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Our Children, Our Future: Tackling Child Poverty: Monitoring and Evaluation - Baseline Report

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Foreword from the Co-Chairs of the

Interministerial Group on Child Poverty

The publication of our Strategy 'Our Children, Our Future: Tackling Child Poverty' last December was a defining moment, marking our first step on a long-term journey to drive down child poverty.

At its launch, we set out both the scale of the problem and the urgent need for action. Child poverty continues to have a profound and enduring impact on children's lives today and their future, limiting opportunity and life chances. Children growing up in poverty are more likely to experience mental and physical health conditions, do worse at school, work less, go on to earn less than their peers, and experience homelessness.

The effects of child poverty are felt across communities and across generations. To build a stronger more prosperous Britain, we must prioritise addressing child poverty.

From the outset, we have been clear that tackling the structural, long-term drivers of poverty will take time and sustained effort.

The Strategy marks a turning point in delivering real support for families, bringing together decisive measures that are already making a tangible difference to people's lives. From strengthening financial support and improving access to childcare, to boosting employment opportunities, tackling the wider cost pressures households face and expanding free school meals, the Strategy reflects a clear commitment to giving every child the best start in life.

Critically, the removal of the two-child limit is already helping hundreds of thousands of families, lifting a significant burden from families and ensuring children have access to the basic things they need each day, and get the best start in life, no matter the size of their family.

We are committed to delivering what we set out in the Strategy to alleviate the experience of families living in poverty and to address the longer-term drivers of child poverty.

Two core principles sit at the heart of this Strategy: security and opportunity. These twin goals underpin our determination to ensure that every child gets the best start in life, with the support they need to succeed and the stability they need to thrive.

This baseline report is a critical part of that effort. It sets out a comprehensive and robust framework for implementing the Strategy and delivering in partnership to

improve the lives of children across the UK. By setting out our guiding approach and the latest evidence, this report establishes a shared understanding of where we stand, and how we will continue to work together to build the evidence on where best to target future interventions across the UK over the course of the ten-year Strategy.

This report also sets out the baseline position against the Strategy's two headline metrics—relative low income after housing costs (AHC), and deep material poverty. Tracking these two metrics over time will strengthen our ability to target action effectively and deliver meaningful reductions in child poverty over the life of the Strategy.

We are committed to sustained, measurable progress. That means taking difficult decisions, focusing relentlessly on outcomes, and working across government and with partners to deliver change at scale.

This report lays the foundation for that work. Through the Child Poverty Strategy, we will drive forward the transformation needed to deliver more security, more opportunity, and more respect for every family and every community across the UK.

The Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP
Minister of State for Employment

Olivia Bailey MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Early Education)

1. Introduction

This baseline report updates on the UK government's Child Poverty Strategy: 'Our Children, Our Future: Tackling Child Poverty'. Building on the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Evidence Pack (December 2025), it outlines the evaluation approach, including plans for analysis, research, oversight, and early delivery progress. Rather than repeating previous analysis (in the Strategy and [associated publications](#)) it presents the updated position for the 2024/25 baseline year, the first year of this government, and sets out how progress will be tracked and reported.

The Strategy set out a ten-year ambition to reduce child poverty and its impacts across the UK, recognising the need for sustained, coordinated effort to address both immediate pressures on families and the underlying drivers of poverty. Early

progress includes removing the two child limit (expected to lift 450,000 children out of poverty), and expanding eligibility for free school meals (expected to lift 100,000 children out of poverty). It also includes establishing the Crisis and Resilience Fund, immediate action on housing security and homelessness prevention to provide stability, and reducing cost pressures on low-income families.

This report sets out how the Strategy will be monitored, evaluated and strengthened, with a framework based on strong cross UK government leadership, partnership with devolved governments, regional and local government and external partners, including business, faith and civil society groups and with lived experience. It also sets out a robust, evolving evidence base, to ensure interventions remain well targeted.

Progress will be assessed using the Strategy's two headline metrics, supported by a broader set of contextual indicators to aid understanding of trends on the underlying long-term drivers of child poverty. These indicators reflect a range of policy levers and recognise that progress need not be even across all areas to deliver meaningful change.

Given the complexity of child poverty, a comprehensive programme of research and analysis will be developed to explore what drives outcomes and why, and how this varies across groups and place. A cross-cutting approach will combine quantitative and qualitative data, including lived experience insights.

This includes new longitudinal research with families experiencing or at risk of poverty, cross-government policy evaluation and synthesis, and a process evaluation supported by a delivery and stakeholder panel. A children's rights approach underpins this work with the voices of children and families central alongside a strong place-based focus recognising how local context shapes both the drivers and experience of poverty.

Annual reporting will ensure transparency on progress and sustain momentum to fulfil the government's commitment to reduce child poverty in this parliament and create the conditions for lasting change. The report provides a foundation for delivery over the coming years and reinforces that tackling child poverty remains central to our aim to give all children the best start in life and increase opportunity.

2. Delivery, monitoring and evaluation approach

The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, published alongside the Child Poverty Strategy, set out our initial plans to track progress and ensure the Strategy is on track to achieve its goals.

The Strategy aims to deliver an enduring reduction in child poverty over this Parliament, as part of a long-term ten-year Strategy for lasting change. A robust programme of monitoring and evaluation will support accountability, assess progress and strengthen the evidence base on what works to reduce child poverty.

The aims of the Strategy evaluation are:

- to monitor implementation of commitments across UK government and with wider local, regional, private and third sector partners, and identify risks to delivery
- to track progress in tackling child poverty and its key drivers, identifying where action may need to change or go further
- to strengthen the evidence base on effective approaches to reducing child poverty, including what works and for whom

Delivery framework

The visualisation presented below (Figure 1) sets out the UK government's framework for delivering the Strategy, sustaining momentum over the next decade and strengthening the evidence base on what works.

It is built around three core elements.

1. Delivery in partnership
2. Governance and accountability
3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Delivery in partnership

First, delivery in partnership emphasises strong coordination and collaboration across the UK government and beyond. This includes working closely with devolved governments, regional and local government, and external partners including business, faith and civil society groups and with lived experience, to deliver the Strategy and support wider anti-poverty work.

