

Child
of the
North

Building a fairer future
after COVID-19



Child
of the
North

Child Poverty and the Cost of Living Crisis:

A report prepared
for the APPG Child
of the North



Addressing Education and Health Inequity: Perspectives from the North of England

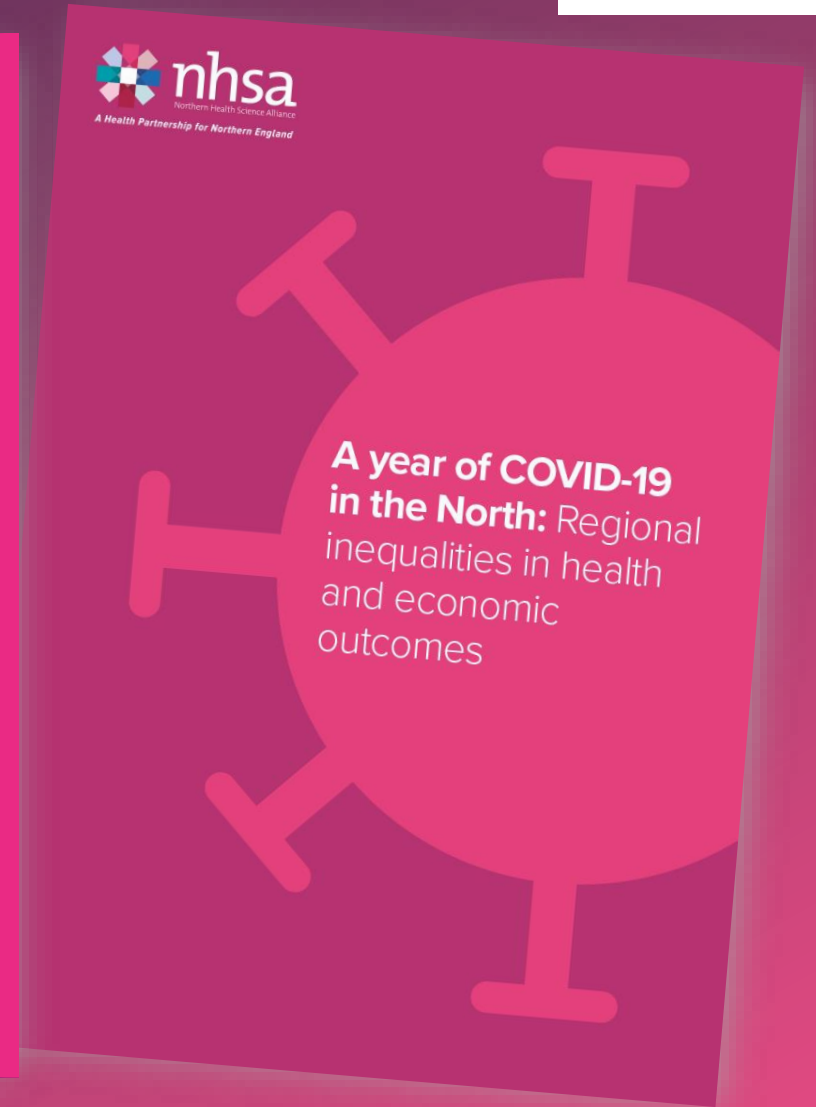
A report prepared for the Child of the North
All-Party Parliamentary Group



Hannah Davies,
Executive Director of
Health Equity North

Health inequalities in the North

**HEALTH
EQUITY
NORTH**



Child of the North: Building a Fairer Future



So we decided to stake a point in the ground and look at the situation for the Child of the North, post covid speaking to experts from our 24 institutions and the N8 Research partnership's expertise covering

1. Child poverty, inequality and deprivation
2. Pregnancy and the Early Years
3. Child mental wellbeing
4. Physical activity, obesity and food insecurity
5. Schools and education
6. Children in care
7. Ethnic minority children and young people: health and wellbeing
8. The economic impacts of child health
9. Children's rights-based approaches to the development of regional policy and governance.



