



COLD, HUNGRY AND STRESSED

The Impact of Poverty on Children this Winter

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November 2021

INTRODUCTION

Disadvantaged children and young people have disproportionately suffered over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. From a loss of education, to the great mental health burden caused by isolation, loss of play and domestic abuse, children living in poverty have already suffered a great deal. With the onset of Winter 2021/2022, there are fears that vulnerable children and young people are facing even greater hardship.

Whilst childhood poverty was prevalent before the coronavirus pandemic, its scale and complexity has been compounded by recent economic and political circumstances. The UK government is ending several programmes meant to help people impacted by the pandemic, including the furlough scheme and £20 universal credit uplift. This is compounded by rising inflation and the energy and supply chain crisis. As the cost of living rises, parallels with the 1970s 'winter of discontent' have been drawn, with predictions that poverty and inequality will increase.

The Childhood Trust has commissioned this report to explore the impact of Winter 2021/2022 on charities and the children and young people they support in London. It includes survey data collected from 31 London-based charities and interview data from 7 of their beneficiaries parents. This data is collated with a UK-wide survey of 1001 families, of which 243 live in London. It found frontline organisations, their beneficiaries and the public are facing an extremely difficult winter ahead if urgent action isn't taken.

This report is structured into ten chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction to childhood poverty in London. Chapter 2 focuses on the research design and methodology. Chapters 3 and 4 present the two key challenges identified in the research: increased costs and reduced household income. Chapter 5 provides an overview of financial concerns, which are developed further in Chapter 6 and 7 that explore the impacts on food insecurity and fuel poverty. Chapter 8 considers requests for further support needed to alleviate the impact of poverty. Chapter 9 concludes the report and Chapter 10 introduces The Childhood Trust and The 2021 Christmas Challenge Campaign.

“We would be starving. 100%. I don’t know what my community would do without the food banks.” - Nazura, Mother of 3.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Increased costs

- **Low-income households are already feeling the affects of inflation, rising food and fuel prices in October 2021.** Families are being forced into arrears, their weekly shop has become noticeably more expensive and energy bills have almost doubled.

2. Reduced household income

- **Universal Credit Cut:** Households are already affected by universal credit cuts in October 2021. Approximately **half (53%)** of the **106,523 children** supported by charities in this report are affected. This equates to **56,289 children**. The UK-wide survey revealed that 21% of London (and 14% of UK) respondents were most concerned about cuts to universal income in terms of finances.
 - **Furlough:** There are initial signs that the end of the furlough scheme is having detrimental consequences. This includes families queuing for hours for foodbanks, and sometimes being turned away empty handed when the food runs out.
 - **Charity Support:** More families are expected to need support from charities in Winter 2021/2022. Charities in London have seen an increase in the number of beneficiaries using their services in October 2021 due to universal credit cuts. The average increase was by almost **half (48%)**. Over Winter 2021/2022, 15 charities predict that the number of service users will increase. Collectively, it is estimated that these 15 charities could see an additional **21,803 children** using their services.
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3. Impact: Financial instability

- **Financial Instability:** In the UK-wide survey, **83% of respondents from London** were concerned about financial stability for Winter 2021/2022. This is higher than the **average across the UK of 71%**. Moreover, a greater proportion of Londoners were very concerned (40%) compared to the UK average (26%).
- **Main Concerns:** The main concern was the **rising cost of living**, with 50% of UK and 43% of London respondents concerned. The second biggest concern was the **energy price rises** with 46% of UK and 32% of London respondents concerned.
- **Mental Health:** Financial concerns impact the mental health of both parents and children in poverty. Skipping meals, having your children missing out on treats, eating smaller portions, and living with a lack of choice are constant worries for parents that do not have enough money to get basic food for their family.

4. Impact: Food Insecurity

- **Increased numbers of children are in food poverty in October 2021.** Out of the **106,523 children** represented by charities in this report, approximately **70,981 (67%)** were affected by food poverty in October 2021. Most charities (**19 out of 31**) reported an increase in the number of beneficiaries accessing their services due to food poverty at the time of this survey (October 2021). Of these charities, the average increase in the number of beneficiaries was by **50%**.
 - **Food poverty has an impact on the physical and mental health of children in London.** One mother described how her child fainted and was taken to A&E due to a lack of nutritious food.
 - **Food poverty is expected to rise in Winter 2021/2022.** In this survey, the lives of **99%** of the **70,981** children affected by food poverty is predicted to get worse. It is expected to **significantly worsen for 69,319 children** and slightly worsen for 1,132 children, represented by 16 and 8 charities respectively. These concerns collate with findings from the UK-wide survey in which **21% of London** (and **12% of UK**) respondents were most concerned about not being able to feed their children in terms of finances this winter.
 - **Pressure on charities is increasing. 19 of the 31 charities** surveyed predict that the number of beneficiaries accessing their services will increase due to food poverty over Winter 2021/2022. It is estimated that the average increase will be by almost a third (**32%**). Collectively, the 19 charities are expecting an additional **17,283 children** that need to access their services in the upcoming months. Without support from charities, some families would not be able to survive this upcoming winter. For instance, one family reported they would be starving if it were not for food banks.
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5. Impact: Fuel Poverty

- **All 3 factors affecting fuel poverty are expected to worsen in Winter 2021/2022.** These are: a household's income, their fuel costs, and their energy consumption.
 - **Households are already affected by fuel poverty in October 2021.** Of the **53,369 children** represented by 23 charities with information on fuel poverty, **almost half (48%)** were affected by fuel poverty in October 2021. This is approximately **25,726 children**. Almost **one third (30%)** of these charities (7 out of 23) reported an increase in the number of beneficiaries accessing their services. Of these 7 charities, the average increase in the number of beneficiaries was by a **half (50%)**.
 - **Families are already struggling with the cold in October 2021, before winter arrives.** Despite the cold, some families are not able to turn their heating on, and know of others that have been living in darkness, unable to turn their electricity on.
 - **Charities predict fuel poverty will get worse in Winter 2021/2022.** The lives of **24,591 of the 25,726 children (96%)** affected by fuel poverty in these 23 charities is predicted to significantly worsen because of the increase in energy costs.
 - **Winter clothes are a priority for parents.** With children growing, each year brings new difficulties in having the warm winter clothing. Some parents have gone without food in order to buy clothes for their children. Whilst others have had to prioritise getting clothing for one child over another.
 - **More families are expected to need support from charities.** For **11 out of 23** of the charities, the number of beneficiaries accessing their services due to fuel poverty is predicted to increase. It is estimated that the average increase will be by **45%**. Collectively, the 11 charities are expecting an additional **4,619 children** that need to access their services due to fuel poverty in the upcoming months.
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6. Further Support

- **Current measures by the government, including the £500 million Winter Support Scheme and changes in the Autumn 2021 Budget, are failing to provide appropriate support this winter.** Only **7 charities (23%)** thought that the winter hardship fund would alleviate the impact of poverty on their beneficiaries.
- **Current government measures are significantly lower than the £20 a week uplift to universal credit.** If the £500 million Winter Support fund was divided by the number of households on universal credit (5.9 million) over 4 months of winter, the average a household could get a week is **£4.04**. If the 1.9 million that partially benefit from the Autumn 2021 budget changes are excluded, this equates to **£5.95** a week.
- **Pressure on charities is increasing.** Charities (**UK 29%; London 42%**) and the public, or every one of us (**UK 41%; London 43%**), should be doing more to help families struggling this winter according to respondents in the UK-wide survey.
- **Charities do not have enough funding.** Only **4 of the 31 charities** currently have enough funding to meet the demand for their services. If they receive extra support from the public, a further 11 charities will be able to meet the demand.
- **The government should do more to support families and charities going into Winter 2021/2022.**

7. Impact of child poverty this Christmas

- **Food Insecurity:** Out of the **106,523 children** represented by 31 charities in this report, approximately **36,197 (34%)** are estimated to go hungry and **42,615 (40%)** are predicted to use food banks over the Christmas holidays.
 - **Fuel Poverty:** Out of the **106,523 children** represented by 31 charities in this report, approximately **40,438 (38%)** are estimated to experience fuel poverty at some point during the Christmas holidays.
 - **Presents:** Out of the **55,318 children** represented by 30 charities in this report, approximately **14,152 (26%)** are estimated to not receive any presents this Christmas. These concerns collate with findings from the UK-wide survey in which **22% of London** (and **20% of UK**) respondents were most financially concerned about not being able to buy Christmas presents this winter 2021/2022. Some parents will only buy presents for their children, not themselves, whilst others will go into debt for Christmas.
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CHILD POVERTY IN LONDON

700,000 children, or **34% of all children living in London**, live in absolute poverty after housing costs [1]. This is the highest rate of child poverty in any English region. The main drivers are the capital's high housing and transport costs, lack of affordable childcare, low pay and a lack of flexible, part-time jobs. This results in children experiencing disadvantage and deprivation, whilst suffering from poverty of income, aspiration and opportunity. The statistics in this chapter demonstrate the prevalence of childhood poverty in the UK, and London more specifically.

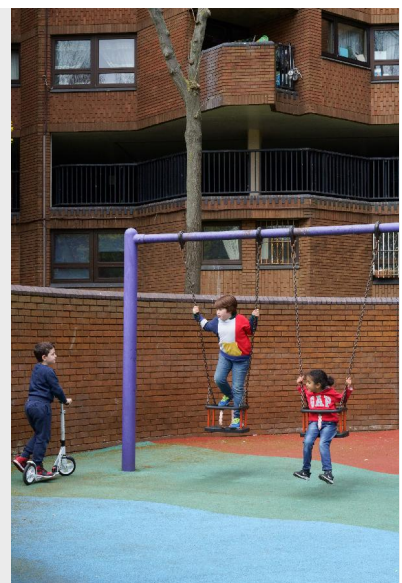
Defining Poverty

This report uses the two most common measures of poverty: relative and absolute low income.

Income can be measured before housing costs (BHC) are deducted or after housing costs (AHC) are deducted. Poverty levels measured AHC are generally higher than BHC as poorer households tend to spend a higher proportion of their income on housing [3] .

Relative low income: people living in households with income below 60% of the median in that year. This compares the households with the lowest incomes against the rest of the population in that year.

Absolute low income: people living in households with income below 60% of (inflation-adjusted) median income in some base year, usually 2010/11. This measures whether living standards at the bottom of the distribution are improving over time [2].



Poverty Statistics

The Households Below Average Income (HBAI) publication provides the latest statistics on poverty in 2019/2020 [4].

