



# CPAG's submission to the Spending Review

February 2025

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## Introduction

There are 4.3 million children living in poverty in the UK today. These are record numbers, and without government action, child poverty is set to rise further over the coming years. The government has been clear about its commitment to drive down child poverty, and the commitment to developing a UK-wide child poverty strategy is a hugely positive step. It creates an opportunity to realise some of the change that children, families and the communities they live in so desperately need. However, a well-intentioned strategy will do little to effectively tackle child poverty if sufficient resources are not allocated. Increasing social security is the most cost-effective way to raise living standards and lift families out of poverty, and this means the priority for investment in the strategy must be the social security system.

Increasing social security does not just boost current living standards for the millions of families affected, it has substantial knock-on effects. There is a large body of evidence showing that increasing social security can lift millions of children out of poverty, while also helping the government achieve its objectives of, boosting long-term growth, breaking down barriers to opportunity and reducing other costs such as healthcare.

Every single day more and more children are being pulled into poverty, and the reality of their day-to-day experience of childhood risks getting worse. The consequences of living in poverty for children are often stark, multifaceted, long-lasting, and can begin to accrue even before a child is born. They affect individuals, families, public services and society at large. A response that is commensurate to the shape and scale of the problem is urgent, essential, and no less than children living up and down the country deserve.

## Why prioritise reducing child poverty

It is rare to find a policy that instantaneously improves the lives of millions of people, while also increasing the long-term prosperity of the country. Governments generally must choose between spending money to provide short term improvements for their populations or making long term

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investment in the future. But reducing child poverty through increasing social security is a win-win – benefiting children and families instantly, while improving school readiness and children’s educational outcomes, easing pressures on the NHS, and increasing the long-term economic potential of the country.

### **Increase living standards**

Reducing child poverty will, overnight, increase the living standards of millions of families across the country. The government has rightly recognised that increasing living standards is a top priority for the public, with little increase seen over the past few years. However, many policies will take longer to deliver economic growth and raise living standards, while increasing social security will have an immediate effect for families across the UK.

### **Boost economic growth**

A chronic lack of investment over the past fifteen years has hampered the UK economy, and steps to increase investment are certainly welcome. However, it is not just robots, wind farms and airports which can be invested in. Investing in children, through social security, leads to lower barriers to opportunity, which means greater long-term economic growth. Studies show that even modest increases in social security during childhood, lead to significantly higher earnings and productivity in adulthood.<sup>1</sup>

### **Remove barriers to opportunity**

Living in poverty is linked with poor outcomes across many domains. Children born to parents living in poverty are more likely to have a lower birthweight and less likely to survive the first year of life.<sup>2 3</sup> They are also more likely to have asthma and other childhood diseases.<sup>4 5</sup> They rate themselves lower on average on measures of happiness and subjective wellbeing and are at higher risk of psychological distress.<sup>6</sup> They also score worse on indicators of socioemotional and behavioural development.<sup>7 8</sup> If child poverty levels remain the same or get worse, it will persistently undermine efforts to achieve the government’s target of increasing school-readiness, as well as improving wider educational attainment.

Economic research shows that investing in social security leads to parents being able to spend more resources on their children leading to better child health outcomes, better developmental outcomes, increased school readiness and higher educational attainment.<sup>9</sup>

### **Lower government spending**

Although investing in social security has an upfront cost for the government, over time some of this can be balanced through reduced spending elsewhere. Healthcare spending would fall, and in adulthood these children will be more likely to have higher-paying jobs, meaning more tax revenue and lower

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<sup>1</sup> H Hoynes, DW Schanzenbach and D Almond, '[Long-run impacts of childhood access to the safety net](#)', *American Economic Review*, 106(4), 2016, pp903-34

<sup>2</sup> A L Weightman and others, 'Social inequality and infant health in the UK: systematic review and meta-analyses,' *BMJ Open*, 2012; M L Martinson and N E Reichman, 'Socioeconomic Inequalities in Low Birth Weight in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia,' *American Journal of Public Health* 106, No. 4 (April 1, 2016), pp748-54

<sup>3</sup> D Taylor-Robinson and others, 'Assessing the impact of rising child poverty on the unprecedented rise in infant mortality in England, 2000–2017: time trend analysis,' *BMJ Open*, 2019

<sup>4</sup> B Nikiéma, N Spencer and L Séguin, 'Poverty and Chronic Illness in Early Childhood: A Comparison Between the United Kingdom and Quebec,' *Pediatrics*, March 2010; 125 (3), e499-e507, [10.1542/peds.2009-0701](#)

