

Background Reading

This guide section briefly introduces poverty through definitions, facts, and figures at local, national, and international levels. It should prepare the teacher (adult) with a starting point. If you need any more information, please use the links below.

Definition of Poverty

UK Definition of Poverty

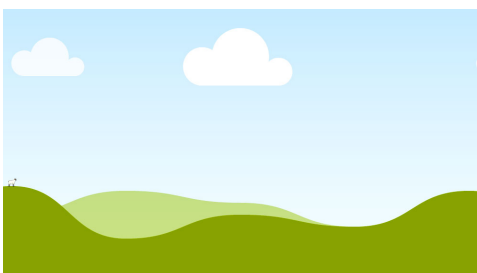


What is poverty?

Poverty is when your resources are well below your minimum needs.

“Poverty means not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or buy the essentials for your children. It means waking up facing insecurity, uncertainty, and impossible decisions about money every day. It means facing marginalisation – and even discrimination – because of your financial circumstances. The constant stress it causes can lead to problems that deprive people of the chance to play a full part in society.”

The United Nations Definition of Poverty



“Poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination, and exclusion, as well as the lack of participation in decision-making.”

Poverty is a human rights violation. Every woman, man, and child has the human right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, food, clothing, housing, medical care and social services.

Schools have a responsibility to tackle poverty and promote equality of opportunities. However, social action in this focus area is an opportunity for young people to learn how to get involved in schools and community projects that mitigate the effects of poverty. This approach empowers young people who will be making a difference.

For these topics, schools may benefit from using a principled approach by linking planning and delivery to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The United Nations Convention on the Child's Rights (UNCRC) is a legally binding international agreement that sets out every child's civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, regardless of race, religion, or abilities.

The UNCRC consists of 54 articles that set out children's rights and how governments should work together to make them available to all children.

Under the terms of the convention, governments must meet children's basic needs and help them reach their full potential. Central to this is the acknowledgement that every child has basic fundamental rights. These include the right to:

- Life, survival and development
- Protection from violence, abuse or neglect
- An education that enables children to fulfil their potential
- Be raised by, or have a relationship with their parents
- Express their opinions and be listened to

In 2000, two optional protocols were added to the UNCRC. One asks governments to ensure children under 18 are not forcibly recruited into their armed forces. The second calls on states to prohibit child prostitution, child pornography and the sale of children into slavery. More than 120 states have now ratified. The United Nations adopted them.

A third optional protocol was added in 2011. This enables children whose rights have been violated to complain directly to the UN Committee on the Child's Rights.

Since the United Nations adopted it in November 1989, 196 countries have signed up to this agreement.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a treaty that sets out the basic rights to which all children are entitled.

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them or to have their views considered and taken seriously; this includes their rights in school too. In addition to Article 12, there are a number of additional key Children's Rights that we need to consider when tackling subjects that affect the lives of children and young people in schools:

Article 2 (Non-Discrimination): The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.

Article 26 (Social Security): Every child has the right to benefit from social security. Governments must provide social security, including financial support and other benefits, to families in need of assistance.

Article 27 (Adequate Standard of Living): Every child has the right to an average living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this.

Article 29 (Goals of Education): Education must develop every child's personality, talents, and abilities. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights and care for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

Article 31 (Leisure, Play and Culture): Every child has the right to relax, play, and participate in cultural and artistic activities.

What is the definition of child poverty in the UK?

"Households with an income less than 60% of the UK average (£30,500 as of 2020) are in poverty. That means families earning £18,300 or less are defined as living in relative poverty." (The Big Issue)

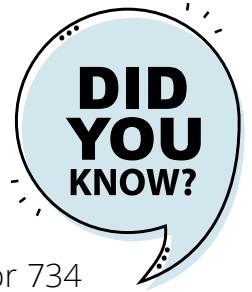


The effects of poverty

Poverty in childhood is damaging: to children, to their life chances and to communities. Watch some animations...

