

No crib for a bed: the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on bed poverty



By Ali Cooper & Ivy Mullen
Date September 2023

**Believe in
children**
 **Barnardo's**

Executive Summary

Child poverty is an entrenched problem in the UK – more than one in four children live in poverty (29%) and this figure, while fluctuating particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, has grown across the last 13 years.¹



Between 2021 and 2022, the number of children in poverty rose by 350,000, more than the population of Newcastle.²

The cost-of-living crisis has deepened the impact of child poverty and will affect children and young people long into their future. In this report we have focused on bed poverty, one aspect of child poverty, to explain the longer-term challenges that are caused by families not having enough money to afford the essentials needed to raise happy and healthy children.

Children need a good night's sleep in order to thrive,³ yet our research shows that families in crisis are having to prioritise essentials such as food, heating and electricity over things like replacing mouldy bedding or fixing a broken bed.

For this report we conducted interviews with 13 Barnardo's practitioners and have included analysis of case studies from a survey about bed poverty of 100 Barnardo's frontline staff who have helped families to access beds and bedding. We surveyed over 700 practitioners and almost two in three (65%) are currently supporting a child, young person or family experiencing poverty, an increase of 7% from June 2022.

Their input starkly demonstrates what bed poverty looks like and how it is affecting children. It includes children sharing beds and sleeping on the floor, all of which is affecting their development, attendance at school and their mental health. The examples provided by staff are reflected in wider research: large population studies have found that most sleep indicators are associated with increased risk of school non-attendance and 66% of young people aged 13–19 say that sleeping badly has a negative effect on their mental health.⁶

New polling conducted on our behalf by YouGov shows that there are

over 1 million families

where parents have given up their own beds so their child had somewhere to sleep in the last 12 months.⁴

Of these families...

 **422,000** had parents who slept on a chair or sofa

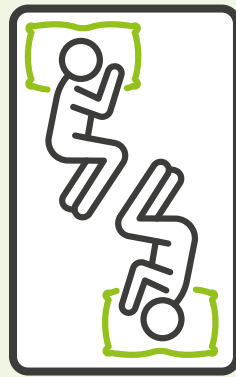
138,000 families had parents who slept on the floor.⁵



New polling of parents, conducted on our behalf by YouGov, shows that:

681,000

families in the UK have children that have had to share a bed with their parent, their parent's partner or a sibling, **because they cannot afford another bed.**⁷



For **226,000** families this is happening right now.⁸



We asked parents who told us their child has not had a bed of their own about the impact on their child:

12%



said their child has **struggled to get a proper night's sleep**

8%



said it meant their child **had low energy all the time**

6% z z



said their child **found it difficult to concentrate or focus** on learning

5%



said it meant their child had **low energy** for sports and physical activity

5%



said their child **felt embarrassed**

5%



said it made their child **angry or argumentative**



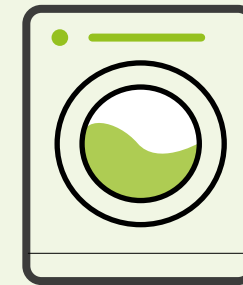
5%

said it gave their child **low self-esteem**

3%

said their child had **become withdrawn** from their peers

We asked parents about difficult decisions they have made as a result of being unable to afford the essentials for their children.

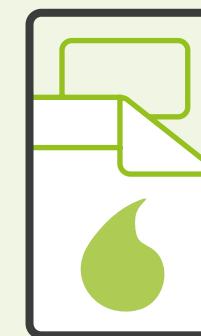
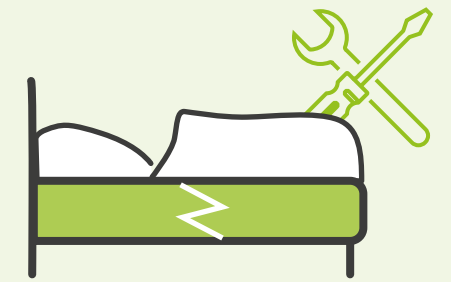


187,000+

Over **187,000 families** in the UK have **not been able to change their children's bedding** in the last 12 months because they **cannot afford to wash or dry it.**⁹

336,000+

Over **336,000 families** have **not been able to afford to replace or repair** their child's broken bed in the last 12 months.¹⁰

