

Dyw hyn ddim yn digwydd yma

Realiti tlodi plant yng Nghymru

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RHOI'R DYFODOLYN ÔL I'N PLANT
GIVING CHILDREN BACK THEIR FUTURE

Cyflwyniad

Ym mis Mawrth 1999, gwnaeth y Llywodraeth addewid hanesyddol ac uchelgeisiol i roi terfyn ar dlodi plant o fewn cenhedlaeth. Erbyn hyn, mae 600,000 mil yn llai o blant yn byw mewn tlodi nag a oedd wyth mlynedd yn ôl. Mae ansawdd bywyd a dyheadau llawer ar gyfer y dyfodol yn gwella ledled y DU, wrth i San Steffan a Llywodraethau datganoledig Cymru, yr Alban a Gogledd Iwerddon roi rhaglenni gwrthdlodi ar waith.

Tan yn ddiweddar, roedd canran y plant a oedd yn byw mewn tlodi yng Nghymru'n uwch na'r cyfartaledd drwy'r DU. Mae'r ffigurau diweddaraf yn dangos bod y ffigur diweddaraf yn 28%, 2% o dan gyfartaledd cyfredol y DU sef 30%.¹ Mae'r cynnydd hwn wedi'i sicrhau'n bennaf o ganlyniad i bolisiâu ariannol y DU ym maes trethi a budd-daliadau ochr yn ochr â chynnydd cyfatebol mewn lefelau cyflogaeth ledled Cymru. Mae cyfran y plant yng Nghymru sydd erbyn hyn yn byw mewn cartrefi incwm-isel wedi gostwng i'r un lefel â'r cyfartaledd drwy'r DU ond oherwydd ei heconomi cyflog-isel, mae Cymru wedi gweld cynnydd yng nghyfran yr aelwydydd sydd mewn gwaith ond eto'n byw o dan y terfyn tlodi.²

Er bod y ffigurau'n gostwng, mae gormod o lawer o blant yn dal i gael eu gadael ar ôl – gyda 3.8 miliwn o blant ledled y DU yn dal i fod yn ysglyfaeth i dlodi. Mae tlodi plant yn dal i fod yn ddwbl yr hyn a oedd yn 1979 ac mae'n uwch o lawer na'r cyfartaledd yn Ewrop. Yn ogystal â hyn, ceir pryder difrifol bod y gyfradd gwella'n arafu ac y bydd rhaid i Lywodraeth San Steffan a Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru ymrwymo buddsoddiad sylweddol er mwyn gwella bywydau ac amgylchiadau'r teuluoedd hynny sy'n byw yn y tlodi mwyaf difrifol a di-fraint ac er mwyn cyrraedd y targedau tlodi plant a bennwyd ar gyfer 2010 a 2020.

Mae'r adroddiad hwn yn crynhoi astudiaeth ehangach drwy'r DU (dan y teitl *It doesn't happen here*) sy'n seiliedig ar gyfweiliadau gyda mwy na deugain o deuluoedd y bydd Barnardo's yn gweithio gyda nhw ledled y DU. Mae'r rhain yn cynnwys plant o deuluoedd du ac o gefndiroedd lleiafrif ethnig, plant mewn teuluoedd sy'n straffaglu byw ar gyflog isel, teuluoedd â rhiant sengl, teuluoedd sy'n delio ag anabledd, teuluoedd mawr a grwpiau agored i niwed, gan gynnwys plant mewn teuluoedd sy'n ceisio lloches, plant mewn tai gwael eu cyflwr a phobl ifanc sy'n byw'n annibynnol. Mae modelu

ychwanegol a gyflawnwyd gan y Sefydliad Astudiaethau Ariannol trwy ddefnyddio gwaelodlin Cartrefi Islaw'r Incwm Cyfartalog 2004/05 yn amcangyfrif cyfraddau tlodi'r grwpiau hyn yn 2010, gyda'r polisiâu cyfredol a phe bai £3.8 biliwn ychwanegol yn cael ei wario.³

Plant sy'n byw yng Nghymru ar hyn o bryd sy'n wynebu'r canlyniadau gwaethaf o ran lles yn y DU ac mae 170,000 (un o bob pedwar) yn dal i fyw mewn tlodi heddiw. Dileu tlodi plant mewn cenhedlaeth yw'r her gymdeithasol fwyaf uchelgeisiol sy'n wynebu Llywodraeth San Steffan a Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru a bydd gofyn i'r ddwy ohonynt ddyblu eu hymdrechion ac ategu gwaith ei gilydd er mwyn cyrraedd y nod.

