

UK Child Poverty Talk Outline

One in three children in the UK lives in poverty. We're working hard to keep ending child poverty at the top of the political agenda. We work in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Introduction:

1.4 million Children in the UK are living in families where every expense means a tough choice: a proper dinner or winter clothes for the children? Pay the gas bill or replace their worn out shoes?

Choices like these mean children are missing out on the basics of a happy, healthy childhood. It's unfair, unjust and it damages their lives.

These children are living in *severe poverty* defined by Save the Children as living on less than 50% of median income (after housing costs):

- £178 per week for two adults and two children
- £124 per week for one adult and two children

That means their families survive on an average of £7,000 a year after housing costs (for a couple with one child). With £7,000 a year a family has only £19 a day to cover fuel and other bills, food, clothes, washing, transport, activities for children and everything else.

Today there are a staggering 3.4 million, a 1 third of our children, living in poverty in the UK, defined by the government as living on less than 60% of median income(after housing costs):

- £268 for a couple with two children
- £186 a week for a single parent with two children

The UK has one of the worst rates of child poverty in the EU, ranked 21st out of 27 countries

Children in the UK who live in poverty miss out on basic necessities

Clothing and shoes:

- The parents of 1.3 million children can't afford to buy new clothes for their children
- 220,000 children won't have a warm coat this winter
- Cost of winter for a boy aged 7:

Warm coat (Woolworths)	£15
Decent shoes (Clarks)	£32
Warm trousers (Adams)	£12
Snug jumper (Adams)	£10
Hat, scarf, gloves (Woolworths)	£5
Pyjamas	£10
TOTAL:	£84

- School uniform and PE kit costs on average £224

Quotes:

My oldest girl grows very fast and always needs new things. You try and cut costs and buy things cheaply, but cheap shoes break quickly and then you have to buy new ones again. And you might as well get proper ones which are £30 a pair, so that would be £90 pounds for all of my children. For clothes I go to the market and Primark.

Trisha, London

I had to buy Chris new trainers recently. You might call that a treat but actually he really needed them.

Sarah, London

By the time the bills are done we don't have much left and it's very hard to get by – especially when the kids need particular things, like new shoes.

Judy, Birmingham

Household bills:

- Nearly 1 in 5 families struggle to pay household bills
- The average annual family fuel bill is more than £1000 – greater fuel costs in winter are a real problem for low income families, especially those with young children
- More than two thirds of low income families often go into debt to make end meet

Quotes:

I struggle to pay the bills. We can't afford to live on the money we get.

We get £200 pounds a week for all of us, that's for gas, electrics, food, clothes and then I get £240 extra a month for my son.

Lucy, Sunderland

We get roughly £98 per week – all of it comes from benefits. We spend around £15 per week on electricity and gas, between £50 and £60 on food, approximately £10 per week on toiletries and with the phone bill that's all our money gone.

Sarah, London

Some weeks if the bills are particularly expensive it feels like a choice between paying the bills or getting enough shopping. There are times when we all have to go without. There have been a few times where we've run out of gas and don't have hot water for showers. But I normally try to make sure these bills are paid first so we have heating and hot water and electricity.

Judy, Birmingham

Food:

- The parents of 770,000 children can't afford to give them a healthy diet
- The summer holidays when children no longer have free school meals are particularly difficult

Quotes:

Money is difficult, and now I have to make a packed lunch for my son because he doesn't like the healthy eating they have in school and he won't eat it.

Carina, Sunderland

I also know that if things are really tight, I can always rely on my mum. If we have no food in the cupboards, my mum will always sort us out.

Sarah, London

Housing:

- A million children live in houses with rotting walls and floors

Quotes:

Old people get a heating allowance. But what about people like us?

Belinda, Sunderland

There are times when I just can't avoid getting into debt. There are times when we run out of gas and I need to borrow money so there will be hot water when the children get up in the morning.

Judy, Birmingham

One-and-a-half years ago I moved to a housing association. I got a flat on the ground, but with no fence around the garden. Also the door broke off when I moved in my things, because it was rotten – but they want to charge me for the fixing.

Kate, London

Children living in poverty are missing out

- Christmas and school holidays often mean children miss out
- Children often have to miss out on after school activities and school trips

- Parents regularly go without to support their children

What does this mean for children?

Growing up poor harms both childhood and children's futures

These children can expect to get:

- fewer qualifications
- lower paid jobs
- suffer more health problems
- die younger than their peers

What is Save the Children calling for?

Our research shows that there are two key times of year – winter and school summer holidays – when pressure on the family budget is so acute that many families are pushed further into poverty

Save the Children is recommending the introduction of seasonal grants to children in low income families:

- a summer grant of £100 per child
- a winter grant of £100 per child, plus £100 to help with increased bills

Seasonal grants will lift 440,000 children out of poverty

We want this to be part of a wider investment in ending child poverty that will get the Government on track to meet its promise of halving child poverty by 2010 and ending it by 2020. It's estimated that an investment of £3 billion could get the Government back on track to meet its 2010 target.

Campaign background:

- In 1999 Tony Blair made a commitment to end child poverty in the UK by 2020
- He set his government the target of lifting a million children out of poverty by 2005
- So far the government has succeeded in helping 600,000 children out of poverty
- Since we've been campaigning on the issue we've seen a billion pounds committed towards ending child poverty in 2007 and almost another billion in the 2008 budget
- Seasonal grants would help the government get back on track towards the 2020 goal
- An additional 3 billion is the minimum needed to ensure the government meets the next milestone in 2010

- The Pre-budget report in late 2008 and 2009 budget are key points for the Prime Minister to allocate more resources to ending child poverty

Save the Children is part of the Campaign to End Child Poverty - a coalition of more than 120 organisations united in their concern about the unacceptably high levels of child poverty in the UK.

Action now:

The UK is the fifth wealthiest country in the world. But it has one of the worst records of child poverty in Europe. One child in three in the UK is growing up in poverty today. That's appalling.

Now we've a once-in-a-generation chance to change it. The government promised to halve child poverty by 2010. But to get there, they need to invest £3 billion in tax credits and benefits.

They won't do that without public pressure. Join our campaign to End Child Poverty now.

- *Poverty is "a scar on the soul of Britain"* Gordon Brown
- Help us to make a dramatic change for children in the UK and get them what they need: adequate clothing, shelter and food.
- Fill in and return the **campaign action card** now
- Find out more and campaign online at www.savethechildren.org.uk/endchildpoverty

Props Box

Items representing:

Food

Shelter

Clothing

Heating