

Cambridge Women's Resources Centre

Media release

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Child poverty on the rise in working households

Latest figures show 68.6% of children in BHC poverty in the East of England live in households where there is at least one adult in work.

Today, the End Child Poverty Coalition launches its annual local child poverty statistics for the UK. Overall figures of child poverty rates AHC in the East of England is 24%, which equates to 300,000 children throughout our region!

CWRC aims to highlight women’s poverty to help tackle this crisis…

With more children experiencing poverty than ever in working households, tackling women’s poverty is critical to the success of strategies aimed at eradicating child poverty, and vice versa. In 2020/21 some 65% of children going through poverty lived with at least one adult with a job. That figure is now 71%. With 3.7 million people earning less than the real living wage. New analysis carried out by the Centre for Research in Social Policy for the End Child Poverty Coalition reveals that lone parents in work especially are struggling, with more than a quarter, 26%, of all children going through poverty being raised by an adult in full-time employment.

**The female face of poverty**

Research from the Women’s Budget Group shows that women’s poverty cannot be divorced from child poverty. Women are at greater risk of poverty than men and are more likely to face recurrent and longer spells in poverty. Women also act as the ‘shock absorbers’ of poverty within their families, feeling the effects more keenly as they try to shield their children from its worst effects. Therefore, this is a gender issue - source: <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/wbg-women-and-childrens-poverty-march-2005.pdf>.

Stef Martinsen-Barker, Chief Executive Officer of Cambridge Women’s Resources Centre, echoes these findings and the impact seen in the East of England: *“Child poverty impacts harshly on a huge population across East Anglia, with families unable to provide the basic needs and requirements to support healthy lives and wellbeing for their children. While the Government turns a blind eye with continued sanctions to families of more than two children, charities are left to absorb the statutory responsibilities of the state.*

*“With increasing numbers in need of food bank and community fridges, just to feed families, alongside debt advice, hygiene bank, data bank and individual grants – the choice between fuel or food is a daily burden parents face and with the increase in cost of living on food, fuel, transport to get to work and school creating barriers to families stepping out of poverty.*

*“Poverty provides a platform for county lines, exploitation and modern slavery, let’s work to ensure this is never the better option or solution. To date the UK Government has not heeded warnings from economists, charities and other community-based organisations to address the harsh reality devastating the lives of our future generation.*

*“We urge the Government to address the sanctions set out in universal credit barriers, seek to address poverty within all strategies and endeavour to fund those absorbing the fallout from poor policy making decisions and low-quality commissioning. Employers to offer a real living wage, reduce the number of staff zero-hour contracts and seek to look at how best to support staff impacted by poverty or debt. We also call for the abolishment of the two-child limit and benefit cap – protecting children should be paramount.”*

**Demographic factors and statistics**

While there is wide regional variation across local authorities and the highest rates of child poverty are Luton at 39.1%, Peterborough at 35%, and Norwich at 34.2%, urban areas with high housing costs are obviously a contributor of this variation, with rates of poverty significantly higher than the national average in more rural LAs, such as Fenland at 30.4%.

* 68.6% of children in BHC (before housing costs) poverty in the East of England live in households where there is at least one adult in work.
* 41% of children in lone parent families in the East of England are in poverty AHC, this is compared to 24% overall. The vast majority of lone parent households are headed by women, around 90%. (source: [Gingerbread](https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Single-Parents-in-2023-Single-Parents-Day-report.pdf)) – so this is a gendered issue.
* The AHC poverty rate for children in the East of England who are disabled is 25.1%, compared to 23.6% of children who are not disabled.
* In the East of England, the estimated child poverty rate AHC for children from ethnic minority groups is 37%, compared to 21% for children of white ethnicity.

