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New analysis finds 51,000 more North East children pulled into poverty since 2015

The findings of new research published today have been described as ‘simply unacceptable’ and ‘shameful’ by regional campaigners, after it was revealed that around 51,000 more children have been pulled into poverty across the North East since 2014/15 – a number so large it would come close to filling St James’ Park.

The analysis, carried out by Loughborough University for the End Child Poverty coalition, estimates that almost 190,000 – or 35% – of babies, children and young people across the region were living below the poverty line in 2021/22, after housing costs were taken into account. Up from 26% in 2014/15, this remains the steepest rise of anywhere in the country over that period.

Across the UK, 4.2million children were living below the poverty line in 2021/22. This is 29% of all children across the country – the same rate nationally as in 2014/15.

And today’s report finds that – of the twenty Parliamentary seats across the whole of the UK that have seen the biggest increases in child poverty since 2014/15 (the first year for which this local level child poverty data is available) – six are in the North East.

These include: Middlesbrough (a 16.7 percentage point increase since 2014/15 – the second highest in the country), Gateshead (12.4ppt), Redcar (12.2ppt), Sedgefield (12.2ppt), Darlington (11.4ppt), and Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland (11.3ppt).

21 out of the North East’s 29 Westminster constituencies have more than one in three children living below the poverty line – with the very highest rates being in Middlesbrough (48.7%), Newcastle Central (43.0%), South Shields (39.7%), Gateshead (38.9%) and Redcar (38.4%).

The research published today also provides important new insights into the families and children who are in poverty, or have a higher risk of being in poverty, across the country. Key findings for the North East include:

- **Almost 7 in 10 (67%) of children living in poverty in the region are from working households.**
- **46% – almost half – of all children living in lone parent families in the North East are in poverty.**
- **37.4% of children with a disability in the region are living below the poverty line – and children with a disability make up 5.7% of all children living in poverty in the North East, the second highest rate in the UK (behind Northern Ireland at 6.1%).**

- Whilst Census 2021 data indicates the North East remains the least ethnically diverse part of England, **almost two thirds (64%) of children from Black or minoritised ethnic communities in the region are estimated to be in poverty – the highest rate of anywhere in the UK for children in this group.**

Importantly, the report highlights that the figures published today are for the year ending March 2022, and therefore do not cover the period during which the cost of living crisis and soaring inflation for household essentials really took hold.

However, this period did include a six-month extension to the £20 per week increase to Universal Credit (UC) introduced by the Government in response to the pandemic. This uplift, amounting to just over £1,000 additional income per year for households in receipt of UC, was removed in October 2021. It is thought this measure is likely to have pushed down poverty rates for families during this period.

Four End Child Poverty coalition members based in the North East have responded to today's findings.

Chair of the North East Child Poverty Commission, Anna Turley, said:

'It's simply unacceptable that tens of thousands more children have been pulled into poverty across our region since 2015 – and these new figures don't even account for the hardship being felt today by growing numbers of North East families as a result of the cost of living crisis, which is hitting those already on low incomes the very hardest.

'The findings of this report are all the more shocking, because we know that poverty is not an unsolvable problem – including for children here in the North East, which should be the best place to grow up and raise a family.

'In what remains one of the wealthiest countries in the world, it is absolutely within our gift to fix this and doing so should be the aim of any Government. But this has to start with political determination, a joined-up plan which recognises the scale of the challenge we face, and the right long-term investment in children and families.'

Leigh Elliott, who is Chief Executive of the charity Children North East, added:

'Every child in every part of the North East deserves to have the best possible start in life, but this research confirms just how many more young lives across our region have been held back by poverty – and all the barriers it can bring – over much of the last decade.

'We know from our work with children and families in schools and communities across the North East how tough life has been for many years. But those longer-term challenges are now being exacerbated by the soaring cost of household essentials – which means even more young people unable to participate fully in school, enjoy the experiences that should be part of every childhood and fulfil their potential.

'This is shameful when we have the resources and ability as a country to put this right.'

Manager of Thrive Teesside, Tracey Herrington, said:

'As this report shows, cost of living challenges are nothing new for the communities we work alongside at Thrive Teesside. The current crisis is just making lives even harder – and behind every one of the statistics in this report is a child whose family has seen the gap between what they have and what they need to get by grow even bigger, and whose opportunities have been restricted as a result. This includes the increasing number of North East families who are in work, but are simply unable to provide the basics for their children.

'We need commitment and action at all levels of government to tackle this issue with the urgency and ambition it requires – but this must be done in partnership with people with direct experience of poverty, to better understand the challenges families face and to work together to design potential solutions.'

Emilie de Bruijn is the co-founder and Chair of Hartlepool Baby Bank. She explained:

'Like so many small charities supporting local families, we know that poverty isn't going anywhere right now in the North East. There's been absolutely no let-up in the growth in demand we've seen since we first opened in 2019, and we're just about hanging on in terms of what we can manage.'

'Because poverty is exhausting – not just for the families and children directly affected, but for all the community organisations working day in and day out to help parents and carers just to keep their heads above water.'

'It cannot be right that so many families across our region are now turning to charities like ours to support them with the absolute basics, whether that's a packet of baby wipes, soap or nappies. This just isn't sustainable, and the Government must take action to rapidly reduce the number of children living in serious hardship across the North East.'

ENDS

For further information, please contact Amanda Bailey (North East Child Poverty Commission) via amanda.bailey@ncl.ac.uk

NOTES

- The [End Child Poverty](#) Coalition is made up of 101 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. The [North East Child Poverty Commission](#), [Children North East](#), [Thrive Teesside](#) and [Hartlepool Baby Bank](#) are all members of the Coalition.
- The full report '**Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2021/22**', as well as tables with constituency and local authority level data will all be available on the End Child Poverty website from 5th June 2023: <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](#) dataset, 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. After housing costs child poverty figures are important because they show the disposable income available to a household once any rent, water rates, mortgage interest payments, buildings insurance payments, ground rent and service charges are paid. This enables a more accurate comparison of what households across the UK have available to spend on food, utilities, clothing and leisure than looking at income alone, given the disparity in housing costs in different parts of the UK.
- 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.