Beth yw'r broblem? – Incwm annigonol a chyflogau isel

Yn 2005/6, roedd cwpwl gyda dau o blant yn byw yn y DU yn gwario £642 yr wythnos ar gyfartaledd. Roedd y teuluoedd a gyfwelwyd ar gyfer adroddiad Barnardo's "Dyw hyn ddim yn Digwydd Yma" yn byw ar incwm is o lawer na hyn, a, gan amlaf, incwm a oedd ymhell o dan derfyn tlodi'r Llywodraeth ei hun.

Er enghraifft, mae Heather o Gaerdydd y rhiant sengl sydd â thri o blant yn byw ar Gymhorthdal Incwm heb ddim taliadau cynhaliaeth. Mae ganddi £210.44 i fyw arno - £40.56 yr wythnos o dan y terfyn tlodi. Yn sgil hyn, mae hi mewn dyled o hyd ac mae gwyliau'r ysgol yn peri mwy o drafferth nag arfer iddi am fod rhaid talu am weithgareddau cymdeithasol i'r plant a gwisg ysgol ar gyfer y tymor dilynol.

Nid dim ond plant sydd â'u rhieni'n ddi-waith sy'n dioddef yn sgil tlodi – mae 52% o'r plant sydd mewn tlodi'n byw ar aelwydydd lle ceir o leiaf un yn ennill cyflog. Er mwyn rhoi terfyn ar dlodi plant, o'r £1 rhaid ailddosbarthu cyfoeth drwy gyfrwng y system trethi a budd-daliadau gan greu rhwyd ddiogelwch ddigonol a gwneud gweithio'n rhywbeth sy'n talu. Rhaid mynd i'r afael o ddifri â swyddi cyflog-isel os ydym am weld teuluoedd yn 'gwella'u byd' ac yn codi'u hunain o dlodi drwy ddod o hyd i ateb tymor hir ym myd gwaith.

Beth mae angen ei wneud i gadw'r addewid ynghylch tlodi plant?

Buddsoddi £3.8 biliwn ychwanegol

Er mwyn cadw'i haddewid i haneru tlodi plant erbyn 2010, bydd gofyn i'r Llywodraeth wario cyfanswm o 3.8 biliwn arall ledled y DU erbyn 2010 nag a gynlluniwyd ar hyn o bryd. Ar sail ei pholisiau cyfredol, ychydig o ragolygon sydd y cyrhaeddir y targed 2010 – nac yng Nghymru nac yng ngweddill y DU.

Mae'r Sefydliad Astudiaethau Ariannol wedi amcangyfrif y bydd gwario'r £1 biliwn ychwanegol ar gredydau treth a gyhoeddwyd yng Nghyllideb 2007 yn lleihau tlodi plant ryw 200,000 arall erbyn 2010. Bydd hyn yn golygu bod y Llywodraeth yn brin o'i nod o haneru tlodi plant, gyda rhyw 900,000 o blant yn dal i fod o dan y terfyn.

Hefyd, mae'r Sefydliad Astudiaethau Ariannol, ac ystyried newidiadau i'r Gyllideb yn 2007, yn amcangyfrif y gellid cyrraedd targed 2010 drwy gynyddu elfen blant y credyd treth plant £11 arall yr wythnos ar sail prisiau 2007, a rhoi £20 ychwanegol yr wythnos i deuluoedd ar gyfer y trydydd plentyn a phob plentyn wedyn drwy gyfrwng elfen deulu'r credyd treth plant.

Felly, mae angen buddsoddi £3.8 biliwn ychwanegol.



Beth fyddai buddsoddi £3.8 biliwn yn ei olygu?

