

Eight Tests for the Child Poverty Strategy



As organisations who care passionately about ending child poverty, we welcome the government's commitment to an ambitious Child Poverty Strategy due to be published in Spring 2025. Set out below are the key areas against which we will test the Strategy when it is published. Our tests are deliberately ambitious and represent the shared view of 120 members of the End Child Poverty Coalition.

We have developed these tests based on our collective insights from the children and families we work with every day who are living in poverty – not only into the heart-breaking impacts of poverty on children, but the change that is needed to effectively lift families out of poverty. We have also drawn on many conversations with frontline professionals exhausted and frustrated at having to manage the symptoms of poverty, without the levers to address the root issue.

Lifting children out of poverty is the key that can unlock many of the Government's wider goals, including its mission to break down barriers to opportunity and ambition for the healthiest generation of children ever. But the overriding test for the strategy must be the number of children it lifts out of poverty and whether it truly puts us on a path to eradicate child poverty for good.

The strategy must call out child poverty for what it is – an unacceptable blight on our society and a violation of children's rights. The strategy must put in place legally binding, independently evaluated, targets that build clear milestones to ultimately eradicate child poverty in 20 years. The specific measures in the strategy must collectively form a credible plan to halving child poverty over the next 10 years. Children's rights (as set out in the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)) must be central to the final strategy and cemented into all associated policy developments.

2. The views of babies, children, young people and their families must be central to both development and implementation.

Children and families with lived experience of poverty must inform every stage of the strategy development, implementation and evaluation. This must include specific measures to engage seldom-heard groups and those more likely to experience poverty (see next test). The strategy must set out how children and families' views have been reflected in the final output and how they will be involved in implementation and evaluation.

The strategy must take an equalities approach, recognising that existing structural inequalities for marginalised groups means certain children are more likely to live in poverty. Targeted action must be taken to combat child poverty for certain groups most at risk, including disabled children, children from minoritised ethnic backgrounds, children in single parent families and larger families, and refugee and migrant children. The strategy must take an intersectional perspective, acknowledging the clear link between child poverty and women's poverty and the evidence that children are more likely to experience poverty if they experience systemic inequalities such as racism.

1. We must end child poverty.

3. The strategy must include specific support for children most likely to experience poverty.



4. Leadership and accountability from the top that drives a truly cross-government approach.

To drive forward the scale of change needed to eradicate child poverty, it is essential that the Prime Minister and Chancellor must demonstrate strong support and ensure buy-in and ownership from the entire Cabinet, communicating their commitment publicly and regularly throughout the life of the strategy. This must include connecting the child poverty strategy as a key foundation for wider ambitions including the Opportunity Mission, raising school attendance, the Employment Rights Bill, the national housing strategy and wider social security reform. An independent scrutiny body must be established to monitor progress on the actions of the strategy and report to Parliament on overall progress in reducing child poverty.

The strategy must be able to operate both regionally and locally as well as across the four nations to ensure specific local needs can be met. This means genuine consultation about the design of the strategy and working with them to deliver it across local and regional structures, as well as in the devolved nations. Delivery must also work in conjunction with, and be informed by, any existing child poverty strategies in the devolved nations.



5. The strategy must work with all levels of government across the four UK nations.



6. Social security reform must be the bedrock of the strategy.

Investing in social security is essential if we are to meaningfully reduce child poverty and protect children's rights. The government must shift from viewing social security as a sign of failure towards viewing it as an essential investment in children and families. This means abolishing the two-child limit and benefit cap as a downpayment on longer term investment in social security to ensure that children do not grow up in poverty. This should include scrapping the "no recourse to public funds" rule that prevents many families who need it most from receiving support. Part of this effort must include further efforts to ensure that raising children does not lead to problem debt and to simplify the social security system so that it empowers families to access the support they need rather than penalise them.

Where parents are able to work, they need the right support to find good quality jobs, acknowledging the specific barriers women face in entering the labour market. Support into employment must take into account the local context, for example the local labour market and childcare availability. The strategy must outline a new system of employment support which includes a non-punitive, evidence-based approach to conditionality. The evidence is clear that the current system is not effective at achieving good employment outcomes, and instead needlessly takes money out of the pockets of low-income families, causing enormous, unnecessary harm.



7. Families should be supported into work where appropriate.



8. High quality public services must play their full part in combatting poverty.

The strategy must acknowledge that properly resourced, high quality public services are the foundation without which many families will not be able to escape poverty. This includes childcare, education, social housing, transport, employment support, health and care services including mental health, family help services, and advice and legal services. The strategy must therefore set out how the government will resource and reform public services to address child poverty. In particular there must be a strong financial settlement for local authorities that allows them to prioritise the right help for families. This should be enhanced by training for professionals in poverty-aware practice that promotes a non-stigmatising approach to supporting families living in poverty.

The End Child Poverty Coalition is made up of over 120 organisations including child welfare groups, social justice groups, faith groups, trade unions and others. Together with a group of Youth Ambassadors we all believe that no child growing up in the UK should live in poverty. Together we ask that this and future governments commit to end child poverty.

This work was developed by the members of the End Child Poverty Coalition, with input from Youth Ambassadors and other expert organisations.