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London has the highest UK poverty rates for households with young children, new research reveals

London has the highest rates of poverty (43%) in the UK for children living in families with a child under 5. That's according to new researchⁱ from London-based Little Village, one of the largest 'baby banks' in the UK, supported by analysis from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The new report explores the rates, persistence and depth of poverty in families where at least one child is aged under 5. It also highlights the impact of the Covid pandemic on low-income families with young children.

Key findings about children living in families with at least one child under 5:

- London has the highest rates of poverty for children in these households (43%).
- London is followed by the North East (42%) and the West Midlands (39%). The lowest poverty rates in the UK for children in these households are in Scotland (28%), the South West (28%) and Northern Ireland (27%).
- London has the deepest poverty rates of anywhere in the UK for these families. On average, children in poverty in the capital live further below the poverty line than children elsewhere in the UK. In real terms, that's the equivalent to a family with two young children living on £248 a week.ⁱⁱ
- Households where there is a child under the age of 3 face the highest risk of poverty.

Little Village, which is based in London, is like a foodbank but for clothes, toys and equipment for babies and children up to the age of 5. The exclusive research has been commissioned to mark the 5th anniversary of the charity, which has supported over 11,000 children since 2016. The report also finds that 1.3 million of the 4.2 million children in poverty in the UK are babies and children under the age of 5.

Sophia Parker, Founder of Little Village said:

"Our new research lays bare the unacceptable scale and depth of poverty in London and around the UK for babies, toddlers and young children. The figures speak for themselves, and we see the real impact poverty has on families every week at Little Village. The families we support are often homeless, living in temporary accommodation or struggling to pay unaffordable housing costs. It is deeply worrying that in one of the wealthiest cities in the world, young children are growing up hungry, cold and with clothes that don't fit, lacking the essential items they need to thrive.

"Every child has the right to a good childhood. The early years have a huge bearing on future health, education and employment outcomes. Even before the pandemic struck, millions of children were being left behind, and the last year has made matters so much worse. Child poverty is not inevitable: we have successfully tackled it in the past. This generation of children should remember us for how we got behind them, not for how they were let down. We believe the Government needs to take real action to address this national crisis now."

The table below shows what this means in terms of money in people’s pockets, after housing costs in London:

Example family	Average weekly income (£) – this column shows the weekly income for a family with the average UK weekly income.	Poverty line – weekly income (£)	Nationally, the average family income for children in poverty is 71% of the poverty line. This column shows the weekly income equivalent of this figure.	In London, the average family income for children in poverty is 66% of the poverty line. This column shows the weekly income equivalent of this figure.
Couple with two children aged below 5	£626	£375	£267	£248
Single parent with two children aged below 5	£438	£263	£187	£173

Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, sent a video message to Little Village volunteers in honour of its 5th birthday, and in it he said:

“Findings like these cast a dark shadow over this incredible global city. Child poverty is a national scandal, and as Mayor, I’ll always prioritise tackling it. It’s so important that grassroots charities like Little Village – who see the impact of poverty every week – are pushing this issue further up the political agenda. Thank you so much”.

Helen Barnard, Director at JRF said:

“It’s just not right that any child in our society is growing up in poverty. The fact that so many children in London are growing up with the constant pressure of poverty should shock us all. It shows just how far we are from realising our society’s shared belief that every child should have the best start in life.

“Organisations like Little Village do extraordinary work to support children and families in the capital, not just with the essentials they need but with the solidarity and kindness that we know means so much to people who’ve been pulled under.

“But as a society we have a responsibility to make sure that people don’t end up in this situation in the first place, and the Government has a critical opportunity to do this now, by keeping the £20 increase in Universal Credit. Introducing this support was the right course of action, and a recognition that our social security system was not strong enough to keep people afloat prior to the pandemic. Unemployment is projected to peak later this year and stay high for some time. Cutting the lifeline would be the worst possible decision for families on low incomes who face another extremely challenging year ahead.”

In order to address the immediate impact of the Covid pandemic on young families living in poverty, Little Village fully supports the calls from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and others to:

- Keep the lifeline. Treasury plans to remove the temporary uplift in Universal Credit in April will reduce the incomes of 6.2 million families by £1040 (£20 a week) and plunge half a million people, including 200,000 children, into poverty overnight.
- Adapt Universal Credit to reflect the challenging economic circumstances families are facing as a result of the pandemic.
- Ensure renters can remain in their homes and extend the ban on evictions for the duration of the lockdown.
- Help low paid and insecure workers through this crisis by widening access to statutory sick pay to make it easier for low-income families to self-isolate when necessary.

To promote good childhoods for all in the long term, the report recommends:

- Ensuring families enjoy decent wages and security of income.
- Greater investment in the early years, to ensure parents and young children receive proper support at this crucial stage in a child's life.

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/2021VirtualVillage?success=true>

About Little Village

Little Village is like a foodbank, but for clothes, toys and equipment for babies and children up to the age of 5. We've grown to be one of the largest 'baby banks' in the UK, supporting over 11,000 children since we launched in 2016. Families are referred to us via a network of over 1,800 professionals such as midwives and social workers. As a volunteer-led movement of parents committed to alleviating child poverty, Little Village's vision is that every child in the capital has the essential items they need to thrive.

About the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is an independent social change organisation working to solve UK poverty. For more information visit www.jrf.org.uk

[1] **"It takes a village: how to make all childhoods matter"** Little Village report, supported by JRF February 2020. The analysis was undertaken by the research team at JRF. They drew on three main sources:

- Households Below Average Income dataset (Department for Work and Pensions).
- Understanding Society (University of Essex, ISER) to make sense of persistent poverty.
- The Understanding Society, Covid-19 study (University of Essex, ISER)

[1¹] Figures calculated after housing costs.