Drwy fuddsoddi £3.8 biliwn ychwanegol, erbyn 2010, fe ellid sicrhau ledled y DU (o'i gymharu â 2004/05):

- 320,000 yn llai o blant tlawd mewn teuluoedd â rhiant sengl
- 240,000 yn llai o blant tlawd mewn teuluoedd ag oedolyn anabl
- 90,000 yn llai o blant tlawd mewn teuluoedd dau riant lle bo un rhiant yn gweithio amser llawn a'r rhiant arall yn ddi-waith
- 50,000 yn llai o blant Pacistanaidd a Bangladeshaidd tlawd

Heb fuddsoddi £3.8 biliwn ychwanegol, erbyn 2010, fe allai fod (o'i gymharu â 2004/05):

- 70,000 yn fwy o blant tlawd mewn teuluoedd dau riant lle bo un rhiant yn gweithio amser llawn a'r rhiant arall yn ddi-waith
- 30,000 yn fwy o blant tlawd mewn teuluoedd â rhiant sengl
- 40,000 yn fwy o blant Pacistanaidd a Bangladeshaidd yn byw mewn tlodi

Drwy fuddsoddi'r £3.8 biliwn ychwanegol hwn mewn budd-daliadau a chredydau treth, gallai'r Llywodraeth gyrraedd targed 2010. Ond mae angen ystod ehangach o ymatebion polisi er mwyn mynd i'r afael â'r achosion sydd wrth wraidd tlodi plant – chwalu'r rhwystrau sy'n atal pobl rhag cael gwaith, sicrhau bod gwaith yn talu a sicrhau bod plant mewn tlodi'n gallu dianc rhag ffawd eu rhieni ac osgoi gorfod magu eu plant eu hunain mewn tlodi.

The price of everything is going up, but my money is staying the same. That's what's doing my head in. How do they expect us to live?'

Kate, Bays Project, Swansea

Drwy roi mwy o help i deuluoedd

Bydd y £3.8 biliwn yn help i gyrraedd targed 2010 ond mae atebion eraill yr un mor bwysig, yn enwedig er mwyn cadw'r addewid i ddileu tlodi plant erbyn 2020.

Cyflogaeth – mae'r rhan fwyaf o rieni'n awyddus i weithio ac roedden nhw'n gweld hyn yn ffordd o ddianc rhag tlodi ond yn cael anhawster go iawn wrth geisio cael swydd ac aros ynddi. Mae'r diffyg sgiliau 'meddal' a chymwysterau'n golygu bod llawer o rieni, yn enwedig rhieni sengl yn cael eu heithrio o'r farchnad lafur. Mae Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru wedi cydnabod hyn ac wedi rhoi rhaglenni cymorth ar waith sydd wedi'u targedu i ymateb i hyn. Fodd bynnag, nid yw gwaith yn gwarantu dihangfa rhag tlodi - mae cyflogau isel a chostau uchel gofal plant yn golygu bod rhieni'n aml iawn yn waeth eu byd wrth weithio. Hefyd, mae'n bosibl bod teuluoedd lle ceir anabledd yn ei chael hi'n anodd manteisio ar gyfle i gael swydd oherwydd cyfrifoldebau gofalu.

Gofal Plant – drwy sefydlu Cychwyn Cadarn, Dechrau'n Deg a chynlluniau gofal plant eraill yng Nghymru, mae Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru wedi dangos ei hymrwymiad i gynyddu'r ddarpariaeth blyneddoddedd cynnar o safon. Fodd bynnag, does dim digon o ofal plant priodol ar gael yn rhwydd i bawb, yn enwedig gofal plant fforddiadwy ac mae hyn yn dal i fod yn rhwystr sylweddol i rieni sy'n dymuno dychwelyd i'r gwaith. Hefyd, bydd rhieni plant anabl yn dweud wrthym dro ar ôl tro am y diffyg gofal arbenigol a'r diffyg gofalu sydd wedi'u hyfforddi'n briodol i ofalu am eu plant.

Help gyda chostau ychwanegol - bydd teuluoedd ar incwm isel yn straffaglu ar adegau penodol o'r flwyddyn ac yn aml iawn yn gorfod talu mwy am y pethau sylfaenol megis y prif wasanaethau. Gallai cymorth wedi'i dargedu gyda'r canlynol wneud gwahaniaeth go iawn i ansawdd bywyd llawer o blant.

