UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights

C/O Patricia Varela
Human Rights Officer
Sustainable Human Development Section
Special Procedures Branch
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Tuesday, 28 August 2018

To whom it may concern,

Please find following two research studies undertaken by The Childhood Trust, a charity focused on alleviating the impact of child poverty in London. These data are gathered from a network of grass roots projects operating all over London and working with marginalised and often vulnerable children and young people, all deeply affected by poverty. We are submitting these for full public dissemination including uploading to your website.

We don't have a policy team, or staff who can respond in full to your questions. We are a small charity with only two staff that creates a big impact with our work. I hope that the following report and survey will provide a valuable and unique insight into the experiences of children and their families struggling to survive in one of the world's wealthiest cities.

Best regards,

Laurence Guinness
Chief Executive


The
ChildhoodTrust
Alleviating the impact of child poverty
The ChildhoodTrust
SUMMERGIVE
Helping vulnerable London children this summer
A SUMMER HOLIDAY FROM HELL
Experiences of children living in poverty in London.
Registered number 07746081
Charity Number 1154032

Introduction

There are approximately 700,000 children living in poverty in London (Trust for London, 2018) with the number of children living in working households that fall below the poverty line increasing by 70% over the last decade (Mayors Fund for London, 2017). Children and young people living in poverty in London are especially vulnerable during the summer holidays without the security of free school meals, and the loss of purposeful activities and structure provided by schools. For disadvantaged children this can directly lead to problems such as hunger, increased risk and exposure to abuse and/or violence as well as an increased propensity to participate in, or become victims of, anti-social activity.

The Summer Give is The Childhood Trust's fundraising campaign that utilises The Big Give's online match fundraising platform. The campaign focuses on alleviating the impact of child poverty in London during the summer holidays when children are particularly vulnerable. Last year our Summer Give campaign raised £778,000 for 36 charities that supported 7634 children and young people in London. The Summer Give 2018 will be The Childhood Trust's largest summer campaign to date, raising much needed funds to enable 62 charities to support approximately 15,000 disadvantaged children in every London borough.

To understand the extent of vulnerabilities and challenges that disadvantaged children face without the security and activities afforded by school, The Childhood Trust conducted a survey targeting children and young people supported by the charities participating in the Summer Give 2018. The survey aims to improve upon the 2017 pre-activity survey and provide a more detailed view of children's experiences during the long summer holidays.

The results are collected from 22 charities that plan on supporting 12,337 children and young people, ranging from 4-18 years old during the forthcoming summer holidays. The questions can be grouped into 3 main categories:

1. Issue of 'holiday hunger' amongst children and young people supported by the beneficiaries
2. Supervision of children and young people
3. Identification of the risks of violence and anti-social behaviour of children and young people supported by the charities.

This report aims to provide an overview of the results of The Summer Give 2018 Survey and link it to the results of the Summer Give 2017 survey. It also explores the broader context of adversities facing children and young people living in poverty in London during the summer holidays.

Summary of Results

66%

of children and young people would go hungry if a charity did not provide meals during the holidays

90%

of children and young people will not go on holiday (i.e. will not experience a period away from home) during the summer holidays

50%

of children under the age of 11 are left without adult supervision during the summer holidays

65%

of children and young people are frightened of being attacked and/or exploited by gangs during the summer holidays

54%

of children and young people have witnessed violence during the holidays

73%

of beneficiaries responded that there is a high threat of violence to children and young people during the summer holidays (compared to term time)

50%

of beneficiaries reported that there is a high threat of sexual exploitation of children and young people during the summer holidays (compared to term time)

48%

Children / young people have witnessed drug taking during the holidays

45%

of beneficiaries responded that the youth violence in communities they serve is out of control (41% described it as "significant")

Data collected from 22 charities providing support for 12,337 children and young people, ranging from 4-18 years old during the forthcoming summer holidays

Analysis of Results
Issue of 'holiday hunger' experienced by children and young people supported by charities.

The London Food Poverty Profile report by Sustain (2015) revealed that approximately 1.5 million children in the UK qualify for free school meals, but since provisions are not available during the school holidays, there are 170 days of the year when children from impoverished families have little or no access to healthy food. The issue is especially pressing because for 1 in 10 children, school lunch is often their biggest meal of the day as reflected in a report by the Greater London Authority in 2013. Over half a million children in London are estimated to struggle for food during the holidays and this number is expected to increase as 700,000 young Londoners were living in poverty by the end of 2016 (Sustain, 2015).

> "I didn't have any breakfast 'cos there was nothing in the fridge. I don't eat breakfast much anyway. When we don't have any food for dinner my Dad will go out to borrow money from our neighbour. Sometime he doesn't come back and I have to go asleep"
>
> Girl, 11, (Interviewed at a Mayors Fund for London's Kitchen Social Hub)

This result is corroborated by our survey which informs that charities working with impoverished children in London communities expect that 66.13% of children and young people will go hungry if they did not provide meals during the holidays.

This is a stark increase from the 37% reflected in 2017's survey figures.

In addition, increased reliance on Food banks during the holidays leave children vulnerable to inconsistencies in supply. In 2017, Food banks across the UK came under pressure as children lost access to free meals during the holidays, on top of a 40% year-on-year increase in referrals (Bryan, 2017).

'Holiday hunger' has implications beyond physical malnourishment as teachers reflect that children who return to school malnourished after the holidays have fallen behind compared to their peers and many will never claw back this learning and health disadvantage to fulfil their full potential (Mayors Fund for London, 2016). This is illustrated by research that finds Primary school children from low socio-economic status show a significant learning loss across the summer months. Furthermore, when children return to school following the summer holiday it takes them approximately 3 ½ months for their spelling ability to catch up to the same level that they had achieved prior to the summer holiday. (Shinwell & Defeyter, 2017). Research by Hirsch (2007) reflects that poorer children are 9 months behind, leading to an education divide between poorer children and their peers. Naturally, families and communities are affected too, with some parents skipping meals to feed their children. As it is, an average of 21% of parents in London have, at some point, skipped meals so that their children could eat (GLA, 2013). The lack of school meals mean that families struggling to meet ends meet rely on unhealthy food options which are often cheaper. Health services report that the BMI of poor children increases dramatically in the school holidays as children engage in less activity and eat food that is low in nutrition (Mayors Fund for London, 2016).

> "These are my favourite biscuits. I've had them for six years, since 2012... No-one else likes them. I have 19 for lunch."
>
> Boy, 9 (Interviewed at a Mayors Fund for London's Kitchen Social Hub)

Many children depend on a charity to provide meals during the holidays – taken at a Mayors Fund for London, Kitchen Social Project, 2018

The APPG also revealed in 2017 included accounts of a group of children who had to drop out of a holiday football tournament in the latter stages of the competition because they had not eaten a meal in the days leading up to the event and their bodies simply gave up on them (Hughes, 2017).

As such, The Summer Give 2018 aims to provide vital funds for charities that provide nutritious meals for children, including The Mayors Fund For London's Kitchen Social programme that will be operating over 60 hubs throughout London this summer.

Supervision and safety of children and young people

> It's really helpful because I don't have to spend money. If you want to take them to activities in other places you need to pay like 2 pounds per child. So bringing them here I don't have to spend a penny, which is like, that's one of the things. If not, they'll just stay at home because I'll be thinking I don't have the money to take them anywhere.

Mother of 2 boys, interviewed at Mayor's Fund for London's Kitchen Social Hub

During the holidays, disadvantaged children from working families are often left without supervision for long periods of time throughout the day as parents can work multiple shifts to make ends meet. Research has shown that the number of children living in working households that fall below the poverty line has increased by 70% over the last decade (Mayors Fund for London, 2016).

Our charity partners reported that 49.95% of children under the age of 11 are left without adult supervision during the summer holidays, an increase from 44% in the previous year. Furthermore, 89.95% of children and young people will not experience a period away from home during the summer holidays, a slight increase from 87% in 2017. This results in multiple issues of safety and emotional well-being.

> "Last summer I spent all day indoors watching telly. My Mum was working, it was SO boring."

Girl, 9 (Interviewed at a Mayors Fund for London's Kitchen Social Hub)

The average cost of holiday childcare in London is £121.81 per a week, a price that is beyond reach for families surviving on minimum wages and or zero hours contracts (Family and Childcare Trust 2016). Without resources to pay for childcare arrangements, impoverished families face the agonising choice between not earning enough money to feed their family and leaving them alone at home (Jowit, 2016). Furthermore, when children are left home alone, the older children are left with the responsibility of looking after the youngest members of the family. This denies them a childhood enjoyed by their peers, including opportunities to participate in enriching activities during the holidays, forcing them to take on caring responsibilities well beyond their years.

Children and young people left unsupervised for long periods of time are at risk, unsafe, vulnerable to anti-social activity and feel frightened of attack and or abuse. Loneliness, boredom and fear are most common for those younger than 10 years of age and in the early teens, there is a greater susceptibility to peer pressures and thus, an increased likelihood of participating in anti-social activities, as will be elaborated in the section below (Rajalakshmi and Thanasekaran, 2015).

A holiday club funded by The Summer Give 2017 keeping children safe in Haringey.

Children of aged between 4 and 11 left alone at home for more than 3 hours a day reported higher levels of behavioural problems, higher rates of depression and lower levels of self-esteem as compared to their peers who had supervision (Rajalakshmi and Thanasekaran, 2015).

The Childhood Trust's Summer Give 2018 supports charities that meet the practical needs of children during the summer holidays, providing trusted adult supervision such as; youth workers, mentors, inspiring activities and an opportunity to make new friends in a safe environment.

Identification of the risk of violence and anti-social behaviour of children and young people supported by the beneficiaries

Summer holidays often means the lack of proper care and supervision for children and young people living in poverty, as mentioned in the section above. Without the safety, routine and productivity afforded by schools, children and young people are susceptible to violence and abuse as well as an increased tendency to participate in anti-social activities due to boredom and lack of fulfilment.

Our 2018 survey reports that 54.4% of children and young people have witnessed violence during the holidays. Without the safety and security afforded by schools, children and young people are more likely to witness or suffer abuse and violence during holidays.

This is supported by 72.73% of beneficiaries who responded that there is a high threat of violence to children and young people during the summer holidays as compared to term time. Furthermore, 50% of beneficiaries reported that there is a high threat of sexual exploitation of children and young people during the summer holidays as compared to term time. This is in stark contrast to 55% of respondents in the 2017 survey saying that children and young people are at a medium risk of violence and sexual exploitation during summer holidays as compared to term time.

Summer on the streets can be terrifying for children, nearly half of the children in our survey reported witnessing drug taking during the summer holidays

(image from Brixton drill music video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4R0FQGzo9ZM)

Data from the Havens project on rape and serious sexual assault of children indicates that those in the 30% most deprived communities were 7.5 times more likely to suffer abuse than those in the 30% least deprived communities (Mayor of London Office for Policing and Crime, 2017). Furthermore, an inquiry provided a conservative estimate of approximately 3,000 young people at risk of child sexual exploitation in London, with young people involved with gangs being most vulnerable (Mayor of London Office for Policing and Crime, 2017).

The 4Children charity found that 80% of the 16,000 youngsters surveyed said that they had nothing to do outside of school (BBC, 2007). This has resulted in 70% of young people becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and petty crime because they were bored (BBC, 2007). This is supported by our survey findings in which beneficiaries reflect that 65.04% of children and young people they support are frightened of being attacked and/or exploited by gangs during the summer holidays, an increase from 62% in the previous year.

Youth services in London have been cut by £145m since 2011 leaving disadvantaged children and young people facing a bleak outlook. Not having positive opportunities to participate in healthy activities during the holidays amongst children in deprived communities is contributing to an unprecedented rise in gang violence and knife crime. Faced with loneliness, insecurity and disconnection from their families, many find a sense of community with others in the same situation. This leaves children particularly vulnerable to gang exploitation and abuse. The rising incidence of youth violence underpins the fears and insecurities faced by young people as a dominant driver of knife crime, many of whom believe that they need to be prepared to defend themselves against knife carrying "opposition." (London Assembly, 2017).

There has been a worrying rise in offences carried out by under-10s. Statistics have shown that as of 2017, children under 10 years old were linked to more than 2,604 offences, a 38% increase from 1,891 in 2016 as gang leaders are recruiting children young enough to avoid prosecution to carry out the attacks (Edkins, 2018).