- **Whole Population:** In the UK, there were 14.5 million in relative low income after housing costs. This is 22% of the UK population. Looking specifically at London, there were 2.4 million which is 27% of the population of London.
- **Children:** In the UK, 4.3 million children were in relative low income after housing costs. This is 31% of children in the UK. Looking specifically at London, there were 0.4 million which is 21% of children in London. The number of children in absolute poverty after housing costs in London is 0.7 million, which is 34% of children in London.
- **Coronavirus:** Whilst there are no official statistics available on the impact of coronavirus on poverty, early analysis suggests that the the pandemic has made an already difficult situation much tougher for those in poverty.

		Relative poverty		Absolute poverty	
		Number (millions)	%	Number (millions)	%
Whole Population in UK	Before housing costs	11.7	18%	9.2	14%
	After housing costs	14.5	22%	11.7	18%
Whole Population in London	Before housing costs	1.4	16%	1.2	14%
	After housing costs	2.4	27%	2.1	14%
Children in UK	Before housing costs	3.2	23%	2.4	17%
	After housing costs	4.3	31%	3.5	25%
Children in London	Before housing costs	0.4	21%	0.3	17%
	After housing costs	0.4	21%	0.7	34%

Figure 1: Poverty statistics 2019/2020 for whole population in the UK, children in the UK, whole population in London and children in London.

The following chapter will show the methodology used to explore the impact of winter 2021/2022 on children in poverty.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods approach has been taken to the research with quantitative and qualitative data collected and analysed. This section provides a brief overview of the methodology used. A more in-depth discussion can be found in the appendices.

London Charity Survey

The Childhood Trust's winter 2021/2022 research survey was sent out on Monday 11th October 2021 and remained live for 2 weeks until Monday 25th October 2021. The survey had responses from 31 charities, that are collectively supporting 106,523 children living in poverty in London. To calculate 106,523 children, the approximate number of children and young people (under 18s) that use each charity's services annually in London was added up. There are limitations with this calculation, for instance, children may be supported by two or more of the charities creating an overlap. Despite these limitations, it is deemed an appropriate method to get insight into a large number of children that could not be accessed individually.

UK-Wide Family Survey

A secondary survey was conducted by Atomik Research. This is an independent market research agency that employs MRS-certified researchers and abides to MRS code. The survey was live from the 18th to the 20th October 2021 and had 1001 respondents. Respondents are parents to children under 18 years old located across the UK. There were 243 respondents from London that are a focus in this research report.

Interviews

7 interviews were conducted with parents that are supported by charities that support children living in poverty in London. Their objective was to provide richer qualitative data to add depth to the perceptions, experiences and understandings of the issues raised in the survey data. The interview participants and the organisation they are associated with are provided in the table below:

Figure 2: Interviewees and their associated organization

Associated Organisation	Interviewee	Information about the charity
The Dadihiye Somali Development Organisation	Nazura. Mother to three children aged 16, 10 and 7.	Supports members from BME communities mainly from those from Somali Background, who are disadvantaged, low- income families, elders, disabled or live in the most deprived areas all over London.
	Safia. Mother to one child aged 16.	
	Ubayaa. Mother to four children aged 15, 13, 12 and 10.	
The Alexandra Rose Charity	Brinda. Mother to two children aged 5 and 3.	Provides families on low incomes access to fresh fruit and vegetables in their local communities.
The Sands End Adventure Playground	Vanessa. Mother of four children aged 9, 8, 5, and 3.	Provides low-cost play and childcare provisions for children aged 4-13 years.
The Walker Children's Club	Tessa. Mother of one child aged 8.	Offers quality, affordable after school care to children.
The Spring Community Hub	Saamiya. Mother of four children aged 10, 8, 4 and 17 months.	A community hub, a food bank and a place of support for the local community.



INCREASED COSTS

With winter approaching, everybody across the income spectrum in the UK is going to see increasing costs. Energy prices are soaring, so too is the cost of food, and inflation is set to rise to its highest level for eight years [5]. However, these inflationary pressures are especially concerning for people with extremely low incomes. This report emphasises the risk of rising costs for children in poverty in Winter 2021/2022.

KEY POINT

- Low-income households are already feeling the affects of **inflation, rising food and fuel prices** in October 2021. Families are being forced into arrears, their weekly shop has become noticeably more expensive and energy bills have almost doubled.

The impact of inflation

Families in London have been impacted by the rising cost in living. Tessa described how it *“makes you feel low”* and believes that *“not having money is the hardest thing anyone has to go through”*. Parents have to juggle a number of concerns, with Safia worried about *“how can the family eat? Or pay the bills?”*, whilst Brinda has had to *“reduce a lot of non-priority bills to make up for priority bills. For example, stopping memberships for Netflix, Prime and Disney Channel”*. In more extreme cases, families have been forced to go into arrears, which supports the Joseph Roundtree Foundation report that millions of low-income households will be pulled under by arrears while living costs rise [6].

THE COST OF LIVING

Inflation measures the change in the cost of living over time. If the cost of a £1 pint of milk rises by 5p, then milk inflation is 5%. CPI (Consumer Price Index) rose to 4.2 per cent in October 2021, up from 3.1 per cent in September 2021 and the fastest pace since November 2011, according to figures from the Office for National Statistics [7].

The impact of rising food prices

All interviewees have noticed food prices rising in recent months. Safia recalls that:

“When you go shopping, the receipt is higher, higher, higher. Every month it is higher.”

Parents noted that particular items of food they bought had increased in price. For instance Saamiya noted that:

“My eldest son likes apples. It was 99p the last time I went to the shop, but when I got there was £1.30. I’m not gonna buy it because I didn’t plan for that.”

For many households, the cost of a weekly shop has also increased noticeably. According to Vanessa (household of 6, inc 4 children):

“I’m spending an absolute fortune and it’s not even lasting us a week. £207 was my shop for this week. That has gone up drastically I’d say in the last couple of months. I was able to spend £130-140 and that would last me Saturday to Saturday. This hasn’t even lasted me. It’s now Tuesday and I’m already out today to buy more.”

Food price rises

Food prices are rising as a result of the lorry driver shortage and more regulatory checks on imported food, combined with price rises of fuel, freight and raw materials. The Office for National Statistics said the price of food and non-alcoholic drinks in shops and supermarkets rose by 1.1% on the month to August 2021 [8]. This is the highest rate of growth since 2008.



The impact of rising fuel prices

The cost of energy has risen dramatically in recent months, both in the UK and internationally. As winter approaches, these energy price rises are of particular concern for low-income households, with National Energy Action (NEA) warning that 500,000 extra households are at risk of fuel poverty. Ubayaa stated that “Gas is very, very high this winter. Last year I used £5 a week, now it is £10. It’s doubled. And electricity is the same.” Whilst Brinda explained that this drastic increase is hitting families at a particularly difficult time:

“It’s the fact that it’s increasing at the period where families tend to spend more on gas. It’s gonna weigh heavily on families, especially those that are under certain income, because they’re gonna have no choice but to use it. So it’s going to increase the outgoings of a family, who spend more money on gas that they could have spent otherwise.”

Rising fuel prices

The price rise has various causes: the return of global gas demand after pandemic-related restrictions, lack of maintenance due to lockdown restrictions and a colder winter in Europe meant people were heating their houses until mid-May, among others [10]. As the cost of supplying energy rises, the price cap that the regulator Ofgem enforces on domestic tariffs rises to reflect this. This is the maximum price suppliers can charge their customers on their default tariff. The cap is reviewed every February and August. A higher energy price cap came into force from the 1st October 2021 (following the review in August), with about 15 million households facing a 12% rise in energy bills. Those on standard tariffs, with typical household levels of energy use, saw an increase of £139, from £1,138 to £1,277 a year [11]. The average prepayment energy bill will increase by around 14% to £1,309 per year from October 1, according to Energyhelpine [12].



REDUCED HOUSEHOLD INCOME

During the COVID-19 pandemic, vital emergency measures prevented the situation from worsening. This report focuses on the furlough scheme and the universal credit uplift. The end to this support in September/October 2021 will reduce the income of many households. This risks seeing elevated levels of poverty and widening inequality that will have detrimental consequences for children in Winter 2021/2022.

KEY POINTS

- **Universal Credit Cut:** Households are already affected by universal credit cuts in October 2021. Approximately **half (53%)** of the **106,523 children** supported by charities in this report are affected. This equates to **56,289 children**. The UK-wide survey revealed that 21% of London (and 14% of UK) respondents were most concerned about cuts to universal income in terms of finances.
 - **Furlough:** There are initial signs that the end of the furlough scheme is having detrimental consequences. This includes families queuing for hours for foodbanks, and sometimes being turned away empty handed when the food runs out.
 - **Charity Support:** More families are expected to need support from charities in Winter 2021/2022. Charities in London have seen an increase in the number of beneficiaries using their services in October 2021 due to universal credit cuts. The average increase was by almost **half (48%)**. Over Winter 2021.2022, 15 charities predict that the number of service users will increase. Collectively, it is estimated that these 15 charities could see an additional **21,803 children** using their services.
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The impact of withdrawing the Universal Credit uplift in October 2021

Various attempts have been made to assess the impact of withdrawing the £20 a week uplift from Universal Credit (UC) and Working Tax (WTC) claimants. Analysis from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggests it is the biggest overnight cut to the basic rate of social security since the foundation of the modern welfare state following World War 2. They have shown that around 5.5 million low-income families will lose £1,040 from their annual income. This will create serious financial hardship and sweep 500,000 people into poverty, including 200,000 children [13]. Families with children will be disproportionately affected, with 6 out of 10 single-parent families impacted. According to Citizens Advice, London is one of the regions likely to be affected the most [14]. In London, families with children in receipt of universal credit or working tax credits in 2019 was 464,980. This equates to approximately 39% of families with children that will be affected by the cut [15].

Universal Credit Cut

Why was it introduced?

Universal Credit (UC) is a means-tested benefit available to those who are in work but on low incomes, as well as those who are unemployed or whose capability for work is limited by sickness or disability. Working Tax Credit (WTC) is a benefit provided to boost the income of those who are in work but on low incomes. In March 2020 the Government announced an uplift to universal credit and working tax credits to “strengthen the safety net” during the Covid-19 pandemic.

What did it do?

The uplift in universal credit and working tax credits amounted to an additional £1,040 per year, or £20 per week. It was part of a support package for household finances (including the furlough scheme).

Who did it affect?

3 million people were on Universal Credit in March 2020. This almost doubled during the coronavirus pandemic to 5.8 million by the end of 2020. Following this it remained fairly constant up with 5.9 million on Universal Credit in August 2021.

When did it end?

The uplift officially ended on the 6th October 2021.