CPAG / Apr 11

Poverty Facts and Figures



At a Global Level

- According to the most recent estimates in 2015, 10% of the world's population, or 734 million people, lived on less than \$1.90 a day. What would you buy for \$1.90, the same as £1.41? Factor in the importance of a healthy meal and other costs such as clothing, heating, travel, and entertainment
- Even before COVID-19, baseline projections suggested that 6% of the global population would still be living in extreme poverty in 2030, missing the target of ending poverty.
- Post-COVID, poverty will push over 70 million people into extreme poverty
- One out of five children live in extreme poverty, and the adverse effects of poverty and deprivation in the early years have ramifications that can last a lifetime
- In 2016, 55% of the world's population – about 4 billion people – did not benefit from any form of social protection

At a National Level (2019/2020)

- 4.3 million children lived in poverty in the UK in 2019-20
- That's 31% of children or nine in a classroom of 30
- 49% of children living in lone-parent families are in poverty
- Lone parents face a higher risk of poverty due to the lack of an additional earner, low rates of maintenance payments, gender inequality in employment and pay, and childcare costs
- Children from Black and minority ethnic groups are more likely to be in poverty: 46% are now in poverty, compared with 26% of children in White British families
- Work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty. In the UK, 75% of children growing up in poverty live in a household where at least one person works
- Children in larger families are at a far greater risk of living in poverty – 47% of children living in families with three or more children live in poverty
- Childcare and housing are two costs that take the most significant toll on families' budgets.
<https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/child-poverty-facts-and-figures>

Child Poverty across the UK - Do You Want to Know About the Scale of Poverty in Your Area?

An interactive map by action for children shows the scale of child poverty in areas across the UK. Please keep in mind that this was before COVID.

Percentage of children in poverty, 2019/20, by English region::

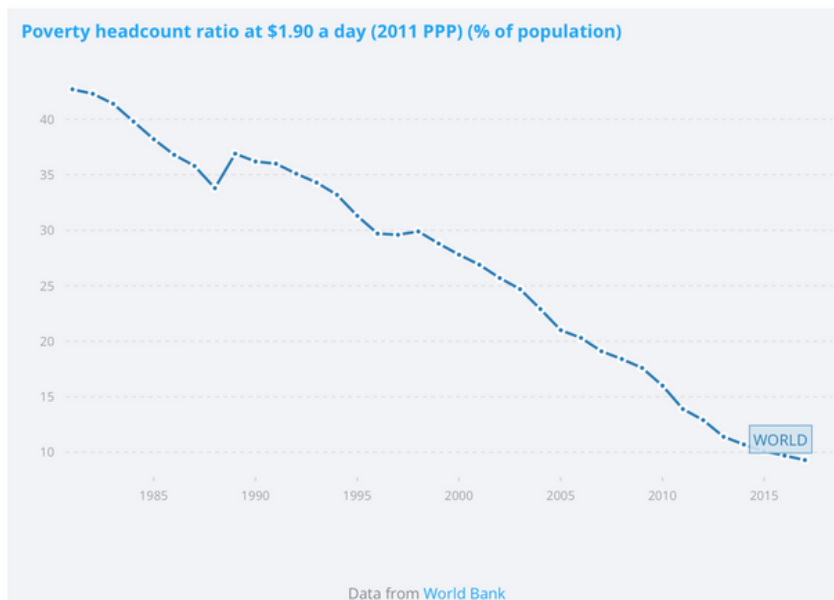
- North East – 37%
- West Midlands – 35%
- Yorkshire and the Humber – 33%

- North West – 31%
- East Midlands – 27%
- South West – 26%
- East of England – 26%
- South East - 24%

According to the most recent estimates by the UN, in 2015, 10% of the world's population or 734 million people, lived on less than \$1.90 a day. This is defined as extreme poverty.

"Global extreme poverty is expected to rise in 2020 for the first time in over 20 years as the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic compounds the forces of conflict and climate change, which were already slowing poverty reduction progress." World Bank (www.worldbank.org)

Data



About 120 million additional people live in poverty due to the pandemic, with the total expected to rise to about 150 million by the end of 2021.

The new target is to have no more than 3 per cent of the world's population living on just \$1.90 a day by 2030.

How can we help to reduce this?

Types of Poverty

The guide will focus on four key areas of poverty. Young people can explore other places if they wish to do so. The resources have the flexibility to be applied to a range of different contexts.

Financial Poverty



Poverty is a state or condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living. Poverty means that the income level from employment is so low that basic human needs can't be met.



Educational Poverty



Save the Children define educational poverty as "a process of eliminating children's right to education and deprivation of their opportunities to learn and develop the skills they will need to succeed in a rapidly changing society"

Homelessness



The legal definition of homelessness is that "a household has no home in the UK or anywhere else in the world available and reasonable to occupy."



Food Poverty



Food poverty is commonly defined as 'the inability to acquire or consume an adequate or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so'.