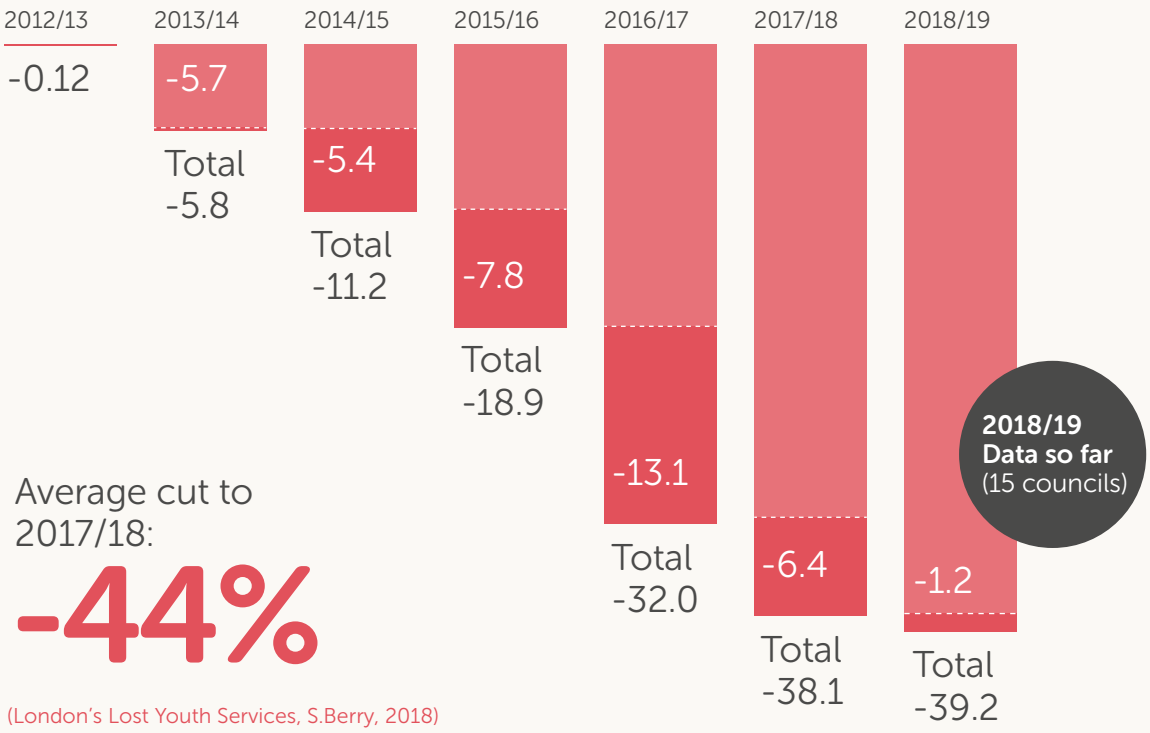
There has also been a sharp rise in the number of arrests of teenagers for drug dealing, with figures showing that between 2013 and 2017, the number of arrests of under 18s for possession with intent to supply rose by 28% (Marsh, 2018).

Figures show that children as young as 12 are being arrested for possession with intent to supply heroin and crack cocaine, prompting concerns that young people are being recruited by urban gangs and dealers who groom them and offer them money (Marsh, 2018).

It is important to support charities targeted at inspiring and providing for the emotional needs of children and young people. Charities that we support provide emotional support for children as well as the delivery of opportunities to try new experiences and develop new skills in a safe environment. Such activities often provide the only alternative to gang-related activity and anti-social behaviour. This is especially important amidst recent incidences of youth crime in London, with knife crime and gang violence on the rise.

Knives recovered by Metropolitan Police's Operation Sceptre prior to Summer Holidays 2017

London youth service budget cuts since 2011/12 (£m cut by 30 councils)



Average cut to 2017/18:

-44%

(London's Lost Youth Services, S.Berry, 2018)

Figures reflect that in 2015-16 there were 6,290 victims of serious youth violence, a 4% increase on the previous year and over a 20% increase on 2012-13 (London Assembly, 2017). The capital has recently witnessed the shootings of 2 children over the bank holiday and a few weeks ago, it was announced that for the first time, the murder rate in London was higher than that in New York (Mwale, 2018).

In London, the racialised nature of the problem is clear as young black boys are disproportionately affected by this violence (Mwale, 2018), thus pointing to the need to support community-based projects in an environment that reinforces a sense of identity and pride independent of gangs. Youth violence is also perpetuated by deep reductions in youth service budgets, particularly to programmes that divert inner-city youths away from gangs and knife crime (Topping, 2011). An inquiry into London's youth services found that 81 youth clubs and council youth projects have closed their doors since 2011 (BBC, 2018) with at least 800 full-time equivalent youth workers cut from council services since 2011. The year with the highest cuts was in 2016/17 when 433 posts were removed compared with 2015/16 by the 22 councils that provided data. (Berry 2018)

Conclusion

> We were playing basketball when they came in. There's no point running cos you gonna get beat worse. I got beat all over and my friend was kicked in the head. They were laughing. We know them from our block, if we didn't they'd have poked [stabbed] us. It happens all the time.

Boy, 10 interviewed at project in North Kensington

The results of our survey point to a childhood in crisis for those living in poverty. While their better off peers enjoy time off from school spending time on holidays with family, engaging in enriching activities, travel and play, children from disadvantaged families face hunger, violence, sexual abuse, and exploitation or worse by gangs or older children similarly disadvantaged. Such adversity undoes the valiant efforts of schools to break down the barriers of child poverty by setting children back educationally by up to a whole term. In the light of this fact alone, the cuts to youth services are a false economy and a tragedy for the life chances and well being of the capitals poorest children.

Children are facing a summer holiday from hell unless they can access free or very low cost local support and activities. That support is more than likely to come from the services of a charity rather than a Local Authority funded project. This year our Summer Give campaign will fund 62 charities to support the needs of over 15,000 London children this summer, helping to alleviate the impact of child poverty with a diverse range of activities including, camping, cooking, sports of all kinds, sailing, climbing, drama, circus skills, music, writing and just having fun.

It is our vision that no child should ever have to go hungry in London or be afraid of violence or abuse during the holidays. Every Local Authority should ensure that all children, regardless of family income have somewhere safe to play and enough nutritious food to eat. Without this investment we risk further widening the gap in children's life chances and in the long term, destabilising civil society in the capital.

> It was the first time we've ever been anywhere. Since Mum died my Dad hasn't had a job and we've never gone nowhere. I'll never forget camp, never. It was the best time of my life,

Girl, 11, supported by a project in North Kensington that took a group of 25 children camping for a week, including her two younger sisters.

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Designed by Little Yellow Duck on a pro bono basis

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theBigGive.org.uk Christmas CHALLENGE
Helping vulnerable London children in partnership with The Childhood Trust

The Childhood Trust Survey 2017

Expenditure on children's Christmas presents (estimated)

National average
£146

London children living in poverty
£19.55

Family pet
£22

Survey of 22 charities supporting 25,000 children in London

Reported reasons why disadvantaged children find Christmas difficult

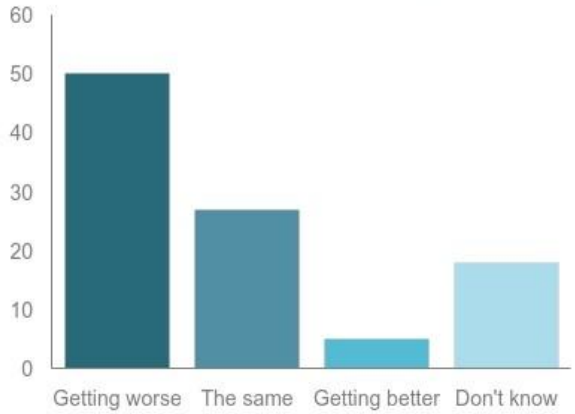
- 82% Poverty
- 50% Consistently not having enough to eat
- 40% Domestic violence/ troubled home life
- 60% Mental health of parents/ guardians
- 64% Feeling left out compared to other children
- 36% Feeling neglected while parent(s) at work
- 32% Being cold due to fuel poverty
- 32% Being homeless or in temporary accommodation

47% *do not* look forward to Christmas

"The presents we give them are the only ones they get."

22 charities report that

Christmas for children living in poverty is;



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The Childhood Trust
Alleviating the impact of child poverty

The Childhood Trust
London Child Poverty Report 2018

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Foreword

> ‘Poverty is not an accident... it can be removed by the actions of human beings’ **Nelson Mandela.**

This hard-hitting report makes for uncomfortable reading. London, is one of the richest cities in the world yet has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the UK. In 2018 the capital continues to experience a demonstrable increase in child poverty with 60% of children living in poverty from households with at least one working adult. The stark facts are laid out in this report.

The factors increasing vulnerability to child poverty are clear for all to read and understand; material deprivation, low earnings, worklessness, the benefits system, and changes in welfare policy, ethnicity, housing tenure and poor education opportunities. All of these factors are beyond the ability of children to change.

The daily impact of poverty upon children and into their future is huge as it affects physical and mental health, relationships, and self-esteem. Children in poverty are less likely to make and keep friendships, more likely to be bored, and commit crime, and violence. There is a long-term cost on the community.

The Childhood Trust’s London Child Poverty Report gives some excellent examples of organisations that, despite the financial challenge, work valiantly to alleviate childhood poverty in London. Furthermore, the report also sets out some recommendations by the authors that will contribute to the ongoing debate about how to reduce child poverty in London.

No child asks to be born into poverty, and no adult wants children to be living in poverty. It is therefore incumbent on us all to continue to work together to ensure poverty is alleviated effectively in London and that the inequalities impacting children are diminished as much as possible and with a greater sense of urgency than at present.

As a former inner-city London Head teacher and currently as an education consultant I continually see the damage that poverty inflicts on vulnerable children. I will never forget the child who sobbed because he did not want to go home. The family was struggling to manage, and it became clear that the only meal for him and his brothers was a school meal at lunchtime as there was no money for food, no cooker, no fridge and the children slept in sleeping bags on the floor.

The child said our Nurture Room was the only place he felt happy and safe. He worried about his Mum and brothers who were often hungry. He spent most weekends wrapped in a blanket, as the flat was cold and food was usually a just a bowl of cereal. Mum was too scared to let anyone know as she feared the children would be taken away from her.

I hope that by reading this report you may be sufficiently moved to consider how you can contribute best to the ongoing debate on the alleviation of child poverty in London.

Dame Sylvia Morris, DBE

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report was commissioned by The Childhood Trust and conducted by postgraduate students at the London School of Economics to help stimulate the conversation about child poverty in London and suggest some possible solutions. It is based primarily on previously published academic research and reports from campaigning organisations but also makes use of a small number of original case studies based on interviews with staff and clients of organisations working with children in deprived areas of London. It comes at an appropriate time – recently released household data figures show a rise in UK childhood poverty for the third year in a row with 30% of children now classed as poor.[1]

[1] https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/mar/16/child-poverty-in-uk-at-highest-level-since-2010-official-figures-show

Key Findings

- Whilst child poverty is most commonly defined using income-related measures such as Households Below Average Income (HBAI) it is also important to recognise its multi-dimensional nature and non-income related aspects.
- Alongside low income, housing tenure and being in receipt of benefits or from a particular minority ethnic group also increases vulnerability to experiencing childhood poverty.
- Experiencing poverty during childhood has repercussions for health – both mental and physical – and educational outcomes that can endure throughout the life-cycle.
- Those children experiencing poverty are also more likely to experience other types of poverty such as food poverty, with further implications for health and wellbeing.
- There is a geographical effect on educational disadvantage with low-income students from Inner-London performing worse than similarly disadvantaged students from elsewhere.
- The combined impact of high housing costs, the benefit cap, and the freezing of all cash benefits and child tax credits for four years is making it increasingly difficult for low-income families to find suitable accommodation in central London.
- The most recent research on childhood poverty emphasises its long-term impacts on the life chances of the individual and the importance of an integrated approach to tackling it with redistributive policies sitting alongside long-term and multi-level educational ones.
- In 2014/15 29% of the UK's children were living in poverty, a figure which has since risen to 30%. Children living in larger families were even more likely to be experiencing poverty with 34% of families with three or more children in poverty.
- London is the most unequal region of the UK and has the highest child poverty rate – 37% in 2013/14 – with almost half the children in Inner London brought up in poor households. Poverty rates within Inner London also vary significantly, from 49% in Tower Hamlets to 15% in Richmond.
- Over the past 20 years there has been a shift in the composition of child poverty with more children now living in poverty in households where at least one adult works than in households where no adult works.
- It is predicted that the implementation of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, which scraps the government requirement to reduce child poverty and limits and freezes a number of key benefits, will push greater numbers of children into poverty.
- An integrated approach, that simultaneously addresses the needs of children and their parents, ought to be adopted in order to effectively tackle childhood poverty.
- Policies that would help to reduce child poverty rates over the short and long term include: increasing the national minimum wage, providing genuinely affordable housing, abolishing unpaid internships, providing high-quality early-years education to children from disadvantaged backgrounds, introducing a childcare subsidy scheme and supporting more flexible working patterns.