This approach recognises the devolved context, where devolved governments hold

responsibilities and have their own strategies and priorities for tackling child poverty, and focuses on alignment and shared learning. This is supported by structured engagement with experts (academics and institutes, including our expert analytical panel), communities of practice, and the voices of children and families, ensuring lived experience remains central to design, delivery and improvement.

Governance and accountability

Second, governance and accountability ensure the sustained prioritisation of child poverty across government through oversight by the Child Poverty Interministerial Group, led by Ministers in the Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Education. This group leads delivery of the commitments in the Strategy, monitors the Strategy's impact and the broader trajectory of child poverty across the UK, and drives sustained momentum. Accountability and transparency are further strengthened by annual reporting and the analytical programme outlined below.

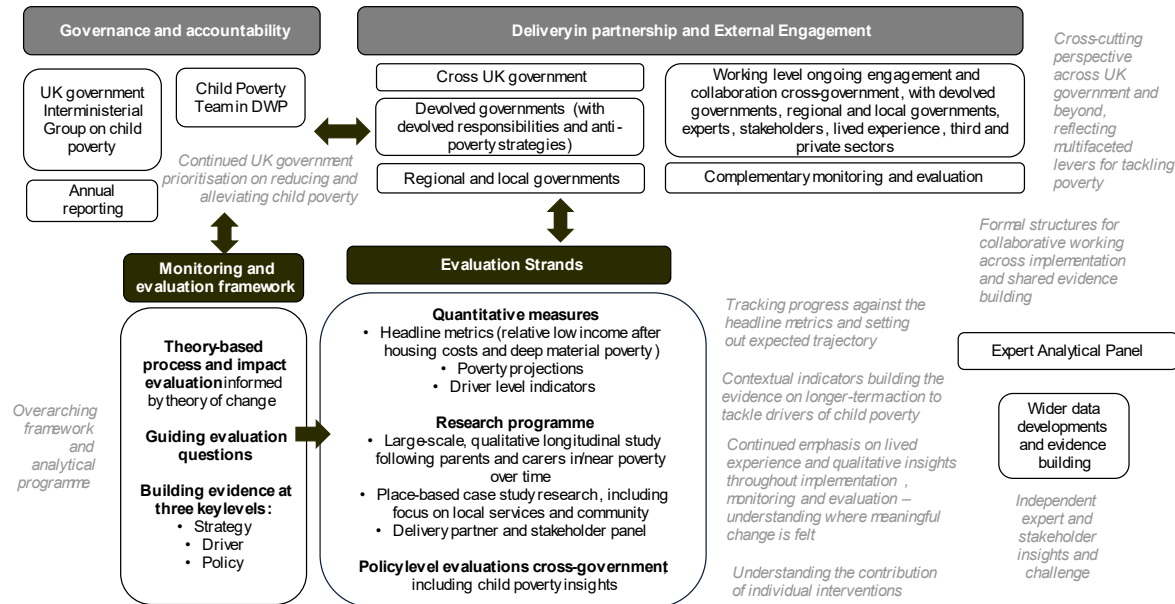
Monitoring and evaluation

Third, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework underpins delivery, combining theory-based evaluation across strategy, driver and policy levels with quantitative insights including headline poverty measures, projections, and contextual driver-level indicators. This is supported by a comprehensive research programme, designed to provide a rich, multi-dimensional understanding of how the Strategy is delivered and what works to reduce and alleviate the experiences of child poverty.

Together, these elements ensure that delivery is evidence-led and continuously informed by lived experience, strengthening accountability and enabling the Strategy to adapt and maximise its impact over time.

Figure 1: Framework for delivering, monitoring and evaluating the Child Poverty Strategy

Our framework for delivering the UK government Child Poverty Strategy commitments ~~is~~ **sustaining momentum on tackling child poverty over 10 years. Building the evidence on what works and where future intervention is most effectively targeted**



Theory-based evaluation

We have adopted a theory-based evaluation approach, which enables us to bring together a variety of evidence to assess whether, how, and to what extent the Strategy is contributing to reducing child poverty and its impacts.

As the Strategy encompasses a range of interventions delivered over a long period and often at different times, and in the absence of a counterfactual, a theory-based approach is most appropriate. We have also built in elements to understand the variation across different geographies, for different groups and insights on individual drivers and policies.

Our monitoring and evaluation framework is organised across three distinct but complementary levels and supported by analytical strands:

1. Strategy level: cross-cutting view of whether child poverty has reduced overall, focusing on the two headline metrics and wider experience captured through the research programme.
2. Driver level: a more detailed focus on what is driving observed changes supported by contextual indicators and research.
3. Policy level: evaluation of specific policies and interventions, understanding their impacts for child poverty and wider benefits.

The evidence across these three levels is brought together across the distinct

strands of analysis and research to understand how individual policies contribute to broader outcomes and how these measures and wider factors influence changes in the structural drivers of poverty and contribute to overall progress.

To guide this approach, we have developed central evaluation questions at each level of analysis, shown below. Taken together, these questions will support us to understand not only if progress is being achieved, but how and why. We will look to address these questions in future annual reporting, using them as a guide to draw together the evidence and insights from across the programme of analytical work.

Central evaluation questions at the strategy, driver and policy level

1. Strategy Level – a cross-cutting view of child poverty in the UK

Q1: Have UK child poverty trends and levels changed since the introduction of the Strategy? How does this vary for different groups with high poverty risk? How, where, and to what extent has the strategy contributed to any change?

Q2: Have the experiences of children and families in poverty changed since the introduction of the Strategy? How does this vary for different groups with high poverty risk? How, where, and to what extent has the strategy contributed to any change?

Q3: Has the Strategy been delivered and implemented as planned across UK government and in partnership with devolved governments, regional and local government and partners including business, faith, civil society and lived experience groups.

Strategy delivery within the UK nationally, and sub-nationally

Q4: How do the above trends and experiences vary across the UK nationally, and sub-nationally?

Q5: How has the Strategy delivery been complemented by devolved government and sub-national efforts to tackle child poverty?

2. Driver level – factors that shape whether children and their families are likely to experience poverty

Q6: What progress has been made in tackling the key drivers of child poverty, due to both strategy and wider activity?

