**NEARLY 1 in 4 CHILDREN STILL LIVING IN POVERTY IN THE SOUTH EAST AS FEARS SITUATION WILL GET WORSE IN COST OF LIVING CRISIS**

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**Interviews with Joseph Howes, Chair of the End Child Poverty Coalition and CEO of Buttle UK, are available as well as further briefing and stats. Images** **available** [**here**](https://we.tl/t-E8fOJUFnRm) **(please credit Save the Children). Local authority and constituency data available below.**

* Statistics released by the End Child Poverty Coalition show 3.6 million children\* were living in poverty in 2020/21 or about eight children in a class of 30.
* Child poverty levels have remained alarmingly high over the last decade. The only year child poverty levels reduced by more than one percentage point since 2010 was 2020/21. This was the year the temporary £20 uplift to Universal Credit was introduced, which experts say reduced child poverty levels by 4 percentage points in a single year. This has since been removed.
* Statistics released today come as national poverty charity[, Turn2us](https://www.turn2us.org.uk/), release their own research showing around half [49%] of their users with children reported having no money to live on every week after covering essentials. Read their full report [here.](https://www.turn2us.org.uk/)
* Charity sector now warning next year will see a rise in child poverty as the cost-of-living crisis plunges families into hardship.
* Demand for grants from children’s charity Buttle UK to support individual families was 48% higher in the South East in the last year than in 2019/20.
* Portsmouth North has seen the sharpest increase in child poverty levels over the last 5 years, up 6.5% from 2014/15, and with 31.7% of children living in poverty in the constituency. Bognor Regis and Littlehampton also saw at 5.9% rise since 2014/15 with 30.2% of children living in poverty in 2020/21.
* 24% of children in the region were living in poverty in 2020/21 overall (compared to 27% of children nationally).
* Child poverty levels are also high and growing in North and South Thanet, where 33.0% and 34.2% of children were living in poverty in 2020/21 respectfully, compared to 29.3% and 30.6% in 2019/20.
* Meon Valley and East Hampshire both saw rises of between 3.0% and 4.0% respectively compared to 2019/20 figures.
* Highest rates of child poverty continue to be in major cities and London boroughs. Over half of children growing up in Tower Hamlets are living in poverty and over 40% of children are growing up in poverty in five more London boroughs as well as Luton, Newcastle, Birmingham, Middlesbrough, and Sunderland.
* Regionally the North East has seen the sharpest increase in child poverty levels, up 7 percentage points from 2010/11. In Wales, 34% of children were living in poverty in 2020/21, compared to 31% in 2019/20.
* In 2020/21, two thirds (65%) of children in poverty lived in a working households (where at least one adult is in work) and 40% of children in lone parent households were in poverty (compared to 24% of those in couple parent households).\*\*
* In 2020/21 40% of children in lone parent households were in poverty (compared to 24% of those in couple parent households).\*\*
* The latest data available\*\*\* shows children from Black and minority ethnic groups are more likely to be in poverty, at 46 per cent, compared with 26 per cent of children in white British families.

New figures released today show 3.6 million children\* are still living in poverty in the UK, down 200,000 (-2%) on the year before.

Research carried out by Loughborough University for the End Child Poverty Coalition shows that despite the slight overall decline nationally, Meon Valley, North and South Thanet and East Hampshire all saw rises of between 3% and 4% compared to the 2019/20 figures.

Portsmouth North has seen the sharpest overall increase in child poverty levels, up 6.5% from 2014/15, and with 31.7% of children living in poverty in the constituency. Bognor Regis and Littlehampton saw a 5% rise over the same period, with 29.3% of children living in poverty in 2020/21. 24% of children in the region were living in poverty in 2020/21 overall (compared to 27% of children nationally). This is a drop of 1% compared to 19/20, less than the overall UK drop of 2%.

Child poverty levels are also high and growing in North and South Thanet, where 33% and 34.2% of children were living in poverty in 2020/21 respectfully, compared to 29.3% and 30.6% in 2019/20.

The data released today by the Coalition covers a period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 at which point families were in receipt of the £20 Universal Credit uplift, which experts say is the main reason why the numbers slightly declined in this period. \*\*\*\*

There is now significant fear that with the £20 removed, next year’s results for the year 2021/22 will see a rise in child poverty levels. Even with the government’s cost of living support package, some of the measures proposed were temporary and will only remedy the recent price hike in energy bills and rising prices. They do not respond to the real terms cuts families have experienced for years.