Tlodi yn ystod gwyliau'r ysgol - i'r rhan fwyaf o blant yn y DU, bydd gwyliau ysgol yn golygu gwyliau oddi cartref a digwyddiadau a thripiâu cyffrous. I deuluoedd ar incwm isel, mae hyn yn golygu mwy o galedi - mae cost pethau hanfodol fel gweithgareddau hamdden a bwyd yn cynyddu ond mae'r incwm yn aros yr un fath. Daw'r gwyliau'n gyfnod o 'grafu byw'. Mae angen cymorth ariannol ar deuluoedd incwm isel er mwyn iddynt fanteisio ar gyfleusterau chwarae a hamdden. Byddai gwneud iawn i deuluoedd am

golli prydau ysgol am ddim yn ystod y gwyliau hefyd yn help i leddfu'r pwysau ariannol ac yn galluogi teuluoedd i roi rhyw fath o brofiadau adeiladol i'w plant yn ystod y gwyliau. Yng Nghymru, byddai hyn yn costio tua £6.1 miliwn y flwyddyn (ar sail nifer y plant sy'n gymwys i gael prydau ysgol x y gost fesul pryd).

Tlodi Tanwydd – yn sgil cynnydd o 91% drwyddi draw ym mhris adwerthu nwy ers 2003 a chynnydd mewn prisiau trydan, mae nifer y teuluoedd sy'n byw mewn tlodi tanwydd wedi codi'n ddramatig. Amcangyfrifir bod tua 3.5 miliwn o aelwydydd ledled y DU, gan gynnwys 300,000 yng Nghymru'n byw mewn tlodi tanwydd. Oherwydd y cynnydd mewn prisiau tanwydd, mae oddeutu 60,000 o aelwydydd yng Nghymru'n wynebu'r risg o gael eu sugno i fyd dyled ("Dyled a'r Prif Wasanaethau," Cyngor Defnyddwyr Cymru, 2006). Os yw Llywodraeth San Steffan a Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru am ddileu tlodi tanwydd i grwpiau agored i newid, rhaid iddynt weithio gyda'r cyflenwyr ynni er mwyn sicrhau bod pob cwsmer ar y tariff rhataf ac nad ydynt yn cael eu cosbi oherwydd eu dull talu.

Dyled – roedd llawer o'r teuluoedd a gyfwelwyd mewn dyled, naill ai i'r Gronfa Gymdeithasol, i fenthycwyr wrth y drws, neu i'w ffrindiau a'u teulu. Roedd llawer o'r benthyciadau hyn wedi'u codi i dalu costau'r Nadolig, penblwyddi a thalu am nwyddau hanfodol y cartref. Mae benthycwyr wrth y drws yn codi llog rhwng 160% ac 800% ar fenthyciadau, sy'n golygu bod teuluoedd yn cael eu dal mewn cylch dieflig o ddyled. Rhaid i'r Llywodraeth roi'r flaenoriaeth sicrhau nad yw teuluoedd ar incwm isel yn cael eu heithrio o'r byd ariannol, a rhaid i fanciau chwarae rhan allweddol yn hyn.

Astudiaeth achos:

Vanessa, partneriaeth bays Barnardo's, abertawe

Roedd Vanessa'n arfer bod mewn gofal ac mae ganddi un plentyn sy'n bedair wythnos ar bymtheg oed. Mae'n byw'n agos iawn i'r dref ar ystâd hynod o ddi-fraint lle mae problemau cyffuriau'n bla. Mae'n derbyn budd-daliadau gwerth £119 yr wythnos, ychydig dan derfyn tlogi'r Llywodraeth – mae'n gwario £35 yr wythnos ar danwydd, £15 ar gludiant a £50 ar fwyd. Mae'n cynilo'r gweddill i brynu dillad i'r babi. Mae Vanessa'n cael benthyg arian gan ei mam ac mae ganddi ddyled i'r cyflenwyr trydan a dŵr.

'Fe ofynnais am beiriant tocynnau-talu am fod hynny'n haws ac wedyn mae rhywun yn gwybod beth yw'r sefyllfa. Yr unig ffordd i chi gael peiriant fel hyn yw mynd i ddyled gyda'r cyflenwyr – neu rhaid i chi dalu £80.'

Dyweddodd Vanessa ei bod yn byw ar £45 yr wythnos cyn iddi gael y babi ac nad oedd hi'n gallu ymdopi ar hynny – mae'r budd-daliadau ychwanegol mae'n eu cael ar gyfer y babi wedi bod o help. Roedd hi'n teimlo nad oedd hi wedi cael plentyndod 'normal' am ei bod wedi bod mewn gofal ac am fod ei mam wedi bod yn gaeth i gyffuriau:

'Roedd mam yn arfer eistedd yn ei hystafell wely drwy'r amser yn chwistrellu heroin felly doedd e [ei plentyndod] ddim fel un pawb arall..'