The cut to Universal Credit is already having a significant impact on low-income families. Approximately **half (53%)** of the **106,523 children** represented by charities in this report are affected. This equates to **56,289 children**. In turn, this has impacted 9 charities that have seen an increase in the number of beneficiaries using their services due to universal credit cuts in October 2021. The average increase was by **almost half (48%)**. The impact is illustrated by Tessa:

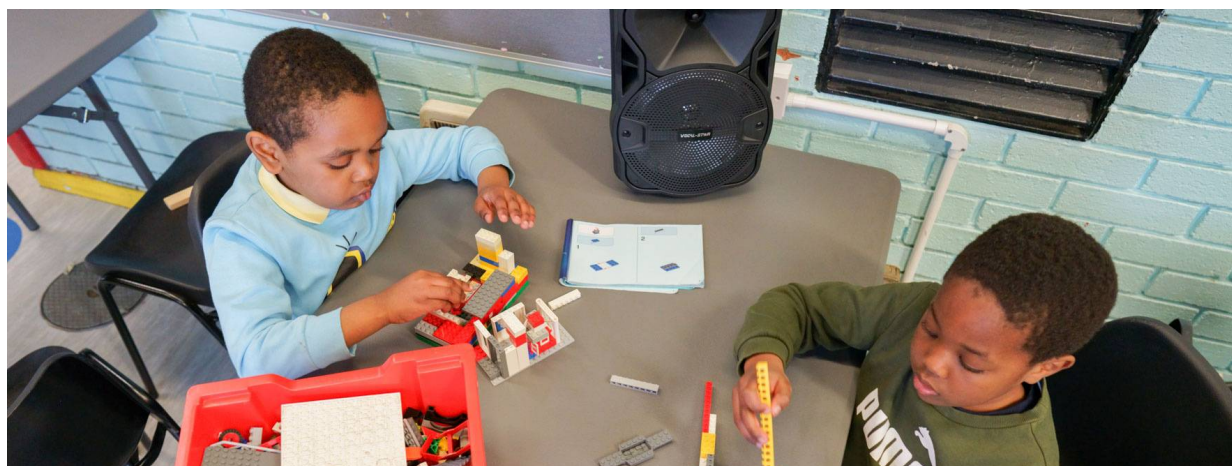
“It’s going to be a huge pressure to a lot of parents. £20 for someone who is struggling is a lot of money. People think that it’s not, but it is. That could feed you.”

There are concerns that this will get worse going into winter. The UK-wide survey revealed that 21% of London (and 14% of UK) respondents were most concerned about cuts to universal income in terms of finances. Moreover, 15 charities predict that the number of service users will increase due to Universal Credit cuts over Winter 2021/2022. Collectively, it is estimated that these 15 charities could see an additional **21,803 children** using their services in Winter 2021/2022. These winter concerns are expressed by Nazura:

“We have less money in and I worry not knowing if I can manage to provide for my family. Not being able to give them food, clothing and a warm home.”

The impact of withdrawing the furlough scheme in September 2021

The sectors most affected by coronavirus restrictions, such as accommodation, food and retail, furloughed the most staff. These sectors also have some of the highest rates of poverty. Nearly a quarter (23%) of workers in accommodation and food and 17% of retail workers were in poverty before the COVID-19 pandemic [16]. As the furlough scheme ends, those in poverty are especially vulnerable when faced with job losses, as they are less likely to have savings to help cover unplanned costs or gaps in income. This could pull many workers and their families deeper into poverty, while others will be pushed into poverty for the first time [17].



Furlough Scheme

Why was it introduced?

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, (the furlough scheme), was introduced in March 2020. Its purpose was to provide grants to employers to ensure that they could retain and continue to pay staff, despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic forcing large parts of the UK economy to close.

What did it do?

It initially covered 80% of an employee's wages (up to £2,500 per month) as well as employer National Insurance and pension contributions. This was later reduced to 70%, then 60%, with employers required to top up wages to 80% in September and October respectively.

Who did it affect?

By midnight on 14 September 2021, 11.7 million employee jobs had been furloughed through the Government's job retention scheme [18].

When did it end?

The furlough scheme was extended a number of times and was closed to new claims on 30 September 2021.

There have been some initial signs that the end of the furlough scheme is impacting upon low-income families. For instance, there is an increasing number of families visiting foodbanks. Indeed, Nazura, who volunteers at a local food bank every Saturday, has noticed that:

“Since the end of furlough, the numbers shot up.” In October, she “served 53 people”, but when she started it was only 5-10 people”. As a result of this growth, “by 2pm they had run out of food and there were still people queuing outside that went away empty handed. Of course they might go hungry, their children might go hungry”. To avoid missing out, “some people come from 9-10am and they stand there rain or whatever. The doors are open at 10:30am, so that’s an hour and a half of waiting”.

Christmas Case Study: Impact of the end of furlough and reduction in universal credit (UC)



According to the UK-wide survey, 74% of London respondents, compared to only 51% of UK respondents, will be impacted by the end of furlough and the reduction of Universal Credit during the 2021 festive period. Impacts include not being able to have a full Christmas dinner (UK 18%; London 33%), not being able to travel to see family (UK 20%; London 34%) and not having enough money to celebrate both Christmas and New Year (UK 17%; London 28%).

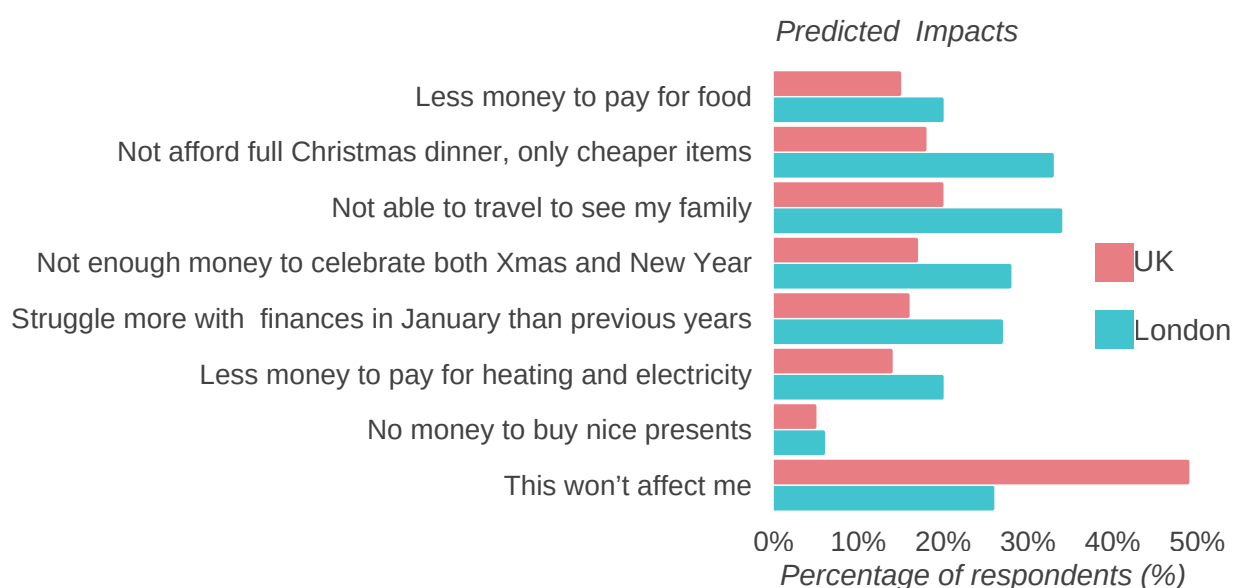


Figure 3: Predicted impacts of the end of furlough and reduction in universal credit for respondents during the 2021 festive period (UK-wide Family Survey)

Even when these additional support measures were in place, they were not enough for many, such as Safia: *"I needed more. It's not enough £20 and now its stopped."* Moreover, others were not eligible for the additional support [19], including Vanessa who is on income support and made clear that: *"They actually didn't give us any extra money. That was difficult being locked in over Covid."* This demonstrates that there were significant gaps in government assistance prior to, during, and after pandemic precautions were implemented.

IMPACT: FINANCIAL INSTABILITY

The impacts of increased costs and reduced household income have numerous detrimental impacts upon children. This research provides an overview of financial concerns, followed by a detailed exploration of the impacts on food and fuel poverty.

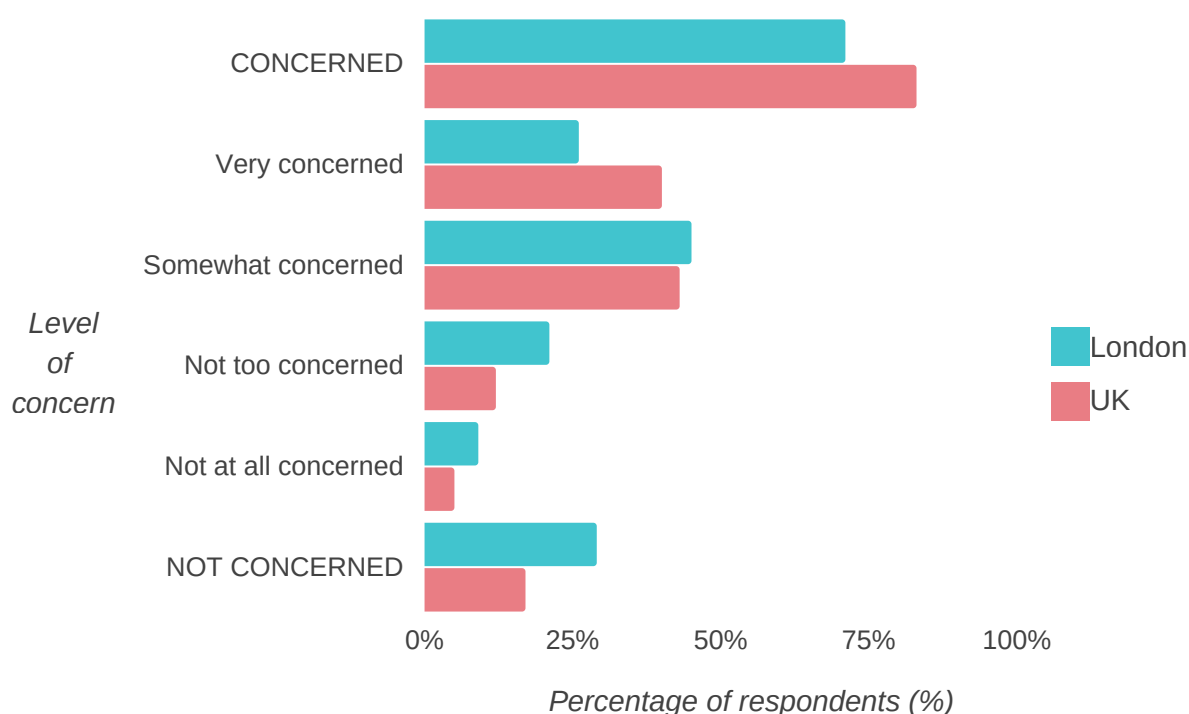
KEY POINTS

- **Financial Instability:** In the UK-wide survey, **83% of respondents from London** were concerned about financial stability for Winter 2021/2022. This is higher than the **average across the UK of 71%**. Moreover, a greater proportion of Londoners were very concerned (40%) compared to the UK average (26%).
- **Main Concerns:** The main concern was the **rising cost in living**, with 50% of UK and 43% of London respondents concerned. The second biggest concern was the **energy price rises** with 46% of UK and 32% of London respondents concerned.
- **Mental Health:** Financial concerns impact the mental health of both parents and children in poverty. Skipping meals, having your children missing out on treats, eating smaller portions, and living with a lack of choice are constant worries for parents that do not have enough money to get basic food for their family.