Of the UK nations, Wales has the highest percentage of children living in poverty nationwide in 2020/21 at (34%), followed by England (29%) then Scotland (21%) and Northern Ireland (24%).

Regionally progress had been made in some areas over the years – with poverty levels in the North East falling from as high as 40% to 26% in 2013. However, this progress has now been lost.

The End Child Poverty Coalition believes the figures released today show child poverty rates remain alarmingly high in the UK and despite promises to ‘level up’ the country, there has been little progress on reducing suffering for children on the scale this country needs. While progress had been made in some areas – with poverty levels in the North East falling from as high as 40% to 26% in 2013, this progress has now been lost.

Far too many children are still going without, struggling to concentrate at school if they’re hungry, missing out on nursery, school trips, and other opportunities that squeezed families can no longer afford. By age three, the average child from a low-income family is up to 17 months behind those from wealthier families.

Former Chancellor Rishi Sunak’s financial package was welcome and showed ministers understood the impact of rising costs on families, but some of the measures are temporary and only remedy the recent price hike in energy bills and rising prices and do not respond to the real terms cuts families have experienced for years. A promised inflationary increase next year will be welcome, but the impact of rising inflation means there isn’t any significant additional income going to families.

Today the End Child Poverty Coalition is calling on the UK government to continue to find ways of making social security more adequate in the long term so that every family can afford the essentials.

1) Benefits should keep pace with inflation permanently, not just through one-off measures due to be implemented this autumn.

2) For those on universal credit, deductions should be reduced, and the benefit cap abolished.

3) Improve access to free or affordable childcare.

4) Ensure Free School Meals in England and Wales are extended to all children in families receiving Universal Credit.

Liv Eren, 18, from Halton, in Cheshire, grew up in a family on a low income and is an End Child Poverty Coalition ambassador.

She said: "It would be an oversimplification to look at the overall figures going down and think child poverty is less of an issue than it used to be. When we look at child poverty statistics, we often focus on the most deprived areas in places like London but when you look at small towns like mine you know, and you witness it every day that child poverty is still rife.

"I remember how poverty made me feel. Always being acutely aware of your social position forces you to mature a lot earlier. I remember a group of us telling a teacher that we wouldn't be able to go on a school trip when she wondered why no one had signed up. At 11-years of age and knowing about your parents’ finances and what they can afford– no child should be able to know that. And I missed out on normal things kids were doing after school too. Mum couldn't afford childcare, so we were going to work with her in the evenings then having to be at school for 8am and we were absolutely shattered

"Although I'm 18 now it really upsets me when I look back at the experiences I've had as a young person you feel it can’t get any worse. And to know it is still getting worse for some children and there are young people who are really struggling at the minute, is just an awful thing.”

Joseph Howes, Chair of the End Child Poverty Coalition & CEO of Buttle UK, said: “The additional £20 support from the Government during the COVID crisis does appear to have affected the figures positively in most areas. This shows that change is possible, these levels of child poverty do not have to be the norm. There will always be conflicting government priorities, but surely the wellbeing of the most vulnerable children in our society should be front and centre, particularly as we go through the most severe period of price rises for 40 years.

“The numbers may have gone down overall during the initial period of the COVID crisis, but it still feels like we are on the edge of a precipice. There is significant concern that they will now rise again sharply with families facing huge cost increases in the coming months. It remains incredibly worrying that at a moment like this there is nothing in the Government’s Levelling Up strategy on this issue. I just don’t understand this, we must see a national child poverty strategy created, it is heartbreaking that there isn’t one when we can see evidence that shows change really is possible.”

Dan Paskins, Director of UK Impact at Save The Children and Vice Chair of the End Child Poverty Coalition said: “It’s an outrage that child poverty figures in this country remain so stubbornly high, even if the statistics show a slight decrease in numbers overall. Growing up in a home where your parents are struggling to make ends meet can leave lasting scars and we are worried that while levels remain this high, children are at risk of growing up feeling anxious, isolated, and lacking self-worth.

“We’ve also seen how Treasury investment in families on low incomes can see children lifted out of poverty – we saw this with the £20 uplift during the pandemic. The Chancellor’s recent economic package was welcome but has just kept families treading water, all it has done is prevent real terms cut in income. There must now be an immediate focus on the Universal Credit system as a means of helping families on the lowest incomes weather the cost-of-living crisis.”