<sup>5</sup> E Lai and others, 'Poverty dynamics and health in late childhood in the UK: evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study,' *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 104, 2019, pp1049-1055

<sup>6</sup> G Main, 'Child Poverty and Children's Subjective Well-Being,' *Child Indicators Research* 7, 2014, pp451-72

<sup>7</sup> E Fitzsimons, A Goodman, E Kelly and J Smith, 'Poverty dynamics and parental mental health: Determinants of childhood mental health in the UK,' *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol 175, 2017, pp43-51

<sup>8</sup> N Kofi Adjei and others, 'Impact of poverty and family adversity on adolescent health: a multi-trajectory analysis using the UK Millennium Cohort Study,' *The Lancet Regional Health – Europe*, Vol 13, 2022

<sup>9</sup> A Aizer and others, 'The long-run impact of cash transfers to poor families,' *American Economic Review* 106.4, 2016, pp935-971

spending on social security. Analysis by Child Poverty Action Group found that the costs of child poverty for the public purse (in terms of higher costs/reduced revenues) total up to £40 billion a year.<sup>10</sup>

## Policy recommendations for reducing child poverty

Implementing a UK wide child poverty strategy creates a framework for meaningful action to tackle child poverty across government. It is vital that the child poverty strategy is a shared responsibility across all government departments, and that every department gets the funding it needs to improve living standards for low-income families. These interventions would support families from pregnancy, through the different stage of childhood and parenthood.

This submission is primarily focused on social security and education policy, as this is where our expertise lies. It is also where we feel the most urgent priorities lie. We have also provided some other recommendations in other policy areas.

### Social security

Child poverty arises as a result of the increased costs that come with having children combined with the lack of income to meet those costs. Salaries don't increase to reflect family size, and the caring responsibilities of parents often mean that they can't increase their hours or progress as much in their careers. Providing support to families during this unique and time-limited period of their lives is crucial to the wellbeing of children, families and society at large.

As a result, cuts to social security over the last 15 years have been a key driver of rising child poverty in the UK. These cuts mean, household income has failed to keep up with the rise in costs, reducing living standards for millions of families. Social security also the key lever that the government can pull to tackle child poverty, especially in a world where fiscal constraints mean cost-effectiveness is crucial. Any attempt to raise living standards, without investing in social security, will have limited effectiveness.

### Scrap the two-child limit

The latest statistics (April 2024) show that there are currently 1.6m children affected by the two-child limit, the vast majority living in poverty.<sup>11</sup> The two-child limit is the key driver of rising child poverty - the rise in (relative after housing costs) child poverty from 3.6 million in 2010/11 to 4.3 million in 2022/23 (latest figures) was almost exclusively concentrated in families with more than two children.

The staggered roll-out means more and more families are affected every day – an estimated 109 children are pushed into poverty each day, meaning, since the government has been in power, over 20,000 additional children have been pushed into poverty because of the policy.<sup>12</sup> For children and young people, every day matters. Forecasts suggest that in the absence of government action, child poverty will rise to even higher levels by the end of this parliament, and the key driver is the two-child limit.<sup>13</sup>

Scrapping the policy is also the most cost-effective way to reduce child poverty. Scrapping the policy in April 2025 would instantly pull 350,000 children out of poverty and stop another 150,000 being drawn into

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<sup>10</sup> D Hirsch, [The cost of child poverty in 2023](#), CPAG, 2023

<sup>11</sup> DWP and HMRC, *Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit claimants: statistics related to the policy to provide support for a maximum of two children*, April 2024

<sup>12</sup> The results presented here are based on UKMOD version B1.11 UKMOD is maintained, developed and managed by the Centre for Microsimulation and Policy Analysis (CeMPA) at the University of Essex. The results and their interpretation are the author's sole responsibility.

<sup>13</sup> See Note 12

poverty over this parliament, as well as reducing the depth of poverty for many more.<sup>14</sup> Scrapping the policy today would cost £2bn (this will rise to £3bn over the course of parliament but so will the number of children set to benefit from removing the policy).

CPAG carried out a survey of affected parents where we found:<sup>15</sup>

- 93 per cent reported that the policy has affected their ability to pay for food
- 86 per cent reported that the policy has affected their ability to pay for clothing
- 82 per cent reported that the policy has affected their ability to pay for gas or electricity.