Introduction: The Childhood Trust London's child poverty charity

The Childhood Trust is a grant making and fundraising charity founded in 2013 by the philanthropist and social entrepreneur Grant Gordon. Our mission is to alleviate the impact of child poverty in London.

We use our funds to generate and match other donations, primarily through our online fundraising campaigns and fundraising partnerships with philanthropists, companies and trusts and foundations.

In the last four years our campaigns have brought people together and inspired them to donate through matched giving to raise £8.5m for grassroots child poverty charities working throughout London.

> For every £1 we invest in our campaigns we generate on average over £4.60 for the charities we support. Leveraging our grants through matched giving means we can help over 4 times as many disadvantaged children.

We make grants to proven charities and projects that are working directly with disadvantaged children. Our work is themed across three areas;

- Meeting children's practical needs
- Supporting children's emotional needs
- Inspiring children with new experiences and opportunities

In addition to making grants we work closely with many of our charity partners to help them to build capacity, increase sustainability and to develop synergies between charities where additional services can be offered in partnership.

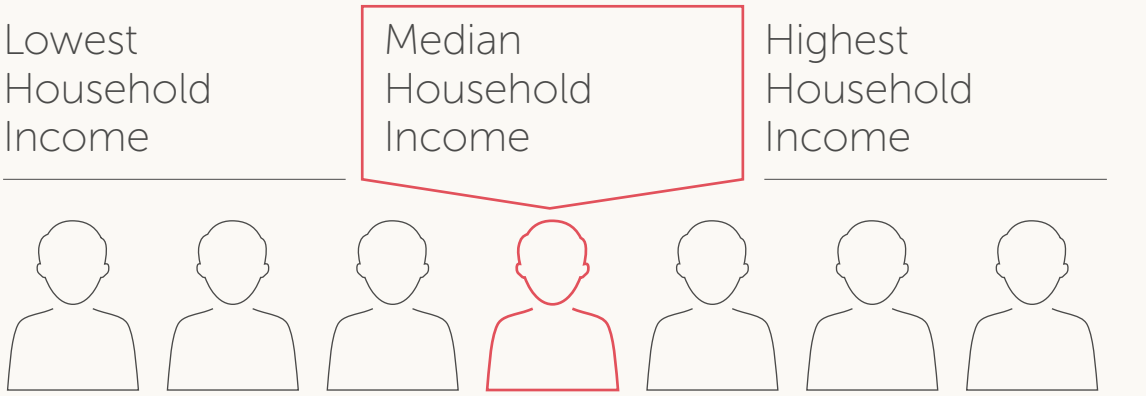
The support we provide transforms the lives of children living in poverty, promoting the development of strong foundations for learning, resilience and aspiration. The impact of our grants is externally monitored and to date we have helped 65,000 children through our partnerships with over 150 charities throughout London.

Definition, Analysis and Causes of Child Poverty

At its' simplest, child poverty is about a lack of income. Therefore, the official definition of child poverty in the UK refers to those children who live in Households Below Average Income (HBAI) 'whose equivalised net income for the relevant financial year is less than 60% of median equivalised net household income for that financial year'[2].

Figure 1: Graphic representation of the official poverty measure used in the UK
Source: DWP

The median household income is used to find the number of people in low-income households



Low Income Threshold = 60% of Median

Relative vs Absolute Low Income

Relative low income: Comparison to median of the current year.

Absolute low income: Comparison to median of the 2010/11 year which allows comparisons over time.

Threshold

A threshold for low income is used for comparing sections of the income distribution over time.

Why Not The Mean Average?

Mean: Sum of all incomes, divided by the number of people whose incomes were included.

The **median income** is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount.

In unequal distribution, the means is likely to be influenced by high values, so it does not reflect the experience of most individual. The median is not affected by a few very high values.

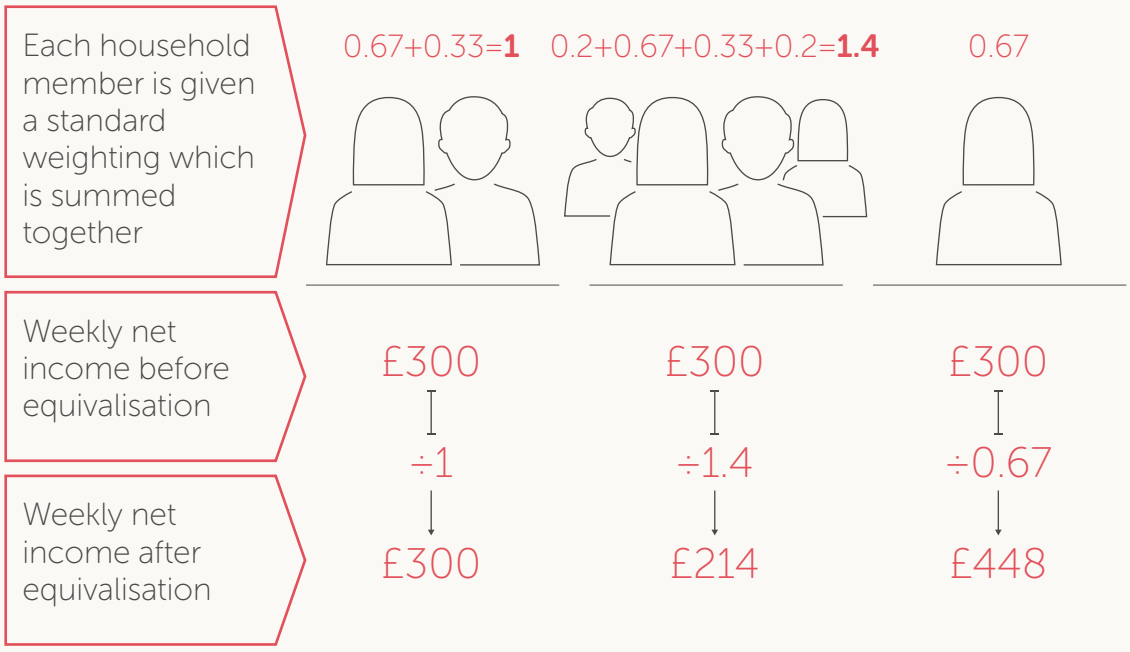
[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/599163/households-below-average-income-quality-metholodogy-2015-2016.pdf

Income is defined as 'total weekly household income from all sources after tax (including child income), national insurance and other deductions'[3]. An adjustment called 'equivalisation' is made to income to make it comparable across households of different size and composition.

Figure 2: Graphic Representation of the calculations of equivalisation
Source: DWP

Income data undergoes equivalisation

Equivalisation allows comparisons to be made of individuals of different ages from different sized households



A couple with no children is the reference point

Income has decreased as a couple with children need a higher income to enjoy the same living standard

Income has increased as a single person needs a lower income to enjoy the same living standard

	Score Value
First Adult	0.67
Other Adult	0.33
Children 14 yrs and over	0.33
Children under 14 yrs	0.2

[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/599163/households-below-average-income-quality-metholodogy-2015-2016.pdf

To put it simply, a couple with no children (the baseline) require more income than a single person with no children to achieve the same standard of living but not twice as much and a couple with two children need more income than a couple with no children but again, not twice as much. In the UK then, the poverty line for 2015/16 after housing costs was £144/week for a single adult, £193/week for a lone parent with one young child (under 14 years), £248/week for a couple with no children (baseline) and £401/week for a couple with two children (one under 14, one over)[4]. By this definition therefore, there were 3.9 million children living in poverty in the UK in 2015/16 after housing costs had been taken into account, equating to a rate of 29%[5].

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) also use two further child poverty measurements – Material Deprivation and Low Income and Material Deprivation and Severe Low Income. Children are deemed to be suffering from material deprivation and low income if they live in households which have a material deprivation score of 25 or more and a household income below 70% of contemporary median income. Children suffering from material deprivation and severe low income live in households which have a material deprivation score of 25 or more and a household income below 50% of the contemporary median.

Material Deprivation is assessed by looking at 21 statements and asking whether the family 'has this', 'would like to have it but can't afford it' or 'doesn't want or need it'. Twelve of the statements refer to the children of the household and include conditions such as 'celebrations on special occasions', 'eat fresh fruit/vegetables every day' and 'have a warm winter coat'. The rest refer to the adults of the household and include conditions such as 'money to decorate home', 'replace worn out furniture/electrical goods' and 'keep house warm'. Unsurprisingly, having a low-income is strongly correlated with people agreeing with the statement 'would like to have it but can't afford it'. For example, 65% of households in the bottom quintile (20th) of the income distribution in the UK state that they would like to go on a one-week family holiday away from home, not staying with relatives, but cannot afford to do so.

The Material Deprivation measures reflect the fact that poverty is not just experienced as low income but is multi-dimensional and inextricably linked to people's need to function and be recognised in the society within which they live. This conception of poverty as being socially relative was most famously expressed by sociologist Peter Townsend in 1979:

> 'Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and the amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average family that they are in effect excluded from the ordinary living patterns, customs, and activities'[6]

[4] Calculated using data from DWP (2017)

[5] DWP (2017)

[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Townsend_(sociologist) – cite_note-Townsend1979-3

The notion that lack of resources leads to exclusion from mainstream society has also led to the concept of poverty as social exclusion and thus operating on many dimensions, not all related to income.

Nonetheless in a market society such as the UK, it is impossible to completely separate poverty and material deprivation from income, something which is reflected in official documentation. For example, the most recent UK government strategy document, Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2017[7] places great emphasis on the links between child poverty and 'worklessness and low earnings (either not working enough hours or not being paid enough)'[8]. Yet, in 2017, even being in work is not a guarantee against poverty and much recent research[9] has shown a growth in the numbers of working families who are in poverty and a fall in poverty amongst those who are workless[10], suggesting therefore that one of the causes of modern child poverty is inadequately-waged and insecure employment[11].

There are other factors which also increase vulnerability to experiencing poverty in childhood:

Benefits

- The child poverty rate amongst children whose carers receive out-of-work means-tested benefits is currently 70%[12]. The current rate of out-of-work means-tested benefits therefore does not ensure that children living in such families are above the poverty line and additionally, the benefit cap and particularly the cash freeze on child tax credits is predicted to be the biggest driver of child poverty up to 2020[13]

Ethnicity

- Child poverty rates are much higher amongst ethnic minority families. For those from Pakistani or Bangladeshi and Black British, African or Caribbean families, the figures are 50% and 43% respectively. This may be reflective of the structural disadvantages faced by certain ethnic minority groups in the UK. In general, having foreign born parents increases the likelihood of experiencing child poverty by 45%.

Housing tenure

- Tenure is closely correlated with higher rates of child poverty. Children living in social rented housing experience a 50% rate of child poverty, whilst those in private-rented sector (PRS) experience a poverty rate of 46%. The increasing number of children living in the increasingly expensive PRS means that housing is becoming particularly important in determining the likelihood of a child experiencing poverty. Added to this, the precarious nature of tenancies in the PRS can be disruptive in other areas of a child's life such as schooling thus compounding the material effects of poverty (JRF, 2016).

Above all, it is important to remember that with child poverty we are talking about children living in households where the level of income is insufficient to adequately meet their needs. Since children are not wage earners and for the most part do not have access to their own resources, their wellbeing is inextricable from that of their carer. Materially poor carers mean materially poor children, even if that carer sacrifices some of their own wellbeing for that of the child. We should therefore always remain conscious that when we talk of 'child' poverty we are in fact predominantly talking about adult poverty and the impact that it has on children.

[7] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/324103/Child_poverty_strategy.pdf

[8] ibid

[9] https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/may/22/record-britons-in-work-poverty-families-study-private-rented-housing

[10] https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-2016

[11] http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/what-causes-poverty

[12] https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-2016

[13] http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/theresa-may-welfare-cuts-million-children-poverty-institute-fiscal-studies-uk-government-a7606236.html

Impact of child poverty
Overview

Child Poverty has significant consequences for the individual, family and wider society. The negative consequences of child poverty are experienced not only by the child but also by those around the child.

