Community Support Fund, there remains an urgent long-term objective to create a society where the most vulnerable are better protected.

The full report ‘Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2019/20’ as well as tables with Constituency and Local Authority data are available [here](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/local-child-poverty-data-2014-15-2019-20/). (Link goes live 00:00 Wednesday 19 May 2021)

**Northern Ireland Local Authority breakdown - child poverty 2015/16 – 2019/20**

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| Local Authority | Child poverty 2015/16 | 2019/20 | Percentage Point change 2015/16 – 2019/20 |
| **Northern Ireland**  | **26%**  | **24%**  | **-2%**  |
| Antrim and Newtownabbey | 23.1% | 21.3% | -1.8% |
| Ards and North Down | 23.9% | 21.4% | -2.6% |
| Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon | 26.1% | 24.1% | -1.2% |
| Belfast | 27.5% | 26.1% | -0.7% |
| Causeway Coast and Glens | 27.1% | 25.0% | -1.5% |
| Derry City and Strabane | 28.4% | 26.0% | -0.9% |
| Fermanagh and Omagh | 25.4% | 24.6% | -0.8% |
| Lisburn and Castlereagh | 20.6% | 19.0% | -2.6% |
| Mid and East Antrim | 24.8% | 23.6% | -0.8% |
| Mid Ulster | 25.3% | 23.6% | -1.9% |
| Newry, Mourne and Down | 26.8% | 26.3% | 0.0% |

**ENDS**

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 **NOTES TO EDITORS**

* + The research was carried out by Dr Juliet Stone and Professor Donald Hirsch at the Centre for Research in Social Policy, at Loughborough University based on the latest Before Housing Cost child poverty data from DWP published in March 2021.
	+ Report and data all available here [Local child poverty data 2014/15 - 2019/20 | Improving the lives of children and families (endchildpoverty.org.uk)](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/kM3vCoj03TlXlp6IVCWLe?domain=track.vuelio.uk.com)
	+ For a family of one adult and one child, 60% of median income, after housing costs, in 2019/20 was £223 week
	+ For a family of one adult and two children, £280 week
	+ For a family of two adults and one child, £343 week
	+ For a family of two adults and two children, £400 week

**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](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk).

1. [Recommendations for an Anti-Poverty Strategy (communities-ni.gov.uk)](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/dfc-social-inclusion-strategy-anti-poverty-expert-advisory-panel-recommendations.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)