



BIRTH TO 19 

Response to the Child Poverty Task Force

Our Response

Birth to 19's vision is to help all children succeed and have great life chances. To promote social mobility both locally and nationally, we:

- Train teachers and apprentices through our [Birth to 19 SCITT](#) and [Apprenticeship Academy](#).
- Provide professional development and support for colleagues in private nurseries, schools and for childminders, including through our status as the [Early Years Stronger Practice Hub](#) for South and West Yorkshire.
- Inspire parents to help their children learn and flourish, through our [50 Things to Do Before You're Five](#) initiative.
- Work with partners to support place-based solutions to complex problems, through our [Education Alliance for Life Chances](#).

Child poverty is an issue in the UK that needs significant long-term strategic action to mitigate the impact it has on children's health, education and future opportunities. For us, acting early in a child's life is important, before problems become more difficult to solve. In simplistic terms, child poverty is when families face significant challenges in meeting their basic daily needs. Child poverty impacts the child, but also the whole family.

According to the [Child Poverty Action Group](#), the standard way to measure child poverty is by using relative household income. A child is said to be living in poverty if they live in a household with income below 60 percent of the national average income.

From 1997, the Government had considerable success in improving child poverty in the UK, so much so that by 2010, the number of children in relative poverty after housing costs had reduced by 600,000 whilst the number in absolute poverty after housing costs had reduced by 2.2 million. Since the pandemic, much of the progress previously made has been lost. Across the UK, the number of children living in poverty increased by 350,000 to 4.2 million between 2021 and 2022. Currently, 3 in 10 children are living in poverty. So, there's a crucial need to act now, at pace and scale.

This issue is close to our hearts at Birth to 19. Figures show that 1 in 3 children are living in poverty in our home city of Bradford.



The Government's Child Poverty Task Force, formed in October 2024, marks the start of a significant effort to tackling child poverty in the UK.

The purpose of the Task force is to deliver a strategy of both short- and long-term actions to reduce child poverty. This is set out in the Government's document with four main focuses:

1. Increasing incomes: Examining how government and business can work together to support parents into secure employment, and support progression in the labour market, building on our plans to Make Work Pay and to Get Britain Working. This will include childcare as a key enabler of parental employment. We will consider how social security reforms could support people into work and help alleviate poverty.

2. Reducing essential costs: Working with business and organisations to understand and tackle the key cost drivers for low-income families (such as housing, energy, food). Looking at where these costs are a barrier to education and employment (like childcare and transport), including addressing the poverty premium and where increased costs of disability exacerbates poverty.

3. Increasing financial resilience: Working with a range of stakeholders, including financial institutions, charities, and consumer representatives to find solutions to problem debt and enabling families to build savings. Financial resilience more broadly, including addressing the problem of low savings levels, can reduce the risk of future generations slipping into poverty and enhance their economic opportunities.

4. Better local support, focussed especially on children's early years: Our society, through our local institutions and our local communities, is at the heart of tackling the impacts of poverty. This is particularly important in a child's early years, where access to high quality early education and health care services is necessary to ensure all children have the best start in life. We will work with community, local and national partners, inside and outside the public sector, to improve access, co-ordination and the quality of services, as well as wider opportunities, for those children of all ages that need them, recognising the particular benefits that early years interventions can have.

We anticipate that the strategy that will be published by the Government in Spring 2025 will present a purposeful and targeted approach to these focuses. This approach will consider preventative measures for future generations and create positive impact for young children.

We collaborated in writing The Centre for Young Lives' report "An evidence-based plan for addressing poverty with and through education settings." The report provides a detailed list of key recommendations from early years experts. We urge a focus on 'mitigating inequality in early childhood (rather than a single focus on absolute poverty)' in order to 'reduce the number of children experiencing multiple adversities by more than 80%.'



Recommendations

The report recommends that the Government should prioritise a joined-up approach to tackle the challenge of child poverty. Through developing a cross-departmental approach with multiple sectors working together within local communities, such as schools and nurseries, health services and local authorities, we will better address the issues children face as an impact of living in poverty.

The three key recommendations are:

- 1** **Commit to a national priority of eradicating child poverty and removing the barriers to education it creates.**
- 2** **Commit to a national strategy that utilises the existing educational setting infrastructure to address child poverty**
- 3** **Focus on “levelling up” within areas where education settings are serving the most disadvantaged communities.**

We acknowledge that child poverty is a complex issue to solve immediately, however the demand for improving life chances for children is more pressing than ever. Through a collaborative and evidence-informed approach, the problem can be mitigated and future generations protected. We are excited to see what the Government deliver in Spring and are doing what we can as an organisation supporting children to have the best start to life.

Our Executive Director, Christian Bunting and Director: Institute of the Early Years, Rebecca Oberg comment:

We look forward to working partnership with the Government to help make sure the strategy has the greatest impact. We work to better the lives of children in deprived communities across the UK. We share the vision of a ‘country that works for all children and young people’.