Q7: For which groups has progress been made? Does this vary by geography, family type and demographic characteristics?

3. Policy level – progress made across the Strategy commitments

Q8: Have Strategy commitments been delivered as planned?

Q9: What is the impact on children and families?

Q10: How has this contributed to any changes in child poverty or its drivers?

Theory of Change

The evaluation is guided by a Theory of Change, which sets out the pathways through which the Strategy is expected to contribute to reductions in child poverty and alleviating its experience.

The updated logic model in figure 2 plays an integrating role, bringing together the different levels of analysis and illustrating how policies, drivers and outcomes are expected to interact. The model reflects the core pillars of the Strategy, the cross-cutting nature of action required and delivery by UK government and beyond (see Figure 3).

Engagement with place-based partners has highlighted further how all drivers of poverty operate within a place-based context. The model now more explicitly reflects the role of delivery partners and the importance of tailoring local support to meet the specific needs of families to both reduce child poverty and alleviate the experience of it, as part of action delivered within a clear national framework.

The model focuses on seven priority areas, building on analysis in the [Evidence Pack](#) and extensive stakeholder consultation. These priority areas are grouped under three central pillars, representing core outcomes required to reduce child poverty and alleviate its impacts. Progress may vary across pillars and does not need to occur equally, reflecting differing policy choices and the range of levers available.

The model recognises the role of delivery partners and collaborators, including UK government departments, devolved governments, regional and local government, and local leaders and organisations in supporting outcomes.

Outcomes will also be shaped by wider contextual factors, such as economic, demographic, social and political change and risks, which may influence the effectiveness of actions or shift priorities. We will continue to monitor and assess the impact of such developments.

While this evaluation primarily focuses on poverty reduction and alleviation, the Strategy actions also supports wider government plans and whole system approaches, including economic growth, ending homelessness, giving children the best start in life, and improving educational, health and employment outcomes. Although these outcomes are captured elsewhere across government, we will continue to explore these interactions as the evidence base develops. Reducing child poverty is a key component and enabler of this wider systems approach to reduce inequality and increase opportunity for children.

Figure 2: the UK government's Child Poverty Strategy Theory of Change

Quantitative metrics

Progress at the Strategy level will be tracked against the two headline Child Poverty Strategy metrics, relative low income after housing costs (AHC) and deep material poverty, benchmarked against a 2024/25 baseline. Where available, official poverty projections will set out the expected trajectory. This is explored in more detail in Chapter 3.

At the driver level, informed by the Theory of Change, we have developed eight contextual indicators to monitor key drivers of poverty and to build the evidence on longer-term action to tackle child poverty. These indicators are summarised in Table 1 below. Many are based on data already published by government. However, several use new breakdowns to increase focus on children in lower-income families. These indicators complement policy evaluation evidence and contribute to the overall drawing together of distinct evidence strands.

We will continue to evolve these indicators as new data becomes available and quality improves over time, including reflecting any changes to the Theory of Change where key drivers or priorities are adjusted.

Please see Annex B, published alongside this report, for additional detail and the latest analysis on these contextual indicators.

Table 1: Child Poverty Strategy contextual indicators

Indicator	Direct link to relative low income	Direct link to deep mat. poverty
Net income before housing costs for children in the bottom two income quintiles	Yes	Yes
Employment rates for parents in the bottom two income quintiles	Yes	Yes
Median weekly earnings for employed parents in the bottom two income quintiles	Yes	Yes
Real value of the Universal Credit standard allowance	Yes	Yes
Household savings over £850 for children in the bottom two income quintiles	No	Yes
Household arrears on bills for children in the bottom two income quintiles	No	Yes
Household spending on essentials for low-income households with children	Yes	Yes
Children in relative low-income living in	No	Yes

Research programme

As with Strategy development, lived experience is a central thread throughout our delivery, monitoring and evaluation activity. Our evaluation is supported by a comprehensive programme of research and analysis, including:

A UK-wide Parents and Carers Longitudinal Study

This will provide a rich picture of lived experience over time, jointly funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Education, with boosts from Scottish and Welsh Governments. This study will follow a cohort of parents and carers of children in or near poverty, on one or both headline metrics, over four years (2026–2029), combining annual light touch surveys with in-depth interviews. It will provide robust, contextual evidence on how families' circumstances, incomes and sources of support change, and how the Strategy is experienced in practice. This longitudinal approach will allow us to understand not just what changes, but how and why, complementing the headline metrics, contextual indicators and policy level evaluations.

A cross-government policy evaluation synthesis

This will assess how individual policies are implemented, their reach and impact, to ensure consistent consideration of child poverty outcomes have been taken. Where possible, this will include incorporating lived experience through evaluation activity. This will allow us to understand how individual policies contribute to broader outcomes. Chapter 4 provides an overview of how these policies are being delivered and evaluated and a more comprehensive update can be found in Annex C, published alongside this report.

A process evaluation with delivery partners and stakeholders

To assess the delivery, coordination and implementation of the Strategy in practice. This will include structured engagement with cross-UK government devolved governments, regional and local government and external partners, including business, faith and civil society groups and with lived experience, including youth ambassador groups. It will ensure their experiences are captured at different milestones of Strategy, to inform ongoing learning and complement our formal research insights. Building on insights from the policy level evaluation, this will enable us to identify what works, barriers and opportunities, and how outcomes vary

across different groups and places.

Place-based research

To capture regional and community-level insights and variation in England, this research will examine how local areas tackle child poverty, the effectiveness of different approaches, as well as how well services meet families' needs. We will do this through a programme of research including research in a number of case study areas to give a representative picture. Our research with children during the development of the Strategy highlighted the importance of community and local services, so children's perspectives will be a key focus for this strand. This activity will also be linked to the policy level evaluations to give us a deeper understanding of local contexts.

Where relevant, activity will be aligned across the different research strands and findings will be cross-referenced to give us insight which can be applied across different strands of the Strategy and Monitoring and Evaluation framework.

Delivery in partnership and external engagement

Reducing child poverty cannot be done by UK government alone. It requires coordinated action, partnership and consensus across multiple policy areas, tiers of government and sectors.