In terms of a broader social concern for child welfare, the early 1800s can be seen as a key turning point when interest in children's wellbeing began to develop[14]. At this stage however, such concerns were largely addressed by the informal sector through philanthropic and evangelical societies. Later in the 1900s, when the welfare state began to evolve, social policies were slowly introduced that protected the individual rights of children above and beyond those of the family unit. Since then, we have seen a further shift within the nation state to focus on an individual child's needs and rights. Policies such as the UK's national Children's Act 1986[15], Child Poverty Act 2010[16] and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC)[17] are clear examples of states and the international community protecting the rights of children.

Under the New Labour Government, the British state positioned itself as a 'Social Investment State'[18], investing in the development of human and social capital in order to promote equality of opportunity. In relation to children, this meant aiming to ensure that every child was taken care of, both physically and mentally and valuing them by what they could potentially contribute to society when they became adults. Investing in their future through early years, primary, secondary and tertiary education was argued to be not only beneficial and important for their own lives but also for the economic and social success of the nation and its ability to remain competitive in the global community.

As well as being the richest region in the United Kingdom, London is also the most unequal and has the highest child poverty rate. The number of children living in a working poor household has significantly increased since the late 1990s. Nearly a third of children living in London are materially deprived compared to 22% of children in the rest of England. In the early 2000s the majority of children (55%) living in poverty were from workless households. Now, 60% of children living in poverty are from households with at least one working adult[19] .

Health

There is a general consensus that poverty is closely correlated with a person's health outcomes. Early years' development is very important to a child's life. If a child does not receive sufficient care in their early years they are more likely to experience further issues be they physical or mental, in the future. Consequently, child development can significantly influence an adults' life chances.

[14] Hendrick, H. (2005). Child welfare and social policy: An essential reader. MIT Press.

[15] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41

[16] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/9/contents

[17] https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf?_ga=2.186621929.1955574392.1494201713-1484766082.1490648527

[18] Lister, R. (2006). An agenda for children: investing in the future or promoting well-being in the present? in Lewis, J. (ed) Children, changing families and welfare states, Edward Elgar: Cheltenham

[19] http://www.londonspovertyprofile.org.uk/LPP%202015%20findings.pdf

Physical health

Conditions inside the womb, and the early years of a child's life are highly influential on later educational achievement, cognitive development and life chances. For example, there is a correlation between a poor diet during pregnancy, low birth weight, early gestation and a higher infant mortality rate. Similarly, children can suffer from stunted growth due to lack of nutrition.

Poverty is also associated with long-term illnesses such as diabetes, anaemia, and cancer. The Marmot review[20] highlighted that the lower a person's socio-economic position, the greater the chance of suffering from health-related issues and it is well established that the poorest areas have the lowest number of doctors per head[21] . Social inequality is therefore a "matter of life and death, of health and sickness, of well-being and misery"[22] and not just about income.

Being born into a low-income household greatly diminishes your chances of living a healthy life. Families with higher incomes, whilst often also pursuing more 'health conscious' behaviours, are also able to afford healthier food, such as fresh fruit and vegetables. Conversely, those from a lower socio-economic background are more likely to rely on readily available, cheaper, processed foods which are often high in sugar and fat. Recently published figures from the Centre for Diet and Activity Research (CEDAR) and the Guardian show higher concentrations of cheap, fast-food restaurants in the most deprived parts of the UK, a pattern which is broadly replicated within London. This disparity between higher and lower-income households has been defined as food poverty[24]. Food poverty, characterised as a reliance on fast-food and a lack of diversity in the diet, leads to poor nutrition and an increased risk of children becoming overweight and obese, the "modern malnutrition". People who have grown up in a low-income household thus have a higher chance of suffering from diet-related diseases such as type-2 diabetes and heart disease than their wealthier counterparts.

[20] http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review

[21] Dorling, D. (2015). Injustice: Why social inequality still persists. Policy Press.

[22] ibid

[23] https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/jul/25/large-rise-takeaway-shops-highlights-dominance-fast-food-deprived-areas-england

[24] Mwatsama, M., & Stewart, L. (2005). Food Poverty and Health. Briefing Statement. Faculty of Public Health, London.

Mental health

Being raised in a disadvantaged household is strongly correlated with children experiencing mental health issues later in life. Social inequalities are most significant in highly populated areas such as London and as social inequalities increase, so do the numbers of people suffering with mental health issues[25].

Studies[26] show that cognitive performance tends to be less developed in children who experience poverty or homelessness compared to their advantaged peers. Socio-economically disadvantaged children are not sufficiently exposed to cognitively stimulating environments and often live in places that have a lot of noise pollution. They are thus also over exposed to environments that produce environmental toxins which hinder their cognitive development. Skoe et al's[27] study highlights that being overexposed to environment toxins can affect a child's brain development, their sensory system in particular, which in turn can affect how they respond to their environment. This can have further detrimental impacts on a child's life, such as leading to them being unable to retain information, and under-performing on their executive functions as compared to their advantaged peers. Similarly, some studies[28] have also identified a strong relationship between having a low level of cognitive development and poor mental health.

A child's living environment can also impact on their overall level of wellbeing. Living in an overcrowded, noisy house as a member of a large family can lead to anxiety and depression[29]. When a child is more likely to fall sick or more prone to accidents due to living in damp or dilapidated houses, the chances of missing school are much higher. This in turn has huge effects on their educational achievement and ability to develop the social skills that come from mixing regularly with their peers. These effects can have long-term impacts and limit opportunities in later life.

[25] Dorling, D., & Dorling, D. (2015). Injustice: Why social inequality still persists. Policy Press.

[26] Fry, C. E., Langley, K., & Shelton, K. H. (2016). A systematic review of cognitive functioning among young people who have experienced homelessness, foster care, or poverty. Child Neuropsychology, 1-28.; Skoe, E., Krizman, J., & Kraus, N. (2013). The impoverished brain: disparities in maternal education affect the neural response to sound. Journal of Neuroscience, 33(44), 17221-17231. ; Ornoy, A., Daka, L., Goldzweig, G., Gil, Y., Mjen, L., Levit, S., ... & Greenbaum, C. W. (2010). Neurodevelopmental and psychological assessment of adolescents born to drug-addicted parents: effects of SES and adoption. Child abuse & neglect, 34(5), 354-368.

[27] Skoe, E., Krizman, J., & Kraus, N. (2013). The impoverished brain: disparities in maternal education affect the neural response to sound. Journal of Neuroscience, 33(44), 17221-17231.

[28] Flouri, E., Mavroveli, S., & Panourgia, C. (2013). The role of general cognitive ability in moderating the relation of adverse life events to emotional and behavioural problems. British Journal of Psychology, 104(1), 130-139 ; Ornoy, A., Daka, L., Goldzweig, G., Gil, Y., Mjen, L., Levit, S., ... & Greenbaum, C. W. (2010). Neurodevelopmental and psychological assessment of adolescents born to drug-addicted parents: effects of SES and adoption. Child abuse & neglect, 34(5), 354-368.

[29] ibid

Education
Difference in educational qualifications

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health[30] has identified a strong relationship between being from a low-income family and being a Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) child. Over one quarter (27.2%) of children who are categorised as having SEND are eligible for free school meals (FSM), suggesting that they are from a low-income household. In addition, children recognised as having SEND are more likely to achieve lower grades and experience poverty in the future, reducing their life chances as adults.

There also appears to be a regional effect. Children living in poverty in Inner London are less likely to do well in school than their counterparts in Outer London and the rest of England. In 2012, children living in Inner London who were eligible for FSM (suggesting that they come from an underprivileged background[31]), had significantly lower educational achievement compared to FSM pupils in the rest of England. Additionally, disadvantaged children are found to perform worse in exams compared to pupils who come from an advantaged background.

Pupils are categorised as being disadvantaged if they meet any of the following criteria: are eligible for free school meals, the Local Authority is responsible for their wellbeing, or they are attending a pupil referral unit (PRU) or Alternative Provision (AP)[32] educational centre. For instance in Figure 3, we can see that in 2013/4, 36.5% of children categorised as being disadvantaged achieved 5 A*-C including mathematics and English in their GCSE's, compared to 64% of advantaged children.[33] Similarly, in 2015/6, 39.1% of disadvantaged pupils in English state-funded schools achieved 5 A*-C GCSE's including English and Maths compared to 66.7% of their advantaged peers.[34] The 27.5% and 26.9% gap (respectively) between these two social groups demonstrate that the experiences of living in poverty as a child have detrimental effects on a child's education.

[30] http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/system/files/protected/page/SoCH%202017%20UK%20web%20updated.pdf

[31] A child is eligible for FSM if their parents receive state benefits such as Income Support, Child Tax Credit or Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance. https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals

[32] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/406314/SFR_02_2015-revised_GCSE_and_equivalents.pdf

[33] ibid

[34] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/584473/SFR03_2017.pdf

Percentage of disadvantaged children who achieved 5 A*-C GCSE's in 2013/4

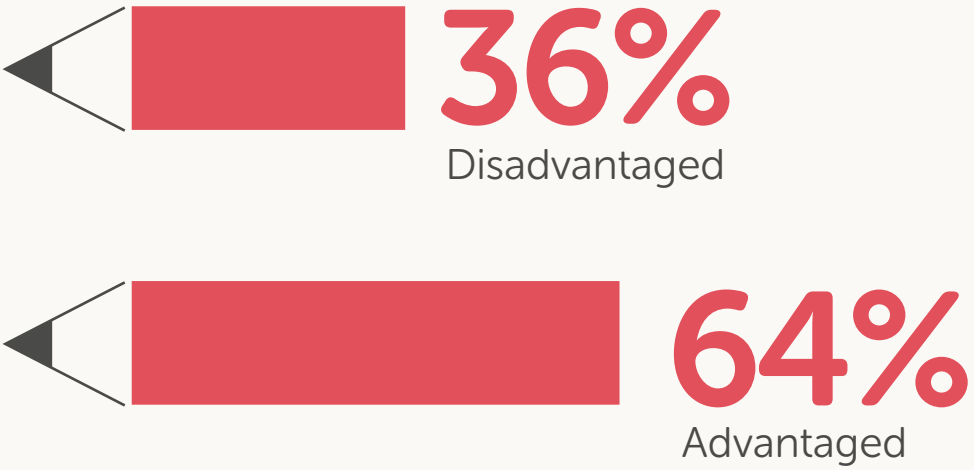


Figure 3: Proportion of children achieving 5 A*- C GCSES categorised by characteristic

Source: Department for Education (DfES) 2015

Soft Skills

The social and emotional skills developed as a child have a significant influence on individuals' life chances as an adult[35][36]. Researchers have observed[37] that children from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to lack skills that are required to live a life that includes a successful career and stable relationships. Developing soft skills, such as communication, is a very important part of a child's education. Moss and Tiley[38] famously identified two clusters of soft skills; interaction and motivation. Interaction relates to whether a person can work well within a team, whether they are easily approachable and have a good appearance. Motivation considers the characteristics of the individual such as their commitment, attitude and dependability.

A World Challenge[39] study found that when universities are deciding between two students with similar grades and are assessing personal statements, they look for evidence that the applicant has developed their soft skills alongside their 'hard' ones. Students are required to show that they have experience working well within a team and communicating with their peers; skills that are vital for an individual to succeed in university and the workplace. Furthermore, the study found that '97% of universities and students say that it is important for prospective students to demonstrate their involvement in extra-curricular activities in their personal statement'.

Involvement in extra-curricular activities for example, increases the likelihood of developing skills within both the soft skill clusters and has other benefits such as raising aspirations and improving educational achievement. However, as Putnam[40] states:

> 'Extracurricular activities, designed precisely in the late 1800s to teach soft life skills to working class Americans are becoming endangered species in working class schools and communities... more schools have instituted "pay to play" regimes to participate in band or football or debate, working class kids not only face fewer such offering but are less able financially to participate.'

[35] https://www.ucy.ac.cy/nursery/documents/ThemaVdomadas/DCSF-Parental_Involvement_1.pdf

[36] http://www.eif.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/EIF-Strand-1-Report-FINAL1.pdf

[37] Ibid; https://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/pdfs/SaguaroReport_DivergingSocialConnectedness.pdf

[38] Moss, P., & Tilly, C. (1996). "Soft" skills and race: An investigation of black men's employment problems. Work and Occupations, 23(3), 252-276

[39] http://www.world-challenge.co.uk/sites/default/files/World-Challenge-Extra-Curricular-Report.pdf

[40] https://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/pdfs/SaguaroReport_DivergingSocialConnectedness.pdf

[41] ibid

Participation in non-academic activities such as sports and youth clubs is seen to teach particular skills that cannot be learnt in a classroom. Putnam argues that out of school activities can teach perseverance, and build self- confidence and a strong work ethic. During his research, Putnam[42] identified that middle-class youths have a higher level of participation in sports compared to working class youths, with the gap steadily increasing.