Fuel Poverty



For example - In response to the latest fuel price increases, many households are unable to keep their home adequately warm and at a reasonable cost in relation to their income level.

Financial Poverty

Financial poverty impacts education, health and well-being, and many more aspects of an individual's life.

Poverty can be present in several different ways. If parents struggle to afford food and rely on food banks, that indicates poverty. Poverty indicators include going without heating and electricity, facing childcare costs higher than earnings, or living in insecure housing because families can't keep up with the rent. It can affect every part of a child's life. (The Big Issue 24th March 2022)

Education Poverty

A study conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found strong evidence that money makes a difference in children's outcomes. Less well-off children have worse cognitive ability, achievement and engagement in school, higher anxiety levels and behavioural issues

Does money affect children's outcomes? <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/does-money-affect-children's-outcomes>

Poor Health and Well-Being

Living in poverty can lead to poorer health outcomes in childhood and adulthood.

Being exposed to some or all of the key factors below and accumulating exposure over time can adversely impact child development and health outcomes

- Little money for everyday resources - including good quality housing
- The stress of living in poverty
- Unhealthy lifestyles
- Poorer education and employment opportunities (Child poverty overview - NHS Scotland)

Facts and Figures

- 500,000 children were pushed into poverty between 2015 and 2020
- 4.3 million children were living below the breadline before Covid-19 hit the UK
- Trussell Trust gave out 1.9 million three-day emergency food parcels in the year up to March 2020; 700,000 of those went to children
- The Legatum Institute estimated that 120,000 of the 700,000 people who fell into poverty during the pandemic were children
- Two in five families fell into poverty in 2020, meaning hundreds of thousands were struggling to pay bills and cover costs for their children during the pandemic

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) said: "A child can have three meals a day, warm clothes and go to school, but still be poor because their parents don't have enough money to ensure they can live in a warm home, have access to a computer to do their homework or go on the same school trips as their classmates."

Educational Poverty

Poverty is the strongest predictor of a young person's well-being at school. The level of disadvantage that a child experience arbitrates the overall experience of school. The effects of poverty can manifest through fatigue and poor concentration, as well as hunger and ill health, which can also lead to bullying by other peers. At the end of key stage 2, Young people living in poverty are often over nine months behind their peers in reading, writing and maths. Young peoples experiencing a high persistence of poverty have a learning gap of 22.7 months, twice that of children experiencing a low persistence of poverty, with a learning gap of 11.3 months.

This attainment gap persists throughout secondary school. Students eligible for free school meals are half as likely to achieve a good pass at GCSE in English and Maths compared to other students. Students living in poverty are four times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their peers. Even with the same qualifications, disadvantaged students are 50% more likely to be 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training' (NEET).

Free School Meals for over 80% of time	22.7 months learning gap
Free School Meals for less than 20% of time	11.3 months learning gap
Average disadvantage gap	18.1 months

Table 1. Learning gap, months behind in secondary school

Poverty significantly impacts the educational experience and attainment of many children growing up in the UK. Based on a survey from the NEU: poverty creates barriers for children from accessing education: Poverty harms the young person's physical health and mental well-being, undermining their ability to learn in many different ways. (<https://neu.org.uk/child-poverty-facts>)

There are links between poverty, health, and social-emotional outcomes:

- Poverty affects friendships at school, with children growing up in poverty more likely to play alone and fall out with their friends and less likely to talk to their friends about their worries
- Respiratory problems such as asthma and bronchitis are more common in children growing up in poverty and can negatively impact attendance at school
- Young people in more deprived areas are likelier to report lower life satisfaction than those in less disadvantaged areas
- 23% of parents under 18 reported skipping meals to make ends meet and feed their children.
- A strong stigma is attached to poverty, and children living in poverty are often bullied at school

Homelessness

Poverty undoubtedly increases the risk of homelessness. Today in the UK, 3.9 million children are living in poverty. Minority groups are facing discrimination or disadvantage

- LGBT+ youth may become homeless due to non-acceptance from their family. It's estimated that LGBT+ homeless youth make up 24% of all homeless young people
- Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people are often overrepresented in homelessness statistics. This may be partly due to social structural imbalances that make them more likely to experience poverty and hardship
- Young asylum seekers and refugees sometimes find themselves without anywhere to go and end up on the streets
- Soaring rent costs, insecure work and low pay plus a patchy welfare system are some factors that leave families without the means to get by
- The proportion of young people living in poverty whose parents or carers are at work increased sharply from 67% in 2015 to 75% in 2020
- Young people in inadequate housing are more at risk of respiratory illnesses and meningitis. Those in the most disadvantaged areas can expect 20 fewer years of good health than children in places with more resources
- Data shows that private rents are unaffordable for the country's poorest, with 2021 showing that there are just two areas in England where the most impoverished families spend less than 30% of their income on rent costs
- Housing costs will be pushed up further for many by increasing council tax bills. Around two-thirds of English councils are expected to levy an increase
- Increased costs will also hit mortgage holders as the Bank of England has raised the base interest rate to tackle inflation. This means repayments will be more expensive.