In the UK-wide survey, **83%** of respondents from London were concerned about financial stability for Winter 2021/2022. This is higher than the average across the UK of **71%**. Moreover, a greater proportion of Londoners were very concerned (40%) compared to the UK average (26%).

Figure 4: Concerns about financial stability for Winter 2021/2022 (UK-Wide Family Survey)



Mental Health

Financial concerns provide a lot of stress for parents. For instance, Tessa noted that the upcoming winter was providing:

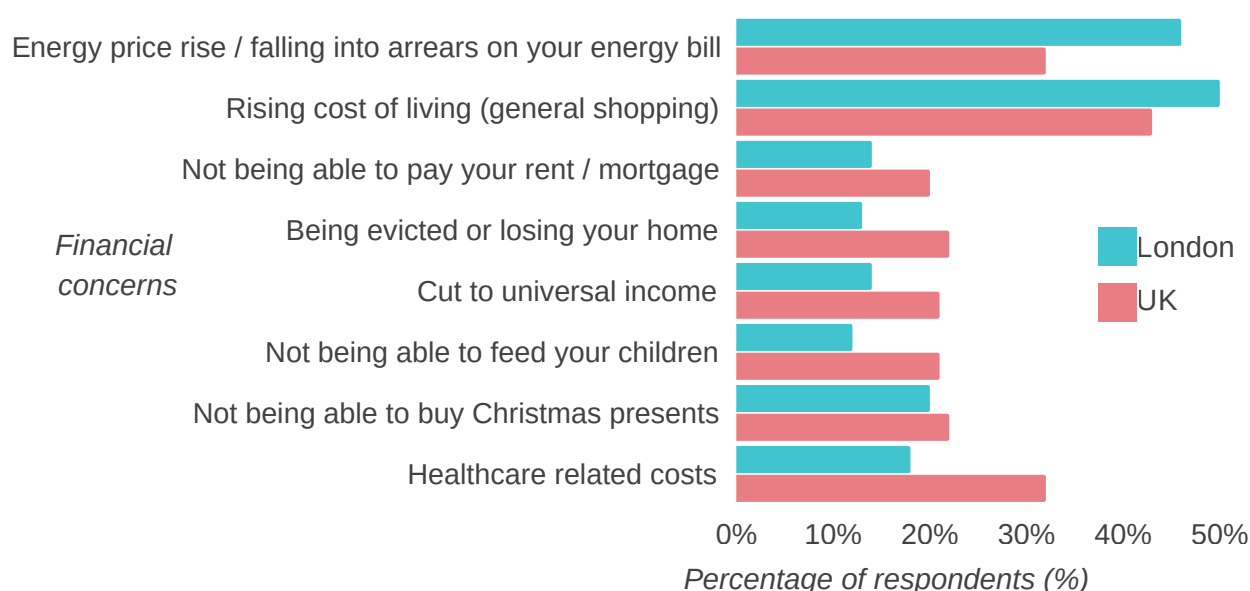
“More added stress to a parent. I need to give the best to my child, but how can I when every time I try I’m going 2 steps forward and going back 10.”

This stress is also having an impact on children, with Nazura noting that:

“It affects their mental health a lot. The children pick up the emotion of their parents.”

The main concern was the rising cost in living, including general shopping, with 50% of UK and 43% of London respondents concerned. The second biggest concern was the energy price rise and the risk of falling into arrears on energy bills (UK 46%; London 32%). With the exception of these two concerns, London respondents were more concerned than UK respondents about other financial concerns including: not being able to pay your rent/mortgage (UK 46%; London 32%), being evicted or losing your home (UK 13%; London 22%), healthcare related costs (UK 18%; London 32%) and saving money (UK 30%; London 36%).

Figure 5: Biggest concerns about finances for Winter 2021/2022 (UK-Wide Family Survey)



These findings collaborate with the main concerns of parents in the interviews. Vanessa noted that *“The biggest concerns for winter are gas/electric, winter clothes and food”* and Saamiya agreed, stating that: *“Keeping the house warm, having warm clothes and food is the three main things.”* Brinda elaborates on these concerns:

“I’m quite worried about the gas as the prices have increased ridiculously and the food prices have increased as well. With the universal credit cuts I feel that the amounts given, especially for children, is not enough to cover certain costs. This is especially during winter time as there’s a lot that needs to be done. The children need extra clothing, extra food, extra heating because we’re indoors more and more. You have to spread your money to last during that winter time because it is such a tight moment.”



Christmas Case Study: Presents

Out of the **55,318 children** represented by 30 charities in this report, approximately **14,152 (26%)** are estimated to not receive any presents this Christmas. These concerns collate with findings from the UK-wide survey in which 22% of London (and 20% of UK) respondents were most financially concerned about not being able to buy Christmas presents this winter 2021/2022.

These concerns were expressed in the interviews. For instance, Vanessa said her four children:

“Know and understand that this year you’re not going to be able to have as many presents as they had last year. They all want the most up-to-date things, and it’s very hard to juggle that. For example, they’ve all asked for a scooter. This year them scooters are going to cost me at least £50 each. £50 times 4 equals £200. How do you buy them anything else? It is very hard to explain to a child because they don’t understand the concept of money.”

This isn’t easy for parents relationships with their children. Safia illustrates the tension with her daughter who asked her for high-heeled shoes:

“She asked for high-heeled shoes. When I say I do not have the money she’s angry, because other children have them. It’s a problem for poor people. People are very, very sad. What can I do? Nothing.”

To deal with these difficulties, Brinda stated that this year

“Me and my husband won’t have a present, just the kids will have their presents.”

However others may spend more than they have, with Tessa stating that she:

“Knows of people who are going into debt for Christmas”.

The following sections, on food and fuel insecurity, explore these two main concerns in more depth.

IMPACT: FOOD INSECURITY

KEY POINTS

- **Increased numbers of children are in food poverty in October 2021.** Out of the **106,523 children** represented by charities in this report, approximately **70,981 (67%)** were affected by food poverty in October 2021. Most charities (**19 out of 31**) reported an increase in the number of beneficiaries accessing their services due to food poverty at the time of this survey (October 2021). Of these charities, the average increase in the number of beneficiaries was by **50%**.
 - **Food poverty has an impact on the physical and mental health of children in London.** One mother described how her child fainted and was taken to A&E due to a lack of nutritious food.
 - **Food poverty expected to rise in Winter 2021/2022.** In this survey, the lives of **99%** of the **70,981** children affected by food poverty is predicted to get worse. It is expected to **significantly worsen for 69,319 children** and slightly worsen for 1,132 children, represented by 16 and 8 charities respectively. These concerns collate with findings from the UK-wide survey in which **21% of London** (and **12% of UK**) respondents were most concerned about not being able to feed their children in terms of finances this winter.
 - **Pressure on charities is increasing. 19 of the 31 charities** surveyed predict that the number of beneficiaries accessing their services will increase due to food poverty over Winter 2021/2022. It is estimated that the average increase will be by almost a third (**32%**). Collectively, the 19 charities are expecting an additional **17,283 children** that need to access their services in the upcoming months. Without support from charities, some families would not be able to survive this upcoming winter. For instance, one family reported they would be starving if it were not for food banks.
-

The impact of food insecurity on children

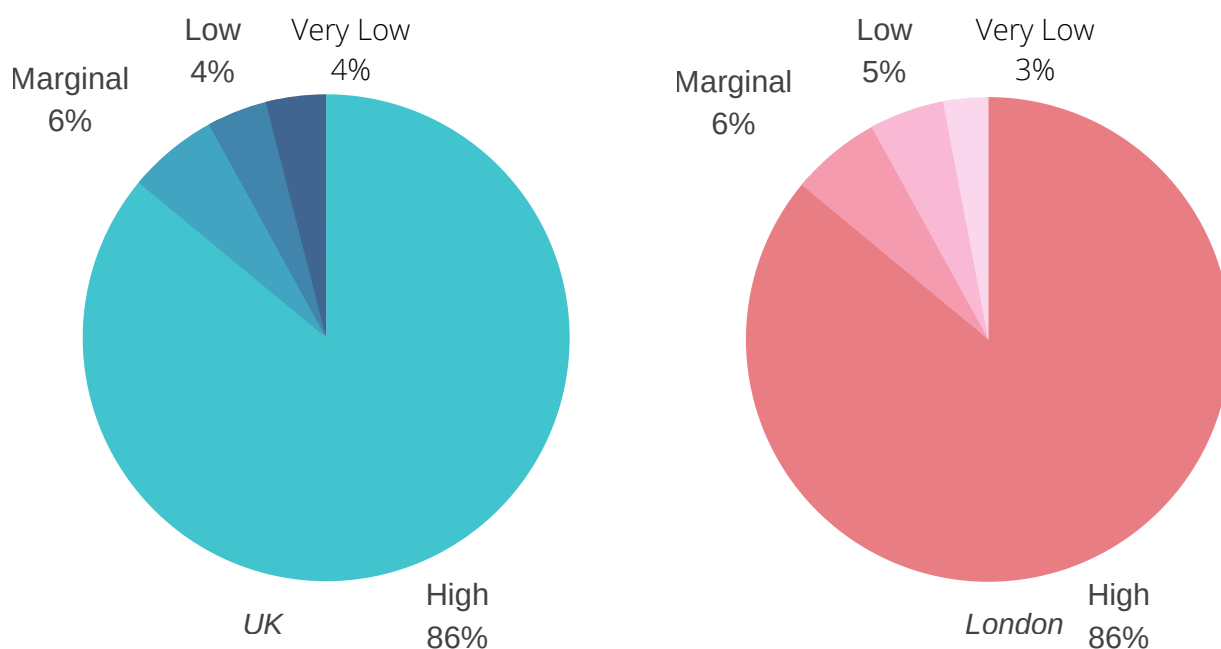
Food insecurity can take many different forms. It could mean missing a meal, not eating enough vegetables, taking a packet of crisps to school instead of lunch or not having breakfast [20]. Children face devastating life-long consequences from food insecurity. It can impact physical health, behaviour, mental and emotional wellbeing, and attainment [21]. Poor quality diets bring increased risks of obesity and poor child growth. Food insecurity causes significant anxiety and stress in families, which can lead to depression, aggressive behaviour, a sense of hopelessness in children. Children that are hungry in class struggle to concentrate and may be disruptive [22]. This can affect their attendance, achievement, and attainment in school.