Commenting on the fact that in 2020/21 40% of children in lone parent households were in poverty, Victoria Benson, chief executive at Gingerbread, the charity that supports single parent families said:
“It’s simply not acceptable that so many children across the country are forced to live in poverty. Financial hardship disproportionately affects single parents and their children and it’s clear there is just not enough support in place for them.

“I’ve heard heart breaking tales of parents not eating so that their children don’t go hungry, of parents juggling debts so they can cover basic living costs and of women with multiple jobs still unable to make ends meet. It's clear this government must do more to support families on low incomes and to protect children from growing up in poverty and experiencing the disadvantage this brings.”

The full report ‘Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2020/21’ 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 statistics released today by the coalition coincide with new research by Turn2us ‘How Many More campaign, which found around half [49%] of their surveyed users with children (compared to 47% without), reported having no money, or less than no money to live on each week after covering essential costs. Additionally, seven in ten [71%] Turn2us users who were single parents surveyed reported that they would be using recently announced cost of living measures to repay debt.

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\*Children in this research are age 0 to 15-years-old.

\*\*Calculated from Households below Average Income for the financial year 2020/21. Note that 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)

\*\*\* Calculations from Households Below Average Income statistics on the number and percentage of people living in low-income households for financial year 2019/20, Tables 4\_3db & 4\_5db. Department for Work and Pensions.

[\*\*\*\* Child Poverty Action Group: Official poverty statistics - government pulled children out of poverty](https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/official-poverty-statistics-government-pulled-children-out-poverty#:~:text=Today's%20Households%20Below%20Average%20Income,UK%20children)%20were%20in%20poverty.).

**Notes to editors:**

* The End Child Poverty Coalition – a group that is made up of over 70 organisations 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.
* 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 has supported over 10,000 children and young people through its individual grants to children and young people since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, preventing them from falling further into crisis and giving 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/).
* Statistics come from data released by the Department for Work and Pensions, Children in low-income families: local area statistics, adjusted to take housing costs into account, and calibrated to Households Below Average Income (HBAI).

**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. More information on 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.

**The 20 parliamentary constituencies with highest increase in child poverty rates after housing costs, 2014/15 – 2020/21**

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|  **Parliamentary Constituency** | **% of children below 60% median income AHC**  |  **%age point change** |
| **2014/15** | **2020/21** |
| Portsmouth North | 25.2% | 31.7% | 6.5% |
| North Thanet | 26.9% | 33.0% | 6.1% |
| South Thanet | 28.2% | 34.2% | 6.0% |
| Bognor Regis and Littlehampton | 24.3% | 30.2% | 5.9% |
| Meon Valley | 19.6% | 24.5% | 4.9% |
| Bracknell | 16.0% | 19.7% | 3.7% |
| East Hampshire | 17.0% | 20.6% | 3.6% |
| Crawley | 29.9% | 33.5% | 3.5% |
| Portsmouth South | 29.8% | 33.2% | 3.3% |
| Havant | 30.4% | 33.6% | 3.2% |
| Romsey and Southampton North | 19.7% | 22.6% | 2.9% |
| Horsham | 14.4% | 17.2% | 2.8% |
| Isle of Wight | 31.7% | 33.9% | 2.2% |
| Slough | 34.3% | 36.2% | 2.0% |
| Gosport | 25.9% | 27.8% | 1.9% |
| Basingstoke | 20.5% | 22.4% | 1.9% |
| Gillingham and Rainham | 28.5% | 30.2% | 1.8% |
| Reading West | 25.1% | 26.8% | 1.7% |
| Canterbury | 26.8% | 27.7% | 1.0% |
| Gravesham | 32.8% | 33.6% | 0.9% |

**The 20 local authorities with highest child poverty rates, 2020/21**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  **Local authority** | **% of children below 60% median income AHC**  |
| Slough | 35.1% |
| Crawley | 33.7% |
| Southampton | 33.3% |
| Thanet | 33.1% |
| Hastings | 32.7% |
| Gravesham | 32.4% |
| Portsmouth | 32.2% |
| Isle of Wight | 31.5% |
| Havant | 31.4% |
| Medway | 30.7% |
| Dover | 30.2% |
| Eastbourne | 30.1% |
| Folkestone and Hythe | 30.0% |
| Milton Keynes | 29.8% |
| Swale | 29.7% |
| Gosport | 29.3% |
| Rother | 29.0% |
| Adur | 28.2% |
| Ashford | 27.9% |
| Arun | 27.9% |