Out of school activities provide structure and expose children from deprived areas to alternative influences and ways to spend their free time. There therefore is a danger that if working class children are not as involved in extra-curricular activities they will not be able to develop the soft skills that are considered to be so crucial for professional and personal fulfilment and as a consequence will become increasingly socially excluded and disconnected from 'mainstream' society.[43]

[42] ibid

[43] Snellman, K., Silva, J. M., & Putnam, R. D. (2015). Inequity outside the Classroom: Growing Class Differences in Participation in Extracurricular Activities. Voices in Urban Education, 40, 7-14.

The effect of rising housing costs and benefit reforms

Working class families and children have been the most affected by the benefit reforms instigated, from 2010, by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition. 4in10[44] predicts that the absolute child poverty rate will increase from 15.1% to 18.3% by 2020/21. One of the policies that is likely to drive the increase in child poverty is the 2015 Conservative Government decision to limit Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit to two children (new births) from April 2017[45]. Furthermore, the government's focus on decreasing unemployment, especially for families with children, has not produced the intended results. The assumption that putting parents to work will improve the child's life chances and overall wellbeing has not been borne out, especially in the context of low-wage, insecure, zero-hours contracts, increasing housing costs, and overall inflation. Employment no longer guarantees that families can move out of poverty.

Due to a sharp rise in housing costs and the combined impact of the Right-to-Buy, Housing Benefit Cap and the 'spare room subsidy', low income families in London social housing are under increasing pressure. The number of social housing units available in England has decreased dramatically. In 2015/6, 12,246 council homes in England were sold under the right-to-buy scheme but only 2,055 were replaced, an 87% annual decrease[46]. The lack of readily available council units and the impacts of the Housing Benefit Cap means that low-income families are forced to either move to cheaper locations, further from central London employment and educational opportunities, or cover the shortfall in rent from other benefits or employment income thus reducing the amount of money available to spend on other essentials.

The costs of the drastic changes to the social housing sector and the constant reforms to the benefits system are weighing heavily on the shoulders of low-income families, especially children. 4in10[47] found that living in an unstable home environment can be detrimental to a child's wellbeing. Every time a child moves home, it is more unlikely that they will achieve 5 good GCSE's. In addition, living in crowded spaces can affect a child's mental wellbeing as it is harder for them to study and they are often unable to invite friends home due to lack of space.[48]

[44] https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/4in10_inner-city-pressures_fv.pdf

[45] ibid

[46] ibid

[47] ibid

[48] ibid

Current Research

The issue of child poverty has long been the subject of thorough research within and across disciplines. Recently, in view of the rising numbers of children living in poverty in the UK, the subject has become even more topical and important with researchers increasingly calling attention to the need for greater action.

In contrast to earlier approaches, poverty is now treated as a multidimensional, complex phenomenon that has far-reaching social, economic, psychological and biological implications for children themselves and society as a whole. It is now well established that the adverse effects of poverty manifest themselves early in children's lives, shaping their physiological and mental functions. Numerous longitudinal studies show that prolonged exposure to poverty-related conditions severely affects the development of children's brains and cells, leading to poorer health across the lifespan and across generations[49]. Children with adverse childhood experiences are also found to be more susceptible to chronic diseases of aging and have elevated rates of adult morbidity and mortality[50].

Much of the research on early childhood experiences has focused on the long-term exposure to toxic stress as the leading cause of health-damaging impacts. What makes the environment of childhood poverty unique and especially pathogenic, is the cumulative nature of these stress factors, which explains the greater accumulation of risks associated with growing up in disadvantaged circumstances[51]. Constant presence of chronic poverty-related stressors has been proven to cause neurological changes in children's brain structures, resulting in diminished intellectual abilities as well as emotional, cognitive or social impairments. Besides health risks, studies have also established a clear link between childhood stress and unemployment, increased substance use and antisocial behaviour later in life[52].

Drawing on these findings, researchers from a variety of disciplines emphasize the importance of early interventions in the development of disadvantaged children. As documented by Elango et al. (2015)[53], early childhood education and childcare programs have beneficial effects on later-life outcomes, with social returns outweighing the financial costs borne by taxpayers. To date, we know for certain that the impacts of child poverty unfold over the years, going beyond the individual human tragedy to affect the well-being and human potential of entire societies. It is therefore crucial to realize that the success of policies in this area defines our common future, and the earlier we start taking measures to alleviate the detrimental impacts of child poverty, the less will be the broader social and developmental consequences of it.

In addition to stressing the priority of early interventions, recent studies highlight the need for greater collaboration between multiple actors in finding solutions for childhood poverty and mitigating its harmful effects. While the role of government is still seen as fundamental, top-down strategies should be complemented with a bottom-up participatory approach, which will allow us to harness the potential of local communities. More importantly, early community engagement and equitable representation of key community stakeholders will ensure that solutions reflect the real priorities of various target groups and are better tailored to specific local needs and contexts. In this case, the government seeking to trigger structural change needs to support

[49] Luby, Joan L. "Poverty's most insidious damage: the developing brain". JAMA Pediatr 169, no. 9 (2015): 810–811; Blair, Clancy and C. Cybele Raver. "Poverty, Stress, and Brain Development: New Directions for Prevention and Intervention." Academic Paediatric Association 16, no. 3S (2016): S30 – S36. ; Hair, N. L., Hanson, J. L., Wolfe, B. L., & Pollak, S. D. (2015). Association of child poverty, brain development, and academic achievement. JAMA paediatrics, 169(9), 822-829.

[50] Miller GE, Chen E, Parker KJ. Psychological stress in childhood and susceptibility to the chronic diseases of aging: moving toward a model of behavioural and biological mechanisms. Psychol Bull. 2011; 137: 959–997.

[51] Evans, Gary W. "The Environment of Childhood Poverty." American Psychologist 59, no. 2 (2004): 77 – 92. DOI: 10.1037/0003-066X.59.2.77.

[52] Metzler, Marilyn, Melissa T. Merrick, Joanne Klevens, Katie A. Ports and Derek C. Ford. "Adverse childhood experiences and life opportunities: Shifting the narrative." Children and Youth Services Review 72, (2016): 141 – 149.

[53] Elango, Sneha, Jorge Luis García, James J. Heckman and Andrés Hojman. Early Childhood Education. NBER Working Paper No. 21766, 2015.

and empower local communities, facilitating the dialogue between local and private actors, public institutions, non-governmental organisations and other concerned parties.

In searching for community-based solutions, national researchers have lately become particularly concerned with the conditions of life in London neighbourhoods. London, and especially Inner London, has the highest rate of poverty among children who live in working families[54]. The percentage of poor children is the highest in Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Newham[55] . In Tower Hamlets, for instance, 45% of secondary school pupils are eligible for free school meals, while the average for Inner London is only 30%[56]. Research further shows that, on a national scale, children belonging to ethnic minorities have a higher chance of being in poverty than those from white families[57]. This is even more so for minority groups living in London. In Hackney, for example, children from ethnic minorities are more likely to be eligible for free school meals than the average child, and some ethnicities demonstrate larger gaps in school attainment than others [1].

While there is no simple solution to childhood poverty, researchers generally agree that special attention has to be paid to poor households. Disadvantaged families need to receive direct support from the government, including both financial and non-financial contributions. It has been proven that parents in poverty prioritise their children's needs over their own and sacrifice personal necessities to provide children with the best possible start in life[58]. Moreover, parental care plays a pivotal role in cushioning the adverse effects of poverty on children, which once again emphasises the imperative of supporting economically disadvantaged families[59]. Direct financial benefits and welfare assistance schemes should be accompanied by the expansion of family services in deprived areas such as healthcare services, parenting advice and day-care centres. Finally, it is vital to ensure that relevant policies reach the poorest segments of the population, as anti-poverty measures targeted at middle-income households are unlikely to bring about the desired outcomes of eradicating childhood poverty[60].

Strategies to address child poverty usually rest on three pillars: increased family assistance, redistribution policies and measures to provide training and increase employment opportunities for poor households[61]. While all three components have a certain degree of effectiveness, there are limits to the extent to which skills upgrading and increasing employment rates can reduce child poverty[62] . As of 2014, two-thirds of poor children came from working households, which indicates that employment per se does not guarantee a decent livelihood nowadays[63]. Further research on the subject will help better inform public debates and decision makers, who need to collaborate with a range of actors including researchers, health practitioners, academics and civil society representatives, if the goal to improve the wellbeing of disadvantaged children in the UK is to be achieved.

[54] Hannah Aldridge, Theo Barry Born, Adam Tinson and Tom MacInnes. London's Poverty Profile 2015. New Policy Institute, 2015

[55] Hirsch, Donald and Laura Valadez. Child Poverty Map of the UK. In End Child Poverty, October 2014.

[56] Born, Theo Barry. (2016). "Demography and deprivation in Southwark and Tower Hamlets." A paper for the Wakefield and Tetley Trust by the New Policy Institute. August 2016.

[57] Magadi, M. (2010). "Risk Factors for Severe Child Poverty in the UK." Journal of Social Policy, 39(2), 297-316. Doi: 10.1017/S0047279409990651

[58] Main, Gill and Jonathan Bradshaw. "Child poverty in the UK: Measures, prevalence and intra-household sharing." Critical Social Policy 36, no. 1 (2016): 38 – 61

[59] Hostinar, Camelia E., Regina M. Sullivan and Megan R. Gunnar. "Psychobiological mechanisms underlying the social buffering of the hypothalamic–pituitary– adrenocortical axis: a review of animal models and human studies across development." Psychological Bulletin 140, no. 1 (2014): 256 – 282.

[60] Kothari, Priya, Graham Whitham and Thomas Quinn. A Fair Start for Every Child: Why We Must Act Now To Tackle Child Poverty in the UK. Save the Children, London, 2014

[61] Wickham, Sophie, Elspeth Anwar, Ben Barr, Catherine Law and David Taylor-Robinson. "Poverty and Child Health in the UK: Using Evidence for Action." Arch Dis Child Published Online, (2016): 1 – 8. doi:10.1136/archdischild-2014-306746

[62] Lewis, Paul. "Upskilling the Workers will not Upskill the Work. Why the Dominant Economic Framework Limits Child Poverty Reduction in the UK." Journal of Social Policy 40, no. 3 (2011): 535 – 556.

[63] Kothari, Priya, Graham Whitham and Thomas Quinn. A Fair Start for Every Child: Why We Must Act Now To Tackle Child Poverty in the UK. Save the Children, London, 2014.

Data, Trends, and Current Situation

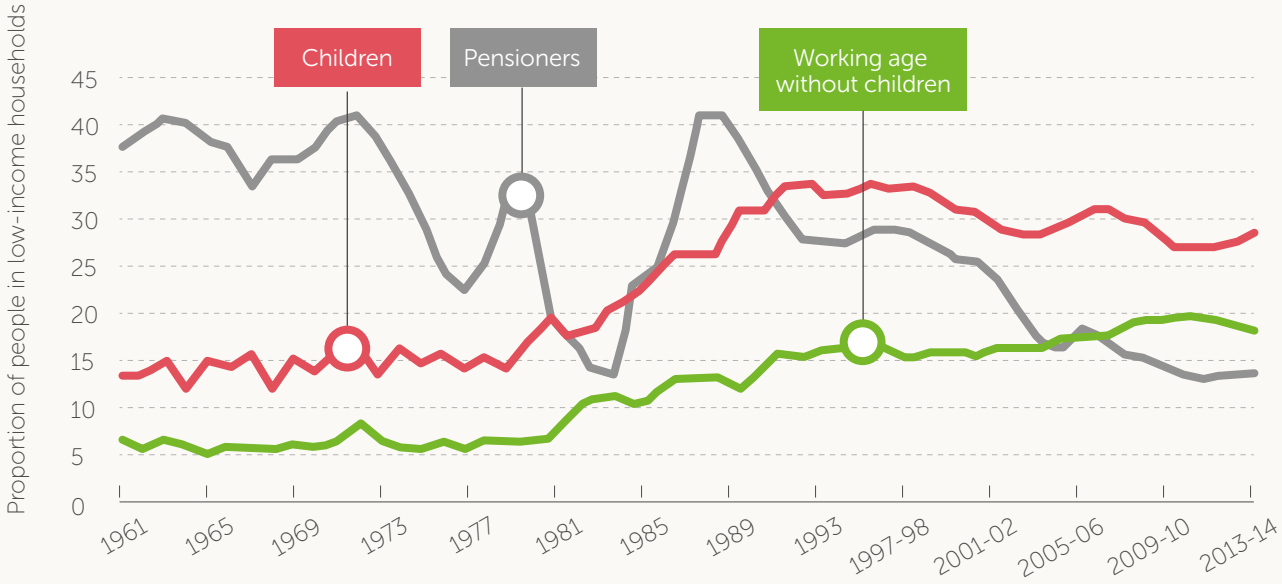
Although the UK is one of the richest countries in the world, there are 13 million people living in poverty, struggling to pay for essential bills and food on a daily basis[64]. These people represent 21% of UK's population. The British economy has recovered from the fall experienced during the recession of 2008, but inequality still prevails[65]. One reason for this might be the inability of benefits to sufficiently support families in need. For example, due to a series of cuts and sub-inflation uprating decisions, these benefits have failed to keep pace with the cost of living in recent years. Families with children are particularly affected by the high costs of living. It is estimated that the annual cost to a family of raising a child is over £8,000 – a level of cost that has outstripped both inflation and government rates of support[66]. Under these current policy conditions and the subsequent inability of families to provide key material resources for their children, the child poverty rate appears to be rising again[67].