Child of the North

Poet, author and then Chancellor of the University of Manchester Lemn Sissay:

“The Child of the North is not one child but many and each of their experiences is unique. They are brought up in different places. Educated in many different ways and go on to live very different lives.

“There is no one experience which speaks to every child across the region but there is an overall picture painted by this report of inequality between children in the North and the rest of the country

“Childhood is life defining and shaped by factors from before birth through to adulthood. A child’s mother’s health, the care they get, through family or the care system, what house they live in, what food they eat, how often they get to run around, their education their opportunities.

“All of these things have a big impact and, as this report shows, the average Child of the North is disadvantaged from the start across all of these measures.”



Child Poverty, Inequality and Deprivation

Findings on poverty



When the pandemic hit, 27% of children across the three Northern regions were living in poverty before housing costs and 33% after housing costs, compared to just 20% before housing costs and 30% after housing costs in the UK as a whole.

Before housing costs, the North East has the highest child poverty rate at 30% and Yorkshire and Humber the third highest, after the West Midlands. After housing costs, the North East has the second highest rate at 37%, after Inner London. This gap between measures of child poverty before and after housing costs illustrates the importance of housing costs for families' livelihoods.

In the North of England 58% of local authorities have above average levels of children in low-income families compared to 19% in the rest of England.

Infant mortality is higher in the North of England than in the rest of England, with 4.23 deaths per 1,000 live births compared to 3.95 per 1,000 live births in England as a whole, in the 2017-19 period.

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Between 2010 and 2018, local authority spending on Sure Start Children's Centres, per eligible child, was cut by 67% in the North, compared to 63% in the rest of England. Starting from a higher level of spending in the North due to higher need, this equates to much larger cuts in absolute terms in the North: on average, spending was cut by £412 per eligible child in the North, compared to only £283 in the rest of England.

Both relative and absolute poverty are expected to rise sharply in the North in 2021/22. Illness due to COVID-19 and long COVID, and job loss, are the primary causes of this projected increase.

During the pandemic, by May 2020, the number of households claiming Universal Credit jumped by more than 1 million to 4.2 million. By December 2020, nearly 6 million people were claiming, twice the pre-pandemic figure.

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Poverty

The Child of the North has a

27%

chance of living in poverty compared to **20%** in the rest of England.

They have a

58%

chance of living in a local authority with above average levels of low-income families, compared to **19%** in the rest of England.

Child mental wellbeing

During the pandemic, children in the North were lonelier than children in the rest of England. **23%** of parents in the North reported their child was 'often' lonely compared to **15%** of parents in the rest of the country.

Their parents and carers were also more likely to have often been lonely during the first lockdown: **23%** in the North compared to **13%** in the rest of England.



Pregnancy early years

Prior to the pandemic, the North saw much larger cuts to spending on Sure Start children's centres. On average, spending was cut by

£412

per eligible child in the North, compared to only **£283** in the rest of England.



Compared to children in England as a whole, they are more likely to die under the age of one.



Physical activity, obesity and food insecurity

The Child of the North is more likely to be living with obesity than a child elsewhere in England.

In the first lockdown there was a massive drop-off in nursery and childcare services for eligible children, with only **7%** continuing to attend. Attendance has a range of benefits for children's health and development, particularly for deprived children. **Because the North is more deprived as a whole,** North-South inequalities in children's development are expected to increase.

Child of the North

Schools and education

In primary maths, by the second half of the autumn 2020 term, pupils in the North East and Yorkshire and Humber experienced 4.0 and 5.3 months learning loss respectively, compared to less than a month in the South West and London.

The economic impacts of child health

The mental health conditions that children in the North developed during the pandemic will cost an estimated

£13.2bn

in lost wages over their working lives.



The loss of learning children in the North experienced over the course of the pandemic will cost an estimated

£24.6bn

in lost wages over their lifetime earnings.



