

ENDING CHILD POVERTY – WHY AND HOW

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Poverty and Social Justice in a post COVID world



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<https://cpag.org.uk/news/ending-child-poverty-why-and-how>

WHY?

1. Because there are so many children in poverty
2. Because poverty diminishes and blights childhood
3. Because poverty has long-term effects as children grow up
4. Because child poverty is a disgrace in a rich society
5. Because we can do it!

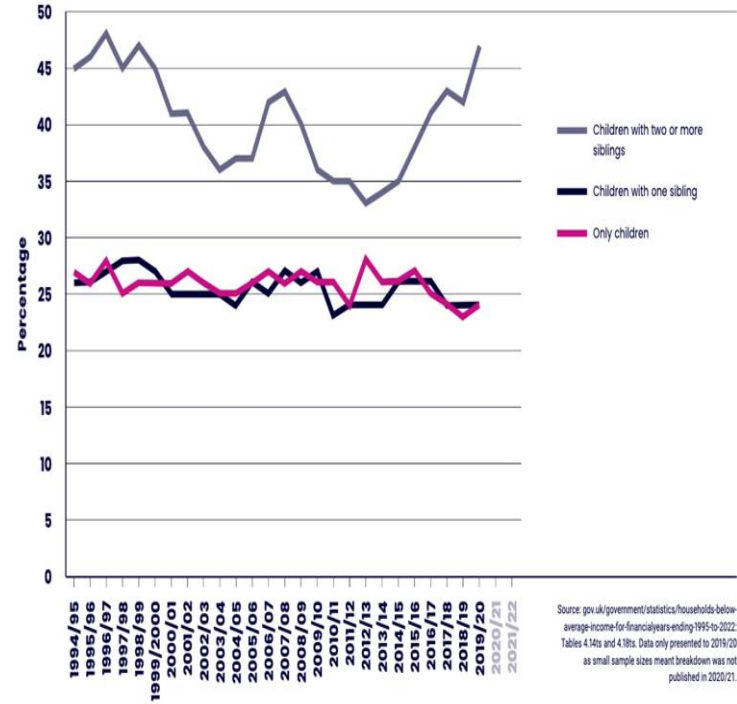
1. Too many children in poverty

- Poverty – below 60% median household income, after housing costs
- Rose from 3.6m in 2010/11 to **4.3m children in 2022/23** - 30%
- Briefly fell by 400k due to £20 payment, rose against once abolished
- Experienced disproportionately by young children, children in BME families, in larger families, in lone-parent families and in families where someone has a disability
- Families with no earners at high risk but poverty increasingly found in families with paid work: 7 in 10 poor children live with at least one working parent
- Deep poverty getting worse - 2.9m children in deep poverty (below 50% median AHC) 600k more than in 2010/11

Figure 1: Relative child poverty: Children (%) in households below 60% contemporary median income (equivalised)



Figure 4: Child poverty by number of siblings over time: children living in households below 60% median equivalised income AHC



2. Poverty diminishes childhood

- Children living in poor and cold housing, lacking basic amenities
- More than 1 in 5 – 900k children- in food insecure households
- Children arriving at school hungry & therefore unable to concentrate
- They return to cold homes
- Children missing out on everyday experiences that make up childhood, like school trips, sports, arts, hobbies, holidays, presents
- Restrictions on friendship and feeling of not fitting in
- Worries and anxieties

3. Longer-term effects

- For some childhood poverty casts a long shadow
- Health - childhood and into adulthood
- Education outcomes – with impact on later job opportunities & earnings
- Wellbeing and mental health