Five ways the cost of living is rising - and how to get help if you're struggling

The cost of living crisis is squeezing millions of households. We've broken down exactly what's changing - and where to get help



What is the extent of youth homelessness in the UK?

There are over 120,000 homeless children and young people in the UK. Who are they? Find out more

Food Poverty

Material deprivation – the inability to afford basics such as food and heating – increased between 2019 and 2020, including for another 140,000 young people. This means around 1.7 million young people in total are forced to go without essentials.

Nearly one million young people signed up for free school meals for the first time in 2020. Councils across the UK provided supermarket vouchers and food parcels to cover the cost. Still, campaigners, including Marcus Rashford, had to fight the government to extend free school meals over the summer holidays when thousands struggled through the pandemic.

"One in ten people was forced to use foodbanks in June, a significant increase of around a third of the previous month. Others reported skipping meals entirely, while some families adopted "basic sustenance" diets made largely of cheap but unhealthy foods." (The lived experience of Food insecurity under Covid-19 July 2020)

There is a strong link between each poverty area we have focused on and its impact on young people and their families.

During and Outside Social Action Planning

During and outside social action planning, it is important to consider how the rights previously listed are facilitated. This can be done by:

- Giving opportunities for young people to work on topics that matter to them
- Giving opportunities for young people to talk about their experiences on certain subjects and giving them the knowledge and resources to do so when necessary
- Use their ideas to feed into the school's work to address these issues and inform the work done during social action projects
- Create opportunities for them to get involved in projects and social actions that address these issues in school

Further Information and Project Ideas

The topic of poverty can be addressed using the UN sustainable goals of No Poverty and Zero Hunger.

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere



Goal 2: Zero Hunger



Possible Project Ideas:

- Raise money for a local charity
- Make quilts, blankets or other clothing for the homeless
- Organise a winter clothes drive
- Recycle Crisps packets and make blankets for the homeless
- Make care kits
- Collect unused makeup products for a homeless/ domestic violence shelter
- Donate a Christmas present to a local charity/hospital
- Financial education
- Send books/resources abroad
- Create resources/ teach members of the local community
- Food Poverty - Raise money for a local charity
- Healthy eating campaigns for the local community
- Grow your own food
- Recycle uniform
- Write a letter to your local MP for support

Guidance for Teachers and Staff to Talk About Poverty to Young People

Young people taking part in social action projects in this focus area will likely be suffering or would have suffered from poverty. This section offers practical advice to approach social action planning on poverty. Talking about poverty with young people is useful because it helps teachers to understand young people's experiences of poverty. It also helps to reduce stigma and negative attitudes toward young people who may not have experienced or know what it is. In both cases, careful consideration must occur at the planning step to ensure that it is carried out through an inclusive ethos by providing that young people experiencing poverty do not feel exposed.

- Create a safe space to talk. Ensure young people have opportunities to approach you and talk about poverty privately.
- If discussing poverty in the classroom or with groups, be mindful not to expose young people who do not want to be identified as living in poverty. Make young people aware that you wish to avoid names at the start of the conversation.
- Please don't worry about having these conversations at the end of the day. That way, young people can come back to you later in the day if they have concerns.
- Use clear and straightforward language. Try to have the conversations in bite sizes
- Art, drama and play can help Young people express their feelings and personal experiences without feeling stigmatised or singled out by classmates.
- You can start the conversation with younger children using a story, character or puppet.
- Address young people's feelings. Learning about poverty can make young people sad and emotional. Let them know it's natural to feel this way. Try to end positively, for example, "We're finding ways to help".
- Remodel any negative language young people might use by rephrasing what they say.
- Provide young people with different perspectives. Children often repeat everything they hear at home, including misconceptions about people in poverty. It can be difficult to discuss, but it's important to recognise that we live in a world of great inequality while still focusing on hope.