Ond byddai Vanessa'n hoffi gweithio a chael rhywfaint o hyfforddiant ym maes bwyd a hylendid – y prif beth sy'n ei chymhell i wneud hyn yw gallu symud i ffwrdd o'r ardal a rhoi gwell dyfodol i'w mab:

'Dwi ddim eisiau iddo fod yma wrth iddo fe dyfu'n hŷn. Dwi ddim eisiau iddo gael ei fagu mewn ardal sy'n llawn cyffuriau a phethe fel 'na... Dwi ddim eisiau iddo fe fod yn byw yn y twll yma pan fydd e'n chwech.'

Cael gwaith a symud o'r ardal oedd y ffordd orau iddi hi ddianc rhag tlogi.

Mae Partneriaeth BAYS Barnardo's yn cynnig cyngor a chymorth i bobl sy'n gadael gofal fel Vanessa. Maen nhw'n gweithio i atal digartrefedd, yn cynnig gwasanaeth cyfryngu i deuluoedd ac yn eu helpu i lunio cynlluniau ar gyfer eu dyfodol drwy gyfrwng 'Cynllun Llwybr'.



Y ffordd ymlaen

Mae Barnardo's Cymru'n gofyn i'r Llywodraeth gadw'i haddewid i filiynau o blant i roi terfyn ar dlodi plant o fewn cenhedlaeth. Rydym yn galw ar Lywodraeth y DU yn San Steffan a Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru i wneud y canlynol:

Llywodraeth y DU:

- Buddsoddi £3.8 biliwn i wireddu'r addewid i haneru tlodi plant erbyn 2010 ac yn y dyfodol, gynyddu budd-daliadau a chredydau treth yn unol ag enillion er mwyn atal incwm y teuluoedd tlotaf rhag disgyn ymhellach ar ei hôl hi.
- Sefydlu Comisiwn y DU ar roi terfyn ar dlodi plant, dan gadeiryddiaeth y Prif Weinidog neu'r Canghellor, a fyddai'n llunio map cyfeiriad yn nodi pa fuddsoddi a pholisïau sydd eu hangen i gyrraedd targed 2020.
- Mynd i'r afael â thlodi tanwydd drwy weithio gyda'r sector preifat er mwyn sicrhau bod pob cwsmer ar y tariff rhataf ar gyfer y prif wasanaethau ac nad ydynt yn cael eu cosbi os na allant fanteisio ar gynlluniau talu megis debyd uniongyrchol.
- Mynd i'r afael â'r caledi ychwanegol yn ystod gwyliau ysgol, drwy roi iawndal i deuluoedd i blant sydd fel arfer yn cael prydau ysgol am ddim ond nad ydynt yn cael y fantais honno yn ystod gwyliau ysgol.
- Sicrhau bod holl drefniadau cyllido a rhaglenni'r Llywodraeth wedi'u cyfeirio'n bennaf tuag at sicrhau lles y plant tlotaf.

All names have been changed to protect identities.

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Copies of the main report *It doesn't happen here – the reality of child poverty in the UK* are available from Barnardo's head office, tel: 020 8498 7750

For further information visit:
www.barnardos.org.uk/poverty

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru

- Ymrwymo'r adnoddau angenrheidiol er mwyn gwireddu Cynllun Llywodraeth Flaenorol y Cynulliad, sef Cynllun Gweithredu yn erbyn Tlodi Plant yng Nghymru ac adeiladu ar seiliau'r cynllun hwnnw.
- Sefydlu mecanwaith priodol i adlewyrchu a chyfrannu at Gomisiwn yn y DU i roi terfyn ar dlodi plant er mwyn sicrhau bod newid yn cael ei roi ar waith yng Nghymru fel sy'n briodol ar gyfer y setliad datganol.
- Sicrhau bod mwy byth o ofal plant o safon ar gael drwy ddarparu arian digonol i gynnal y ddarpariaeth gofal plant mewn cymunedau dan anfantais. Ni fydd dibynnu ar y farchnad yn unig yn sicrhau'r ddarpariaeth briodol i'n teuluoedd tlotaf.
- Annog awdurdodau lleol i ddarparu gweithgareddau i bob plentyn sy'n briodol i'w hoedran yn ystod gwyliau'r ysgol a'r ddarpariaeth honno'n un fforddiadwy.