While the Strategy sets the national direction, its impact depends on how effectively policies are implemented in practice by a wide range of delivery partners and supporting organisations, including UK Government, devolved governments, regional and local government, as well as business, faith and civil society. Strong partnership working enables the Strategy to respond to and learn from local needs and approaches, align activity across systems, and ensure that support reaches families in an accessible, joined up and effective way. See Chapter 5 for further detail.

To support this and as part of the process evaluation outlined above, we will engage with delivery partner and stakeholders to provide ongoing insight and challenge. These fora will bring together representatives from across the system, including delivery partners and lived experience experts, to gather insights at key milestones and inform implementation and ongoing development. This will complement wider evaluation activity and seek to understand how the Strategy is delivered in practice, how effectively partners are working together, how policies are coordinated, and how implementation varies across places and groups.

We are also continuing to engage regularly with devolved governments, to coordinate and align where policies are devolved, acknowledging where priorities diverge and learn from differential approaches taken in their respective strategies.

By drawing on this evidence alongside findings from policy evaluation and place-based research set out in the research programme, we will build a clearer picture of what works well, what barriers exist, and why outcomes differ, providing insight to support continuous improvement over the life of the Strategy.

The evaluation is supported by an Expert Analytical Panel. Please see the [Expert Analytical Panel](#) for terms of reference and membership. The panel will provide important ongoing independent expertise, challenge and scrutiny to the analytical work supporting delivery and oversight of the Strategy.

We are also inviting contributions from interested organisations and individuals to continue to support the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy. We welcome continued proactive engagement and sharing of evidence, forthcoming projects and research. Please contact us at childpovertystrategy.analysis@dwp.gov.uk with any evidence you have on what is working well, key challenges, and opportunities for improvement, or to discuss forthcoming projects and research that could strengthen our evidence base.

The Department for Work and Pensions has recently published its updated Areas of Research Interest outlining priority research questions to address, including those relating to child poverty. This is available at: [DWP Areas of Research Interest 2026 - GOV.UK](#). We are keen to continue, and build on, collaboration and external evidence building in these areas.

Governance and accountability

To maintain a cross-government focus and provide leadership on delivery of the Strategy, the government has established an Interministerial Group on Child Poverty (IMG) with representation from all government departments key to child poverty. Co-chaired by ministers from the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Education, the IMG is:

- leading delivery of the commitments in the Strategy
- monitoring the Strategy's impact and the broader trajectory of child poverty; and
- building momentum to sustain and increase impact into the future

To achieve this, the IMG is continuing to be informed by expertise from across and beyond government, recognising the important role of collaboration and partnership in tackling child poverty. This involves reviewing new evidence, as it comes to light, and agreeing next steps over the 10-year lifespan of the Strategy. The IMG's work is underpinned by the voices of children and families with experience of poverty.

In addition to publishing this baseline report, the IMG will oversee the annual updates on the progress of the implementation and impacts of the Strategy.

The IMG will meet regularly through to the end of this Parliament.

3. Strategy level baseline update

Building on the monitoring and evaluation approach set out in Chapter 2 this chapter presents the baseline position, focusing on overarching trends and future developments.

Child poverty trends in the UK: 2024/2025

We use two headline metrics to evaluate progress against the Strategy, reflecting its focus on addressing both the drivers and root causes of child poverty.

The first metric is relative low income AHC, a leading and internationally recognised measure of poverty. It reflects changes in living standards by comparing household income AHC and adjusted for household size and composition, to the national median. Children are considered in poverty if they live in households with less than 60% of this median income.

The second metric is deep material poverty based on material deprivation, reflecting our commitment to address deeper child poverty. It is based on whether families can afford 13 items, identified by the public as the most essential items, covering basic needs such as food, heating and housing. Children in families lacking four or more items for financial reasons are classed as being in deep material poverty. This measure goes beyond income to reflect broader pressures on living standards, including costs and access to support.

Since the Strategy publication, updated estimates for both measures were published

in the Department for Work and Pensions’ [Household Below Average Income Publication \(HBAI\)](#) in March 2026. This includes methodological improvements implemented in HBAI this year, resulting in revised estimates for income-based poverty measures with updated back series through to 2021/2022. Further information on the HBAI methodological changes and publication are here: [Households below average income \(HBAI\) statistics - GOV.UK](#)

Due to the methodological changes, HBAI data from before 2021/2022 cannot currently be compared with data from 2021/2022 onwards.

Latest UK statistics (for 2024/2025) show:

- 4.0 million children (27%) were in relative low income AHC. This is unchanged since 2023/2024, but there are 700,000 more children in poverty than there were in 2010/2011 [\[footnote 1\]](#)[\[footnote 2\]](#)
- 1.9 million children (13%) were in deep material poverty in 2024/2025, a decrease of 100,000 (1 percentage point) since 2023/2024 [\[footnote 3\]](#)

Looking ahead, the latest [official poverty projections](#) based on OBR assumptions (March 2026) estimate:

- 3.6 million (25%) children will be in relative low income (AHC) in the final year of parliament, 2029/2030, a reduction of 400,000 (2 percentage points) from the baseline year. [\[footnote 4\]](#)

This is the largest expected reduction in child poverty over a single Parliament since comparable records began.

As deep material poverty is impacted by a range of un-modellable factors, such as families’ broader resources, support networks and financial resilience, it is not possible to model projections in deep material poverty in the same way as for relative low income.

As set out in the Child Poverty Strategy and the accompanying [Evidence Pack](#), not all children face equal risks of poverty, and rates vary across the UK. Children from larger, single parent, ethnic minority families, families where someone has a disability, and families in rented accommodation are all at particularly high risk of poverty. Many families experience multiple risk factors, compounding the challenges they face.

We discuss the impact and importance of place in Chapter 5, and latest analysis showing the different characteristics associated with increased risk of child poverty

is published in Annex A, published alongside this report, reflecting the latest revised and updated HBAI data. Historic trends are set out in the [Evidence Pack](#).

