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**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.**

**DRAMATIC RISE IN CHILD POVERTY IN NORTH EAST ENGLAND OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS SHOWS SCALE OF ‘LEVELLING UP’ CHALLENGE**

* Even before the pandemic, 4.3 million children across the UK were living in poverty, up 200,000 from the previous year – and up 500,000 over the past five years.
* North East England shows the greatest growth in child poverty over the past five years and has risen by a third, taking it from below the UK average to the second highest of any region.
* Child poverty rates increased in every North East local authority. Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead see sharpest rises in the region.
* Middlesbrough and Newcastle upon Tyne Central constituencies report highest levels of child poverty.

New figures released today reveal that over a third of children in the North East are growing up in poverty, once housing costs are taken into account.

The research carried out by Loughborough University for the End Child Poverty Coalition shows that the North East of England has seen the most dramatic rise in child poverty over the past five years, fuelled by stagnating family incomes.

Overall child poverty rates in the North East have risen by over a third - from 26% to 37% - over five years, moving from just below the UK average to the second highest of any region, after London. Every North East local authority reported increases in child poverty rates, after housing costs are taken into account. Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead in particular have seen their child poverty rates soar.

The new data also reveals the North East constituencies with greatest numbers of children living in poverty are Middlesbrough (46%) and Newcastle upon Tyne Central (45%), closely followed by South Shields (39%), Gateshead (38%) and Hartlepool (38%).

Vikki Waterman is a single mum of two from Durham who works full-time. She says poverty in the North East cripples hard-up families and it beggars belief that the UK Government doesn’t understand the struggles facing working parents, even more so following the financial impact of COVID-19.

“Too many of us in the North East work twice as hard for half as much. We’re not living, were just about surviving.

“Working families, particularly single parent families, already live day to day with the constant fear of having no flexibility or financial safety net, often forcing them to turn to high interest loans in times of desperate need. The government must not allow those of us barely managing to keep our heads above water from going under.”

**Imran Hussain, director of policy and campaigns at Action for Children, said:** “These deeply worrying figures reveal the true extent of the hardship facing families across the North East– even before the pandemic hit. With child poverty rates soaring, children in the region are among those most exposed to the devastating economic consequences of the pandemic.

“Our frontline workers tell us that poverty levels are at the worst they ever seen, as they deliver vital support to families in the region desperately trying to keep their kids clothed and well-fed.

“We are desperately concerned this generation of children have had their childhoods and life chances damaged and disrupted by poverty and the pandemic. If the government truly wants to level up parts of the country hardest hit by poverty, they must scrap their plans to cut Universal Credit later this year and give families a fighting chance at recovery.”

**Amanda Bailey, director of the North East Child Poverty Commission, added:** “This alarming new data really does demonstrate the scale of the challenge in reducing inequalities for most parts of the North East, which have only been exacerbated by the pandemic – and yet we are still to hear how the post-Covid recovery and proposals to level up the country will address this growing child poverty crisis.

“The single most important step the Government could take to improve the lives and opportunities of children and young people across our region is to commit to a clear plan - backed up with decisive action - to tackle child poverty.

“This must start by not going ahead with the planned cut to Universal Credit which will have a devastating impact on thousands of families across the North East.”

The coalition is calling on the UK Government to recognise the scale of the problem and its impact on children’s lives and to create a credible plan to end child poverty which must include a commitment to increase child benefits. Given the extent to which families are already struggling, the planned £20 p/w cut to Universal Credit come October should also be revoked, with the support extended to those on the ‘legacy’ benefits system.

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/).

**North East Local Authority breakdown - increases in child poverty rates after housing costs, 2014/15 – 2019/20**

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| --- | --- |
| **Local Authority** | **% of children below 60% median income AHC** |
| **2014/15** | **2019/20** | **%age point increase** |
| **North East** | **26%** | **37%** | **11%** |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 28.4% | 41.2% | 12.8% |
| Gateshead | 24.7% | 36.0% | 11.2% |
| Redcar and Cleveland | 26.2% | 36.8% | 10.6% |
| County Durham | 25.3% | 35.8% | 10.5% |
| North Tyneside | 23.6% | 34.0% | 10.5% |
| Darlington | 25.7% | 36.1% | 10.4% |
| South Tyneside | 27.4% | 37.8% | 10.4% |
| Hartlepool | 27.4% | 37.8% | 10.4% |
| Middlesbrough | 29.2% | 39.4% | 10.3% |
| Sunderland | 27.4% | 37.6% | 10.3% |
| Stockton-on-Tees | 25.5% | 35.3% | 9.8% |
| Northumberland | 26.5% | 36.2% | 9.8% |

**The 20 North East parliamentary constituencies with highest child poverty rates, 2019/20**

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| --- | --- |
| **Constituency** | **% of children below 60% median income after housing costs, 2019/20** |
| **North East** | **37%** |
| Middlesbrough  | 45.6% |
| Newcastle upon Tyne Central  | 45.4% |
| South Shields  | 39.4% |
| Gateshead  | 38.2% |
| Hartlepool | 38.1% |
| Newcastle upon Tyne East  | 38.1% |
| Blyth Valley | 37.0% |
| Sunderland Central | 37.0% |
| Easington | 36.9% |
| Washington and Sunderland West | 36.8% |
| Redcar  | 36.7% |
| Bishop Auckland  | 36.5% |
| Stockton North  | 36.5% |
| Darlington | 36.3% |
| Sedgefield | 35.9% |
| Jarrow  | 35.7% |
| Wansbeck  | 35.2% |
| Houghton and Sunderland South | 35.0% |
| Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland  | 34.8% |
| North Tyneside  | 34.8% |

**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)](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/local-child-poverty-data-2014-15-2019-20/)
* 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.endchildoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildoverty.org.uk).

**About Action for Children**

Action for Children protects and supports vulnerable children and young people by providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives. With 476 services in communities across the UK, the charity helps more than 370,000 children, teenagers, parents and carers a year. [actionforchildren.org.uk](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/P562CQ62ou6X3QyCP07nq?domain=track.vuelio.uk.com)

**About the North East Child Poverty Commission**

NECPCis a stakeholder network of representatives from different sectors in the region, which works to build support for actions that improve the lives of the more than 1 in 3 children and young people growing up in poverty in the North East of England. With an overarching aim to ‘provide a strong regional voice to raise awareness of the issue of child poverty in the North East and to work collaboratively to tackle the problem’, NECPC is hosted by - but independent of - Newcastle University. For more information visit <https://nechildpoverty.org.uk/>