4. Child poverty is a disgrace

Recent years policy has **increased** child poverty

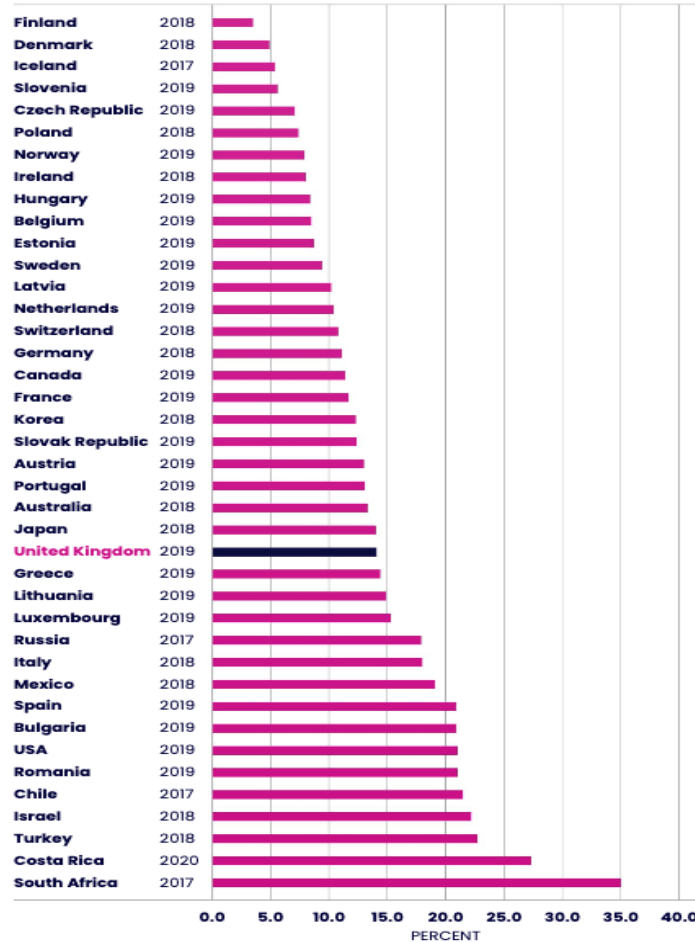
- Currently spending around £42bn a year less on social security than in 2010
- Children left out of packages to support cost of living – eg, £20 payment and energy lump sums – ignored family size
- And child benefit has lost 20% of its value since 2010
- This April, benefits will have risen by inflation in only 5 out of the last 14 years
- In 2022/23 Trussell Trust gave out almost 3m food parcels, including 1m for children

At a high cost to society

- In 2008, cost of child poverty (services & lost revenue) estimated at £25 billion per year
- In 2023, risen to over £39 billion a year, due to both higher prices and higher rates of child poverty

The UK falls into the bottom third of European rankings, with a poverty rate more than double that of Denmark and Finland

Figure 5: Child poverty rates in the OECD: children 0–17 (%) in households with equivalent income less than 50% median



5. We can do it!

- The last child poverty strategy was successful –
 - 1m fewer children in poverty
 - Largest reductions in child poverty in OECD mid-1990s to 2008
- Child wellbeing improved on 36 out of 48 indicators 1997 to 2010
- Deprivation levels fell as did debt & money worries
- Extra money led to increased spending on fruit and vegetables, children's clothes and books – spending on alcohol and cigarettes fell
- Can also learn from other countries

HOW?

1. **Abolish** policies that are increasing child poverty
2. **Expand** measures to prevent or reduce child poverty
3. **Imagine** a society with no child poverty and build support to achieve that

Just some examples here, from top of a much longer list!

ABOLISH & EXPAND

1. Abolish 2-child limit
2. Abolish the benefit cap
3. Increase Child Benefit and make it universal again
4. Extend Free School Meals to all children on Universal Credit (and then all children)
5. Uprate working age and children's benefits annually

Measures 1-4 would mean 1 million fewer children in poverty, reduce the depth of poverty for millions more, & increase the economic security of all families, at a cost of around £20 billion per year.

IMAGINE - no child poverty

- **Comprehensive child poverty strategy for the UK**
 - Strengthened social security
 - Decent work, pay and progression
 - Universal childcare
 - Inclusive education
 - Secure homes
 - Inclusive high quality universal services
- Clear leadership from No. 10
- Stretching targets and indicators
- Build cross-party support - needs buy-in from everyone
- Engage with children, young people, parents