Figure 4: Comparison between number of children and pensioners in poverty between 1961-2014

Source: Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion, JRF

Age and poverty

Children have the highest poverty rate and it is rising, while the pensioner poverty rate is close to the lowest on record.



Source: Living standards, inequality and poverty dataset.
IFS: the data is for Great Britain to 2001/02 and for the UK thereafter

[64] Tinson, A., et al. (2016). Monitoring poverty and social exclusion. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

[65] Tinson, A., et al. (2016). Monitoring poverty and social exclusion. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

[66] Child Poverty Action Group (2016). Improving Children's Life Chances: Summary September 2016.

[67] Child Poverty Action Group (2016). Improving Children's Life Chances: Summary September 2016.

In 2014/15, 29% of the nation's children were living below the poverty line[68]. Families with three or more children are especially likely to face poverty – 34% of children in poverty live in large families[69]. However, the level of poverty is also dependent on other factors such as geographic location, the existence of disability, ethnic origin and employment status of the household and in many cases these factors intersect .

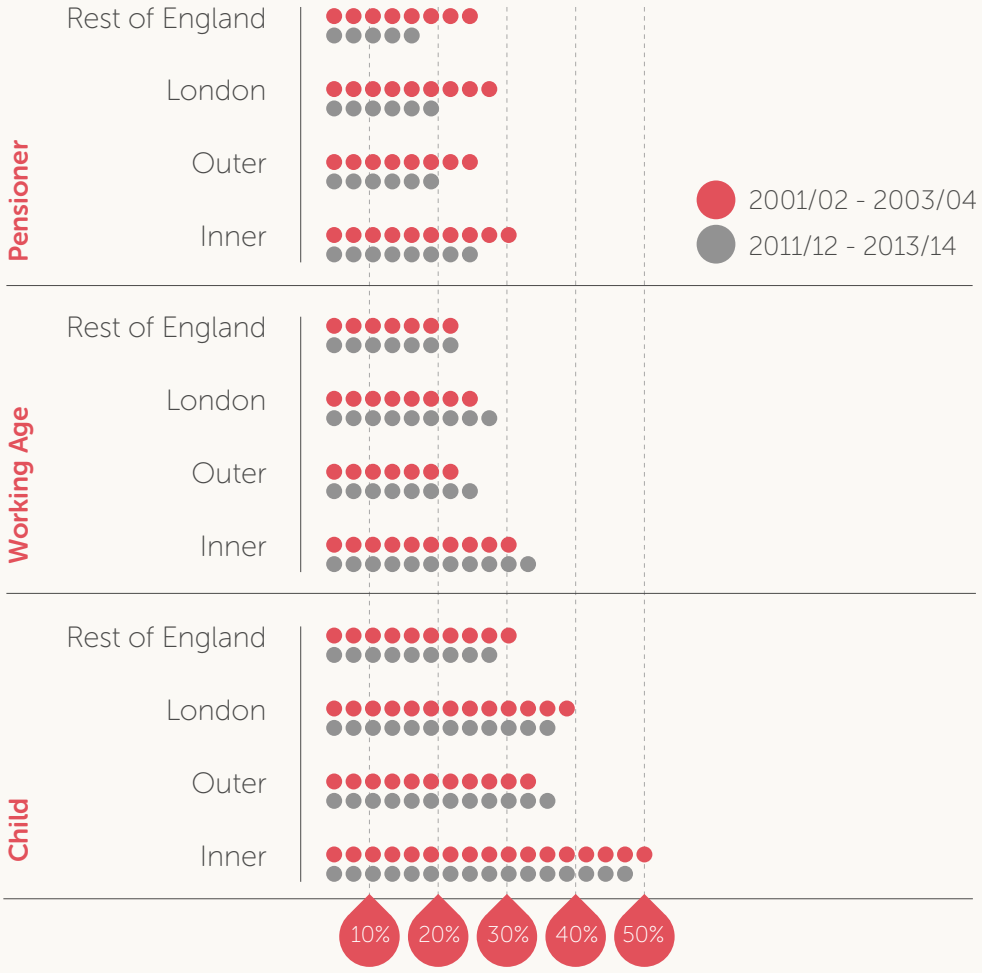
There are now 3.9 million children living in poverty in the UK.

Figure 5: Number of children living in low-income households between 2001-2004 and 2011-2014

Source: Households Below Average Income, DWP

Poverty rate for different age groups

Proportion of people in low-income households (after housing costs)



[68] Child Poverty Action Group (2016). Improving Children's Life Chances: Summary September 2016.

[69] Shale, J., et al. (2015). Households below average income: An analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 – 2013/14. London: Department for work & pensions.

[70] Tinson, A., et al. (2016). Monitoring poverty and social exclusion. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Poverty rates vary greatly with location in the UK. London is the most unequal region with an overall poverty rate of 27%[71]. More specifically, approximately two-fifths of children live in low-income households in the capital while the national average is one-third. This proportion has only slightly decreased since the millennium implying the government's lack of success in sufficiently alleviating childhood poverty[72].

As can be seen from Figure 5 above, Inner London has the highest proportion of children living in poverty in the UK – nearly half the children here are brought up in low-income households[74]. Nonetheless there is wide variation even within Inner London: Inner East and South London have particularly high child poverty rates – for example, the borough of Tower Hamlets with 49% – but other areas have rates lower than the national average – for example, Richmond upon Thames with 15%[75]. However, whilst Inner London has generally experienced a decrease in child poverty since the millennium, in Outer London the rate has gone up to approximately 35%. As a result, a high number of children in poverty now live in Outer London.

The probability of experiencing poverty is higher for some children than others: children living in single-parent or ethnic-minority families, families where someone is disabled or who have parents who are self-employed, working part-time or not working at all, are more likely to experience poverty than those living in families where this is not the case[76]. There is further divergence within these categories. For example, some ethnic-minority children experience higher poverty rates than others; in London, Bangladeshi households are three times more likely to experience poverty than Indian or White households. This might be due to the fact that these families are less likely to attain employment[77]. In general, around half of children of foreign-born parents live in poverty. This highlights the need to better integrate immigrants in the job market to decrease childhood poverty.

[71] Tinson, A., et al. (2016). Monitoring poverty and social exclusion. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

[72] MacInnes, T., et al. (2015). London's Poverty Profile. Trust for London/New Policy Institute.

[73] MacInnes, T., et al. (2015). London's Poverty Profile. Trust for London/New Policy Institute.

[74] MacInnes, T., et al. (2015). London's Poverty Profile. Trust for London/New Policy Institute.

[75] Child Poverty Action Group (2014). London has highest child poverty rate.

[76] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-199495-to-201516

[77] MacInnes, T., & Kenway, P. (2009). London's Poverty Profile. Trust for London/New Policy Institute.

Lastly, there has been a change in the nature of child poverty over the past twenty years: there are now a greater number of children in poverty in working families and fewer in workless ones[78]. This implies that having a job does not ensure welfare in the UK anymore[79]. In 2015/16, 67% of children living in poverty lived in households where at least one adult was in work compared to 33% who lived in workless households[80]. In 1996/97 the figures were almost reversed at 43% and 57% respectively[81]. Key reasons for this development are low pay, limited working hours and high housing costs[82]. Looking at these numbers, it becomes clear that poverty rates are much higher for working families – despite their effort to provide their children with a better life. This highlights the need for the government to reconsider working conditions and potentially increase the level of pay for low paid jobs.

In response to this, the UK government has introduced legally-binding targets to decrease the level of child poverty to 5% by the end of this decade[83]. Despite such promises, the outlook for future is rather negative as the latest data confirms predictions of a steep increase in child poverty in the UK[84]. It is forecasted that by 2030, an extra 310,000 households with children will live in relative poverty[85]. This will have an immense impact on those children affected but also for the UK as a whole; according to new research, child poverty costs approximately £29 billion a year. These costs arise from adults' lower productivity and the higher risk of unemployment from having grown up in poverty as well as the necessity of additional public spending due to social problems that stem from high levels of child poverty[86].

[78] Tinson, A., et al. (2016). Monitoring poverty and social exclusion. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

[79] Shale, J., et al. (2015). Households below average income: An analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 – 2013/14. London: Department for work & pensions.

[80] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-199495-to-201516

[81] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-199495-to-201516

[82] MacInnes, T., & Kenway, P. (2009). London's Poverty Profile. Trust for London/New Policy Institute.

[83] Browne, J., Hood, A., & Joyce, R. (2014). Child and working-age poverty in Northern Ireland over the next decade: an update. The Institute for Fiscal Studies.

[84] McCall, B. (2016). Child poverty continues to rise in the UK. The Lancet.

[85] OXFAM (2016). How to close Great Britain's great divide: The business of tackling inequality.

[86] Child Poverty Action Group (2013). An estimate of the cost of child poverty in 2013.

Policy Landscape

In 2015 the Conservative Government scrapped the legally binding target set by Labour through the Child Poverty Act 2010 of eradicating child poverty by 2020. The Welfare Reform and Work Act, passed in 2016 and which repealed much of the Child Poverty Act, instead requires ministers to report on annually on 'life chances' indicators, namely the number of children in workless households and GCSE success rates[87]. The 2016 Act also reduced the benefit cap to £23,000 for families living in Greater London and £20,000 everywhere else, limited the child element of universal credit to a maximum of two children and the amount of support provided by child tax credit, and froze the main rates of income support, jobseeker's allowance, employment and support allowance, housing benefit, universal credit, the individual element of child tax credit, the second adult and lone parent elements of working tax credit and both rates of child benefit, at 2016/17 levels for four tax years[88]. Unsurprisingly this has led to predictions that child poverty will increase as a result of the provisions of the Act[89].

Prior to this there have been three major legislative acts with relevance to children's wellbeing: the Children's Act 1989[90], the Children Leaving Care Act 2000[91] and the Homelessness Order 2002[92]. These three legislative acts, alongside other minor regulations and legislations, have all aimed in some way to improve the life chances of children born into poverty.

The Children's Act 1989[93], defines the term 'in need' and concludes that this is the case if:

a) He is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for his of services by a local authority;

b) His health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or

c) He is disabled.

The law defines quite precisely in which situations children's services become responsible for providing measures to improve the living conditions of children and young adults in poverty. The Children Leaving Care Act 2000 defines a range of measures to be provided, such as life skills, education and training, and employment and financial support. It is worth mentioning that selected measures can be extended up until the age of 24, especially when the child is undertaking training or education. In addition, The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) Order 2002 focuses on children up to the age of 21 and particularly defines when a child is falling under the term 'vulnerable' and may thus be eligible for priority housing and support measures.

[87] http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/theresa-may-welfare-cuts-million-children-poverty-institute-fiscal-studies-uk-government-a7606236.html

[88] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/7/pdfs/ukpgaen_20160007_en.pdf

[89] https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jul/19/the-welfare-reform-and-work-bill-will-make-poor-children-poorer

[90] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents

[91] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35

[92] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/contents

[93] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents

The Southwark Judgement of 2009 was a landmark legal case which helped to clarify the legal responsibility of local authorities to care for children and young adults in relation to housing and homelessness. It led to the government issuing statutory guidance in 2010 to the effect that teenagers, particularly, 'need care' and not just 'support and facilitation', especially in the transition phase between adolescence and adulthood (16-18). In the Southwark Judgement case, a 17-year old boy claimed legal rights under section 20 of the Children's Act 1989 because he had fallen out with his mother and had to leave the family home and as a result was sleeping on friend's floors. Although the council acknowledged his needs, they refused to provide housing, instead determining that he required 'support and facilitation' to claim housing benefit and find a flat. The boy challenged the council's decision and although the initial appeal was rejected, the Supreme Court ruled in his favour. As a result, councils now have a legal responsibility to provide housing for 16 and 17 year olds who are made homeless. Furthermore, if such young adults ever become homeless again up until the age of 20, they can claim priority need for shelter and housing.

