**“DEVASTATING” FIGURES SHOW MORE THAN ONE IN THREE WELSH CHILDREN TRAPPED BELOW THE POVERTY LINE IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PANDEMIC – NEW DATA**

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**Interviews, further briefing and stats available.**

**Images available** [**here**](https://wetransfer.com/downloads/87794da3f36b8bf89d0d4ae1c946eb3720220708095544/158a23)**. Please credit Save the Children UK**

* **More than one in three children across Wales still living in poverty, despite temporary increase in universal credit during pandemic**
* **Newport now the local authority with the highest child poverty rate in Wales**
* **Urgent action still needed at every level of government, say campaigners**
* **Councillors across Wales urged to use local powers to maximise family incomes and reduce costs**
* **Welsh local authority and constituency data available below**

More than one in three children living in Wales were trapped below the poverty line during the first year of the Covid pandemic, according to new estimates published today by the End Child Poverty coalition. Even when families across the UK benefited from a temporary increase to universal credit, child poverty rates in Wales remained stubbornly high.

Members of the End Child Poverty coalition in Wales - including Child Poverty Action Group, Save the Children and Children in Wales - are calling on the UK government to ensure benefits permanently keep pace with inflation, not just through the one-off measures announced by the former Chancellor in May. They are also calling on the Welsh Government to implement a new child poverty strategy and delivery plan as a matter of urgency.

The new research by Loughborough University, on behalf of the End Child Poverty coalition, shows that the headline rate of child poverty across the UK fell during 2020/21, primarily as a result of the temporary £20 a week uplift to universal credit brought in during the pandemic. However, most local authorities in Wales continued to experience high rates of child poverty. Areas that were hit by the sharpest increases in unemployment and economic inactivity at the start of the pandemic are also those areas which top the table in terms of child poverty rates, once housing costs are taken into account

The new research adjusts local area statistics from the Department for Work and Pensions to take account of different housing costs across Wales, giving a more accurate reflection of the money families have to make ends meet. The estimates show child poverty is consistently high across all local authorities in Wales, ranging from 27% in Monmouthshire to over 36% in Newport and Cardiff. More than a quarter of all children in every Welsh local authority now live below the poverty line.

The UK Government has since decided to cut universal credit by £1040 a year, meaning many of the children who were lifted out of poverty by the temporary increase will also have been forced back over the brink into poverty. As the spiralling cost of living squeezes incomes even harder, organisations warn that many more children in Wales face going without everything they need to have a happy and healthy childhood.

Naomi Lea, 23 from Denbighshire, grew up in a family who were experiencing poverty, and is an End Child Poverty Coalition Ambassador

‘To see the rates of child poverty across Wales is devastating. Behind each of those numbers are real children and their families who are struggling right now just to get by. Often having a job is simply not enough to survive on for these families. Speaking to any one of them you would see that they are not to blame and that we urgently need action to bring these figures down.

“Growing up in poverty, I experienced many things no child should ever have to. For many years of my life, my Mum worked in the care sector, but unfortunately this still did not allow us enough money to live on. I became very aware from a young age about our financial situation, from bigger worries, like whether we would be able to pay the rent and keep a roof over our heads to the daily worries about what food we would be to afford. It wasn’t that I was told I couldn’t access an after school club or music lesson but that I literally never asked. No child should have to be so aware of that.

“I’m 23 now and have moved away from my family home and would no longer consider myself as living in poverty, but the impact of growing up with those experiences is something I live with every day. Money is something that still terrifies me and can cause me intense anxiety, and the stigma of living in poverty is something that still plagues me. With the cost of living rising, those fears reignite, and I can only imagine the intensity of those feelings for those still living in poverty.

“The mental health impact of living in poverty, of fighting to survive on so little, is huge and often underestimated in our society. For those children and families in these figures, it is not only about making sure they have the financial resource to live and thrive but also about the emotional support that needs to be available now and in their futures.”

With the cost of living crisis now causing further hardship, the campaigners are calling on the UK government to ensure social security is adequate in the long term, so that every family can afford the essentials. Specifically, they say governments must ensure:

* Benefit payments permanently keep pace with inflation, not just through one-off measures due to be implemented this autumn.
* Deductions from universal credit payments should be reduced, and the 2-child limit and the benefit cap abolished.
* There is improved access to free or affordable childcare.
* Free School Meals are extended to all children in families receiving Universal Credit or equivalent benefits.

The End Child Poverty campaigners are also urging newly elected councillors across Wales to use local powers, including over economic development, housing, and financial support, to maximise family incomes and reduce the costs parents face.

Responding to the new figures, Ellie Harwood from the Child Poverty Action Group said:

“The reductions in child poverty at a UK level show that, when the UK and devolved governments invest in social security, children can be rapidly lifted out of poverty. However, benefits are only one aspect of preventing and ending child poverty. We also need fair work for families, accessible childcare, an inclusive and affordable education system, and equitable public services that meet the specific needs of families affected by poverty. Wales urgently needs a new national child poverty strategy to co-ordinate all the action required to prevent and end child poverty for good.”

Here in Wales, we urge newly elected councillors to use every tool at their disposal to boost family incomes and reduce the costs families face. That means using local powers to deliver more cash support to families, support decent jobs - especially for women and disabled people - and improve access to high quality, free childcare. The Welsh government should also continue to invest in cash-first support for families through the Pupil Development Grant and free school meal payments.”