Strengthening our poverty measurement

Our evidence base on the relative low income headline metric will be further strengthened, in particular at a local level, through the following recent and forthcoming statistical developments:

- [Households Below Average Income \(HBAI\)](#), which is the primary official source of poverty statistics in the UK, has been improved with administrative-linked data as outlined above. Additional developments are planned in the future, for example bringing grossing into alignment with Census 2021 (2022 for Scotland).
- For the first time from March 2026, [Children in low income families: local area statistics](#) includes relative low income (AHC) estimates, as well as the established estimates on a before housing costs (BHC) basis.
- We are working on a new metric of low income for families in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) to be published later this year. This will provide timelier estimates of child poverty at both local and national level.

Further information is available in DWP's [Statistical work programme](#).

4. Delivery update and evaluation plans

Following the updated baseline position presented in Chapter 3, this chapter provides an overview of key delivery updates and evaluation plans under each pillar. Please see, [Annex C published alongside this report](#) for detailed policy delivery updates, relevant evaluation activity and evidence.

These policies and programmes apply differently across the UK based on reserved and devolved matters. This was set out in more detail in the Strategy.

Boosting family incomes

The UK government is taking action to ensure parents can support their families through high quality jobs, and that the social security system acts as a safety net for those that need it most.

To help parents into work, the new Jobs and Careers Service will provide tailored employment support, including for parents. This includes Family Community Work Coaches, who provide personalised support for vulnerable families to address their underlying barriers to work. The government has also commissioned local Get Britain Working plans in all areas in England.

Recognising the importance of access to high quality, affordable childcare for working parents, the government is conducting an ongoing review into early education and childcare support alongside taking steps to improve access. This includes creating 11,000 new places in schools-based nurseries by September 2027, reviewing reforms of Early Years funding, and streamlining the process of claiming support with upfront childcare costs in Universal Credit (UC). With the expansion of the working parent entitlement, around 8 in 10 eligible children aged 9 months to 2-years and 9 in 10 eligible 3 and 4-year-olds are now registered, supporting parents to access work.

The Milburn Review interim report set out the close link between child poverty and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). The government is taking action through a range of NEET prevention measures and a £2.5 billion investment in employment support through the Youth Guarantee.

This action on employment support comes alongside the government's Make Work Pay plan to strengthen job quality and security. The Employment Rights Act (December 2025) introduced the Day 1 right to Paternity Leave and Unpaid Parental Leave with further measures including enhanced dismissal protections for pregnant women and new mothers, flexible working, and the right to guaranteed hours from 2027. These reforms will benefit millions, particularly parents in low income or in insecure jobs.

Impacts of these measures on parental employment and progression will be evaluated through the Get Britain Working framework, alongside insights from administrative data and evaluation of delivery of childcare provision.

On social security, the government brought in urgent legislation to remove the two child limit in UC. This change is expected to lift [450,000 children out of relative](#) low income (AHC), underlining the scale of its potential to improve family living standards. The removal of the two child limit came into effect on 6 April 2026 alongside a 6.2% above inflation increase to the UC standard allowance, increasing

support for low-income households facing cost of living pressures.

The government is making wider reforms to social security support, including improving the work incentives in Housing Benefit for those in temporary accommodation and supported housing, and ongoing reforms to the Child Maintenance Service to better support separated parents. The government also continues to progress the UC Review to inform ongoing policy development across areas including work incentives, financial resilience and customer experience.

The government will evaluate the impact of these changes on children and families through a programme of mixed method evaluations, supplemented by a range of other sources including administrative data, customer insights and stakeholder engagement.

Driving down the costs of essentials

Since publication of the Strategy, the government has taken forward action to improve housing security, strengthen homelessness prevention and reduce cost pressures on low-income families.

In housing, progress has included publication of a policy statement on a new Decent Homes Standard, with legislation to extend the standard across both the social and private rented sectors by 2035, and enactment of the Renters' Rights Act 2025, which abolished Section 21 'no fault' evictions and strengthened protections against poor housing conditions and unfair rent increases. The government is also strengthening its response to homelessness, with a greater emphasis on prevention and the quality of accommodation available to families.

The government is taking additional action to improve outcomes for children in temporary accommodation, including work to end the unlawful use (beyond the statutory six weeks) of bed and breakfasts for families and strengthening notification arrangements with schools and health services. The government is also working to end the discharge of newborns into Bed and Breakfasts, whilst NHS England is scoping a new clinical code for children in temporary accommodation to support improved data on accidents and admissions to better identify and prevent incidents. These measures are being accompanied by strengthened monitoring and evaluation, as outlined in the National Plan to End Homelessness, including new national targets and planned system-wide assessment.

Alongside housing measures, the government has introduced a range of

interventions intended to reduce essential household costs and improve access to food as part of wider manifesto commitments. In April 2026, we increased the value of Healthy Start weekly payments by 10%, boosting the ability to buy healthy food for those families who need it most.

From the start of the academic year 2026/27, all children in households in receipt of UC will become eligible for free school meals. This includes pupils in school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools.

The phased expansion of free breakfast clubs across state-funded primary schools is also expected to support food security, children's wellbeing and reduced childcare costs for working families.

We are also implementing the Warm Homes Plan alongside the Fuel Poverty Strategy for England, which sets out our plan to reduce energy costs for low income households, including those with young children, and to lift up to 1 million households out of fuel poverty by 2030.

Further measures include reforms to reduce school uniform costs, continued support for affordable local transport, and planned reform of the WaterSure scheme to expand eligibility. Across these areas, departments are undertaking evaluation activity to assess delivery, value for money and wider impacts on children and families.

The government has also continued to develop its approach to digital inclusion, recognising the role of connectivity and access to suitable devices in supporting participation in education, employment and essential services. Measures have included work with telecoms providers to improve access to affordable tariffs and reduce unexpected mid-contract price rises, alongside device donation and IT reuse initiatives designed to widen access to digital technology among households and community organisations. The government is undertaking a range of evaluation activity to assess implementation of these programmes and their impact on children's wellbeing and wider outcomes.

Strengthening support for children and families

The government is making progress in strengthening support for children and families and moving towards a more preventative approach to reducing child poverty. The Crisis and Resilience Fund is now in delivery as a three-year scheme, giving local areas greater certainty to invest in support that helps families manage

financial shocks, avoid crisis and strengthen financial resilience. The effectiveness of the fund in achieving these impacts will be evaluated through a mixed methods approach. In parallel, the government and Ofgem are working closely together to consider a range of options to reduce energy debt in the system.