Children in care

Children in the North are significantly more likely to be in care than those in the rest of England. Of the local authorities with more than 100 children per 10,000 in care, 21 of 26 are in the North.

Ethnic minority children and young people: health and wellbeing

More than **one in five children in the North are from an ethnic minority**. These children are more likely to live in a deprived area than children from an ethnic minority in the rest of England.



Children's rights-based approaches to the development of regional policy and governance



The multiple public health, social and economic effects of COVID-19 impacted on children in profound and enduring ways.

An abundance of research demonstrates that the prioritisation of children's rights, services and remedies from the very early stages of children's lives is the best way to achieve positive societal change.

The key features which can be used as a blueprint are:

- A COVID-19 recovery strategy for the North grounded in children's rights principles and provisions
- The impact of legal and policy changes on children must be assessed
- There should be routine and meaningful participation of children and young people in local recovery planning
- Public budgeting should be grounded in children's rights.

Child of the North and the Cost of Living Crisis



Child poverty

During the pandemic, a drop in median income and the **£20**

universal credit uplift contributed to a sharp decrease in relative child poverty across the UK, but not in the North: During the pandemic

34% of children in the North (around 900,000) were living in poverty,

compared with **28%** in the rest of England. This equates to

160,000

extra children in poverty in the North (above what would be expected if children in the North experienced the levels of poverty experienced in the South.)

In Yorkshire and the Humber and the North East, child poverty is now the highest it has been since 2000/2001.

There is variability in child poverty within the North: while child poverty has decreased in some areas of the North West, in almost every area of Yorkshire and the Humber and the North East there has been rising child poverty in recent years.

There are proportionally more parliamentary constituencies in the North with high levels of child poverty: in 2020/21 the proportion of constituencies with child poverty above

40%

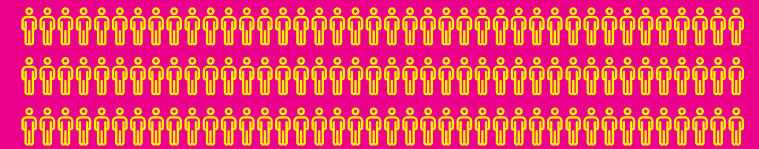
was twice as high in the North as in the rest of England.

Fuel poverty

Before the current crisis, about

1 million

households in the North were fuel poor, proportionally more than in the rest of England



In **11** parliamentary constituencies in the North, relative child poverty after housing costs has reached

45%

or higher: Bradford West, Middlesbrough, Bradford East, Newcastle Central, Manchester Gorton, Oldham West and Royton, Bolton South East, Leeds East, Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough, Leeds Central and Blackburn.

Food poverty

Children in the North are more likely to be living in food insecure homes than those in the rest of England and inequalities between households with and without children are larger in the North. As living costs rise, food insecurity is increasing much faster amongst households with children than without.

23%

of children who are food insecure miss out on free school meals as only families with a very low income are eligible to apply (£7,400 after tax and not including benefits)

In October 2022,

42,954

households previously in receipt of paper Healthy Start Scheme vouchers had not successfully applied for the new online prepaid Healthy Start card.

Children and young people often take on the burden and responsibility of helping their families when times are hard, not only leading to anxiety, distress and worry, but also guilt when parents go without.

Cost of living crisis impacts

Local authorities in the North are the most vulnerable to rising living costs across the whole of England. Many families with children are already going without essentials, falling behind with essential bill payments, or taking on debt, reflecting real harm, stress and suffering.

Families in the North are more likely to be living in poor quality, damp homes than the rest of England. Before living costs started to rise, over **98,500 homes in the North** already had some form of damp and **1.1 million homes failed 'decent homes' criteria**

The current crisis raises particular risks for young children and babies as families struggle to make ends meet: research shows that each 1% increase in child poverty is associated with an extra

5.8 infant deaths per **100,000** live births.

The shame, anxiety and worry faced by young people living in families on a low-income can make it difficult to concentrate in school, to feel included, and to afford the resources needed to learn well and join in with friends, which undermines educational outcomes and social wellbeing.