References

- ¹ Y Swyddfa Ystadegau Gwladol – www.nationalstatistics.org.uk/pdfdir/efs0107/pdf - ac eithrio taliadau llog ar forgais a'r dreth gyngor.
- ² Mae'r adroddiad hwn yn defnyddio'r un diffiniad o dlodi gan Lywodraeth y DU yn Cyfle i Bawb (DWP, 2002). 60 y cant o'r lefel incwm ganolig yw'r terfyn tlodi - sef lefel incwm ar ôl tynnu trethi a buddiannau uniongyrchol, wedi'i haddasu ar gyfer maint yr aelwyd, fel bod hanner y boblogaeth uwchben y lefel honno a'r hanner arall oddi tani. Mae'r diffiniad yn safon sy'n newid wrth i lefel incwm canolig newid; ac mae'n fesur o dlodi cymharol. Diffinnir pobl sy'n byw mewn tlodi fel y sawl sy'n byw ar lai na 60 y cant o'r incwm canolig, ar ôl tynnu costau tai.
- ³ Mae'r rhagamcanion yn yr adroddiad yn seiliedig ar foddelu gan y Sefydliad Astudiaethau Ariannol. Cyflawnwyd y modelu gwreiddiol ar ran Sefydliad Joseph Rowntree yn 2006 ac fei hadroddir yng ngwaith Mike Brewer, James Browne a Holly Sutherland (2006) *Microsimulating child poverty in 2010 and 2020*, available from www.jrf.org.uk

It doesn't happen here

The reality of child poverty in Wales

Barnardo's Wales

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RHOI'R DYFODOL YN ÔL I'N PLANT
GIVING CHILDREN BACK THEIR FUTURE

Introduction

In March 1999, the Prime Minister made a historic and ambitious pledge to end child poverty within a generation. There are now 600,000 fewer children living in poverty than eight years ago. The quality of life and future aspirations of many are improving across the UK through anti-poverty programmes being implemented by Westminster and the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The percentage of children living in poverty in Wales was, until recently, higher than the UK average. Latest figures, however, show that at 28 per cent, this now stands at 2 per cent below the current UK average of 30 per cent.¹ This progress has largely been achieved as a result of UK government fiscal policies on tax and benefits combined with a corresponding increase in employment levels across Wales. The proportion of children in Wales living in low income households has now fallen to the same level as the UK average but, due to its low wage economy, Wales has seen an increase in the proportion of its working households living below the poverty line.²

Despite the falling figures, however, far too many children are being left behind – the lives of 3.8 million children across the UK are still blighted by poverty. Child poverty remains double what it was in 1979 and is well above the European average. In addition to this, there are serious concerns that the rate of improvement is slowing down and that major investment will have to be committed by both Westminster and Welsh Assembly governments if they are going to improve the lives and circumstances of those families living in the most severe and persistent poverty and if the child poverty targets set for 2010 and 2020 are to be reached.

This report is a summary of a wider UK study (called *It doesn't happen here*), based on interviews with over 40 families with whom Barnardo's works. These include children in black and minority ethnic families, those in families struggling on low wages, lone parent families, families affected by disability and large families, and other vulnerable groups, including children in asylum-seeking families, children in poor housing and young people living independently.³

Additional modelling carried out by the Institute of Fiscal Studies, using the baseline of 2004/05 HBAI, estimates the poverty rates for these groups of children in 2010 on present policies and if an additional £3.8 billion was spent.

Children living in Wales currently have very poor outcomes and 170,000 (one in three) are still living in poverty today. The eradication of child poverty in a generation is the most ambitious social challenge facing the Westminster and Welsh Assembly governments and it will require a re-doubling of efforts and a combined and complementary approach from both, if this goal is going to be achieved.

The problem: inadequate incomes and low wages

In 2005/6 a couple with two children living in the UK spent on average £642 per week. The families interviewed for the Barnardo's report *It doesn't happen here* had incomes far lower and, in most cases, well below the Government's own poverty line.

Heather from Cardiff is a single parent with three children living on Income Support who receives no maintenance payments and has £210.44 a week to live on - £40.56 a week below the poverty line. As a result, she is constantly in debt and particularly struggles in school holiday periods to pay for social activities and school uniforms for her children for the next school term.