Progress is also being made in expanding the infrastructure of family and early years support. With over 200 Best Start Family Hubs in newly funded areas now open from April 2026, the Government is on track towards its ambition of 1,000 hubs and 2,000 network sites by the end of 2028. This is being reinforced by a further £200 million investment in Healthy Babies support for families during the critical 1,001 days, targeted at 75 local authorities with high levels of deprivation. This brings the total Government investment in Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies to over £900 million between 2026 and 2029 – a substantial and sustained commitment. These programmes will be evaluated to assess value for money and their effectiveness in strengthening support for families.

This is being complemented by wider action to reduce health inequalities and strengthen support through programmes such as supervised toothbrushing, vaccination delivery through health visitors and implementation of the Neighbourhood Health Framework. In addition, £3 billion has been consolidated into a single Children, Families and Youth Grant to support more joined-up local delivery across Family Help, multi-agency child protection reform and provision of meals and activities during school holidays.

The government has also taken steps to strengthen the wider systems and community conditions that shape children's life chances. The first phase of funding through the Better Futures Fund will be launched in summer and is intended to support social outcomes partnerships that tackle the structural and root causes of poverty and improve outcomes for children and young people. Related programmes such as Pride in Place as well as capital funding to build new and upgrade existing community sports facilities, aim to improve opportunity and wellbeing in disadvantaged communities. The effectiveness of these initiatives and the impact on children, families and young people will be assessed as part of a comprehensive evaluation.

Moreover, publication of the Local Outcomes Framework, rollout of additional Integrated Settlements and the first multi-year Local Government Funding Settlement are giving local leaders a clearer framework, greater flexibility and more certainty to align resources and respond to local need.

5. Delivering in partnership with Devolved, Regional and Local Government

While Chapters 2 to 4 set out the national framework, evidence and delivery activity, there is significant variation in child poverty across the UK, nationally and sub-nationally. This chapter focuses on how the Strategy is implemented across different places.

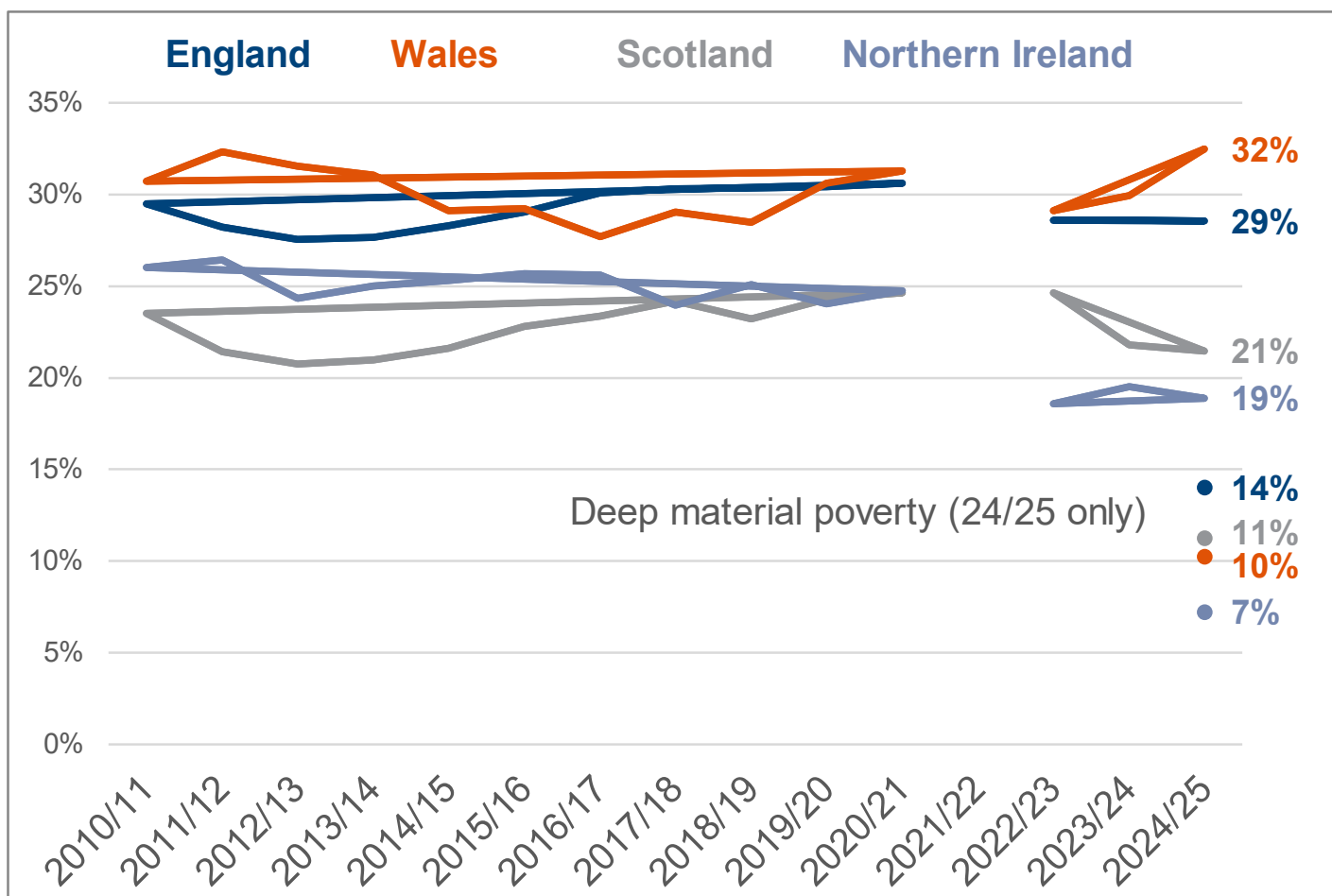
Place is fundamental to child poverty, shaping the environment in which children grow up, and the opportunities parents have to provide for their children: through the jobs available locally, local childcare options, transport connections, shops, and community support. It also shapes the quality and availability of local support services that families in poverty rely on the most. Many of the key factors influencing child poverty are rooted in place – whether that's the nation, region, local authority, ward or street.