FOOD POVERTY

A household can broadly be defined as experiencing **food poverty** or '**household food insecurity**' if they cannot (or are uncertain about whether they can) acquire 'an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways' [23].

Food insecurity was already prevalent in the UK before the coronavirus pandemic. In 2019/2020, the Family Resource Survey revealed that 5 million people, or 8% of the UK population, were in food insecure households. In London, 5% of households had low and 3% had very low food insecurity [24]. The households with **low food security** reduced the quality, variety, and desirability of their diets, but the quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted. At times, households with **very low food security** reduced food intake and disrupted the eating patterns of one or more household members because it lacked money and other resources for food.

Figure 6: Household food security status of households, 2019/20



Food insecurity increased during the pandemic

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, household food insecurity has increased, food bank use has reached its highest levels, and children eligible for free school meals has risen.

- **Food Insecurity:** The Food Foundation found that 4.7 million adults (9% of all households) and 2.3 million children (12% of all households with children) experienced food insecurity between August 2020 and January 2021 [25].
- **Foodbank Use:** The Trussell Trust foodbank network supplied more than 2.5 million emergency food parcels in 2020-2021, an increase of 33% on the previous year. London saw the largest percentage increase, where parcels distributed more than doubled (a 106% increase) [26]. Around 40% of these went to children, equating to 2,685 parcels given to children on the average day.
- **Free School Meals:** 1.74 million children were eligible for school meals in January 2021. This equates to 20.8% of all state-funded pupils, signifying a large increase from 17.3% in January 2020. The proportion of pupils eligible in London increased from 18.8% in 2020 to 22.6%, which is above the national average [27].

Covid-19 has widened existing inequalities in food insecurity

Exposure to food insecurity is not equal across all households. The 2019/2020 Family Resource Survey found it disproportionately affected households where the head was black (19%) or on low incomes (78% of households with gross incomes of less than £200 per week) [28]. For households with children, food insecurity rates increased with the number of children in the household (25% for one child, 28% for two children and 41% for three or more children). These inequalities have widened over the pandemic, with The Food Foundation reporting BAME communities (20%) have two times higher levels of food insecurity compared to white British (9%) in January 2021 [29]. Moreover, in May 2020 households with a single parent were twice as likely to be food insecure (31%) compared with couple households (15%).

Winter 2021/2022

Elevated levels of food insecurity and widening inequality are expected for Winter 2021/2022. The impact of vital emergency measures ending, such as the furlough scheme and universal credit uplift, will be exacerbated by rising food prices.

This report found that:

1. Increased numbers in food poverty in October 2021

Out of the **106,523 children** represented by charities in this report, approximately **70,981 (67%)** were affected by food poverty in October 2021. Most charities (**19 out of 31**) reported an increase in the number of beneficiaries accessing their services due to food poverty at the time of this survey (October 2021). Of these charities, the average increase in the number of beneficiaries was by **50%**.

2. Food poverty has an impact on the physical and mental health of children in London

Physical health:

Having to buy lower quality and cheaper food impacts on the nutritional value of any meals. For instance, Tessa states that: *"I buy more frozen vegetables than fresh. Because I just can't budget for fresh."* Moreover, many families need to use food banks that may not provide the healthiest options, as Safia said: *"It's not healthy, children need fruit, they need fish, or something like that. They need more food that is good for the body."* Ubayaa backs this up, stating that: *"It's not just the food but the type of food. You need to eat more hot food for your health in winter."*

The lack of nutritious food can have a long term impact on families' health. One mother, Nazura, described how her 16 year old daughter fainted due to not receiving enough iron:

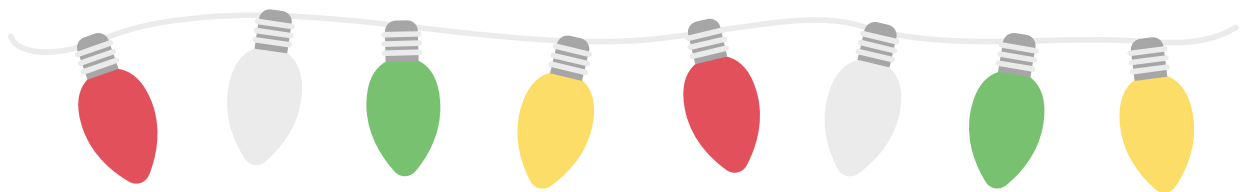
"My children were not getting fresh fruit and vegetables every day. Not having your 5 a day was very hard. My 16 year old ended up fainting. She passed out around 8 o'clock at night. We had to go to A&E. The doctors said her blood iron levels were low. Anaemia, because of the poor diet. Afterwards we tried to top up our diet properly so we had to cut expenses. I had to stop my phone contract for one thing."

Mental health:

Food poverty can also have a negative impact upon mental health. Skipping meals, having your children missing out on treats, eating smaller portions, and living with a lack of choice are constant worries for parents that do not have enough money to get basic food for their family. Mother Ubayaa highlights this, stating: *"It is stressful and it does affect the children"*.

3. Food poverty expected to rise in Winter 2021/2022

Going into Winter 2021/2022, the situation for children affected by food poverty is expected to decline. In this survey, the lives of **99%** of the **70,981 children** affected by food poverty is predicted to get worse. It is expected to significantly worsen for **69,319 children** and slightly worsen for **1,132 children**, represented by 16 and 8 charities respectively. These concerns collate with findings from the UK-wide survey in which 21% of London (and 12% of UK) respondents were most concerned about not being able to feed their children in terms of finances this winter.



Christmas Case Study: Food Insecurity

Out of the **106,523 children** represented by 31 charities in this report, approximately **36,197 (34%)** are forecast to go hungry and **42,615 (40%)** are predicted to use food banks over the Christmas holidays.

Parents are concerned by the extra food expenses over the holidays. For instance, Brinda said that:

“School holidays are a worry because they require extra money to spend. When the children are at home they want to eat even more. My son has got the belly of a whale. He wants to eat everything.”

For families that celebrate Christmas, many will have to cut back on their Christmas dinner this year due to the rising cost of living. Vanessa notes that:

“I will not have the money to get as much as I usually do. For Christmas dinner, we will have to have chicken [not Turkey] because of the inflation of prices. There’s no way I’m gonna be able to continue how it’s been before. I try and make everything look like it’s all great and it’s not going to impact them [her children], but actually I take it all on my shoulders.”

4. Pressure on charities is increasing

19 of the 31 charities surveyed predict that the number of beneficiaries accessing their services will increase due to food poverty over Winter 2021/2022. It is estimated that the average increase will be by almost a third (**32%**). Collectively, the 19 charities are expecting an additional **17,283 children** that need to access their services in the upcoming months.

This places an increased pressure on organisations to provide services, for instance food banks. Indeed, if the food banks didn't exist, mother Nazura, who went hungry at different points over the lockdowns, believes that:

"We would be starving. 100%. I don't know what my community would do without the food banks."

In other words, in one of the richest cities in the world, children would be starving if they did not have access to food banks.



IMPACT: FUEL POVERTY

KEY POINTS

- **All 3 factors affecting fuel poverty are expected to worsen in Winter 2021/2022.** These are: a household's income, their fuel costs, and their energy consumption.
 - **Households are already affected by fuel poverty in October 2021.** Of the **53,369 children** represented by 23 charities with information on fuel poverty, **almost half (48%)** were affected by fuel poverty in October 2021. This is approximately **25,726 children**. Almost **one third (30%)** of these charities (7 out of 23) reported an increase in the number of beneficiaries accessing their services. Of these 7 charities, the average increase in the number of beneficiaries was by a **half (50%)**.
 - **Families are already struggling with the cold in October 2021, before winter arrives.** Despite the cold, some families are not able to turn their heating on, and know of others that have been living in darkness, unable to turn their electricity on.
 - **Charities predict fuel poverty will get worse in Winter 2021/2022.** The lives of **24,591 of the 25,726 children (96%)** affected by fuel poverty in these 23 charities is predicted to significantly worsen because of the increase in energy costs.
 - **Winter clothes are a priority for parents.** With children growing, each year brings new difficulties in having the warm winter clothing. Some parents have gone without food in order to buy clothes for their children. Whilst others have had to prioritise getting clothing for one child over another.
 - **More families are expected to need support from charities.** For **11 out of 23** of the charities, the number of beneficiaries accessing their services due to fuel poverty is predicted to increase. It is estimated that the average increase will be by **45%**. Collectively, the 11 charities are expecting an additional **4,619 children** that need to access their services due to fuel poverty in the upcoming months.
-

The impact of fuel poverty on children

For households in poverty, maintaining consistent access to warm housing and electricity – a basic need – can be challenging. Fuel poverty can have negative impacts on both mental and physical health [30]. Those most at risk of ill health include children. Young people living in cold homes are more likely to be at risk of multiple mental health problems [31] and children living in cold, damp and mouldy houses are almost three times more likely than those living in warm homes to suffer from respiratory illnesses [32]. Children can fall behind at school without a warm, quiet place to do their homework. They can spend hours of the day alone in bed with no warm space to spend time with their family and a lack of hot water might cause them to avoid personal care, leading to bullying and social isolation [33].

FUEL POVERTY

In England, the 'Low Income Low Energy Efficiency' (LILEE) definition of fuel poverty is used. A household is classified as fuel poor if:

- They are living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D, E, F or G
- Their disposable income (income after housing costs and energy needs) would be below the poverty line [34].

Fuel poverty existed pre-pandemic

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, fuel poverty was already a problem in England. In 2019, an estimated 3.2 million households in England were defined as fuel poor. This was 13.4% of households [35]. London was above this average with 15.2%. This made it the English region with the third highest rate of fuel poverty. It also had three of the seven Local Authorities with a fuel poverty rate above 20% [36].