We repeatedly hear from families about the devastating impact of the two-child limit:

*A single mother of three on maternity leave is subject to the two-child limit on universal credit. She receives maternity allowance which gets deducted from her UC pound for pound. Mum describes their situation as 'impossible' and struggles to provide the basics for her children. She says her children are unable to attend any activities with their friends and she cannot afford to buy the correct uniform; her son has been threatened with internal isolation by his school for having the incorrect footwear.<sup>16</sup>*

The policy has been shown to have a negligible impact on the number of children parents decide to have,<sup>17</sup> meaning the only real effect of the policy is to take money out of the pockets of low-income families, limit children's outcomes and drive up child poverty.

### Scrap the benefit cap

Removing the benefit cap would help families living in the deepest poverty. The vast majority of households affected by the benefit cap are families with children, in particular lone parent mothers. 122,000 capped households,<sup>18</sup> and this number is likely to increase further in April as benefits are uprated by inflation, while the cap threshold remains fixed. A failure to uprate the benefit cap threshold means the long-term trend is more and more families being pulled into deeper poverty by the cap.

The logic for the benefit cap remains fundamentally flawed. The cap has a negligible impact on work incentives, while taking money away from the poorest families. The main reason why families are unable to earn enough are significant barriers to work such as disabilities or childcare.

*A single mother of three is affected by the two-child limit and the benefit cap, reducing her universal credit by around £400 a month. Mum works 3 days a week but feels like she is worse off; childcare costs for a childminder are a lot and whilst some of the costs are reimbursed by UC, these are paid back in arrears and tapered away along with the rest of the award.<sup>19</sup>*

Most capped households sit far below the poverty line, therefore removing the cap will not have a significant impact on the number of children in poverty but it will substantially reduce the depth of poverty for the 300,000 children estimated to be living in families affected by the cap, and cost just £300 million.<sup>20</sup> Living in deep poverty is particularly damaging for children's outcomes.

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<sup>14</sup> See Note 12

<sup>15</sup> CPAG, [Things will only get worse: Why the two-child limit must go](#), 2024

<sup>16</sup> P1598, Early Warning System, May 2024

<sup>17</sup> M Reader, J Portes and R Patrick, [Does cutting child benefits reduce fertility in larger families? Evidence from the UK's two-child limit](#), Nuffield Foundation, 2022

<sup>18</sup> DWP, [Benefit cap: number of households capped to September 2024](#), 2024

<sup>19</sup> P1610, Early Warning System, May 2024

<sup>20</sup> See note 12

## **Increase child benefit by £20 a week**

Investing in child benefit shores up household finances for over seven million households – reducing child poverty and providing increased economic security and improved living standards for almost all families with children. Child benefit is also extremely effective at reaching families, because of its simplicity, predictability and near universality.

Since 2010, child benefit has lost 20 per cent of its value.<sup>21</sup> Increasing child benefit by £20 a week would pull 600,000 children out of poverty, at a cost of £12 billion.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, CPAG would welcome making child benefit universal again. The high income child benefit tax charge adds unnecessary complexity, reduces take-up, distorts labour market decisions as well as undermining the idea that social security should make a contribution towards the costs of children and support families when their incomes and working time are under pressure.

## **Increase wider adequacy of social security**

It is not just child-related benefits which are inadequate - the adequacy of social security needs to increase across the board. Particularly inadequate areas are local housing allowance (LHA), the standard allowance of universal credit (UC), disability benefits, statutory sick pay, and local crisis support. Although fiscal constraints mean that increases to benefits may not happen overnight, one option is to uprate benefit levels by more than CPI year-on-year to reach a longer-term goal of increased benefit adequacy.

34 per cent of children living in families where someone has a disability are living in poverty. The additional cost faced by disabled adults and children are compounded by the limits these disabilities and the associated caring requirements mean for the family's ability to increase their income via work. The government's anticipated plans to cut disability benefits risk lowering living standards for these families even further and could lead to a further increase in children living in poverty. It is vital that changes to disability benefits are not done in a way that causes harm to families dependent on them to survive, and government must be aware that getting reform wrong risks undermining the success of its child poverty strategy.