Consistent with the delivery in partnership model set out in Chapter 2, reducing child poverty requires coordinated action across UK government, devolved governments, and regional and local government.

Devolved governments

Child poverty rates vary across the four UK nations and are higher in England and Wales than in Scotland and Northern Ireland, as demonstrated in Figure 3 below which shows the rates for both headline metrics - relative low income (AHC) and deep material poverty by UK Nation.

Figure 3: Percentage of children in relative low income (AHC) and deep material poverty by UK nation[\[footnote 5\]](#)



The most recent UK statistics for 2024/2025^{[\[footnote 6\]](#)} show:

- in England, 29% of children were in relative low income (AHC) and 14% were in deep material poverty
- in Wales, 32% of children were in relative low income (AHC) and 10% were in deep material poverty
- in Scotland, 21% of children were in relative low income (AHC) and 11% were in deep material poverty
- in Northern Ireland, 19% of children were in relative low income (AHC) and 7% were in deep material poverty

Devolved governments have set out their own strategies and delivery approaches, reflecting different policy choices and contexts. These are complemented by the UK-wide Strategy and contribute to the shared evidence base on what works. We will continue to work with devolved governments including through the Four Nations Group on Child Poverty.

In Scotland, the government published its third Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan on 12 March 2026, covering the period 2026-31. Entitled '[Bringing Hope, Building Futures](#)'. The plan sets out a framework for reducing child poverty, focused on increasing incomes, reducing the cost of living, and supporting children and families

to thrive. The plan is underpinned by an updated [evaluation strategy](#) and [measurement framework](#). The Scottish Government published an [annual progress report](#) on 18 June , setting out action taken in 2025-2026 to drive further progress toward eradicating child poverty.

In Wales, the previous administration published the [Child Poverty Strategy for Wales progress report 2025](#)) in December 2025, alongside the [monitoring framework](#) and [analysis of child poverty lived experience](#). The new administration has committed to developing specific, ambitious and deliverable poverty reduction targets to inform a new, targeted plan to tackle child poverty.

In Northern Ireland, work is ongoing to develop the Northern Ireland Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy. Following a 14-week public consultation including in-person engagement and written submissions, a [summary report](#) of this consultation was published in April 2026 . Departments have been asked to review its findings and identify potential actions, including those requiring additional funding. The Minister for Communities has requested that further action is taken in developing the Strategy including maximising opportunities for collaboration and shared delivery across government, and broader partners, effective prevention and exit measures, refreshed funding approaches and the introduction of clear, deliverable targets and indicators alongside a fully costed delivery plan.

Place-based intervention in England

There are significant local level variations in child poverty as shown in Figure 4, which maps rates of children aged under 16 in relative low-income (AHC) families by local authority. The 40 local authorities with highest child relative low income rates (AHC) [\[footnote 7\]](#) all have rates above 30%, while the 40 local authorities with the lowest all have rates below 15%.

Figure 4: Rate of children aged under 16 in relative low-income (AHC) families by local authority, 2024/2025 [\[footnote 8\]](#)

The variation in sub-national child relative low income (AHC) rates underlines the importance of place-based interventions that are tailored to local context and need. Effectively tackling child poverty requires coordinated action across UK government, devolved governments, and regional and local government, where different policy levers sit. Regional government and mayors play a vital cross-system leadership role in reducing child poverty and mitigating its impacts, whether through broader growth strategies, targeted action plans, or convening stakeholders. Meanwhile, local authorities and their partners are central to delivering the Strategy's commitments, particularly in addressing gaps in public services and responding to local needs.

Our objectives

We recognise that adopting a genuinely place-based, systems-level approach to reducing child poverty requires flexibility. For this reason, the Strategy has not mandated regional or local authorities to develop their own child poverty action plans. Instead, we have prioritised policies that empower local areas to act on child

poverty through greater devolution and funding to strategic authorities, as well as long-term local government funding settlements. Initiatives like Pride in Place, the Better Futures Fund, the Crisis and Resilience Fund, the roll out of Best Start Family Hubs (see Chapter 4 and Annex C, published alongside this report) and the implementation of the socio-economic duty in the Equality Act 2010, are providing new opportunities to support community-level anti-poverty action.

Over the course of the Strategy delivery, we will continue to work with a wide range of regional and local stakeholders to strengthen place-based approaches to tackling child poverty, aiming to:

1. Ensure strong regional and local systemic strategic leadership – by aligning partners, coordinating action, bolstering governance to create conditions for effective system-wide child poverty reduction and alleviation.
2. Support the development and delivery of flexible, locally or regionally tailored interventions – through strong partnerships with Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises (VCSEs), faith, and civil society organisations, and the private and wider public sector to drive innovation and collaborative problem solving across places.
3. Build and share evidence around what works well to drive continuous improvement – by gathering insights from analytical activity within local authorities and at a regional level; as well as considering how central government can collate and synthesise insights on local approaches through our own research.

Enablers of place-based action

Since Strategy publication, we have worked with a small group of regional, local and VCSE stakeholders, listed in Appendix A, to gather evidence on place-based approaches to child poverty and local system challenges. [Research published](#) by Resolve Poverty in May 2026 maps strategic local activity in 2026 by considering how many councils in England have anti-poverty strategies in place. Their findings show that 16% of councils have an anti-poverty strategy in place, with a further 19% planning to implement one within the next year, reflecting the variation in approaches across England. Our engagement with stakeholders built on this picture, revealing both the diversity of anti-poverty action and the common barriers to success, alongside opportunities to build on existing momentum and good practice. From this, we identified a set of key enablers which we tested with stakeholders:

- strategic leadership and effective coordination – placing a clear emphasis on child poverty is crucial to ensuring that tackling child poverty is prioritised in integrated service design and delivery by the government, local partners and wider public sector organisations