Fuel poverty increased during the pandemic

COVID-19 has exacerbated an already difficult situation for the fuel-poor. Pre-pandemic, people were able to access their home (first place), work (second place) and in-between mediums such as shops, libraries and transport (third place) environments for heat and warmth. The introduction of social distancing and lockdown restrictions reduced access to second and third place environments, thus increasing reliance on first place environments. As such, the average UK household energy bill increased by £32 per month [37]. Widespread financial hardship has made it more difficult for customers to pay for their energy bills. Left unsupported, the National Energy Action, a fuel poverty charity, warned in its annual Fuel Poverty Monitor, that the Covid-19 impact on households had been "stark", with increased levels of energy rationing and energy debt expected over winter [38].

Winter 2021/2022

Three factors affect fuel poverty: a household's income, their fuel costs, and their energy consumption (which can be affected by the household energy-efficiency) [39]. All three factors are expected to worsen in Winter 2021/2022. The financial hardship of the pandemic, coupled with the end to emergency support (such as furlough and universal credit), reduces household income, fuel costs have risen dramatically in recent months and the quality of housing has deteriorated, with essential maintenance and repair work postponed due to the pandemic. For instance, one mother, Saamiya, was worried that *"My house is not double glazed so I have to pay more and I am a bit worried when the heating goes off that's it, it's cold."* This report found that:

1. Households are affected by fuel poverty in October 2021.

23 charities had information on beneficiaries that are affected by fuel poverty. Of the **53,369 children** represented by these charities, **almost half (48%)** were affected by fuel poverty in October 2021. This is approximately 25,726 children. Almost **one third (30%)** of these charities (7 out of 23) reported an increase in the number of beneficiaries accessing their services due to fuel poverty at the time of this survey (October 2021). Of these 7 charities, the average increase in the number of beneficiaries was by a **half (50%)**.

In the interviews, parents shared that they are already struggling with the cold in October 2021, before winter arrives. Nazura is wearing a big jumper in our interview. She notes that:

"Sometimes it gets really cold, but up to now we haven't used the heating because we are scared. We're waiting for the proper cold to come in. But sometimes it's really, really cold. I'm like, okay, put on your layers, put on your jumper, put on your socks."

Nazura also revealed that she knows of other families in worse situations than herself:

"I know people who are struggling. Some people cannot even afford to pay for their electricity. One mother comes to me and says my lights are off...she has 3 children. No cooking, no hot water, they have nothing. I gave her £10 of my money."



Christmas Case Study: Fuel Poverty

Out of the **106,523 children** represented by 31 charities in this report, approximately **40,438 (38%)** are estimated to experience fuel poverty at some point during the Christmas holidays.

2. Charities predict fuel poverty will get worse in Winter 2021/2022

Going into Winter 2021/2022, the situation for children affected by fuel poverty is expected to decline. The lives of **24,591** of the **25,726 children (96%)** affected by fuel poverty in these 23 charities is predicted to significantly worsen.

Parents that have struggled with fuel poverty in the past, shared concerns that they will have to take similar measures again. For instance, Tessa shared that:

“In my previous years I've gone overnight with no electricity because I didn't have the money. You just survive with the light on your phone. It's not nice. No one should have to live like that.”

Winter Clothing

Warm, winter clothing was a big concern for parents, with Brinda stating:

“It does get cold and the boys need hats. They need scarves. They need long winter socks. They need mittens. Children tend to lose a lot during the winters, they lose their hats at school sometimes and it means re-buying.”

Similarly, Vanessa notes that:

“All four children are growing all the time and trying to keep up with clothing, coats, everything for every single one at once. It's very difficult. I find myself having to prioritise who needs that item first. My money does not cover enough to clothe us all, as well as feed us, as well as pay the bills. It is a huge worry for me around clothing, definitely. It is so expensive love.”

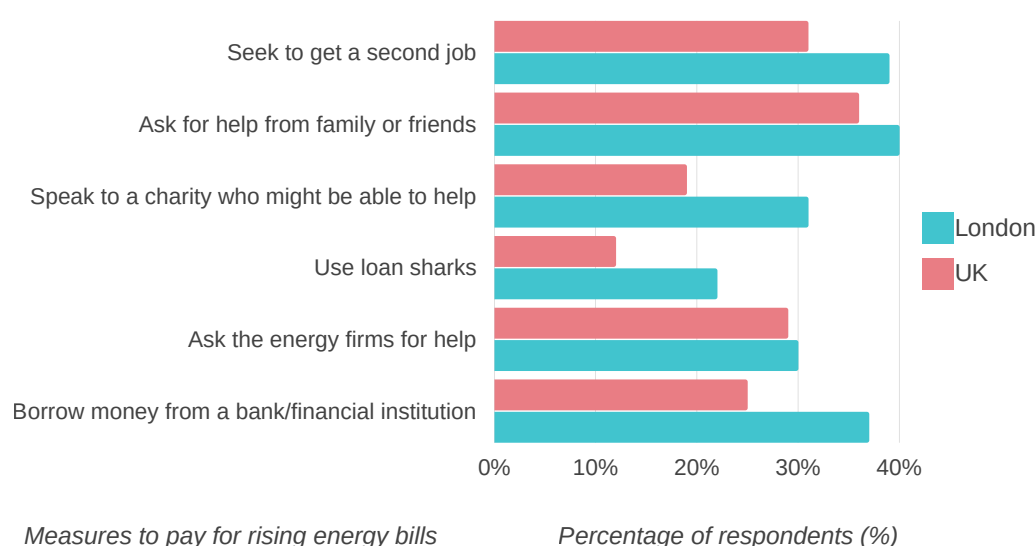
In order to get winter clothes for her children, Ubayaa has gone without food:

“Buying winter coats and shoes is a priority. They need gloves and scarves. It means I might have to go without food in winter.”

3. More families and children are expected to need support from charities

With the rising cost in energy, people may need to take additional measures to help pay their bills. In the UK-wide survey, respondents from London were more likely than respondents from across the UK to take the suggested measures. For instance, seek to get a second job (UK 31%; London 39%) or ask energy firms for help (UK 29%; London 30%). Many would ask for help from family or friends (UK 36%; London 40%), borrow money from a bank/financial institution (UK 25%; London 37%) or take the risky option of using loan sharks (UK 12%; London 22%). Others would speak to a charity that might be able to help (UK 19%; London 31%), thus illustrating the increase in demand for their services.

Figure 7: Measures people would take to help pay for rising energy bills (UK-Wide Family Survey)



This report found that the support systems that address fuel poverty, such as charities, are expecting extra demand for their support. For **11 out of 23** of the charities, the number of beneficiaries accessing their services due to fuel poverty is predicted to increase. It is estimated that the average increase will be by **45%**. Collectively, the 11 charities are expecting an additional **4,619 children** that need to access their services due to fuel poverty in the upcoming months.

Going into Winter 2021/2022 it will be harder for them to support their vulnerable beneficiaries if they do not receive extra funding.

FURTHER SUPPORT

It is acknowledged that inflation, prices rises and reduced household income, among other things, will make Winter 2021/2022 challenging for some. This research found that additional support is needed for children in poverty. This is because current measures by the government, including the £500 million Winter Support Scheme and changes in the Autumn 2021 Budget, are failing to provide the appropriate support this winter.

KEY POINTS

- **Current measures by the government, including the £500 million Winter Support Scheme and changes in the Autumn 2021 Budget, are failing to provide appropriate support this winter.** Only **7 charities (23%)** thought that the winter hardship fund would alleviate the impact of poverty on their beneficiaries.
 - **Current government measures are significantly lower than the £20 a week uplift to universal credit.** If the £500 million Winter Support fund was divided by the number of households on universal credit (5.9 million) over 4 months of winter, the average a household could get a week is **£4.04**. If the 1.9 million that partially benefit from the Autumn 2021 budget changes are excluded, this equates to **£5.95** a week.
 - **Pressure on charities is increasing.** Charities (**UK 29%; London 42%**) and the public, or every one of us (**UK 41%; London 43%**), should be doing more to help families struggling this winter according to respondents in the UK-wide survey.
 - **Charities do not have enough funding.** Only **4 of the 31 charities** currently have enough funding to meet the demand for their services. If they receive extra support from the public, a further 11 charities will be able to meet the demand.
 - **The government should do more to support families and charities going into Winter 2021/2022.**
-

1. Government support is limited

a) 2021 Autumn Budget

The 2021 Autumn Budget changes to the taper rate and work allowance improves the social security system for working families by allowing low-paid workers to keep more of what they earn. However, at a cost of £2.2 billion, the uplift is much smaller than the £6 billion a year reduction made in October with the £20 universal credit cut. Moreover, analysis by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation indicates that the rising cost of living wipes out much of the financial gain some families will receive from the changes [40].

On the 27th October 2021, the Chancellor Rishi Sunak presented the Autumn Budget to Parliament. It introduced changes to Universal Credit (UC) to reduce the amount that is taken away as earnings rise. This included:

- A fall in the taper rate for UC from the 1st December 2021. This means a person's UC award will be reduced by 55p, rather than 63p, for every £1 of net earnings above any work allowance.
- An increase in the work allowance for households with children and household members with limited capability to work. This means a household can keep £500 per year more from what they earn before their UC starts to be reduced, from the 1st December 2021 [41].

The benefit of the changes will also bypass the poorest, such as those who are unable to work or looking for work. This includes cancer patients, people with disabilities and those caring for young children or elderly parents. Indeed, the new measures will only benefit 1.9 million households, around a third of the 5.9 million claiming universal credit in August 2021. Ignoring them with these changes risks deepening poverty amongst this group, who *"now have the lowest main rate of out-of-work support in real terms since around 1990"* according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation [42].

b) Winter Support Scheme

The Winter Support Scheme has been labelled a *"sticking plaster"*, with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation stating *"It does not come close to meeting the scale of the challenge facing millions of families on low incomes as the cost of living crisis looms. By admitting today that families will need to apply for emergency grants to meet the costs of basics like food and heating through winter, it's clear the chancellor knows the damage the cut to universal credit will cause"* [43]. Indeed, only 7 charities (23%) thought that the £500 million winter hardship fund would alleviate the impact of poverty on their beneficiaries. 11 (35%) did not think it would help and 13 (42%) did not know.

The government announced £500m of grants to help families struggling with the cost of living as other support schemes are withdrawn. The new Household Support Fund will support millions of vulnerable households in England and will be distributed by councils in England, who know their local areas best and can directly help those who need it most, including for example, through small grants to meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities. Cash will be made available to Local Authorities in October 2021 and will run for an unspecified period over the winter [44].