Poverty does not only affect children whose parents are out of work – 52 per cent of children in poverty live in households with at least one earner. Ending child poverty requires redistribution through the tax and benefits system to provide an adequate safety net and to make work pay. Low paid work needs to be meaningfully addressed if families seeking to 'better themselves' and move out of poverty are to find a lasting solution in the world of work.

Keeping the child poverty promise

By investing an extra £3.8 billion

Keeping its promise to halve child poverty by 2010 will require the government to spend a total of 3.8 billion more across the UK by 2010 than currently planned. On current policies, there is little prospect of the 2010 target being hit – either in Wales or across the rest of the UK.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has estimated that the additional £1 billion spending on tax credits announced in the 2007 Budget will reduce child poverty by a further 200,000 by 2010. This will mean the Government missing its target to halve child poverty by some 900,000 children.

Further, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, taking account of 2007 Budget changes, estimates that the 2010 target could be achieved by increasing the child element of child tax credit by a further £11 a week at 2007 prices and giving families an extra £20 per week for third and subsequent children through the family element of the child tax credit.

Hence - £3.8 billion of extra investment is required.



What would the £3.8 billion investment mean?

With an additional £3.8 billion estimated by the IFS for the report, there could be, by 2010, across the UK (compared with 2004/05):

- 320,000 fewer poor children in lone parent families
- 240,000 fewer poor children in families with a disabled adult
- 90,000 fewer poor children in two parent families where one parent works full-time and the other parent does not work
- 50,000 fewer poor Pakistani and Bangladeshi children.

Without the additional £3.8 billion investment there could be, by 2010, (compared with 2004/05):

- 70,000 more poor children in two parent families where one parent works full-time and the other parent does not work
- 30,000 more poor children in lone parent families
- 40,000 more Pakistani and Bangladeshi children living in poverty.

By investing this additional £3.8 billion in benefits and tax credits the Government could meet the 2010 target. But a wider range of policy responses is necessary to tackle the root causes of child poverty – to remove barriers to work, to ensure that work pays and to ensure that children in poverty are equipped to escape their parents' fate and avoid bringing up their own children in poverty.

The price of everything is going up, but my money is staying the same. That's what's doing my head in. How do they expect us to live?'

Kate, Bays Project, Swansea

By giving wider help to families

The £3.8 billion will help to meet the 2010 target but other solutions are equally important, especially if the pledge to abolish child poverty by 2020 is to be met.

Employment – most parents want to work and saw this as a way out of poverty but experience real barriers to getting a job and staying in it. The lack of 'soft' skills and qualifications keep many parents, especially lone parents, out of the labour market. The Welsh Assembly government has recognised this and implemented targeted support programmes. However, work is not a guaranteed route out of poverty - low wages and the high costs of childcare means that parents are often no better off in work. Also, families where there is a disability may not be able to take up employment opportunities because of their caring responsibilities.

Childcare – through the setting up of Sure Start, Flying Start and other childcare initiatives in Wales, the Welsh Assembly government has demonstrated its commitment to increasing the availability of high quality early years provision. However, lack of appropriate, universal and, most importantly, affordable childcare continues to be a significant barrier to parents who wish to return to work. Also, parents of disabled children repeatedly tell us about the lack of specialist and well-trained childcare for their children.

Help with extra costs – low income families struggle at certain times of the year and often end up paying extra for the basics like utilities. Targeted support with the following could make a real difference to the quality of life for many children:

Poverty in school holidays – for the majority of children in the UK, school holidays mean holidays away from home and exciting events and trips. For families on a low income, they mean extra hardship – costs on essentials like leisure activities and food go up but income does not. Holidays become a time of 'survival'. Families on low incomes need financial support to access play and leisure facilities. Compensating families for the loss of free school meals in holidays would also help ease the financial pressure and enable families to provide some sort of positive experiences during holidays. In Wales, this would cost an estimated £6.1 million per year (based on numbers of children eligible for school meals x cost per meal).

Fuel poverty – an overall 91 per cent increase in the retail price of gas since 2003 and an increase in electricity prices has seen the numbers of households living in fuel poverty escalate dramatically. It is estimated that there are 3.5 million households across the UK, including 300,000 in Wales, living in fuel poverty. Due to fuel price rises there are 60,000 households in Wales at risk of spiralling into debt (*Debt and Utilities*, Welsh Consumer Council, 2006). If the Westminster and Welsh Assembly governments are to eradicate fuel poverty for vulnerable groups, they must work with energy suppliers to ensure that all customers are on the cheapest tariffs and are not penalised because of their method of payment.