## **Reform the design and operation of UC**

In addition to increasing the adequacy of social security, the government has an opportunity to improve the design and functioning of the UC system as part of the planned review of UC. By the time UC is fully rolled out, over half of children in the UK will be living in a family that claims UC. We know that alongside the adequacy of benefits, families on low incomes value predictability and security of income, and there is much that can be done to improve this within UC. Getting this system right promises to improve the lives and life chances of all those children. CPAG's [three-step plan](#) to reform UC sets out priorities for change, and is an area where engagement with families on a low income would be particularly valuable.<sup>23</sup>

## **Increase access to social security by broadening eligibility and ensuring access to advice**

The government must also ensure families most at risk of poverty are able to access the social security system. This is a particular issue for migrants and refugee families, many of whom are currently excluded from accessing support. As a minimum, the NRPF condition must be abolished for families with children so that families can access financial support through the social security system.

There is also a lack of access to properly funded expert legal and welfare rights advice, with the result that many families do not receive their full entitlement to social security. This means many families are living in deeper poverty than they should be, and some are pushed into a crisis situation. This can be devastating for families as well as being costly for the government. It is essential that families can have

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<sup>21</sup> Author's calculations using Office for National Statistics, *CPI All Items Index*, 2025

<sup>22</sup> See note 12

<sup>23</sup> CPAG, [Universal credit: A three-step plan](#), 2024

any problems with their social security claims resolved as soon as possible and this will require investment in advice, representation and support services.

Recommendations for how to improve the support families have to receive their proper entitlement include: putting welfare benefits advice back into scope of legal aid and decoupling it from housing and debt contracts; ensuring that means testing for legal aid does not exclude struggling families from access to justice; supporting the welfare rights sector to resolve welfare benefits problems early through adequate funding and through funding for specialist second-tier services; and supporting a healthy legal advice sector with appropriate fee structures and efficient administration.

## Education

Although investing in social security is by far the most effective way to lift children out of poverty and help them get on at school, education policy also plays an important role. School is where most children spend a significant portion of their time, learning and developing. Time at school is formative, affecting childhoods and children's life chances. CPAG estimates that going to school costs families of primary school children at least £864 per year per child (before childcare costs) and at least £1,755 for secondary-aged children.<sup>24</sup> Urgent action is needed to reduce the cost of the school day.

### Expand FSM eligibility

Expanding FSM eligibility should be a key priority. FSM policy and eligibility varies across the UK, but in all nations children in poverty are missing out on this entitlement.<sup>25</sup> In England, poverty at home is being compounded in schools by a highly stringent FSM eligibility threshold (£7,400 after tax and before benefits). This threshold has not been updated since 2018, and CPAG estimates this leaves 900,000 school-age children in poverty in England ineligible for FSMs, as well as missing out on the other associated benefits.<sup>26</sup>

In a recent evaluation of the Mayor of London's universal primary FSMs programme, CPAG found that providing FSMs to all children greatly helped household finances; freed up money that was spent on items for children such as school clubs; improved home-school relations by addressing dinner money debt; removed the additional stress of making and managing school meals in the mornings; and supported children's time at school. The introduction of the policy has been welcomed by families across the income spectrum, but families on lower incomes are benefitting the most and were more likely to say the policy was significantly helping household budgets.<sup>27</sup>

Evidence from elsewhere shows that universal FSMs can help boost children's learning and attainment,<sup>28</sup> as well as supporting their health through providing a balanced meal each day.<sup>29</sup> Children also benefit from the social experience of sitting down together in a shared dining hall and eating the same food.<sup>30</sup>

FSM eligibility in England must be urgently expanded to support more families on a lower income, and in the longer-term means-testing should be removed entirely from the dining hall, with universal provision for all school children. CPAG estimates that rolling out universal FSMs to all school-aged children in England would cost £2 billion.

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<sup>24</sup> CPAG and Loughborough University, [The minimum cost of education](#), 2023

<sup>25</sup> CPAG, [The number of children in poverty not eligible for FSM by region and nation](#), 2024

<sup>26</sup> CPAG, [New official data shows 900,000 children in poverty don't qualify for free school meals under national policy](#), 2024

<sup>27</sup> Impact on Urban Health, [More than a Meal](#), 2024

<sup>28</sup> Lund University, [Free and nutritious school lunches help create richer and healthier adults](#), 2021

<sup>29</sup> Nuffield Foundation, [Impact of the universal infant free school meal policy](#), 2020

<sup>30</sup> Education Policy Institute, [Evaluation of Universal Infant Free School Meals](#), 2018

## Reduce the cost of the school day including through uniform grants

CPAG's research in education highlights the hidden cost of schooling and the impact this has on children and families. School uniform and kit is the largest school cost for families and yet, unlike elsewhere in the UK, struggling families in England receive no national support with this cost.