Referring to the work that Save the Children does with families and partners, Melanie Simmonds, Head of Save the Children Cymru added: “I’ve heard heart breaking tales of parents struggling to afford even the basics and not eating so that their children don’t go hungry. Many are juggling debts so they can cover basic living costs and that they find it difficult to get clear advice and support when in need. For many, living in constant fear of not being able to support their children affects they own mental health and ultimately seeing their parents in such stress affects children’s wellbeing too.

“This is a serious situation that needs an updated child poverty strategy and action plan with key targets and milestones to provide an urgent co-ordinated approach at local and national level allowing public and third sectors to work together. The Welsh Government needs to ensure that all their programmes of support including free school meals and the childcare offer are available to all those children in Wales who are living in poverty.”

Sean O'Neill, Policy Director at Children in Wales said: “Although the powers to tackle child poverty do not completely rest in Wales, the Welsh Government should accelerate its efforts to avoid yet more children being swept up into poverty in the months to come. This is a national crisis. Tackling the cost-of-living increases and preventing more families falling below the breadline has to be the number one priority, and a revised Child Poverty Strategy should be published without further delay.

\*Data detailed in this press release are numbers of children living in poverty in year 2020/2021

**Estimates of children living in poverty, below 60% median income after housing costs, by Welsh local authority.**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Local authority** | Estimated percentage of children living in poverty | Estimated number of children living in poverty |
| **2020/21** | **2020/21** |
| Newport / Casnewydd | 36.3% | 11403 |
| Cardiff / Caerdydd | 36.0% | 23946 |
| Isle of Anglesey / Ynys Môn | 35.6% | 4148 |
| Blaenau Gwent / Blaenau Gwent | 35.5% | 4239 |
| Pembrokeshire / Sir Benfro | 35.5% | 7430 |
| Conwy / Conwy | 35.4% | 6540 |
| Merthyr Tydfil / Merthyr Tudful | 35.2% | 3998 |
| Ceredigion / Ceredigion | 35.1% | 3712 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf / Rhondda Cynon Taf | 35.1% | 15421 |
| Denbighshire / Sir Ddinbych | 34.9% | 5934 |
| Caerphilly / Caerffili | 34.7% | 11359 |
| Carmarthenshire / Sir Gaerfyrddin | 34.6% | 11247 |
| Gwynedd / Gwynedd | 34.4% | 6997 |
| Torfaen / Tor-faen | 34.4% | 5880 |
| Neath Port Talbot / Castell-nedd Port Talbot | 33.5% | 8221 |
| Wrexham / Wrecsam | 33.4% | 8465 |
| Powys / Powys | 33.3% | 6880 |
| Bridgend / Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr | 33.1% | 8472 |
| Swansea / Abertawe | 32.7% | 13325 |
| Flintshire / Sir y Fflint | 30.8% | 8688 |
| Vale of Glamorgan / Bro Morgannwg | 28.9% | 7044 |
| Monmouthshire / Sir Fynwy | 27.0% | 4015 |

Estimates by Westminster constituency are also available [here](https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty/)

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

For further information, or requests to speak to Welsh members of End Child Poverty, please contact

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* The research was carried out by Dr Juliet Stone at the Centre for Research in Social Policy, at Loughborough University using data released by the Department for Work and Pensions, [Children in low income families: local area statistics,](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2021) published in March 2022. This is based on benefits and tax credits administrative data and is before housing costs. The figures are adjusted to take housing costs into account, and calibrated to Households Below Average Income (HBAI).
* Calculating poverty ‘after housing costs’ gives a more accurate measure of how much money families have to live on.
* **NOTE:** These statistics are calibrated to regional 3-year averages from Households below Average Income for the financial years 2018/19 to 2020/21. The HBAI figures for 2020/21 are less reliable than earlier years due to sampling issues related to the pandemic. Caution should be used in interpreting HBAI statistics for 2020/21 due to sampling issues related to the pandemic. Further information is available [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2021).
* Report and data all available [here](https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty/).

**Notes on how the data should be interpreted**

* The figures are based on the Department for Work and Pensions Children in low income families: local area statistics which estimates the poverty rate before housing costs. A statistical model is used to estimate child poverty after housing costs which draws on household survey data alongside local area statistics on private rent levels.
* The statistics are calibrated to regional 3-year averages from Households Below Average Income (HBAI) for the financial years 2018/19 to 2020/21. The HBAI figures for 2020/21 are less reliable than earlier years due to sampling issues related to the pandemic. This should be kept in mind when interpreting the statistics released today, but the impact is lessened by the use of three-year averages for regional figures. HBAI is available [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2021/households-below-average-income-an-analysis-of-the-income-distribution-fye-1995-to-fye-2021).
* Users are advised that the data for individual local authorities and parliamentary constituencies are subject to small statistical fluctuations year-on-year and should be considered within the context of the regional or the longer-term local trend.

**Note 1** In May, the former Chancellor announced a £650 one-off Cost of Living Payment for those on means tested benefits and confirmed that the Government will use the usual rules for uprating benefits in April 2023, increasing them by September’s value of inflation,

**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/).