Addressing education and health inequity



Children born into the poorest fifth of families in the UK are almost **13 times** more likely to experience poor health and educational outcomes by the age of 17 years. Children from the lowest income households are five times more likely to experience poor academic achievement. Mitigating inequality in early childhood (rather than a single focus on absolute poverty) would reduce the number of children experiencing multiple adversities by more than

80% ↓

Schools in London received an average of

£6,610



per pupil compared to **£6,225**, **£5,956**, and **£5,938** in the North East, North West, and Yorkshire & The Humber, respectively. **On average, pupils in London received 9.7% more funding than those in the North. Students in London achieve a third of a grade higher, on average, than students in the North.**



Children in the most affluent schools in the country had bigger real-terms increases in funding from the National Funding Formula between 2017 and 2022 (8–9%) than those in the most deprived ones (5%).

Child of the North: Building a Fairer Future

Poverty findings



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Parliamentary launch and Westminster Hall debate



Hansard

UK Parliament > Hansard > Westminster Hall > Regional Inequalities: Child Poverty

Regional Inequalities: Child Poverty

Volume 709: debated on Wednesday 2 March 2022

[Download text](#)

[Dr Rupa Huq *in the Chair*]

🕒 2.30pm

Liz Twist >

(Blaydon) (Lab)

[Share](#)

I beg to move,

That this House has considered regional inequalities and child poverty.

It is a pleasure, Dr Huq, to serve under you as Chair in this debate on regional



Child of the North APPG

**HEALTH
EQUITY
NORTH**



All Party Parliamentary Group
Child of the North



Seven evidence-based missions to tackle health inequity



1

Create a national strategy to reduce health inequalities

Evidence shows that over a 10-year period, it is an **achievable aim** to reduce the health gap between the most deprived areas of the country and the national average by 10%. This can largely be achieved by addressing the wider determinants of health including education, poverty, productivity and employment rates. **Evidence** shows bringing up the North's health to that of the rest of the country would put **£13.2bn** into the economy.

2

Tackle poverty through evidence-based policies

Lifting the poorest out of poverty will have a huge impact on health over the life-course. **Evidence** shows a key focus should be put on reducing relative child poverty. Measures to do this include: committing to end child poverty, getting rid of the two child cap on Universal Credit, increasing child benefit and getting rid of the five week wait for Universal Credit.

3

Give children in the North enough food of good quality

Good nutrition is essential in supporting life-long health according to **evidence-based** research. Use existing data to auto-enrol all eligible pupils for Free School Meals (FSM) and give FSM to all children on Universal Credit. Eligible families should be auto-enrolled into the Healthy Start Scheme to support adequate nutrition from early years onwards.

4

Give people warm homes of a good standard

Evidence shows the impact of warm homes on health. Extend financial support to groups most in need, especially: carers, those dependent on essential powered medical equipment, and low income households not in receipt of means-tested benefits. Introduce financial support for those using prepayment meters. Introduce a social tariff for fuel-poor and vulnerable households. Prioritise action to improve the energy efficiency of all homes.

5

Support communities and families to access health and social care easily

Focus funding for family hubs that offer a life-course approach, from Sure Start programmes to ageing well, to physical and mental health, in the most deprived communities is an **evidence-based** approach to improving health. This should take into account current access to healthcare, bus routes and other amenities and utilise and build on existing community assets taking a place-based approach to need.

6

Fund schools in the North of England fairly

Evidence shows schools are on the front line in combatting mental health issues and supporting pupils' wellbeing. Immediately implement changes to the National Funding Formula to offer more support to schools in deprived areas, taking into account historic under-funding of schools in the North of England.

7

Give people in communities that are not often consulted a voice

Use Children's Rights Impact Assessments to make sure children and young people's needs are being met. Use devolved Citizens Assemblies to make sure a wide range of voices from relevant places and regions are included when making policy decisions. This is an **evidence-based** approach to supporting the needs of these communities and young people.