- delivery with trusted partners – collaborating with VCSE, faith and civil society organisations as well as the private and wider public sector to build trust with communities and engage harder to reach families
- alignment and clear messaging from central government – on national strategies and policies related to poverty that enable local areas to take a more cohesive, system wide approach to tackling child poverty
- access to communities of practice – to share learning, challenges, build capability and improve consistency
- emphasis on embedding lived experience – to shape policy development and delivery as well as in monitoring and evaluation activity to understand how services are working for families
- continuous learning and improvement – from policy to strategic-level insights, with clear data-led approaches and evidence building mechanisms in place to deepen knowledge of poverty across a range of stakeholders
- focus on immediate need as well as wider prevention – to address the drivers of child poverty in the longer-term, while recognising that work often sits across a number of these drivers and across tiers of government

Next steps

In the Strategy we laid the groundwork for better funded, joined-up public services that reduce the rate and impact of child poverty. Maintaining momentum is critical to deliver on our ambitions. We are committed to working closely with regional and local government to strengthen leadership, scale effective interventions, and build a shared evidence base of what works. This will require sustained, collective effort. We are calling on regional and local authorities, alongside VCSE, faith and civil society organisations and the private and wider public sector, to work in partnership with central government to deepen understanding; test new ideas; shape a stronger framework for place-based delivery; and drive consistent, high-quality support for every child and family. To support this, [Annex D published alongside this report](#) highlights some of the existing cross-government activity that can be leveraged by local government to support place-based action on child poverty.

Following publication of this baseline report, we will convene regional and local government and VCSE stakeholders in England for an event focused on the opportunities and challenges of place-based approaches to reducing child poverty. This event will build on our discovery work and provide a forum for regional and local stakeholders to engage directly with government to set direction for the next phase of this work. Beyond this event, we will continue to engage with regional and local stakeholders to understand how national government can best enable and support

anti-poverty action and, with selected areas, develop case studies and undertake the place-based research outlined above showcasing the breadth and impact of work underway across the UK.

6. Summary and next steps

This report sets out the 2024/2025 baseline for the Strategy and outlines how progress will be monitored, evaluated and strengthened over time. It introduces a clear delivery and evaluation framework, underpinned by strong partnership working and a robust programme of research and analysis.

Tackling child poverty is a long-term endeavour. The Strategy sets out a ten-year framework for action, and delivery is now underway, with key commitments implemented and further activity continuing across the Strategy's pillars. Maintaining momentum over time will be critical to achieving the intended outcomes.

Looking ahead, we will continue to build on this foundation through a programme of regular reporting and analytical development. Annual reporting each summer will track progress and ensure transparency, bring together the latest statistics and collate insights across the broad programme of research and analysis as set out here. This will be complemented by ongoing publication of evidence and findings from individual strands of work, including policy evaluations, research activity and statistical outputs.

In the short-term, the evidence base will be strengthened through new and improved data, including the upcoming Universal Credit Low Income Statistics, , as well as ongoing developments to existing datasets. These will support more timely and granular insights into child poverty trends. Alongside this the research programme will continue to develop, including the qualitative longitudinal study, further place-based research and engagement, and continued cross-government policy evaluation. Continued collaboration and engagement with experts, including through the Expert Analytical Panel and engagement with delivery partners and stakeholders will remain central to this work. A public portal will support ongoing evidence submissions and help shape future research priorities.

Through this combined approach, we will continue to build on the evidence on what works and track progress as part of our ongoing commitment to transparency, accountability and continued learning. This will be critical to maintaining momentum and achieving lasting reductions in child poverty over the life of the Strategy.

This work is delivered by the continuing Child Poverty Team based within the Department for Work and Pensions.

For any questions and to get in touch, please contact:
childpovertystrategy.analysis@dwp.gov.uk

Appendix A: Regional, local and VCSE stakeholders engaged in discovery work on place-based action on child poverty

Since Strategy publication, we have worked with a small group of regional, local and VCSE stakeholders to gather evidence on place-based approaches to child poverty and local system challenges. Through a variation of one-to-one and roundtable discussions we heard their experiences of how child poverty intersects with place along with the challenges and opportunities localised action brings.

We would like to thank the below areas and organisations for their engagement and their feedback, and we are keen to continue to work with them and others as our shared work in this space progresses.

Table 2: Regional, local and VCSE stakeholders engaged in discovery work on place-based action on child poverty

Regional and Local Authorities	VCSEs
East Devon District Council	Child Poverty Action Group
Darlington Borough Council	Children in Need
Durham County Council	Citizens Advice
Gateshead Council	Institute for Public Policy Research
Greater London Alliance	Local Government Association (LGA)
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	LGA Children, Young People and Families Committee
Hartlepool Borough Council	National Children’s Bureau

Lambeth Council	North East Child Poverty Commission
Newcastle City Council	Resolve Poverty
North East Mayoral Strategic Authority	Save the Children
North Tyneside Council	UNICEF
Northumberland County Council	-
Plymouth City Council	-
Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council	-
South Tyneside Council	-
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	-
Sunderland City Council	-
Tees Valley Combined Authority	-
West of England Combined Authority	-

1. While direct comparisons cannot be made, cumulative changes over time can be calculated, as explained in section 3.2 of [Households Below Average Income: Background Information and Methodology report FYE 2025 - GOV.UK](#) ↵
2. Source: [Households below average income: for financial years ending 1995 to 2025 - GOV.UK](#) ↵
3. Source: [Households below average income: for financial years ending 1995 to 2025 - GOV.UK](#) ↵
4. It is only possible to project relative low income after housing costs, not deep material poverty. Source: [Low income poverty projections for children, FYE 2026 to FYE 2031, July 2026](#) ↵
5. Due to methodological changes to Households Below Average Income, it is not possible to produce a full consistent back series. For details see [Households](#)

[Below Average Income: An analysis of the UK income distribution: FYE 1995 to FYE 2025 - GOV.UK](#) ↵

6. For national breakdowns multi-year averages are used. Relative low income is for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25, and deep material poverty for the period 2023/24 to 2024/25. Source: [Households below average income: for financial years ending 1995 to 2025 - GOV.UK](#) ↵
7. Due to the way data is collected and the statistics created, it is not possible to create deep material poverty estimates for local areas. ↵
8. Source: [Children in low income families: local area statistics 2022 to 2025 - GOV.UK](#) ↵

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