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

**Interviews available. Local authority and constituency data available below.**

**RISE IN CHILD POVERTY IN SOUTHAMPTON & ITCHEN IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS SHOWS THE SCALE OF THE ‘LEVELLING UP’ CHALLENGE. SURGE IN REQUESTS FOR LOCAL FINANCIAL HELP!**

* Even before the pandemic, 4.3 million children were living in poverty, up 200,000 from the previous year – and up 500,000 over the past five years.
* Southampton & Itchen has one of the highest growth rates in child poverty over the past five years with a rise of 5.3%.
* Surge in applications for Buttle UK’s Chances for Children Grants during the COVID-19 Pandemic. 55% increase in applications in Southeast during the period April 2020 to March 2021, compared to the same period the year before.
* Highest rates of child poverty continue to be in major cities – particularly London and Birmingham
* National figures show that three quarters (75%) of children living in poverty in 2019/20 in the UK were in households with at least one working adult; a rise from two thirds (67%) in 2014/15.

New figures released today reveal that even before the pandemic, in some parts of the UK, the majority of children 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 Southampton & Itchen has seen a steep increase in child poverty in the past five years, fuelled by stagnating incomes and high housing costs, which are pushing some families to the brink.

Compared to child poverty rates across the South-East, which have stayed steady over the 5-year period, the rate in Southampton & Itchen has jumped 5.3%%. The rises came at a time when many low-paid workers were finding they were being pushed below the poverty line by the freeze in their in-work benefits.

These results show that there were already areas where rates of poverty were worryingly high in the region even before the COVID pandemic hit – with 1 in 3 children (35.5%) in Southampton & Itchen living in poverty. However, the economic impact of the crisis will have pushed more families below the breadline.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Children’s charity, and coalition member, Buttle UK provides financial assistance in the form of *Chances for Children* grants directly to families struggling in Southampton & Itchen.  The grants of up to £2000 are themselves designed to give children a chance in life and are based on the principle that child poverty can be addressed by understanding the long-term impact of small interventions. During the COVID-19 pandemic Buttle UK, have seen a surge in application rates across the Southeast with a staggering increase of 55% in the period April 2020 and March 2021, compared to the same period the year before.

The new data also confirms London and Birmingham, two of the UK’s largest cities, as having the greatest concentrations of child poverty with a dozen constituencies showing the majority of children living below the poverty line, even before large numbers of people started losing their jobs as a result of the pandemic.

Of the UK nations, Wales has the highest percentage of children living in poverty nationwide (31%), followed by England (30%) then Scotland and Northern Ireland (24% each).

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.

Anna Feuchtwang, Chair of the End Child Poverty Coalition said: “*The figures speak for themselves – the situation for children couldn’t be starker. We all want to live in a society where children are supported to be the best they can be, but the reality is very different for too many.*

*“The UK Government can be in no doubt about the challenge it faces if it is serious about ‘levelling up’ parts of the country hardest hit by poverty. After the year we’ve all had, they owe it to our children to come up with a plan to tackle child poverty that includes a boost to children’s benefits. And they need to scrap plans to cut Universal Credit given parents and children are having a tough enough time as it is.”*

Joseph Howes, CEO of Buttle UK, said: *“Even in the South East, which we tend to regard as one of the most affluent parts of the UK, there is evidence of a rise in child poverty even before the crisis. We know things will have got worse since. The steep increase Buttle UK have seen in requests for our support in the last year tells us how dramatically the COVID crisis has hit the most vulnerable families - in the South East and all across the UK. As the country starts to move out of lockdown, and we begin to plan for recovery, this must include a co-ordinated response to child poverty. We urge the Government to take the lead on making this happen.”*

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/).

**The 20 local authorities with highest increase in child poverty rates after housing costs, 2014/15 – 2019/20**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Local Authority**  | **% of children below 60% median income AHC**  |
|  | **2014/15** | **2019/20** | **%age point increase** |
| **UK**  | **29%**  | **31%**  | **2%**  |
| 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%  |
| Leicester  | 30.0%  | 37.9%  | 7.9%  |
| Bradford  | 30.1%  | 37.7%  | 7.7%  |
| Birmingham  | 35.5%  | 42.5%  | 6.9%  |
| Leeds  | 28.6%  | 35.3%  | 6.7%  |
| Manchester  | 35.4%  | 41.8%  | 6.4%  |
| Kirklees  | 30.0%  | 36.1%  | 6.2%  |
| Kingston upon Hull  | 30.2%  | 36.3%  | 6.1%  |
| North Lincolnshire  | 27.2%  | 33.1%  | 5.9%  |

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Constituency**  | **% of children below 60% median income after housing costs, 2019/20**  |
| **UK**  | **31%**  |
| Bethnal Green and Bow  | 59.6%  |
| Hackney South and Shoreditch  | 56.3%  |
| Birmingham Ladywood  | 54.5%  |
| Birmingham Hall Green  | 54.3%  |
| Birmingham Hodge Hill  | 52.0%  |
| Vauxhall  | 51.6%  |
| West Ham  | 51.2%  |
| Poplar and Limehouse  | 50.6%  |
| East Ham  | 50.0%  |
| Walthamstow  | 49.8%  |
| Birmingham Perry Barr  | 48.9%  |
| Barking  | 48.9%  |
| Warley  | 47.8%  |
| Tottenham  | 47.6%  |
| Bermondsey and Old Southwark  | 47.4%  |
| Bradford West  | 47.3%  |
| Walsall South  | 47.1%  |
| Manchester Gorton  | 46.8%  |
| Bradford East  | 46.7%  |
| Holborn and St Pancras  | 46.4%  |

**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 Buttle UK**

Buttle UK provides **financial assistance** in the form of ***Chances for Children* grants** directly to families struggling in the UK.  The grants themselves are designed to **give children a chance in life.** The charity provided £4.2 million in individual grants to children and young people in the last year for children affected by the COVID-19 crisis, preventing them from falling further into crisis and give them a genuine chance for change. Whether Buttle UK gives a bed to a child who has become used to sleeping on the floor; counselling to a young boy or girl who has fled an abusive home with their mother or a laptop to support a homeless teenager to begin their first college course, their direct, efficient, and intelligent grants always focused on the needs of the individual.  Families are recommended for grants of up to £2,000 by a range or organisations including: social services, charities, housing associations or schools.For more information visit: [www.buttleuk.org](http://www.buttleuk.org/)

1. [Almost 700,000 driven into poverty by Covid crisis in UK, study finds | Poverty | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/nov/30/almost-700000-driven-poverty-covid-crisis-uk-study) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)