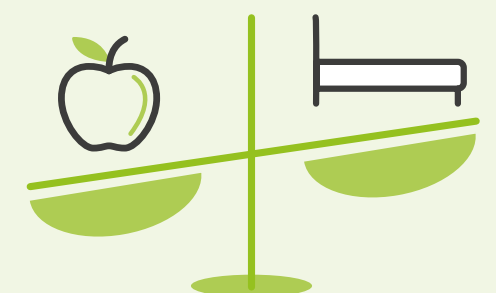


204,000+

Over **204,000 families** have seen their **children's bed or bedding getting mouldy or damp** in the last 12 months because they cannot afford to put the heating on.¹¹

281,000+

Over **281,000 families** have had to **choose between paying for heating or food and getting a new bed or bedding** for their child in the last 12 months.¹²



Executive Summary (cont.)

Every family will have different sleeping arrangements and this will be shaped by factors such as personal preference, culture and household composition. In this report we have focused on situations where families, children or young people do not have the sleeping arrangement they need because they have insufficient financial resources.

It is vital that families can get help from their local authority for things like beds and bedding when they need urgent help. For this report we asked all local authorities in England how they were supporting families with beds and bedding. Most Local Authorities do not collect robust data on the items they distribute through their crisis support schemes, however the

responses we did receive show that there are a significant number of requests for help with beds and bedding for children – at least 42,116 in the last five years (based on the 45 authorities that provided data about children). Our practitioners have told us there is a postcode lottery in relation to what help is available and local authorities are struggling to cope with need with squeezed resources.

Recommendations

Urgent action is needed to address these deep-rooted issues. We recommend that the UK Government takes steps to:

- **End the 'sibling penalty':** end the two-child limit, a policy which restricts support provided through Tax Credits and Universal Credit for families which have more than two children and is currently the single biggest driver of child poverty.¹⁴
- **Implement an Essentials Guarantee:** ensure that the amount of Universal Credit families receive is always enough to afford essential items so they can better accommodate unexpected costs such as replacing a broken bed or bedding.
- **Fix the Fund:** urgently extend funding for the Household Support Fund in the Autumn Statement 2023 (currently £842m) to a sustainable three-year funding settlement increased by 16% and embed a minimum standard across England to end the postcode lottery of provision.

Our new polling of children aged 8–17, conducted on our behalf by YouGov, shows that:

11% of children have had to share a bed or sleep on the floor in the last 12 months, an estimated 894,000 children in the UK. We asked this group how they felt about sharing a bed with someone else, even when they would rather not:

20% 

said they **felt tired the next day during lessons at school**, an estimated **176,000** children in the UK.

13% 

felt tired the next day during physical activities like sports, an estimated **119,000** children in the UK.

11% 

felt embarrassed, an estimated **117,000** children in the UK.

8% 

felt anxious, an estimated **73,000** children in the UK.

10% 

felt unhappy, an estimated **92,000** children in the UK.

14% 

felt moody, an estimated **123,000** children in the UK.

607,000 children don't have a bed of their own and would prefer to have their own bed.¹³

"It's just so difficult to know where to turn – I have never struggled like we're struggling now. We can only afford a food budget of £50 a month – and as the boys are sleeping on the floor it's really hard for them to get to sleep. I have to keep the heating on in the evening to try and make it more comfortable for them, and then I wake up early to turn it on again before they wake up. We have sleepless nights ourselves, sat there all night worrying about the situation and what will happen. I'm just so thankful for Barnardo's help – I don't know what we'd have done without it these last few weeks"

Danielle from Bradford, mother to three sons aged six months, six and three

"We can only afford a food budget of £50 a month – and as the boys are sleeping on the floor it's really hard for them to get to sleep."

YouGov survey of parents:

Sample size was 1,049 GB parents of children aged 0–18. Fieldwork was undertaken between 25th and 30th August 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB parents of children aged 18 or under. Population extrapolations for families are based on the most recent [ONS Labour Force Survey](#), published 18th May 2023, using 8,196,000 as the base number of families with dependent children.