Given that 4 million households are unlikely to benefit from the Autumn 2021 Budget, it can be assumed that the £500 million additional funding is meant to support them from the recent cuts. £500 million divided by 4 million households is equivalent to £125 per household. Supposing that the winter fund is meant to last 4 months from October 2021-February 2022 (equivalent to 21 weeks), the average a household could get per week is **£5.95**. If the additional 1.9 million that are partially benefitting from the Autumn 2021 budget are included, the average a household could get per week is **£4.04**. These figures are both significantly lower than the £20 a week uplift.

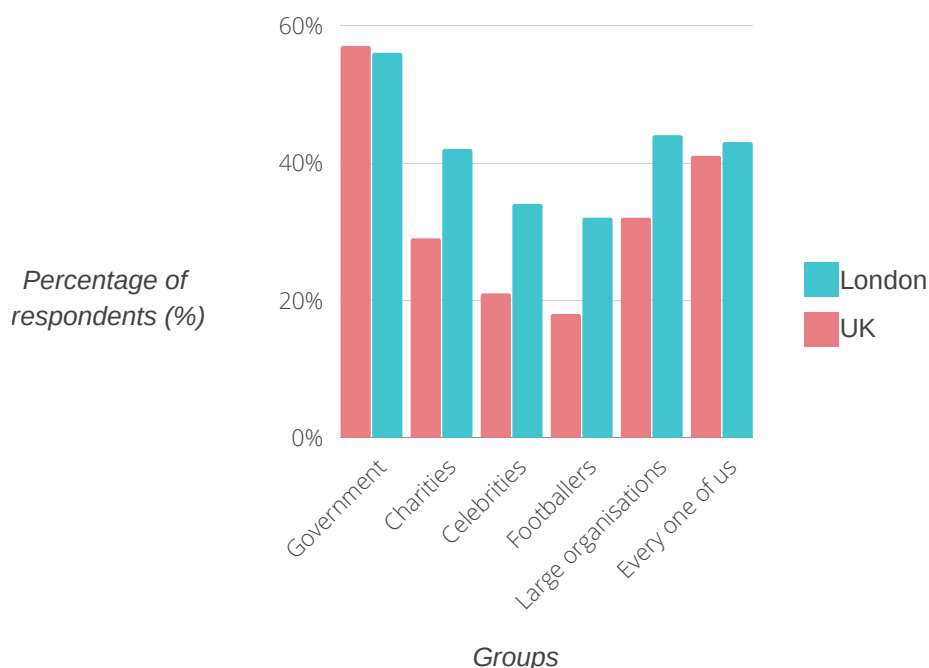
2. The government should be doing more to support families

In the survey, charities were asked what they thought the government could do to support disadvantaged children and young people during Winter 2021/2022. 19 charities thought that the government should reinstate the cut to universal credit. 8 charities suggested measures to tackle food poverty, such as: *“funding of school food provision including breakfast and holiday provision”* and *“shopping vouchers to families for food”*.

4 charities identified methods to combat fuel poverty, including: *“Fuel top-up vouchers”*, *“Additional means tested support for fuel costs”*, *“Remove VAT from Fuel Bills”*, *“Ensure fuel companies have hardship funds and that they advertise them”* and *“Providing funding for the Charities that are already working with the children and keep the School open for the families to access support needed”*.

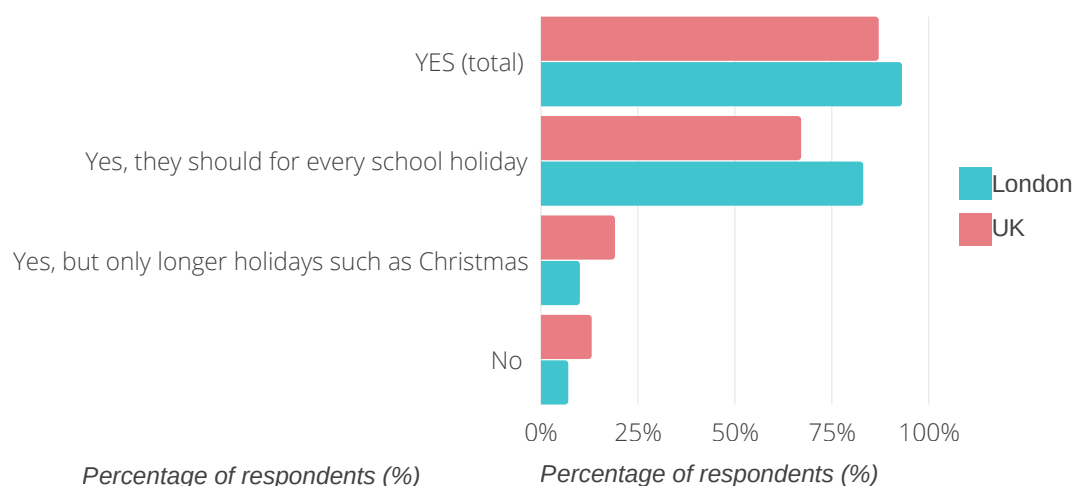
Other suggestions included: *“Get rid of the bedroom tax & the 2 child limit”*, *“Help with quality childcare costs to working parents”* and *“clothing parcels”*. Finally, one suggestion was *“Do not just look at this winter, look at a more holistic approach. This is a problem that will be there into the next years and a sticking plaster will not do”*, or in a more direct tone, simply *“Get a grip on reality”*.

Figure 8: Perceptions over who should be doing more to help families who are struggling to heat their homes and eat (UK-Wide Family Survey)



In the UK-wide survey, 57% of UK respondents and 56% of London respondents believe that the government should be doing more to help families that are struggling to heat their homes and eat. One way of doing this, that had general consensus, was that the government should fund meals for children who qualify for free school meals on holidays (UK 87%; London 93%). Most respondents thought this should be at every school holiday (UK 67%; London 83%), whilst some only believed it should only be during longer school holidays such as Summer and Christmas (UK 19%; London 10%).

Figure 9: Perceptions of whether the government should fund meals for children who qualify for free school meals at holidays (UK-Wide Family Survey)



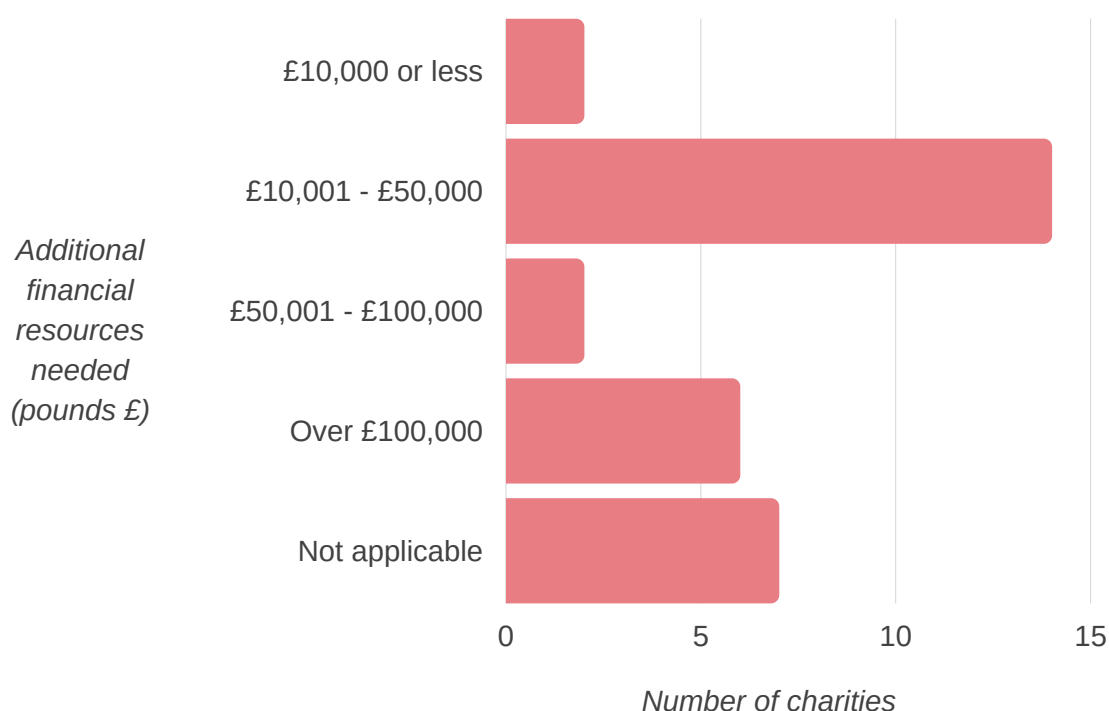
3. Pressure on charities is increasing

The pressure on charities was also evident (UK 29%; London 42%), as was the responsibility of the public, or every one of us (UK 41%; London 43%), to do more to support families struggling this winter. However, only 4 of the 31 charities currently have enough funding to meet the demand for their services. If they receive extra support from the public, a further 11 charities will be able to meet the demand.

In the interviews, parents highlighted their reliance on charitable organisations. For instance, Nazura shared how the The Dadihiye Somali Development Organisation helped her family during the lockdowns:

“My husband is an uber driver and during lockdown we were on zero. The only thing we could rely on was food banks and the Dadihiye community here offering services for us. If it was not for them, I don’t know what we would have done. It was really hard. It has definitely helped my children, and I’m sure all the other children who have been using the service, feel like they belong somewhere. Feel like they can have opportunities that other children have.”

