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**North East child poverty now highest in the UK**

‘Deeply alarming’ new figures released today must act as a serious wake-up call for Government say regional campaigners, after it was revealed the North East now has the highest rate of child poverty of anywhere in the country, overtaking London.

Research carried out by Loughborough University for the End Child Poverty coalition indicates that two in five babies, children and young people across the North East (38%) were living below the poverty line in 2020/21, after housing costs were taken into account – rising from 37% the year before.

The North East has also continued to experience by far the steepest increase in child poverty across the UK in recent years, moving from being just below the national average in 2014/15 to having the highest rate of any nation or region of the country by 2020/21. Overall child poverty rates in the North East have risen by almost half – from 26% to 38% – in the space of those six years; during a time when child poverty fell slightly, by two percentage points, across the country.

Every local authority area in the North East reported significant increases in child poverty rates over the same period, with Newcastle, Gateshead, Redcar and Cleveland and Sunderland seeing the most dramatic rises since 2014. Six of the region’s local authorities also now feature in the list of the twenty council areas with the highest child poverty rates in the whole of the UK: Newcastle (42.2%), Middlesbrough (41.2%), Sunderland (39.7%), Redcar and Cleveland (39.3%), South Tyneside (39.1%) and Hartlepool (39.0%).

The new research also confirms the North East Parliamentary seats with the highest levels of child poverty – with at least 40% of children now growing up poor in one third of the region’s constituencies: Middlesbrough (50.7%), Newcastle Central (47.8%), Gateshead (42.2%), South Shields (42.1%), Washington and Sunderland West (40.7%), Easington (40.6%), Redcar (40.6%), Sunderland Central (40.2%), and Bishop Auckland (40.0%).

Today’s new report concludes that: ‘the rate of child poverty after housing costs in the North East now outstrips London, which suggests that the government’s ‘levelling up’ agenda has a long way to go where child poverty is concerned.’

The UK-wide rate in 2020/21 was 27%, representing a fall of around 400,000 children from the previous year, [which has been attributed to the Covid-related £20 per week increase to Universal Credit](https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/official-poverty-statistics-government-pulled-children-out-poverty) that was removed in October 2021.

**Responding to today’s figures, Chair of the North East Child Poverty Commission, Anna Turley, said:**

‘These new figures are deeply alarming. Rather than being levelled up, it’s clear that inequalities for children and young people across the North East are widening even further – and this must surely act as a serious wake-up call for both the current and incoming Government about the scale and urgency of the child poverty crisis we face.

‘Sadly, this research will come as no surprise to the many hundreds of organisations working tirelessly across our region to help families keep their heads above water, with all reporting even worse levels of hardship as people – both in and out of work – now grapple with the soaring cost of living.

‘The single most important step the Government could take to improve the lives and opportunities of children across our region is to commit to a clear plan – backed up with decisive action – to tackle child poverty. Babies, children and young people here in the North East deserve so much better than this, and they don’t have time to wait.’

**The Bishop of Durham, the Rt Revd Paul Butler, added:**

‘We all want a North East in which every child is valued, is able to thrive and is supported to reach their potential – but today’s new research shows we are now even further away from achieving that ambition than we were before.

‘Cruel and unfair policies like the two-child limit are resulting only in growing numbers of families going without the basics – which means children across our region are having their life chances restricted and childhoods damaged from the moment they are born.

‘This is not right in a compassionate and just society like ours – and the Government must act urgently to reverse this situation, which should be of profound concern for all of us in the North East.’

**David, an End Child Poverty Youth Ambassador and college student from Tyne and Wear, explained:**

‘Talking about poverty and the impact it’s had on my life is really difficult – particularly with people who have no experience of being poor and no idea how damaging it can be.

‘I’ve had to work so hard to overcome the challenges and barriers I’ve faced. Having lived in a number of different places, I’ve experienced just how unequal opportunities are for young people here in the North East compared to many other parts of the country. That just isn’t fair. Young people are put off from fighting for their dream goals because of this*.*

‘I became a Youth Ambassador for End Child Poverty because I wanted to give a voice to other young people like me. I am prepared to stand up and fight to make things better for children and young people in poverty – but we really need the Government to do that too.’

End Child Poverty coalition members believe that – whilst the former Chancellor’s recently-announced financial package was welcome and showed Ministers understood the impact of rising costs on families – some of the measures are temporary and only remedy the recent hike in energy bills and rising prices. They do not respond to the real terms cuts to social security support families have experienced for years and, whilst the promised inflationary increase next year will be welcome, the impact of rising inflation means there isn’t any significant additional income going to families.

The North East Child Poverty Commission joins other End Child Poverty coalition members in calling for the UK Government to make social security more adequate in the long term, so that every family can afford the essentials:

* For those on Universal Credit, reducing deductions and abolishing the benefit cap and two-child limit.
* Improving access to free and affordable childcare.
* Extending free school meals to all children in families receiving Universal Credit.

ENDS

To request the embargoed report, data and a North East regional briefing, please contact Amanda Bailey (North East Child Poverty Commission) via amanda.bailey@ncl.ac.uk or 07725 039 614

**NOTES**

* End Child Poverty is a coalition of over 70 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. The North East Child Poverty Commission and Church of England are both members of the coalition.
* The research was carried out by Dr Juliet Stone at the Centre for Research in Social Policy, at Loughborough University and the report and data will all be available on the End Child Poverty website from 12th July 2022: <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty/>
* All figures in this release refer to relative child poverty; that is the % of children living in households with below 60% of the UK median household income. 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. More information on HBAI is available [here](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fstatistics%2Fhouseholds-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2021%2Fhouseholds-below-average-income-an-analysis-of-the-income-distribution-fye-1995-to-fye-2021&data=05%7C01%7CAmanda.Bailey%40newcastle.ac.uk%7C587993d1ec9b4066ed9408da60cee72a%7C9c5012c9b61644c2a91766814fbe3e87%7C1%7C0%7C637928740190492495%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=9hxkHePhdi3q4DfGnU5GumjsRkrz62B6GJ9SKNFpBmE%3D&reserved=0). 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.