YouGov survey of children:

Total sample size was 1013 children aged 8 to 17. Fieldwork was undertaken between 25th–31st August 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB children aged 8 to 17. Barnardo's YouGov polling is based on a representative sample in Great Britain. Population extrapolations for children aged 8-17 are based on the ['ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates, UK, June 2021'](#) published in December 2022, using 7,937,715 as the base number of children in the UK aged 8–17. Our YouGov polling showed that 11.27% of this group have had to share a bed or sleep on the floor in the last 12 months. We therefore estimate 894,541 children in GB aged 8–17 have had to share a bed or sleep on the floor in the last 12 months. We used this base figure for further extrapolations above.

All population extrapolations are estimated for the UK population and therefore assume results in Northern Ireland would be similar to those in the rest of the UK. The figures presented from the online surveys have been analysed independently by Barnardos. The views expressed here are not the views of YouGov.



Barnardo's support for children in poverty

Helping families, children and young people in poverty has been at the heart of Barnardo's work for over 150 years. Our frontline colleagues are seeing greater need than ever before in our 800 services across the UK.

In our latest survey of frontline practitioners in August 2023 we received 723 responses. We found that:

Almost 2 in 3 practitioners (65%) are currently supporting a child, young person or family experiencing poverty, and increase of 7% from June 2022.



Of these practitioners:

60%

have provided financial support (including help with loans, debt and access to grants)



59%

have provided help with access to food (such as with access to food banks, vouchers or food parcels)

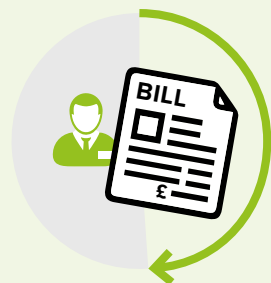


16%

have provided help with access to essential items (e.g. white goods, toiletries or baby equipment)



Half of practitioners (49%) are worried that rising costs are making it difficult for families they work with to afford beds or bedding. Nine in 10 practitioners are worried about families they work with being able to afford energy (e.g. heating, fuel or electricity) and eight in 10 are worried about families being able to afford rent or mortgage payments.



To address the crisis Barnardo's has been providing crisis support to families in our services who are struggling to afford essential items. Helping families with beds and bedding has been a key part of the help provided.

Between October 2022 and September 2023, our crisis support has helped more than 13,000 children and 7,200 families.



This has included helping:



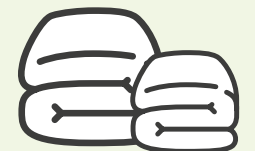
442

families with beds reaching 1016 children



133

families with mattresses reaching 307 children



52

families with duvets reaching 110 children



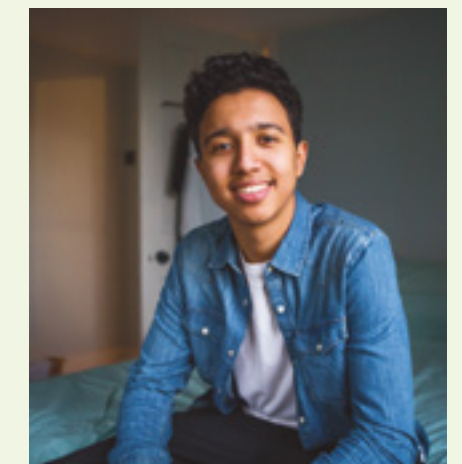
18

families with sheets reaching 35 children



28

families with blankets reaching 66 children



Policy context

One year ago, in October 2022, we published our first report on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on children and young people.¹⁵ In April 2023 we published a further report, looking at how the cost-of-living crisis is exacerbating child poverty across our services.¹⁶

We remain highly concerned about the impact of rising costs on children, young people and families. This report's findings on bed poverty are part of a far deeper problem of entrenched child poverty in the UK. In the six months since we published our last report, the Department for Work and Pensions published new child poverty figures; 4.2 million children in the UK – more than one in four – live in poverty.¹⁷ Between 2021 and 2022, the number of children in poverty rose by 350,000, more than the population of Newcastle.¹⁸

The UK Government has implemented measures to support people with the cost-of-living crisis, including increasing benefits in line with inflation in April 2023.¹⁹ Such steps have provided a temporary lifeline to families, however, we remain very concerned about the four key issues we identified six months ago, especially as we head into winter 2022/23:

Hunger

- In June 2023, nationally representative polling from the Food Foundation found that 23.4% of households with children reported experiencing food insecurity, up from 9.6% in January 2021.²⁰
- In June 2023, the Trussell Trust reported that 39% of people referred to food banks in its network were living with children under the age of 16.²¹
- In July 2023, the Office for National Statistics ('ONS') released its latest dataset on the cost-of-living crisis. Between February to May 2023, 55% of parents spent less on food shopping and essentials, up 5% from September 2022 to January 2023.²²

Health and wellbeing

- In May 2023, research by the Co-op and Barnardo's identified that, in the last six months, 41% of young people have worried about their mental wellbeing and 46% have been worried about being able to afford things.²³ The research also identified a shift in young people's concerns, with nine in ten (89%) saying that 'having enough money to cover basic needs' is now an aspiration in life, over 'achieving their dream job' and 'buying a house.'
- According to NHS data, as of April 2023 there were 413,000 people in contact with children and young people's mental health services, up from 389,000 a year earlier and from 219,000 in April 2019.²⁴



Affording essentials

- In April 2023, End Furniture Poverty found that 340,000 adults were living without a bed in the UK and 740,000 did not have a place for their child to sleep.²⁵
- In June 2023, Joseph Rowntree Foundation research found that nine in 10 (89%) low-income households on Universal Credit were going without essentials like food and clothing.²⁶
- In July 2023, the ONS found that one in four parents (25%) were using credit more than usual such as credit cards, loans or overdrafts. This rises to 39% of households with only one parent.²⁷

Staying safe and warm

- According to the ONS in May 2023 private rental prices paid by tenants in the UK increased by 5.0% in the previous 12 months.²⁸ 37% of parents reported finding it difficult to afford their rent or mortgage.
- In May 2023, the ONS also found that one in 10 parents are behind on their gas or electricity bill, rising to one in four (25%) for single parent households.²⁹

What is bed poverty?

For this research we conducted interviews with 13 Barnardo's colleagues and received 100 responses to a survey of Barnardo's practitioners who had provided beds or bedding to families we support.

In this section of the report we look at these responses. Quotes from interviews are included in pull-out boxes and survey responses are in the report text. We use these responses to address the following topics:

- What does bed poverty look like?
- What is the impact of bed poverty?
- What causes bed poverty?
- How does bed poverty explain the structural problems associated with child poverty?
- What is the impact on specific groups of children?
- The lack of local authority support



The breadth of these issues are complex and point to the deep structural components of child poverty. One Barnardo's worker in a Barnardo's family service captured the range of issues in her response:

*"In our service we've [secured] beds, mattresses, bedding and cots. **This has ranged from families whose children are sleeping on broken beds, sharing beds with siblings and other family members or sleeping on the floor or sofas.** We've also been able to provide beds for parents or carers who have nowhere to sleep within the home. In some cases, the current mattresses used are broken, dirty and beyond repair so we have been able to replace these.*

We've also seen a lot of families who are living in inappropriate properties – this has led to significant overcrowding and in such circumstances we have looked at options with bunk beds and triple bunk beds to maximise the space and ensure all children have a safe and comfortable bed to sleep in. With the cold weather, it came to light that some of our families did not have adequate bedding and were using sheets or blankets instead of duvets.

Most of the families we support have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis. They have very little disposable income and are struggling to fund the essential items such as gas and electric or food. Furniture is not seen as a priority to purchase.

We've been able to provide suitable beds, cots, mattresses and bedding to instantly improve the sleeping situation. Bed poverty wasn't as common as it is now. Things will not have been helped by the cost-of-living crisis and the impact on so many people's mental health following the pandemic."

What does bed poverty look like?

Broken beds and bedding

Families who could not afford to replace or repair broken beds or damaged bedding was a consistent theme in interviews and survey responses. **Sonia** (name changed), a Barnardo's worker, supported one young person with a broken bed:

*"Only this week I got a single divan bed base as **the young person's bed was broken and was unable to support his weight effectively. The underlying issue here was poverty and the rising cost of living.**"*

*Many of our workers are supporting families whose beds had been in a state of disrepair for some time with families doing what they could to make repairs. **Gemma** (name changed) works for Barnardo's in the southeast:*

*"I'm working with a single parent with four children, two of them with special educational needs. I had a call from the parent saying that their bed was broken and **bedroom furniture was being held together with tape.**"*

Sharing beds and rooms

A number of families in our research were sharing beds with their children as they could not afford separate bedding. **Tom** (name changed) works for Barnardo's in the north-west:

*"I've supported families with buying beds as there are not enough beds in the house, buying quilts and bedding and blankets or throws. **One family had a 12-year-old daughter who was sleeping with mum as she didn't have a bed of her own.** We also provided the family with extra quilts and throws to keep them warm over the winter months."*

Chloe (name changed) is another Barnardo's worker who supports parents struggling financially:

*"On my daily visits I see the poverty so many children are living in. **Good beds and bedding are always lacking and I also often see families sharing mattresses on the floor with no sheets on or badly soiled duvets.** These items come very low on the list of items to purchase when families are struggling to make ends meet, especially since the rise in food bills and heating bills. On some occasions children and mum are all sleeping in one bed."*

Sharing bedrooms was also mentioned in interviews with Barnardo's colleagues:

Andrea (name changed) works for a Barnardo's Employment, Training and Skills Service:

*"It has been quite a revelation working with the young people in our programmes. I don't know what I truly expected, but it's so sad. Some of their stories and some of their situations, it has been quite a shock. **I spoke to a young person who was sharing their bedroom with their parent and sibling. All three of them, two teenagers and a parent, were living in one room. That's not right. The young person is actually now sleeping in the kitchen to get some privacy.**"*

What does bed poverty look like? (cont.)

Sleeping on the floor

Many Barnardo's practitioners mentioned seeing parents or children sleeping on the floor. **John** (name changed) works for Barnardo's supporting families with building confidence after difficult life events:

*"Today I bought a mum a new bed and mattress. She was **sleeping on a single children's mattress on the floor as she'd given up her bedroom for her son.** Mum had recently become a single parent and was struggling to manage all of the bills on one income rather than two."*

Becky (name changed) described help to families she supported earlier in 2023:

"I have been working with some parents on very low incomes who had a child who

*was sleeping on a broken bed. **One child had additional needs and had broken his bedframe. The parents could not afford to replace it meaning he was sleeping on the floor.** I discussed their needs and applied for funding and the children were both able to get a good night's sleep within a week of the request."*

Caitlin (name changed) works in a large Barnardo's children's centre:

*"We have over 22,000 children & families coming to our children's centre every year – **we've seen a lot to do with poverty whilst working with these families. Some families don't have beds to sleep in and they think it is ok to sleep on the floor.** We've supported families with beds and bedding but I find that they feel it's a luxury".*



What is the impact of bed poverty?

Children's sleep and the impact on school

Various respondents mentioned the impact of bed poverty on children's sleep and the knock-on impact on behaviour, attention at school and attendance.

Kate is a Barnardo's worker. She supported one family with moving house after the father had a sudden illness that left him paralysed. This meant the family were unable to afford to buy beds for the new house.

"He was in hospital for a year, and they had to move out of the family home with the grandparents so he could have a hospital bed downstairs. Obviously his bedding needs were taken care of, but there were four children and they were sleeping on the floor, just on the old mattresses. This was having an impact on the children's mental health. The older one was out of school for a while, he started having behavioural issues that weren't there before, worrying about his dad but also his family, and one of the daughters was having panic attacks. She's only eight. The whole situation is impacting on the children in different ways.

*But now we've been able to sort out the sleep and the bedding problems for them, and it did have a positive impact on the children and their wellbeing. **When I had a meeting at the school where the younger three children go, they were saying how much things had improved with their learning and concentration. I think that did have a really big impact.***

I just hope that the Government try and recognise the problem, because it is a big issue amongst families, and I think it's even more so for the children. When they're growing and they're developing they need sleep, but they also need it to go and concentrate at school – and if they've not slept, then they're not going to be in a position to take in and retain information and succeed, they're not going to be ready to learn. They're starting at a disadvantage right at the beginning of the day."