Joseph Howes, Chair of the End Child Poverty Coalition, said:*“The pandemic and cost of living crisis have meant more and more children are having to go without food and a warm home.*

*“There is one policy change that we know would make a direct and immediate difference, and that is to scrap the two-child limit for those claiming Universal Credit. The policy is unfair in the indiscriminate impact it has on children, and there is no evidence it has achieved its aims. Abolishing the two-child limit would immediately lift 250,000 children out of poverty, and the government could make this change now.*

*“We were encouraged to hear in January that the Labour Party is reviewing the policy, yet they must commit to scrapping it altogether ahead of the next election if they are to successfully deliver on their commitment to lead an assault on child poverty”.*

The new research confirms that the cost-of-living crisis has driven up the number of children experiencing poverty to 4.2 million last year (29% of all dependent children aged 0-19), with an increasing number living in working households. Some 71% of them live in households where at least one adult works, according to a new analysis of child poverty figures adjusted for housing costs released today.

The End Child Poverty Coalition is calling for two-child limit for those claiming Universal Credit to be scrapped, as evidence shows children with two or more siblings are more likely to be going through poverty. The year 2020/21 saw a £20 uplift in the weekly payment of Universal Credit, which helped ensure the first-time levels dropped by more than 1% in a decade. Its removal has seen the number climb back from 27% of all children to 29% - just behind the high registered in 2019. An estimated 58% of families affected by the ‘two-child limit’ policy are already in work.

The analysis of official statistics, carried out by Loughborough University for the End Child Poverty Coalition, also shows how children in larger families are significantly more likely to be experiencing poverty, and households where one or more members are disabled are more likely to experience poverty throughout the UK. There is also a clear correlation between children in receipt of disability living allowance and the rate of child poverty at a local level. The total number of children experiencing poverty in 2021/2022, 4.2 million, is an increase on the 3.6 million recorded the previous year.

**What is the End Child Poverty Coalition?**

The End Child Poverty Coalition is made up of organisations including child welfare groups, social justice groups, faith groups, trade unions and others. Together with a group of Youth Ambassadors, members campaign for a UK free of child poverty. Cambridge Women’s Resources Centre is the 100th organisation to join the coalition, Stef Martinsen-Barker said: *“We are proud to be a part of this association in order to help drive directives that can move the harsh reality faced by families fighting to escape poverty and negate the impact on future generations.”* Further information on the Coalition can be found [here](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/yljl9ie7e6hnq3x/AAAL1KZKpzNahRhIWLnX2RJQa?dl=0&preview=End+Child+Poverty+Policy+Positions+Designed.pdf).

Interviews with Joseph Howes, Chair of the End Child Poverty Coalition and Stef Martinsen-Barker, CEO of Cambridge Women’s Resources Centre, are available. Images can be accessed [here](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GZECuwl1NVrqgvfV4jHELt2jT0WZ9UUp) (please credit Save the Children). Local authority and constituency data available at the end of this release.

**Notes to editors:**

* The full report ‘Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2021/22’ as well as tables with Constituency and Local Authority data and further information about the coalitions’ key positions are available [here](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GZECuwl1NVrqgvfV4jHELt2jT0WZ9UUp).
* The statistics on local child poverty rates after housing costs presented in today’s report are calibrated to the Department for Work and Pensions’ (DWP) Households Below Average Income (HBAI) dataset for FYE 2021 and FYE 2022. The DWP’s data has undergone extensive quality assurance prior to publication but, due to sampling issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic, users are encouraged to exercise caution when interpreting this data. We further recommend that users of these Local Child Poverty Statistics focus on longer-term trends to understand how poverty has changed in an area rather than year-on-year changes which are prone to fluctuations.
* More information about the DWP’s Households Below Average Income dataset is available [here.](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2022)

**About Cambridge Women’s Resources Centre**

* CWRC offers emotional and practical support to empower women with workshops, training and information, helping strengthen their families and the Cambridgeshire communities they live in.
* Dedicated to providing resources, opportunities and space for women to gain control of their lives for a better future, our centres in Peterborough and Cambridge offer a safe, trauma-informed environment for all who walk through our doors.
* As an established and constantly evolving community, CWRC offers services for many day-to-day challenges, including information on debt and finance, guidance on career development, and support on family and parenting issues.
* CWRC also hosts a number of fun events and informal networking groups, encouraging a sense of friendship and companionship.
* CWRC has a duty of care for all women, children, young people and vulnerable adults using our services. Visit: [www.cwrc.org.uk](http://www.cwrc.org.uk)

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