

Counting the cost of child poverty

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One in three children are living in poverty in the UK today. The statistic is shocking enough, but the real stories behind it – of the effect that early deprivation can have on young lives – are even more shocking.

Blighted lives

This report, produced as part of Barnardo's campaign against child poverty, calculates the human, social and economic costs of poverty. Through the true stories of eight young people whose lives have been blighted by poverty, the report shows how a failure to invest in our children not only deprives them of their own childhood, but also increases the risk that they will pass on that deprivation to their own children.

For each of the young people featured, the report calculates the costs to the state of the effects of poverty – for example keeping a child in local authority care or sending them to a unit for children excluded from school. It also looks at what the costs would have been if help had been given at an earlier stage.

What could have been

For example, 30-year-old Keith grew up in poverty because of his father's alcoholism, and turned to drink, crime and violence as he grew up. Keith's own daughter was taken into care because of his violence. By the age of 30, the report calculates, Keith's life of crime had cost the state £153,649. But if support had been given to Keith and his family when he was a young child, preventing him from turning to drink and crime, the cost would have been £11,888.

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