CPAG analysis finds that parents of primary school children are paying at a minimum £352.86 per year for uniform and P.E. kit, and parents of secondary school children are paying a minimum of £481.77 per year.<sup>31</sup> Grants should be made available to families struggling with the cost of school uniform and P.E. kit. School uniform costs and requirements also affect school attendance and must be addressed.

Research from the DfE shows 18 per cent of children from households facing financial hardship were sent home from school in 2023 due to uniform requirements.<sup>32</sup>

Before- and after-school provision and holiday programmes help to maximise the poverty-reducing potential of schools. They enable parents and carers to work, and high-quality school-based provision can help children from lower-income households to access enriching experiences that are not covered in the curriculum. The government should invest further in before- and after-school childcare provision and holiday clubs. Breakfast clubs are a welcome start. But wider provision around the school day from 8am to 6pm is needed, as well as during the school holidays.

## Supporting children who face additional barriers to escaping poverty

In addition, the government needs to do more to uphold the rights of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to access education and childcare. Children with SEND are often doubly disadvantaged due to challenges around accessing education, the possibility of additional costs, and the impact of poverty at home, often made deeper because parents are less able to work. This is a complex area and the government must consider how reforms can work to better support children's outcomes and educational experiences.

## Employment

Employment is a vital component of any meaningful strategy to address child poverty, but on its own it is not sufficient to lift families out of poverty. The past fifteen years can be characterised by falling unemployment, but also a large rise in in-work poverty, as out-of-work parents were pushed into low-paid precarious work, while cuts to social security, affected both in-work and out-of-work low-income families. Increasing the adequacy of social security is therefore very important in reversing the trend of rising in-work poverty. Nonetheless, there are some sensible employment reforms that would have a positive impact for families living in poverty, even if they would not lead to large-scale reduction in child poverty.

## Reform conditionality and employment support for parents and carers.

There is currently a culture of fear and distrust between DWP and claimants, exemplified by a strict conditionality regime with egregious financial penalties such as the benefit cap and sanctions. This regime is not good for employment or wider outcomes such as poverty (depth) or mental health.

In addition to stringent conditionality, the current approach to employment support is one size fits all and focuses on getting people into any job, regardless of their household circumstances, qualifications and aspirations. A variety of evidence including CPAG's own research project *Your Work Your Way*,<sup>33</sup> shows that a more individually tailored approach that focuses on helping parents overcome their substantial barriers to work leads to better outcomes.

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<sup>31</sup> CPAG and Loughborough University, [The minimum cost of education](#), 2023

<sup>32</sup> Department for Education, [Cost of school uniforms survey 2023](#), 2024

<sup>33</sup> CPAG, [Your Work Your Way](#), 2024

The proposals outlined in the Get Britain Working white paper signal a positive direction of travel, and will require resources to implement effectively so that parents and carers are able to access meaningful, local support (at jobcentres) that successfully moves them into work.

### **Reform work incentives in social security**

The incentives in UC for working more could go further to support parents to move into work. This is important for households with children, where one pay cheque can only go so far in covering the costs of multiple people. In addition, families moving into more working hours then face the additional costs of childcare (covered in more detail below). Work incentives are a particular issue for second earners in couples. Introducing a second earner work allowance (as there is for the primary earner) in UC would help address this problem for low-income couple families.

## **Housing**

Housing is the largest cost that most low-income families face, therefore policies that bring down these costs are essential to tackling child poverty. Housing costs have risen substantially in recent years, primarily as we have failed to build enough houses or replenish the social housing stock. Meanwhile, support through the social security system has not kept up with rapidly increasing rents. This has led to families having to spend more on housing and far less on other areas, lowering their living standards considerably. This is a particularly acute problem for families affected by the benefit cap (see social security section)

### **Increase the stock of social housing by 90,000 a year for 10 years**

The social housing stock has been severely depleted over the last 40 years. This means many families have been pushed into the private rented sector, where rents are skyrocketing as demand outstrips supply. It also means that rates of homelessness have risen, and there are currently a record 159,380 children in temporary accommodation, which is extremely harmful for children and their families in a variety of different ways.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, there must be an investment in social housing, as the long-term strategy for reducing housing costs and ensuring that families are not pushed into temporary accommodation. A commitment to increasing the stock of social housing by 90,000 a year for 10 years, would result in homelessness falling and rents becoming more manageable. It would also ease pressure on the private rental market, where rents are skyrocketing, housing quality is low and tenancies are unstable.

