



Strictly embargoed until 22.00, Tuesday 4th August 2020

The Duchess of Cambridge brings together British brands and baby banks to boost support for struggling families during coronavirus as new research reveals rise in demand for their services

Nearly nine in ten (88%) baby banks surveyedⁱ say children living in poverty will go without essentials such as nappies as a direct impact of the pandemic. That's according to new research from Little Village, a charity tackling poverty for the under 5's. It has conducted a survey with 50+ baby banks across the UK exploring the impact of the pandemic on their operations. The survey results are released on the same day as The Duchess of Cambridge launches a new initiative, bringing together British brands and baby banks around the UK, in a bid to support more families. The brands have donated items to Little Village, Baby Basics and AberNecessities who all operate baby banks across the UK.

Of the baby banks surveyed:

- Nearly 8 in 10 (77%) say they need more nappies, mattresses and other products that can't be given out second hand.
- 9 out of 10 (90%) say the crisis is making it harder to support families in the way they would want.
- 83% say families are concerned about being able to afford/find essentials such as nappies and baby milk.
- 8 in 10 (81%) say children living in poverty will go hungry.
- 7 in 10 (70%) say children living in poverty will fall behind in developmental/educational terms.

Baby banks aim to support and empower families by ensuring every child has the essential items they need to thrive such as clothes, toys and equipment. The organisations are powered primarily by volunteers, with families who need support typically being referred via a network of professionals such as midwives, health visitors and social workers.

Almost half (46%) of baby banks surveyed have seen an increase in the numbers of families they are supporting since lockdown began in March. A 2018 surveyⁱⁱ estimated that 1 in 100 families in England with children under 5 have visited a baby bank.

Meanwhile, 4.2 million children are growing up in poverty in the UKⁱⁱⁱ, with poverty rising fastest among children under the age of 5^{iv}.

Child poverty is projected to rise to record levels by 2023/2024^v, and the pandemic is set to make the situation much worse with nearly 8 in 10 (78%) respondents saying

children in poverty will suffer long-term consequences as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

One survey respondent said, "Families who were already in crisis, are in even more crisis now. Those who were managing are now in crisis due to loss of income and/or benefits delay." Another respondent said, "I think that children have been already (sic) living in poverty, the covid pandemic has caused an extreme level of poverty."

The majority of baby banks surveyed believe coronavirus has created more financial difficulties for low income families:

- 64% say families are experiencing increased food costs.
- 64% say families are experiencing a loss of income from business closures/reduced hours.
- 59% say families are experiencing a loss of income from self-isolation, illness or caring responsibilities.
- 55% say families are experiencing a loss of income due to delays in benefits payments.

The social and emotional impact of coronavirus on the families that baby banks support is evident:

- 74% say there has been an increase in mental health issues such as anxiety.
- 68% say there has been an increase in social isolation and loneliness.
- 53% point to an increase in relationship difficulties, with 42% concerned about an increase in domestic violence.
- 38% are concerned about a negative impact on children's mental health and behaviour.

The survey also reveals the fragility of support around low income families who are experiencing practical difficulties as a result of the pandemic:

- 70% talk about difficulties that families have in accessing community and charity services.
- 53% talk about difficulties that families have in accessing health services.
- 50% talk about difficulties that families have in accessing child support services such as developmental support.
- 40% talk about difficulties families have in accessing educational materials to support home learning.

Sophia Parker, Founder and Chief Executive of Little Village said:

"We are thrilled that the Duchess of Cambridge is helping to bring brands together to support the work of baby banks around the UK.

Child poverty was projected to rise before the pandemic, and we believe the crisis is making things so much worse. Families who were on the edge of coping before the outbreak are now struggling even more due to job losses, illness and caring responsibilities. We are facing unprecedented demand from families and we're on track to support over 6,000 children this year, double the number we helped in 2019. Every child should have the right to a good childhood. Unless action is taken now, we fear that the rise in inequality for children trapped in poverty will continue, which is likely to blight their childhood and future life chances."

The 19 brands who have donated items to Little Village, Baby Basics and AberNecessities are:

- Bloom and Blossom
- Boden
- Bramley
- Green People (Organic babies)
- Childs Farm
- Frugi
- John Lewis
- JoJo Maman Bebe
- Kit & Kin
- Kokoso Baby
- M&S
- Mamas & Papas
- Matalan
- My Little Coco
- Sainsbury's
- Tesco
- The White Company
- Trotters

DHL Express has provided logistical services for the dissemination of donations to the baby banks across the UK.

ENDS

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Little Village has launched an online charity appeal, #VirtualVillage, to help support families most at risk of hardship during the pandemic:

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/virtualvillage>

About [Little Village](#)

Little Village is a 'baby bank', which is like a foodbank, but for clothes, toys and equipment for babies and children up to the age of 5. Since we launched in 2016, we've supported over 8,000 visits from families across London and we saw nearly 3,000 children in 2019. Families are referred to us via a network of professionals such as midwives and social workers from over 500 organisations. The families we help are facing a range of challenges – homelessness, unemployment, low wages and domestic violence. As a volunteer-led movement of parents committed to alleviating child poverty, our vision is that every child in the capital has the essential items they need to thrive.

To find your nearest baby bank to support, click [here](#)

Find out more about the work of Baby Basics [here](#)

Find out more about the work of AberNecessities [here](#)

If you are interested in setting up a baby bank, or a business wishing to support baby banks contact Cat Ross cat.ross@baby-basics.org.uk

ⁱ Source: [Little Village survey](#) with 50+ UK Baby Banks May 2020

ⁱⁱ Source: [UK Baby Banks Report](#) – True Vision/Channel 4 Dispatches, Born on the Breadline 29.10.18

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: [DWP Households below average income](#): 1994/95 to 2018/2019

^{iv} Source: [DWP Households below average income](#): 1994/95 to 2017/18

^v Source: [Resolution Foundation](#) report 2019
