Child poverty in the Covid-19 pandemic

26 June 2020
Louisa McGeehan
Director of Policy, Rights & Advocacy
Child Poverty Action Group

www. cpag.org.uk

Lmcgiehan@cpag.org.uk
What’s going on with child poverty?
Child poverty is relative

“Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and 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 individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary patterns, customs and activities.”

Peter Townsend (1979) ‘Poverty in the United Kingdom’
Child poverty - trend since the 1960s

% CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY

AFTER HOUSING COSTS

BEFORE HOUSING COSTS

IFS PROJECTION

0% 10% 20% 30% 40%

Compared with the EU
Who is most at risk of poverty?

- Children in single parent families: 49%
- Children in families with 3+ kids: 42%
- Children in families with under-5 children: 35%
- Children in families where someone is disabled: 36%

Who is most at risk of poverty?

Black lives matter, particularly the lives of children

47% of Black children are living in poverty, compared to 26% of White British children.
60% of children from Bangladeshi families
54% of children from Pakistani families

In the 17 local authorities with the highest rates of child poverty, BME children make up half of the young population.


Unknown child illustrator, thanks for your lovely picture – Women and children’s health network, Australia
Would have hit target in early 2020s

- Actual child poverty rate (BHC)
- Projected child poverty rate (BHC) under current government policies
- Hypothetical percentage of children living in poverty (BHC) if progress observed between 98/99 and 10/11 were sustained
Were we all in it together when the Covid-19 pandemic struck?
What’s been happening?
Covid-19 and child poverty

- All in the same storm, not all in the same boat
- Families already struggling risk sinking deeper into poverty
- Millions of households have experienced a drop in income
- Unprecedented Government action to support incomes – Job Retention Scheme, Income Support for Self-Employed (up to £2,500 pcm)
- But big gap between this and universal credit, even after uprating (c.£400 pcm)
- 8.7m people benefited from government support – almost 3m missed out.
- £63 million for local welfare assistance schemes but falls short of the £250 million needed to support all hard-hit families in England.
- Unemployment as a result of the crisis set to rise to its highest level for 25 years – economy shrunk 9 times faster than ever before.
- Nothing specifically aimed at supporting children in Covid-19 response other than continuing statutory free school meals provision in ‘school holidays’.
Covid-19 and child poverty

CPAG is tracking the pandemic response and its aftermath, highlighting early research and making proposals for building back better.

Further information and updates on Poverty and Covid-19 can be found on the CPAG website https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/covid-19
What can we do to tackle poverty and improve health and resilience?
Child poverty – what needs to happen?

• Need a broad strategy to end child poverty
• Reinstate targets at national and local level
• Restore family benefits – triple lock?
• £10 on Child Benefit = 5% drop in child poverty
• Fix UC – so it’s fit for families
• DHPs and LWAS – serious need of reform (guarantee future, ringfence, reporting duties, clear framework as in Scotland)
• Universal Free School Meals work
Policies to focus on at a local level

• Income maximisation – welfare rights advice is early intervention
• Provide local support for parental employment
• Council tax reductions schemes
• Local Welfare Assistance Schemes
• Debt and credit advice
• Housing quality and homelessness prevention – local solutions
• Good use of DHPs
• Change of tenancy arrangements – refurbishment, furniture, UC friendly dates
More policies to consider

- Restore SureStart
- Libraries
- Planning – no fast food near schools?
- Green spaces – community growing
- Child mental health services – prioritise and develop
- Community transport – free for children & young people?
- Unlock sports facilities and community assets and make them affordable
Child Poverty checklist

The following slides are from a checklist developed with the LGA Children’s Programme Team to support peers whilst undertaking Early Years Challenges for the LGA Early Years Conference in Manchester.
## Child Poverty Considerations

<table>
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<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is the lead in your local authority for child poverty?</td>
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<td>What is the % of children living in poverty for your area and how has this changed over the last few years?</td>
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<td>Do you have a child poverty strategy? (if yes how does this link in with your Early Years Strategy?)</td>
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<td>Where does child poverty fit within your boards and governance structures?</td>
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<td>Are there clear pathways for professionals to signpost low income families to for support?</td>
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<td>What local welfare assistance support is available to your families?</td>
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<td>Is there adequate welfare rights advice available to families in your borough?</td>
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<td>What is your local take up rate for Child Benefit and how are you ensuring all families that are eligible are claiming it?</td>
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<td>If referring families to food banks, what steps do you take to reduce stigma for them?</td>
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<td>What local housing initiatives are in place to support families in poverty?</td>
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<td>How does your council ensure that the views of low income families feed into council plans?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Years and Education</td>
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<td>How are you promoting funded childcare to families?</td>
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<td>How are you supporting parents re ‘voluntary’ parental contributions &amp; charges for materials and activities?</td>
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<td>How is Pupil Premium (and EYPP) used to support families effectively?</td>
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<td>Is there sufficient affordable extended school provision to enable parents to work outside school hours?</td>
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<td>How do schools work to reduce the cost of education for families? (trips, uniforms, clubs etc)</td>
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<td>Is childcare provision of high quality including in areas of highest deprivation?</td>
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<td>How do you ensure all children can access enriching activities regardless of low income?</td>
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<td>Are all staff trained to identify and support/signpost families and children living in poverty?</td>
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<th>Partners</th>
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<td>How are libraries supporting families and children in poverty?</td>
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<td>How are local community groups supporting families and children in poverty?</td>
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<td>Are local adult education training programmes tailored to meet the local job market?</td>
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<td>How are local businesses encouraged and supported to recruit parents with children?</td>
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