Debt – many of the families interviewed were in debt, either from the Social Fund, doorstep lenders or friends and family. Many of these loans were to cover the costs of Christmas, birthdays and essential household goods. Doorstep lenders are charging between 160 and 800 per cent on loans, trapping families in a vicious cycle of debt. Government must give priority to ending the financial exclusion of low income families with banks playing a key part.

It's like there's a play group down by me but until he's three, I'd have to pay £13 a week for him to go to play group and I can't afford it, so at the moment he's not even in a play group

Natalie, single mother with a 3 year old son, Compass Partnership, Wrexham

Case study:

Vanessa, Barnardo's Bays Partnership, Swansea

Vanessa was formerly in care and has one child aged 19 weeks. She lives close to town on a very deprived estate where there are known drug problems. Her income from benefits is £119 a week, slightly below the government's poverty line – she spends £35 a week on fuel, £15 on transport and £50 on food. She saves the rest to buy clothes for the baby. Vanessa borrows from her mum and is in debt with the electricity and water suppliers.

'I had the token meter put in because it's easier and you know where you are. The only way to get a meter is to get into debt with the suppliers – otherwise you pay £80.'

Vanessa pointed out that before she had the baby she was living on just £45 a week and she could not manage – the extra benefits for the baby have helped. She felt that she had not had a 'normal' childhood because of being in care and because her mother had a drug addiction:

'My mother used to sit in the bedroom all the time jacking up heroin, so it [her childhood] weren't like everyone else.'

But Vanessa would like to work and do some training in food and hygiene – her main motivation for this is to move away from the area and provide a better future for her son:

'I don't want him to be here when he gets older. I don't want him getting brought up in an area where it's full of drugs and stuff like that... I don't want him living in this dump when he is six.'

Getting a job and moving out of the area presented the best way of escaping poverty.

Barnardo's Bays Partnership offers advice and support to care leavers like Vanessa. They work to prevent homelessness, offer family mediation and assist in the development of plans for their future through a 'Pathway Plan'.



The way forward

Barnardo's Cymru is asking the Government to keep its promise to millions of children to end child poverty within a generation. We call on the UK government at Westminster and the Welsh Assembly government to do the following:

UK government:

- Invest £3.8 billion to meet the promise to halve child poverty by 2010 and in the future increase benefits and tax credits in line with earnings to stop the incomes of the poorest families falling further behind.
- Establish a UK commission on ending child poverty, chaired by the Prime Minister or the Chancellor, which would deliver a road map setting out the investment and policies needed to hit the 2020 target.
- Tackle fuel poverty by working with the private sector to make sure that all customers are on the cheapest tariffs for utilities and are not penalised if they cannot take advantage of payment schemes such as direct debit.
- Tackle the additional hardship in school holidays by compensating families whose children get free school meals for the loss of these during the school holidays.
- Aim all government funding and programmes at benefiting the poorest children most of all.

All names have been changed to protect identities.

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For further information visit:
www.barnardos.org.uk/poverty

Welsh Assembly government

- Commit the necessary resources to fulfil and build upon the previous Assembly government's Child Poverty Implementation Plan for Wales.
- Establish an appropriate mechanism to mirror and contribute to a UK commission on ending child poverty to ensure change is implemented in Wales as is appropriate to the devolution settlement.
- Extend further the access to high quality childcare by ensuring adequate funding to sustain child care provision in disadvantaged communities. Reliance on the market alone will not deliver for our poorest families.
- Encourage local authorities to provide affordable and age-appropriate holiday activities for all children.



References

- ¹ Office for National Statistics – www.nationalstatistics.org.uk/pdfair/efs0107.pdf - excluding mortgage interest payments and council tax.
- ² This report uses the same definition of poverty as used by the UK government in *Opportunity for All* (DWP, 2002). The poverty line is 60 per cent of median income level – where the median is the level of income after direct taxes and benefits, adjusted for household size, such that half the population is above the level and half below it. This definition is a standard that changes as median income levels change; it is a measure of relative poverty. People living in poverty are defined as those living on less than 60 per cent of median income, after housing costs.
- ³ The original modelling was carried out for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Brewer, Brown and Sunderland (2006) *Microsimulating child poverty in 2010 and 2020*.