The Social Mobility Commission (previously The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission) 'monitors the progress of government and others in improving social mobility and reducing child poverty in the United Kingdom'[94]. Recently, the Commission has published articles about facilitating job searches for parents, based on the assumption that employment will positively affect the level of disposable income in the family. In addition, part of the Child Poverty Unit, a governmental department set up to fight child poverty, is dedicated to increasing local responsibility for poverty reduction rather than reliance on centralized decision making and action[95]. The Child Poverty Act 2010 transfers tasks such as assessing the needs of children, towards communities and obliges them to develop a locally driven child poverty strategy[96].

[94] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-and-child-poverty-commission

[95] https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-child-poverty-unit

[96] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/9/contents

Changes in Welfare Policy

The benefit cap on households, implemented in 2016 through the Welfare Reform and Work Act, will put even more children at risk of falling into poverty, as it limits the income of disadvantaged households in London to £23,000 and outside of London to £20,000. This is aimed at increasing equality between families in work and those who are receiving out-of-work support by incentivising those out of work to get off benefits. What has received less attention is that children are seven times more likely to end up in poverty and thus by putting 60,000 adults at risk, up to 160,000 children will potentially slide into worse conditions.

> "By lowering the cap today, we are ensuring the values of this government continue to chime with those of ordinary working people and delivering on our commitment to make sure work pays more than welfare".
>
> Damian Green,
> Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

With the Government's 2015 decision on only allowing child tax credits for the first two children in a family, the potential for childhood poverty increases further and puts more pressure on families with more than two children. The United Nations expressed their dismay regarding this development when they asked the UK delegation to explain how this measure could ever be in line with their obligations towards fulfilling UN policies on reducing childhood poverty.

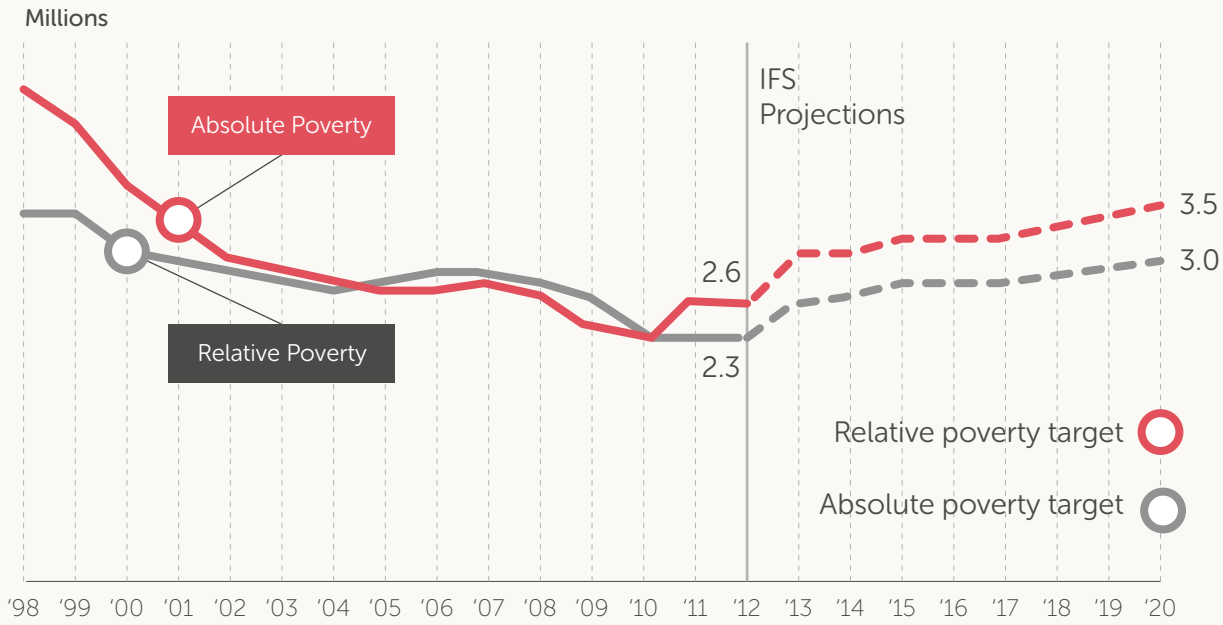
One of the most recent changes that has been made is the introduction of Universal Credit, which is a new unified payment scheme for benefit recipients. It comes with an increased work allowance, meaning that the incentive for parents to work in addition to claiming their benefits is theoretically higher. Consequently, there would be more disposable income for the family. So far, the government has focused on tax credits to increase disposable income at a family level. This new way to increase work allowances could work as well, as long as the incentive to work is kept high and the taper rate (the reduction rate that comes into play once a family that receives benefits earns too much to get benefits) is held moderately.

Looking at the present and to the future, there are several policies in place that focus on child poverty within the UK. One of the most important is the Child Poverty Act of 2010 that aims to reduce relative poverty by 2020 to a level below 10% and absolute poverty to below 5%. Under the 2010 to 2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government, there were changes to the methods of tackling poverty, with a move towards more prevention within families, and a focus on the younger generation and especially employment itself, as a mitigating factor. However, although it is acknowledged that childhood poverty prevention is vital, especially regarding educational achievement and future career prospects, little is stated about the measures that could lead towards less child poverty in the immediate to short-term.

Data from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) shows that from 1998 to 2010, the era of the New Labour government, the relative child poverty rate fell from around 3.4 to 2.4 million and the absolute rate from 4.5 to 2.4 million (see Figure 6 below). From 2010, the election of the Coalition government, child poverty rates began to increase again and recent figures indicate 3.9 million children in poverty. This includes an increase of 0.5% in absolute poverty compared to 2010. The IFS therefore predicts that the 2020 relative child poverty target of around 1.3 million will be missed quite significantly, by around 2.2 million, an increase from 2012 of almost 1 million and a return to the to the levels seen in 2000.

Figure 6: Children in poverty before housing costs in the UK from 1995 to 2020 projected

Source: IFS



According to the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (SMCPC), under the best circumstances, in 2020 around 20% of children will be in relative and absolute poverty, despite the ambitious goals of the Child Poverty Act.

Furthermore, it is predicted that the exit of the UK from the European Union (Brexit), which is planned to be effective in 2019 will affect the child poverty rate in London. With Brexit, the UK is likely to cut the welfare spending that tackles social issues such as child poverty[97]. The possible extent of this is becoming clearer, with recent warnings of the Bank of England, stating that following Brexit, a recession and job losses are quite likely. Considering the two major causes of poverty, earning too little and unemployment, this is likely to worsen the situation in the long run. Additionally, inflation will reduce disposable income, particularly for low-income households. It is expected that low income households will lose twice as much (3.3%) compared to higher income ones (1.6%) with regards to inflation. When inflation rises, it reduces the amount of money that can be spent on daily living and housing expenses. This is especially concerning for low income families who are reliant to some or great extent on in and out of work benefits because, as noted in the opening section, Child Benefit, Income Support and Jobseekers' Allowance rates have been frozen for the next four years.

[97] http://money.cnn.com/2017/03/02/news/economy/child-poverty-brexit-uk/index.html

Forecast and Solutions

To bring down the levels of childhood poverty in London an 'all-of-society' approach is needed, one that is both long-term and sustainable[98]. Shifting towards prevention and improving people's life chances should be consistent over time, as attempts to reduce poverty that are unsustainable can be counterproductive, even hampering progress. It is vital to link 'directly, technically and politically' childhood poverty and health with the wellbeing of parents[99]. Interventions ideally should come at an early age, even during pregnancy if possible. Even though early years offer a solid foundation for building life chances, interventions in later ages should not be abandoned[100]. Future attempts to reduce childhood poverty should take into account the whole family unit and consider an extensive variety of cultural and socio-economic factors, in order to move beyond mere measures of financial status.

> People are living in poverty despite having a job. A commitment to maximising the national living wage is needed.

An unacceptable number of children in the UK are living in households where no parent is in paid employment, despite them wanting to be, and too many children are still experiencing poverty despite having parents in paid employment[101]. For those who are able to attain a job, employment offers the best route out of poverty[102]. A commitment to maximising the 'national living wage' is required for a family to have an acceptable income and to escape poverty[103]. It is vital to ensure equality and adequate remuneration for those working in low-wage labour[104]. Moreover, it is important that the laws in place regarding wages and work are strictly enforced[105]. However, there seems to be a tension between working and parenting, especially for single parents, with a possible solution to this being more flexible hours, such as part-time work and job-sharing[106]. To promote career progression and attainment there should be an increase in the availability of better paying jobs by motivating competition in firms with 'higher value-added products and services', supported by a skilled labour force and a high-quality workplace, which encourages higher revenues and finally, better wages[107]. A social security system promoting work and supporting individuals to enter employment is essential but in cases where people are unable to work the system should also provide a safety net that adequately protects against poverty[108]. Support in education, vocational training and skills required for employment are vital, not only for individuals, but also for the economy as a whole[109].

[98] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2016). We Can Solve Poverty in the UK: A strategy for governments, businesses, communities and citizens. York, pp.1-51.

[99] Wise, P. (2016). Child Poverty and the Promise of Human Capacity: Childhood as a Foundation for Healthy Aging. Academic Paediatrics, 16(3), pp.S37-S45.

[100] Trust for London, (2011). Tackling Child Poverty and Improving Life Chances: Consulting on a New Approach. London, pp.1-13.

[101] Cooke, G., Gregg, P., Hirsch, D., Jones, N. and Power, A. (2008). Ending child poverty: 'Thinking 2020' A report and think-pieces from the Child Poverty Unit conference. In: Child Poverty Unit and the Institute for Public Policy Research. pp.1-78.

[102] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2016). We Can Solve Poverty in the UK: A strategy for governments, businesses, communities and citizens. York, pp.1-51.

[103] Child Poverty Action Group, (2016). Improving Children's Life Chances. pp.1-4.

[104] Cooke, G., Gregg, P., Hirsch, D., Jones, N. and Power, A. (2008). Ending child poverty: 'Thinking 2020' A report and think-pieces from the Child Poverty Unit conference. In: Child Poverty Unit and the Institute for Public Policy Research. pp.1-78.

[105] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2016). We Can Solve Poverty in the UK: A strategy for governments, businesses, communities and citizens. York, pp.1-51.

[106] Trust for London, (2011). Tackling Child Poverty and Improving Life Chances: Consulting on a New Approach. London, pp.1-13.

[107] Ending Child Poverty: thinking 2020, pg. 67

[108] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2016). We Can Solve Poverty in the UK: A strategy for governments, businesses, communities and citizens. York, pp.1-51.

[109] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2016). We Can Solve Poverty in the UK: A strategy for governments, businesses, communities and citizens. York, pp.1-51.

Education provides another fundamental path out of poverty. High-quality education should be offered as early as possible and a dual-generational approach must be implemented to enhance parents' ability to improve the home learning environment[110]. For some ethnic minority groups, additional barriers may be preventing access to early years childcare, relating not only to costs and awareness, but also 'concerns about culturally appropriate care, gendered expectations and personal preferences'[111]. Government strategies for improving education emphasise the importance of advancing the educational attainment of children living in poverty, and pledge to do so by increasing the number of two to four year olds from low-income backgrounds attending high-quality pre-schools, employing qualified staff in pre-schools and also by establishing an 'Early Years Pupil Premium' for three to four year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds[112]. Moreover, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation recommends the establishment of a new child care subsidy scheme, which rather than having multiple providers, is unified, and offers families with a low-income free childcare, as long as they are working, training or job hunting. Other families on the scheme would pay a contribution towards childcare costs depending on their income and it is suggested that this does not exceed more than 10% of the disposable income of low and middle-income families[113].

Another area that needs reform concerns adverse childhood experiences, which need to be addressed in the educational environment as well. An example of this can be found in the USA, where a more comprehensive understanding of adversity in childhood has led some state legislatures and schools to stop suspending children expressing behavioural problems attributed to adversity during childhood[114].

It is also important that adolescents and young adults are supported into adulthood; for example, by putting an end to the practice of unpaid internships[115]. It is also suggested that service providers supporting low-income families should be trained to recognise and respond to warning signs of teenagers developing problems as adults. Moreover, JRF suggests that family-centred interventions targeted at teens and pre-teens could help prevent them from becoming vulnerable adults. Finally, an educational system that is adapted to children's needs is vital and in a context of greater autonomy regarding school admissions, there is a need for the government to support efforts to reduce social segregation in schools and to promote an unprejudiced mix of school children[116].