### **Unfreeze local housing allowance**

There is no real justification for freezing LHA, as it means that many families receive less in housing support than they need to pay their rent. It is also unfair to claimants to keep changing (in real terms) the amount they receive, when they already face difficult budgeting decisions. As a minimum LHA should be permanently pegged to the 30th percentile, but even at this level there are many renters who do not receive enough to cover their housing costs.

## **Childcare**

Childcare is vital not only for enabling parents to work but also for child development, especially in the early years. High-quality early years education is vital for children's outcomes and has proven to be especially beneficial for children experiencing poverty, both in terms of school readiness and long-term

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<sup>34</sup> Shelter, 'Children homeless in temporary accommodation hits shameful new record of 151,000 – up 15% in a year', 2024



outcomes.<sup>35</sup> The UK government has announced some positive changes to the childcare system in England, including funding for 3,000 school-based nurseries, which is a welcome investment in the maintained childcare sector. However, chronic problems remain.

### **Increase access to affordable childcare for all children**

A vital first step is to expand the working families and childcare element of UC to all families, not just those who meet certain work/immigration requirements. Beyond this, the work criteria should be removed for existing pre-school, free-hours, childcare offers. This includes making the 'disadvantaged offer' (for two-year-olds in families claiming certain benefits) universal. This would be beneficial for both the labour market and child development.

### **Simplify the childcare system**

The government should look to simplify and strengthen the childcare system overall and work towards having a free at the point of access universal childcare system. In the short term, the following changes should be made to childcare in UC:

- Simplify the repayment system through UC.
- Allow parents to claim invoices which have top-up fees added (as is currently the case for those on tax-free childcare).
- Explore ways to increase the uptake of the FSF for childcare costs and expand it to mothers returning from maternity leave.

### **Reform childcare funding**

A significant injection of funding is needed through a variety of different mechanisms to ensure that high-quality childcare places are available to all children. This can be done through increasing funding for the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP),<sup>36</sup> creating a more inclusive SEND funding system and removing restrictions on the early years meals programme. In the long-term, childcare should move towards an integrated system of support across early years, alongside healthcare and family support services to provide a joined-up approach to children's outcomes.

## **Services for children and families**

Services for children and families are important for mitigating the impact of poverty, even if they are not an effective means of reducing child poverty. Currently, these services are very stretched, as the past 15 years have seen rising (deep) poverty, coupled with large cuts to funding.

### **Invest in preventative early years services that improve children's outcomes**

Investing in integrated place-based services (such as Sure Start in England and Flying Start in Wales) can mitigate some of the negative effects of growing up in poverty and have a long-term impact on children's outcomes.<sup>37</sup> These services also have the potential to offer a peer-support element which has a positive impact on mental health outcomes and can make services more welcoming to parents.

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<sup>35</sup> P Carneiro, S Cattan and N Ridpath, [The short- and medium-term impacts of Sure Start on educational outcomes](#), Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2024

<sup>36</sup> Recent additional investment in EYPP is an excellent first step, which could be built on by increasing the deprivation element within the national funding formula and working to bring EYPP in line with primary school PP in the longer term.

<sup>37</sup> See Note 36

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## Conclusion

The spending review coupled with the forthcoming child poverty strategy represents a huge opportunity to significantly reduce child poverty across the UK. It is an important moment to think strategically about the short-term and long-term path to eradicating child poverty, and to allocate the resources needed to achieve systematic change. But the sooner that action is taken, the better the impact on children who cannot keep waiting for help.

Investing in social security is a cost-effective way to raise living standards, boost long-term growth and lower barriers to opportunity. The first step must be scrapping the two-child limit and the benefit cap, as these policies are pushing more and more children into (deep) poverty, and if they remain, child poverty will continue to rise over the course of this parliament.

### About CPAG and our sources of evidence

We have particular expertise in the functioning of the social security system, through our welfare rights, training and policy work. CPAG's *Early Warning System* collects case study evidence from advisers across the UK on the impacts of welfare reform, and has collected thousands of cases to date. We also have two particular projects focusing on different areas of family life. The *Your Work Your Way* project provided tailored employment support to second earners. The *Cost of the School Day* project works with children and young people, parents and school staff to find out where problems lie for children from low income households, how their school participation and experiences are affected by costs, and which current and potential policies and practices could help to prevent these problems arising.