



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**NEW FIGURES show one in three children are living in poverty in south-west hotspots**

**Interviews available with Imran Hussain, director of policy and campaigns at Action for Children.**

**Somerset in-vision case study available. Please contact: Huw Beale, senior media officer - 07718 114 038 /** **huw.beale@actionforchildren.org.uk**

* More than a quarter (27 per cent) of children in the South West of England are living in poverty.
* The highest levels are in Bristol where a third (33 per cent) of children are living in poverty, followed by Torridge (32 per cent) and Cornwall (31 per cent).
* Most children living in poverty in the South West (75 per cent) are in families where at least one adult is in work.
* Child poverty in the South West has increased by 1.4 percentage points since 2014/15.

New analysis of government data, carried out by Loughborough University for the End Child Poverty Coalition, shows the poverty hotspots across the South West, with a third of children living in poverty in Bristol, Torridge and Cornwall.

An end to the additional support made available during the pandemic has driven up the number of children experiencing poverty in the South West to 300,000 last year (27 per cent of all dependent children aged 0-19).

A rising number of children in poverty live in working families. The new figures released today estimate that some 75 per cent of children living in poverty in the South West live in households where at least one adult works.

The data further suggests that in every region of the UK, children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are more at risk of being in poverty. In the South West, 48 percent of children from minority ethnic groups are estimated to be in poverty, compared to 25 percent of white children.

The analysis also shows how children in larger families are significantly more likely to be experiencing poverty.

The End Child Poverty Coalition, which Action for Children belongs to, is calling for an end to the two-child limit for those claiming Universal Credit. The research shows scrapping the measure would immediately lift 250,000 children out of poverty¹.

**CASE STUDY: Lone parent, Ana, 37, from Somerset,** works part-time as a support worker for people with learning disabilities and mental health issues.

She claimed Universal Credit for the first time during her maternity leave in March 2021. She previously worked full-time and had never been out of work or claimed benefits before.

**She said:** 'I worked right up until my daughter was born in January 2021. As her dad and I had split up, my maternity pay was not enough for us to survive on, so I applied for Universal Credit as a top-up.

‘I have always worked and never needed to use the system before, so it was a shock to find out how little I was expected to live on, even with child benefit.

‘I am back at work part time now, but it is still a struggle. I have cut down on absolutely everything, and it’s still not enough.

‘I would happily work more hours - but the childcare costs are so high, and I don’t have anyone else who can look after my daughter.

‘Not being able to afford normal things when you work shows the system isn’t good enough.

‘The stress and humiliation of not being able to afford essentials is the worst part for me.’

**Imran Hussain, director of policy and campaigns at Action for Children, said:**

‘The pandemic and cost-of-living crisis have meant more and more children are having to go without basics like food and clothing. It’s particularly worrying to see that 75 percent of children in poverty in the South West live in a home where at least one adult is working.

‘There is one policy change we know would make a direct and immediate difference, and that is to scrap the two-child limit for those claiming Universal Credit.

‘Children in families with two or more children already face high poverty risks, so to block access to benefits that provide a lifeline to meeting their basic needs cannot be justified. It’s wrong and will damage childhoods and life chances.

‘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 table below shows the 10 local authorities in the South West with the highest levels of child poverty, and how it has changed over time, adjusted for housing costs:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Local Authority**  | **Percentage of children in poverty 2014/15** | **Percentage of children in poverty in 2021/22** | **Percentage point change over time 2015-2022** |
| Bristol, City of  | 30.1% | 33.3% | +3.2% |
| Torridge  | 29.8% | 32.4% | +2.5% |
| Cornwall  | 29.1% | 31.4% | +2.3% |
| Gloucester | 27.4% | 31% | +3.6% |
| Plymouth  | 29.1% | 31% | +1.9% |
| Torbay | 28.8% | 30.9% | +2.2% |
| North Devon  | 28.4% | 30.2% | +1.9% |
| Sedgemoor | 27.4% | 28.7% | +1.3% |
| Forest of Dean  | 26.7% | 28.3% | +1.5% |
| South Somerset  | 25.1% | 27% | +2.0% |

The table below shows the 10 local authorities in the South West with the lowest levels of child poverty, and how it has changed over time, adjusted for housing costs:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Local Authority**  | **Percentage of children in poverty 2014/15** | **Percentage of children in poverty in 2021/22** | **Percentage point change over time 2015-2022** |
| Cotswold | 20.6% | 18.6% | -2.0% |
| Bath and North East Somerset | 21.4% | 19% | -2.4% |
| South Gloucestershire | 21.6% | 20.8% | -0.8% |
| Wiltshire | 21.2% | 20.9% | -0.3% |
| Tewkesbury | 22.1% | 22% | -0.1% |
| North Somerset | 22.6% | 22.3% | -0.3% |
| Stroud | 22.5% | 22.7% | +0.1% |
| South Hams | 26.0% | 23.9% | -2.1% |
| Cheltenham | 23.8% | 24.3% | +0.4% |
| East Devon | 25.2% | 24.7% | -0.6% |

**ENDS**

Notes to editors:

¹ [CPAG\_Budget\_Submission\_March\_2023.pdf](https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/policypost/CPAG_Budget_Submission_March_2023.pdf)

* 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 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. 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).
* The statistics on local child poverty rates have been calculated after housing costs, and 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).

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**About Action for Children**
Action for Children protects and supports vulnerable children and young people by providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives. With 447 services across the UK, in schools and online, in 2021/22 we helped 671,275 children, young people and families. [actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/)