

**CHILD
POVERTY
ACTION
GROUP**

Impact report

2023/2024



Positive changes for children and families this year

- All benefits increased by September's inflation rate.
- Local housing allowance also rose, giving families in private rented homes more support with housing costs.
- Universal primary free school meals have now been rolled out in London.
- The Scottish government's Programme for Government confirmed tackling child poverty as a 'National Mission' and introduced a commitment to expand funded childcare for 13,000 more children.
- The household support fund in England was extended by 6 months.
- More families now receive child benefit as the eligibility threshold before families are affected by the high-income child benefit charge is increased.
- Income thresholds have been removed from Best Start foods in Scotland, in line with Best Start grants.
- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has made improvements to the universal credit payment statement, increasing transparency.

CPAG in numbers

6.7% increase in support from our social security system

54% + Your Work Your Way parents in work or self-employment

30,052 people supported through our helpline for advisers

500,000 families benefit from expansion of child benefit

Voice matters: Spotlight on our work with children, young people and families

We try wherever possible to centre the voices of children and families to drive the conversation on child poverty and its solutions.

This year, we launched the **Cost of the School Day Voice network**, made up of children and young people in 290 schools across Scotland taking action on school costs and making education more inclusive.

The network gives schools who join access to lots of great activities and opportunities to learn about campaigning and awareness raising, to develop resources, to meet up online with other groups to learn from each other, and to speak directly to politicians and decision makers.

Children and young people across the network are already making a difference in their school communities, and at a larger scale. More than 5,000 of them took part in the first Cost of the School Day Big Question last October to inform policy and advocacy work with the Scottish government, local authorities, schools and Education Scotland.

In Wales, our **Cost of the School Day – Every voice heard** project, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, has begun. This is a children's voice and whole school community project exploring the financial implications of schooling for families. We are helping schools and local authorities to identify and overcome cost barriers to education, so that all pupils can have the same school experience.



Picture from Linlithgow Primary School

We are bringing to the fore the voices of young people from backgrounds sometimes inadvertently excluded by existing engagement mechanisms. The project builds on the UK Cost of the School Day project, which ran from 2019 to 2022.

We are working with schools in Neath Port Talbot, Powys, Monmouthshire and Cardiff local authority areas. All schools who participate in the project will have a co-produced action plan to guide all school staff in their approach to tackling poverty. We support pupil research groups, a young person's policy panel and best practice networks for school staff.

Our London-based **Youth Panel** are a group of 13-18-year-olds passionate about highlighting the everyday realities of children and young people living in poverty. The Panel has designed workshops that have been presented to other young people, spoken on panels alongside other organisations, and had conversations with MPs at the Houses of Parliament. The Panel has focussed on the impact that poverty has on education and children's experiences at school, and poverty-related isolation and stigma.



The CPAG Youth Panel gives young people a voice when it comes to tackling child poverty, something I believe is crucial... I know from the opportunities the CPAG Youth Panel has engaged in, including presenting at conferences, attending MP roundtables, and speaking on panels, that young people's perspectives resonate with a wide range of audiences. It is listening to young people to drive action that will lead to change.

Lilly, CPAG's Youth Panel

Youth Panel members have represented CPAG at events, including the London Challenge Poverty Summit and the Fair Education Alliance Youth Summit, and delivered a workshop at the Rethinking Education Conference.

We were also very pleased to support the **UK Youth Parliament** with their campaign on free school meals. Members of Youth Parliament met with their MPs to talk about free school meals, at events called 'Spill the Tea', and then debated the issue in the House of Commons last November.



We continue to be a partner on the **Changing Realities** project with the University of York and more than 100 parents and carers on a low income across the UK. Together we have produced briefings calling for change to better support families, covering issues such as the cost-of-living crisis, employment support and mental health.

The project raises up parents' voices, and as well as making substantive policy recommendations it pushes for people with lived experience to be part of the policy making process. This year the project published a toolkit on involving lived expertise in research, policy and campaigning to encourage others to work in this way.