Ash (name changed) works for a Barnardo's on a project supporting young people's attendance at school in the north-east:

*"One family I work with have had broken beds for the past two years but with the cost of living they just couldn't afford to get them replaced. I got funding for two kids beds and they can now get a good night's sleep. Across our project, we've got funding for ten beds with some of our kids sleeping on the floor or only getting a good night sleep when sleeping at grandparents. **This is having a huge impact on kids, including with their school attendance as some are just too tired and it means they start falling behind in school.**"*

Erin (name changed) also works on this project:

*"We often visit our young people's homes as part of our work around family routines. **In a number of our cases, not having a bed has interfered with young people's attendance at school as they are not sleeping properly.** I'm working with parents who are struggling with paying for gas, electric and food so although they know a bed is really important they have to prioritise needs and unfortunately this drops below hot water and food. With the increased*

What is the impact of bed poverty? (cont.)

cost of living, one family I work with have had to borrow to get through the month with food. I've also got a family with three young people in one room and one of the beds has been broken for two years, so one of the young people is sleeping on a mattress with exposed springs. These parents know the bare minimum is providing a warm bed – they're fully aware but they're ashamed they can't provide this."

Interviewees also highlighted the importance of good sleep on other aspects of life, beyond school.

Sam (name changed) works for Barnardo's in the North West of England and supports young people in different living situations:

"Sometimes the young people I support have to live with a family member even though they can't afford a bed for them because of the cost-of-living crisis and rent having gone up. We had a young person that had been in hospital, then a placement with a different family member before returning to one of the parents' homes. They were using their younger brother's bed – it was one of those cabinet beds for six-or-seven-year-olds but the young person was 17. They were far too big for that bed. They were always falling into the steps up to the bed and falling out of the bed, it was actually really affecting them badly but it was all they had.

That young person had just got to a stage where they didn't need to be in a placement anymore and could return to the family home. This was a huge positive, but not feeling like they belonged there and not having their own bed made them feel uncomfortable and it had a knock-on impact with them missing important appointments. They weren't participating in the activities that they wanted to get involved in and they wouldn't have friends round because they felt embarrassed. They also felt guilty that they'd taken the room off a younger sibling. It's probably true for a lot of our young people, their room's their safe space. I think it does have a big knock-on effect when that sense of 'this is where I belong' just isn't there. And for that young person, it wasn't."

"With the cost of living now, for furniture that would have cost £200, you're looking at £350 now. So it's difficult and you have to narrow things down to the absolute essentials to be able to afford what your family need. I think some families they feel ashamed, they feel like they should be able to provide these things."



Impact on parents

A number of practitioners highlighted how parents were cutting back on their own beds or bedding to prioritise their child's sleeping arrangements. **Bill** (name changed) works for a Barnardo's family support service in the North:

*"One family I worked with could only afford a second-hand bed for themselves and the children had a cot to sleep in. The parent's bed was really uncomfortable and the springs were sticking up through the mattress. **Due to the cost of living these families were having to make some really hard choices and feeding and keeping their children warm was more of a priority than having decent beds and bedding.** They said they'd make do with what they had, hoping they'd be able to get some money at some point. Some of the families I've been working with are already in debt and this means it gets harder for them to get any form*

of credit. Helping these families with beds and bedding has meant they've been able to get a good night's sleep. One mum told me that she is grateful for the new bed and that it's given her a really good nights sleep, without having to deal with the springs sticking out of the bed."

Barnardo's practitioners also highlighted the guilt parents felt about not being able to provide beds or bedding for their children: **Ellie** (name changed) works for Barnardo's in the north-west:

*"I support a family with a young child who was sleeping on the floor as they were struggling with the cost-of-living crisis and were on a low income. **Getting a bed for the family really took the worry away from mum who was feeling guilty about the situation.** The young child told me she now had a bedroom 'like her friends'."*



How does bed poverty explain the structural problems associated with child poverty?

Drivers of bed poverty

Barnardo's frontline practitioners are clear that bed poverty reflects only part of the picture. They highlighted the structural nature of child poverty and how the driving factor behind bed poverty was families having insufficient incomes to be able to afford essentials like food, energy and housing.

Jess (name changed) works for Barnardo's and highlighted this point. She has helped families over the years with getting beds and bedding, including this year:

*"Beds, mattresses and bedding are expensive items and although they're essential for health and wellbeing these are often very low on a family's agenda of things to buy due to rising costs and the need to prioritise other things like food, electricity. Families will also prioritise cookers, washing machines, fridges but will make do with the bed that they have. I've seen many parents sleep on the sofa as they just do not have their own bed. **Poverty is the underlying issue here.** Children also break their bed – they are often cheaply made and not strong enough. I've also seen issues with bed wetting and children sleeping on urine-stained mattresses – I have been successful in getting funding to buy waterproof mattresses or protective covers whilst toileting issues are sorted out. Whenever it's possible I always try to get the families I support a bed, mattress or bedding as this is something that all families need but often cannot afford."*