The home environment is fundamental when it comes to reducing childhood poverty, as a safe, warm and affordable home can make a fundamental difference to children's lives. Especially in London, where housing costs are extremely high, paying rent poses a great challenge to families living in poverty. Policy reforms must take into account the greater living costs in London, in particular the cost of housing[117]. To improve the home environment of people living in poverty, there should be greater minimum qualifications for energy efficiency and better-quality housing, as well as more protection for renters. Increasing the supply of genuinely affordable homes offers a solid solution for reducing childhood poverty, under the 'Living Rent' policy model; homes should be affordable for any household in full-time employment. Moreover, there should be greater responsibility for social landlords; JRF recommends that 'tackling poverty should be an explicit aim in social landlord's business plans and strategies'[118].

[110] Child Poverty Action Group, (2016). Improving Children's Life Chances. pp.1-4.

[111] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2016). UK poverty: Causes, costs and solutions. pg. 114

[112] Child poverty strategy pg. 14

[113] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2016). UK poverty: Causes, costs and solutions. pg. 118.

[114] Metzler, M., Merrick, M., Klevens, J., Ports, K. and Ford, D. (2016). Adverse childhood experiences and life opportunities: Shifting the narrative. Children and Youth Services Review.

[115] Child Poverty Action Group, (2016). Improving Children's Life Chances. pp.1-4.

[116] Child Poverty Action Group, (2016). Improving Children's Life Chances. pp.1-4.

[117] Trust for London, (2011). Tackling Child Poverty and Improving Life Chances: Consulting on a New Approach. London, pp.1-13.

[118] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2016). UK poverty: Causes, costs and solutions. pg. 86

Going beyond the home, the neighbourhood also plays a fundamental role in tackling childhood poverty. A child born in a poor neighbourhood will pass away on average nine years earlier than a child born in a wealthier area[119]. At the neighbourhood level, efforts to alleviate poverty necessitate the parallel orientation of cross-sector efforts, community commitment and multifaceted methods which take into consideration the role of people as well as that of place and settings[120]. Deprivation in the neighbourhood is linked to a minimisation of opportunities[121], while moving to a lower poverty neighbourhood may influence economic mobility, despite children often remaining in dysfunctional family structures[122]. JRF recommends that estate renewal and area-focused interventions must be focused on more than just regeneration of the environment, and should be associated with broader economic strategies, tailoring arrangements to local conditions and using resident ballots to gauge support for proposals[123].

In conclusion, fighting against childhood poverty in London necessitates a multi-faceted approach, one that not only views the reasons and solutions to childhood poverty holistically, but also allows interventions on multiple levels of society from local and national governments to community and individual-centred interventions. This has been a thematic overview of solutions to childhood poverty in London, beginning with work and education, leading into the importance of the home environment and the neighbourhood. A sustainable and durable solution to childhood poverty should incorporate multiple levels of action in order to provide a successful and multi-faceted solution to poverty; one that takes individual and community needs into consideration, but also incorporates an understanding of cultural and social contexts, which can influence how poverty is experienced and dealt with.

[119] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2016). We Can Solve Poverty in the UK: A strategy for governments, businesses, communities and citizens. York, pg. 5

[120] Sandel, M., Faugno, E., Mingo, A., Cannon, J., Byrd, K., Garcia, D., Collier, S., McClure, E. and Jarrett, R. (2016). Neighbourhood-Level Interventions to Improve Childhood Opportunity and Lift Children Out of Poverty. Academic Paediatrics, 16(3), pp.128-135.

[121] Leventhal T, Brooks-Gunn J, Eisenberg N. The neighbourhoods they live in: the effects of neighbourhood residence on child and adolescent outcomes. Psychol Bull. 2000;126:309–337.

[122] Sandel, M., Faugno, E., Mingo, A., Cannon, J., Byrd, K., Garcia, D., Collier, S., McClure, E. and Jarrett, R. (2016). Neighbourhood-Level Interventions to Improve Childhood Opportunity and Lift Children Out of Poverty. Academic Paediatrics, 16(3), pp.128-135.

[123] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2016). UK poverty: Causes, costs and solutions. pg. 88

Alleviating childhood poverty

An All-Society-Approach

- ☑ Increase national living wage; offer higher pay for low-wage labour
- ☑ Decrease housing costs
- ☑ Terminate unpaid internships
- ☑ Offer high-quality education for people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- ☑ Introduce child care subsidy scheme
- ☑ Provide flexible working hours (i.e. more part-time jobs)

Figure 7: Policy recommendations to alleviate childhood poverty.

Case Studies

Caius House

During our research, we visited Caius House Youth Centre to help the team with their activities, talk to some of the children and gain a better understanding of the profound importance of youth clubs.

Caius House is a charity and youth club in Battersea, London, that is committed to providing young people with a safe place to go, have fun and develop their talents. The club offers children a wide range of activities – from basketball and dancing to boxing, music, cooking and many more. Children from the age of 8 to 21 can attend the club and participate in their favourite activity and adults can also join in free yoga classes.

> 'Every young person deserves to belong to a youth centre to encourage imagination, aspiration, creativity, innovation and personal fulfilment'
>
> Caius House vision

However, Caius House not only provides activities that otherwise would be less accessible to disadvantaged children. The team also tries to teach important values, skills, and behaviours to equip them for life.

During my visit to Caius House, I assisted in the baking class. From the beginning, I realized that the class was not only about learning how to bake but about conveying values such as teamwork, modesty, and altruism. For example, the instructor emphasized that there were only two bananas available that need to be shared between all the children – "You need to learn to get along with what you have – even if it is little. But after making the cupcakes, you will find out that, in fact, two bananas are more than enough for all of you if you allocate them fairly". The children might not have been aware of the profoundness of their teacher's words at that exact moment but I am certain they have, to some extent, internalized these valuable lessons and will act accordingly in the future.

Furthermore, at Caius House children are given the opportunity, at an early age, to take responsibility by leading a project or organizing an event for the charity.

During my visit to Caius House, I talked to one such 'Youth Leader'. Currently, she is planning a Multi-Cultural Day where every nationality will be given a booth to share their local food and traditions and exchange their experiences. This event will help the children involved to develop the ability to plan carefully, lead, and work in a team, skills which are the building blocks of possible future careers.

The Caius House team consists of experienced youth workers, educators, musicians, counsellors, trained dancers and media specialists – some of whom are paid workers but many of whom are volunteers. The team dedicates a lot of time, effort and compassion into helping the children. Some of the volunteers do so because they simply know from experience how hard it is for a child in poverty and how important places like Caius House are:

> "I wish I had a place like this when I was young."

The demand for such youth clubs is high. During my visit, I was impressed with how well the team handled a large number of children with only a few workers and volunteers. However, it might be only a matter of time that the team can keep up with the high demand as youth clubs like these are rare in London and workers and volunteers are scarce.

> "We are struggling to get money in...More and more children are coming to us but it is hard to receive money from companies or the government."

After spending time at Caius House, we began to understand the major significance of places like these to counteract childhood poverty.

Firstly, youth clubs provide young people in need with a sense of joy, social exchange and the ability to develop talents. This way, children can shape their own future and are offered a safe place to go whenever they may feel lonely. For example, one young person told me: "In the mornings, my mom often tells me to leave, so I come here and stay until Caius House closes". Secondly, youth clubs provide parents with the opportunity to hand their children into high quality care when they have to go to work – "It's nice for the parents to bring their children here to go to work or just relax for a few hours". Thus, places like Caius House help to decrease current child poverty rates as parents are enabled to go to work, and protect against future poverty by enabling children to develop skills that might be vital for their future career. Therefore, investing in youth clubs can be seen as a key starting point to alleviate childhood poverty, or at the very least, as a way to provide children with a stable environment outside the home.

> "For some children, Caius House is like a home"


PREVENT CROSS CONTAMINATION
RAW MEAT
RAW FISH
COOKED MEATS
SALADS & FRUITS
VEGETABLES
DAIRY PRODUCTS
ATTENTION!
Calius House is NOT responsible for YOUR valuable items. YOU are responsible for YOUR property

Katherine Low Settlement

Katherine Low Settlement in Battersea, South West London, has been providing support to the local community and fighting against poverty and isolation since its foundation in 1924. Still going strong after 90 years, it provides services for children and families, older people, newly arrived communities, and unemployed people as well as providing space for other charities to deliver services.

Katherine Low Settlement's roots are in children and family work and in the early 2000's they became one of London's first Sure Start Centres. Following closure in 2013 they began a new project – The Railway Children – a nursery and playgroup for local children aged 0-5. Alongside this they run ESOL classes with a crèche, mums and toddlers workshops and, most crucially for children growing up in poverty, a youth club providing access to recreation and learning opportunities.

Earlier this year we visited Katherine Low Settlement and interviewed one of the workers about the role of the youth club and the issues facing children growing up in poverty in London. They described how providing access to recreation opportunities that children on low-incomes would otherwise struggle to be able to afford was one of the most important roles of the youth club, helping to redress some of the imbalances in society:

> 'At the club we are constantly thinking about opening up doors to different types of recreation. If you see downstairs, we do Karate and we are going to do basketball, to open them up to thinking that there are opportunities for them, and from that we can support them in taking up other interests. It's having access to that, and access to technology can be a challenge as well.'

They also highlighted the role that the club played in facilitating social interactions and building relationships amongst peers and in providing exposure to different types of people, helping to boost aspirations:

> 'Often in our society, recreation is where you encounter others and make friendships...that is why the club is important; access to facilities and computers, so they can develop their language skills etc. but also meeting friends, making friendships. And very importantly, I've come to appreciate here, that's why our volunteers are so important, aspiration. We do have some youngsters who come here who have quite a drive and want to be successful, but for many the dimension for aspiration is quite important. So meeting our volunteers from university can help them think that they can do that. Many of them, because of their language difficulties, can often very much play down their own abilities.'

More fundamentally and shockingly perhaps, the club also plays a role in meeting the most basic needs of some of the children that make use of its facilities, highlighting the material poverty that exists for some young Londoners:

'We have food out, which is very important for the sense of welcome and comfort, but with a small group you see that food insecurity coming forward. The grabbing of the snacks that are available, their gorging on them and that kind of brings out the sense of that at home the budgets are tight, very tight.'

Growing Up in Poverty in London

I remember my class had to do a maths test at the end of year 9 (at the age of 14) so my school could put us in class sets for year 10 when we would start studying for our GCSE's. I remember I did well in my exam; I got a level 6a, which was an equivalent to a high B. I was fairly pleased with myself, but there was this girl in my class that got a level 8b which was a fairly strong A*. I knew she was smarter than me, but I knew we tended to achieve grades that were fairly close to each other. When we went through the exam paper in class, I recognised that the majority of the class missed out on 18 marks because we did not know how to do the trigonometry questions. The girl who got the highest grade came and taught me how to answer the questions. I got it fairly quickly and didn't have any problems understanding the concept. I asked the girl "How did you know how to answer these questions? Our teacher hasn't even taught us this topic yet?" She replied "My parents hired me a tutor a year ago, so I learnt trigonometry ages ago". I was unable to achieve my potential because I was not taught all that I needed to know. The problem with this scenario is that I was not incapable of achieving a higher grade, but limited due to external factors, such as my teacher not having enough time to teach the whole curriculum. But there are people who can afford to achieve their potential because they have parents that can afford a tutor, to compensate for the failures of my school. I was left behind because I did not grow up in a wealthy household. Those who had the resources were able to excel and I was left behind. In year 10, she was placed in top set maths class; I was placed in second set.

As a 14 year old student, I didn't see what I missing, but when I look back at my education, I see that this middle-class girl was able to succeed in school not because she was smarter than me, but because her parents were able to hire a tutor, something I did not have the luxury to do. She was the girl that knew how to play the piano because she had a piano teacher, she was the girl that also went on holidays to France where she was able to practice her French for her GCSE French speaking exam, she was the girl that had a family friend that was a lawyer where she could get work experience. It is so frustrating knowing that I could have achieved much higher grades if I had the same resources as my peers. This issue is not obvious, it's very subtle. You don't see the middle-class children wearing designer clothes, but you hear it when your classmate reads out what they did during the summer and they include words such as "villa" and "beaches". You see it when you go to birthday parties and they've got their own room, you see it when they have fancy gel pens and pencil cases and you have a few pens and rubber band.

Designed by Little Yellow Duck on a pro bono basis

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