Figure 10: Additional financial resources needed to meet a rise in demand for services in Winter 2021/2022 (UK-Wide Family Survey)



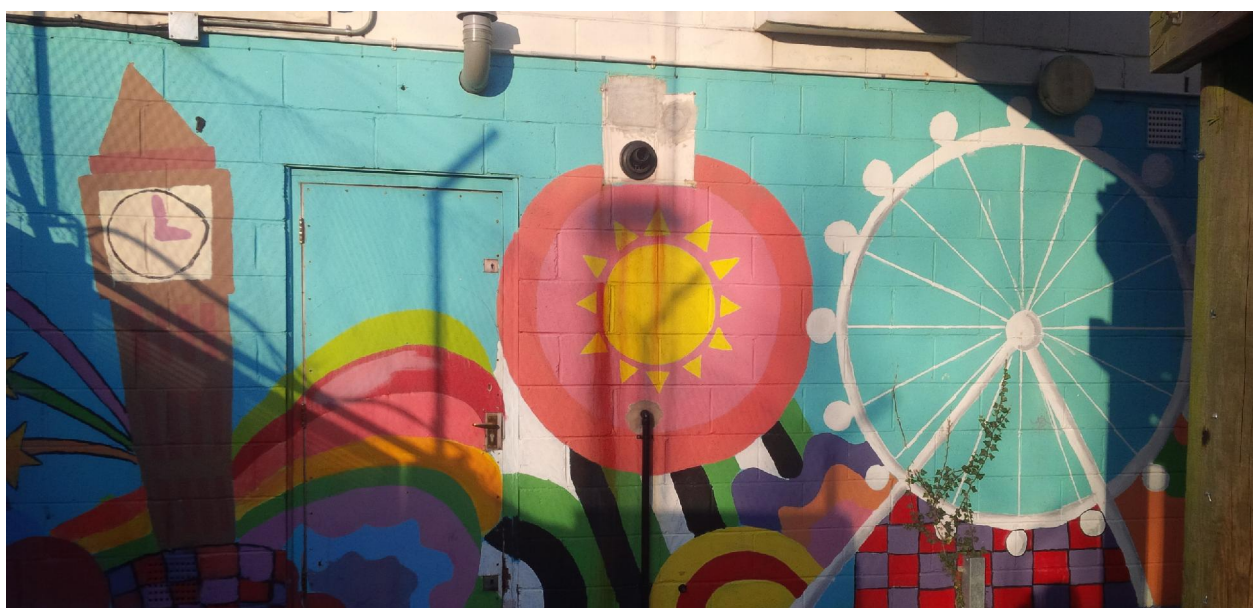
It is predicted that there will be an increase in demand from children and young people needing support in Winter 2021/2022. Only 7 of the 31 charities (22%) has the funding to meet this predicted increase in demand. 2 charities indicated that needed up to £10,000 extra to meet the Winter 2021/2022 demand, 14 need an additional £10,0001-50,000, 2 needed £50,001-£199,000 and 6 need over £100,000 (see Figure 9).

4. The government should be doing more to support charities

Charities were also asked what they thought the government could do to support small charities during Winter 2021/2022. The priority was increased funding and grants to meet the increased demand for services. This was said by 25 charities, with one stating *“funding-as simple as that”* and another *“Fund those most in need!”*.

It was understood that additional funding is needed because charities are *“bridging huge voids of earned income shortfall caused by Covid closure.”* Suggestions for additional funding included: a *“Winter emergency fund for charities to apply to increase their support for disadvantaged children/families”* as well as *“Government could offer more funding to councils to work with charities to offer support to the disadvantaged.”*

The impact of rising energy costs is not only on the charities beneficiaries, but also the charities themselves. Therefore some charities mentioned measures such as providing charities a *“Discount on our energy bills”*.



CONCLUSION

Childhood poverty is worsening in Winter 2021/2022. Increased costs, reduction in household income and the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are impacting the lives of thousands of children across London, and the UK more generally. In this research, we found financial instability, food insecurity and fuel poverty are of huge concern, both for low-income households, and those that support them.

To respond to these challenges, our findings suggest that reliance on community and voluntary sector groups will increase as greater numbers of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people face poverty. These charities need further support to deal with the additional strain on their resources.

The Childhood Trust is launching a £3.5 million Christmas Challenge appeal to provide support to over 150,000 disadvantaged children in London this Christmas and throughout 2022. No child deserves to go hungry or cold this winter.

“You want to be able to relax and enjoy Christmas. You feel like you're missing the best parts of your child because you're just stressed out all the time and you're worrying and panicking. I just want to sit back at Christmas and enjoy that time, but you're worrying about when that next bit of extra money is going to come in.” - Tessa

ABOUT THE CHILDHOOD TRUST

The Childhood Trust is London's child poverty charity, dedicated to alleviating the impact of poverty on children and young people living in the capital. Children growing up in poverty face multiple and complex challenges, which can limit their development and degrade their potential. London has the highest rate of child poverty in England. The Childhood Trust's work is focused on supporting the 700,000 plus children living in poverty in the capital.

Since our inception in 2013, The Childhood Trust has raised £24.9 million to help fund projects supporting 420,000 children and young people. Our funding ensures that local grassroots organisations can successfully engage London's most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in a wide range of support services, such as counselling and mental health support, food provision, sports training, arts and cultural activities, and special educational needs support. In addition to funding projects, we run community support programmes that provide immediate, practical support to low-income families living in substandard accommodation and families experiencing food insecurity. We also raise awareness of the consequences of child poverty through research, advocacy projects and events.



THE CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE 2021



The Childhood Trust has launched the 2021 Christmas Challenge Campaign to ensure that disadvantaged children across the capital can easily access the programmes and services they need to grow and thrive over Christmas 2021 and throughout 2022. Taking place from 30th November - 7th December 2021, the campaign aims to raise £3,500,000 to fund the delivery of approximately 98 projects providing a range of essential support services for disadvantaged children living in all 32 London boroughs. These include:

- Recreational and play activities
- Food provision
- Arts and music
- Sporting activities
- Mental health support
- Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Support
- Mentoring and counselling

The Christmas Challenge programme is funded by our matched fundraising campaign that doubles individual donations made via an online portal operated by our partners, The Big Give. The matched fund (50%) is comprised of funds from The Childhood Trust (25%) and from the participating organisations' major donors (25%). This creates 50% of each charity's target fund. The other 50% of the target is raised by the public via the campaign's online donation portal.

In 2020, The Christmas Challenge raised a total of £3,060,469 for 85 projects supporting approximately 144,000 children and young people in London. These funds have enabled the delivery of vital support and services ensuring disadvantaged children and young people stay safe, are well nourished and enjoy purposeful, fun activities throughout 2021.

We hope to beat last year's record to continue providing vital support for children and young people in London throughout 2022.

APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

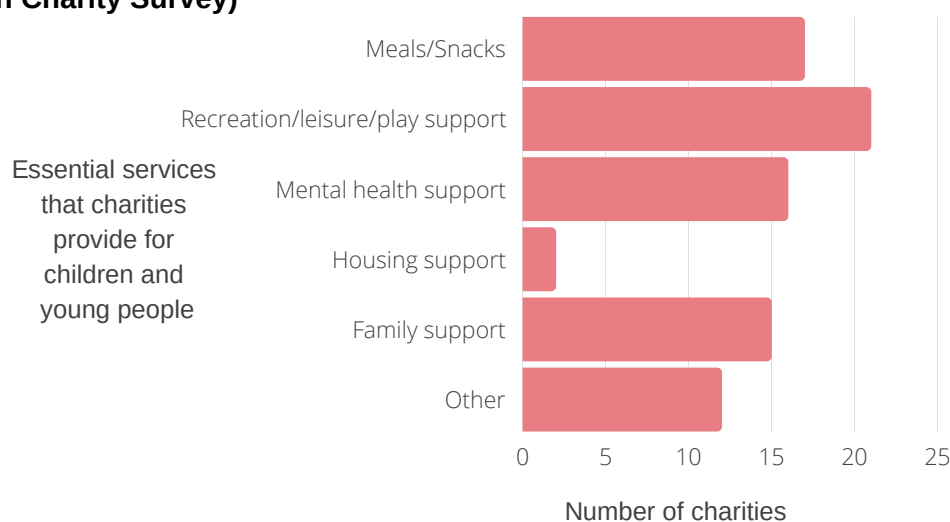
A mixed methods approach has been taken to the research with quantitative and qualitative data collected and analysed.

London Charity Survey

The Childhood Trust's winter 2020/2021 research survey was sent out on Monday 11th October 2021 and remained live for 2 weeks until Monday 25th October 2021. Participants were asked to provide 5-10 minutes of their time, to give their independent view and opinion in response to 36 questions. The survey had responses from 31 charities, that are collectively supporting 106,523 children living in poverty in London.

To calculate 106,523 children, the approximate number of children and young people (under 18s) that use each charity's services annually in London was added up. There are limitations with this calculation, for instance, children may be supported by two or more of the charities creating an overlap. Despite these limitations, it is deemed an appropriate method to get insight into a large number of children that could not be accessed individually.

Figure 11: Essential services that charities provide for children and young people (London Charity Survey)



The charities provide a number of essential services to children and young people (Figure 2). 21 charities provided recreation/leisure/play support (68%), 17 provided meals/snacks (55%), 16 provided mental health support (52%), 15 provided family support (48%) and 2 provided housing support (6%).

The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics, with patterns of responses presented on graphs and charts. This produced information on charities perceptions of the challenges their beneficiaries face in the upcoming winter.

UK-Wide Family Survey

A secondary survey was conducted by Atomik Research. This is an independent creative market research agency that employs MRS-certified researchers and abides to MRS code. The research fieldwork took place from the 18th to the 20th October 2021 and had 1001 respondents. Respondents are parents to children under 18 years old located across the UK. There were 243 respondents from London that are a focus in this research report.

Interviews

7 interviews were conducted with families that are supported by charities that support children living in poverty in London. Their objective was to provide richer qualitative data to add depth to the perceptions, experiences and understandings of the issues raised in the survey data.

The interviews were conducted in person (2) and online over Zoom (5). They were approximately 30-40 minutes long. To carefully traverse the sensitive nature of this research, each interview followed a topic guide that was prepared in advance. This included:

- Overview of the charity and interviewees association with it
- The impact of the Covid-19 crisis
- Predictions for winter 2021/2022
- Increased Costs
- Reduction in household income (End to universal credit uplift and furlough)
- Food Insecurity
- Fuel Poverty
- Christmas
- Further support that is required

The questions were semi-structured to avoid making assumptions about what was learnt, and contained open-ended questions that allowed common themes to emerge across participants, whilst still reflecting each participant's individual experiences. This responsive interviewing style established rapport and trust between the interviewer and the interviewee, allowing participants to openly share their opinions on sensitive topics.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data collected. This is a research method used to identify, analyse and interpret themes that come up repeatedly within qualitative data. Whilst the beneficiaries of each charity faced unique challenges, there were a number of key themes that ran through the interviews.

The interview participants and the organisation they are associated with are provided in the table below:

Associated Organisation	Interviewee	Information about the charity
The Dadihiye Somali Development Organisation	Nazura. Mother to three children aged 16, 10 and 7.	Supports members from BME communities mainly from those from Somali Background, who are disadvantaged, low- income families, elders, disabled or live in the most deprived areas all over London.
	Safia. Mother to one child aged 16.	
	Ubayaa. Mother to four children aged 15, 13, 12 and 10.	
The Alexandra Rose Charity	Brinda. Mother to two children aged 5 and 3.	Provides families on low incomes access to fresh fruit and vegetables in their local communities.
The Sands End Adventure Playground	Vanessa. Mother of four children aged 9, 8, 5, and 3.	Provides low-cost play and childcare provisions for children aged 4-13 years.
The Walker Children's Club	Tessa. Mother of one child aged 8.	Offers quality, affordable after school care to children.
The Spring Community Hub	Saamiya. Mother of four children aged 10, 8, 4 and 17 months.	A community hub, a food bank and a place of support for the local community.

Figure 2: Interviewees and their associated organization

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