Delivering our objectives

In December, we published comprehensive analysis on what is needed to tackle child poverty in **Ending Child Poverty: why and how**. We launched this at a well-attended seminar at the London School of Economics with the then shadow minister for social security Alison McGovern MP. Our many years of campaigning were rewarded when the Labour party committed to introducing a child poverty strategy at its National Policy Forum in 2023.

In Scotland we sit on the Scottish government's tackling child poverty programme board. In Wales, the Senedd's Equality and Social Justice Committee published a report, *Calling time on child poverty: how Wales can do better*, which reflected many of CPAG's recommendations on what is needed from a new child poverty strategy in Wales. The strategy that was subsequently published by the Welsh government falls short of what is needed, so we will continue to advocate for a robust action plan with measurable targets.

Our research on social security continues to be impactful. Following CPAG engagement, the now governing Labour Party has made a commitment to reforming universal credit.

We again had to campaign for benefits to be properly increased with inflation this year, which should never be in doubt. Following significant engagement by CPAG with others, we successfully urged the government to uprate benefits by 6.7 per cent (September's inflation rate) in April 2024. And the government increased the local housing allowance. The Work and Pensions Committee agreed with us that 'benefit levels are too low'.



In London we have launched our **Young Leaders** project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, which builds on the pupil-led approaches used successfully in our UK Cost of the School Day project. It will be led by young people and will explore how schools can be better set up to learn from pupils' experiences, to influence change at school, local and national level.

The **Cost of the School Day in Scotland** continues to support schools and local authorities to remove or reduce financial barriers to education, including through the new voice network. In Wales, we have launched our Cost of the School Day – Every voice heard project. The Welsh government is now planning coordinated training and Cost of the School Day approaches that can be rolled out nationwide. We have also started our own England-wide training programme with the National Education Union (NEU), with CPAG staff training up NEU members on Cost of the School Day topics and themes.

We published authoritative and widely shared analysis showing that there are 900,000 children in England who are in poverty yet do not qualify for a free school meal. We worked with the NEU to understand the knock-on effects of universal free school meal provision, finding that universal free school meal entitlement has these positive effects: increased financial and psychological security; improved nutrition and school engagement; reduced stigma and social exclusion; improved home/school relationships; changed eating habits; and a richer school life.

Our Barclays-funded programme, **Your Work, Your Way** (YWYW) finished this year, having supported 70 clients in Bury, Coventry, Luton and Taunton with benefits advice and personal employment support.

“Some participants reported that taking part in YWYW had been life changing. Before the programme, clients reported feeling frustrated, distressed and unsure about the future. After taking part in YWYW, they felt greater self-fulfilment, self-worth and a sense of purpose.

Independent evaluation of
YWYW

The YWYW support model enabled participants to overcome many barriers to work, particularly around confidence, skills and training, transport and household finances, and subsequently enabled many participants to address in-work poverty.



We do a lot of our work in coalition to increase our influence, including with End Child Poverty, the Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security, the Social Security Consortium and the Education Anti-Poverty Coalition.

We continue to deliver our highly-valued **second-tier service for advisers**. Available by phone and email, our free expert social security advice lines are open five days a week for frontline workers. CPAG Welfare Rights is the new dedicated home for all our welfare rights information, advice and tools. These services help people get the social security support they need, maximise family incomes and reduce child poverty.

The positive changes we have achieved this year were made possible thanks to supporters like you. We are grateful to more than 2,224 individuals and organisations who donated or raised funds, 1,100 members and 26,877 supporters who contributed to our efforts in other ways to prevent and end child poverty, and our many funders and corporate partners. For every £1 of our expenditure in 2023/24, 91p was spent on our charitable activities.

Thank you. We hope you will continue to support us in whatever way you can.



Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) works on behalf of the more than one in four children in the UK growing up in poverty. It doesn't have to be like this. We use our understanding of what causes poverty and the impact it has on children's lives to campaign for policies that will prevent and solve poverty – for good. We provide training, advice and information to make sure hard-up families get the financial support they need. We also carry out high-profile legal work to establish and protect families' rights. CPAG is a charity registered in England and Wales (registration number 294841) and in Scotland (registration number SC039339), 30 Micawber Street, London N1 7TB.