Overcrowding

Problems with housing and the link with bed poverty was a key theme, including overcrowding. Wendy (name changed) works for Barnardo's and supported one family with beds and mattresses to help with the overcrowding issue in their home:

*"A mum recently referred to us had been struggling since her partner moved in with his children. He has custody of three children and mum has three of her own. **Their home is overcrowded and bunk beds were needed to maximise space and give everyone their own bed.** I ordered the beds and mattresses and arranged for them to be delivered to the home. The help was very much appreciated and the mother said it will help give the children the individual space they need."*

Liz (name changed) works for Barnardo's in the south-west of England:

*"I've [secured] beds and bedding for two families I've been working with. With both of them, the families were struggling financially due to the rising cost of living, particularly with food and energy prices. **The families were also struggling with more long-term issues around poverty due to low paid and inconsistent work.** Barnardo's support allowed the families to pay their energy bill debt and to use supermarket vouchers to get some food shopping, meaning they had some money to set aside to purchase beds and bedding for their children. **For both the families, overcrowding and poor housing conditions were a factor, including damp.** This meant that some of the older children in these families were sleeping on sofas, and bedding was not warm enough or was being affected by damp and needed to be replaced. Both families were attempting to move to larger housing but were on long waiting lists."*

How does bed poverty explain the structural problems associated with child poverty? (cont.)

Ayesha (name changed) is a Family Support Worker for Barnardo's:

*"I supported a family with getting beds, mattresses and a cot over the summer period. The family was in a unique situation as they were also supporting another family that had no recourse to public funds. The family found themselves in this situation through no fault of their own. Both families were living in a caravan and when they secured a bungalow the children had no beds. **The children were having to share their mum's double bed and she said this was waking the children up and no-one was getting enough sleep.** The mother said that getting help with their own beds made such a big difference as now they get enough sleep and the children love their new beds."*

Rising rent and housing

One of the key factors relating to housing problems was the risk of homelessness and rising housing costs. **Karen** (name changed) works for a Barnardo's children's centre in the Midlands:

*"I've recently had families that have needed support with beds and bedding as they've been unable to afford a bed due to financial difficulties. **One family I supported had a child and had found accommodation after being made homeless however no furniture had been provided.** This meant they were sleeping on blankets, with their child, on the living room floor."*

Abbie (name changed) works in a Barnardo's Family Support service:

*"**A family I was working with had been made homeless due to their landlord increasing rent to an unmanageable rate.** They managed to find a new private rental but this was unfurnished and they couldn't afford any furniture with the financial strain they were under. We were able to supply a bed and bedding for one of the children and a cot and bedding for a baby who was soon to be born."*

Mould and damp

Another key theme was how beds and bedding were damaged by mould or damp, caused by housing with poor ventilation and families not being able to afford to put the heating on.

Nora (name changed) works for a Barnardo's family support service in the north:

*"I helped one family get new bedding as **mould had been growing all over one side of the house. This had ruined their bedding including duvets and duvet covers as well as pillows.** Due to the cost of living these families were having to make some really hard choices and feeding and keeping their children warm was more of a priority than having decent beds and bedding. They said they'd make do with what they had, hoping that they'd be able to get some money at some point. Some of the families I've been working with are already in debt and this means it gets harder for them to get any form of credit."*

Helen (name changed) works for a Barnardo's Family Support service in the Midlands:

*"Issues with beds and bedding seems to be a common thread with the families in this area. **I supported a toddler whose cot was mouldy and heavily soiled.** With Barnardo's support we were able to help and he now has a clean and safe cot with clean bedding."*

Pete (name changed) is a Family Support worker at Barnardo's:

*"Most of the families we work with are low-income families. Due to the cost-of-living crisis - even with the support - families are struggling to maintain a level of care for their children such as food and basic hygiene. **Bed poverty is hardly spoken about.** People take for granted things like having two sets of sheets and a bed. The majority of families we deal with are in poverty - that means they probably can only afford one set of sheets and that can make doing the washing pretty stressful as they **might not be able to afford a dryer or to heat their homes to dry things properly.**"*

Problems with mould and damp were also identified in interviews:

Joyce (name changed) works for Barnardo's Parenting support service in The North of England:

*"There was one family I worked with that lived in a house with a dampness problem. When people check properties they don't check the beds, they just see the mould on the walls. The landlord came and repaired the gutter but it didn't solve the mould already in the house, in the bedding. **It was only when they moved the bed out the way that they noticed all the mould on the headboard and seeping into the mattress and base of the bed.** Only when lifting up the bedding, the pillow and everything else like that could you see all the mould on the mattress. They had to bin the beds and put new beds into the dining room so that the children had somewhere to sleep. You wouldn't have noticed if they hadn't moved the bed but this had been an ongoing problem for about nine months."*

Problems with mould and damp is a common concern for a number of families that Barnardo's works with:

Jon Radcliffe works as a property surveyor for Barnardo's in the North of England. Mould has been an increasing problem for families that Barnardo's supports and this can often affect beds and bedding:

*"Black mould is a really big problem for the families we support in the North of England. I'm working on a project to make sure our families know their rights, especially with landlords who don't want to take any responsibility for the problem. They often want to blame tenants for causing dampness but we regularly find it's landlords who have neglected making essential repairs, sometimes for years. **When black mould gets into a property it can get into beds and bedding. This is really bad for children as they'll be sleeping right next to the source of the problem, every night.** Prolonged exposure can cause significant long term respiratory health issues that can really affect young children long into their future."*

How does bed poverty explain the structural problems associated with child poverty? (cont.)

Families that Barnardo's supports have spoken out about their concerns:

Danielle's story

Danielle is a mum of three from Wyke near Bradford. She has three sons, one of whom is only 6 months old. Danielle's two older sons, 6 and 3, were sleeping on mattresses on the floor after their beds rotted away with black mould in her rented home. As Danielle and her partner Wayne tried to cope with rising living costs, they were simply unable to buy new beds for their sons, one of whom is awaiting a diagnosis for autism.

Danielle believes the bedding situation has not helped her son. Lack of sleep can have a significant impact on physical and mental health, and research suggests children and young people who don't get enough sleep are at risk of higher blood pressure, diabetes and a range of mental health issues including anxiety and depression.

Barnardo's was made aware of Danielle's situation after an NHS health visitor raised concerns about their hardship during a routine visit to check up on their new baby. They had not asked for support, but in the following two months we have been able to order new beds for their sons, as well as provide baby essentials and other support.

Danielle said:

*"It's just so difficult to know where to turn – I have never struggled like we're struggling now. **We can only afford a food budget of £50 a month – and as the boys are sleeping on the floor it's really hard for them to get to sleep.** I have to keep the heating on in the evening to try and make it more comfortable for them, and then I wake up early to turn it on again before they wake up."*

"We have sleepless nights ourselves, sat there all night worrying about the situation and what will happen. I'm just so thankful for Barnardo's help – I don't know what we'd have done without it these last few weeks."



How does bed poverty explain the structural problems associated with child poverty? (cont.)

“They were rationing heating at that point, and it was three weeks before Christmas. When I went up to the children’s bedrooms, the eldest daughter was sleeping on a mattress with no cover sheet and a sleeping bag that didn’t zip.”



Keeping warm

Staying warm, particularly over the winter periods, was another key issue raised by respondents. **Amanda** (name changed) works for Barnardo’s and supported one family with this:

“A family that was known to our service had mentioned how they were struggling to keep the house warm. This led to a discussion over warm bedding for the winter. The mother disclosed that their quilts were old and thin and that the baby was still in a small crib.

Helping her with the bedding meant that she and her children were able to keep warm at night without having to have the heating on through the night. It meant a lot to the mother as she didn’t have to worry about the extra cost that she couldn’t afford.”

The link between bed poverty and fuel poverty also came up in interviews.

Sarah Campling works for Barnardo’s and supported a family struggling with their bills:

*“We supported a family with fuel poverty - they were having to decide which bill they could pay, the gas or the electricity. **They were rationing heating at that point, and it was three weeks before Christmas. When I went up to the children’s bedrooms, the eldest daughter was sleeping on a mattress with no cover sheet and a sleeping bag that didn’t zip.** We purchased a duvet, duvet cover, bed sheet and pillows so that she had a bed. The daughter was so excited to have this. She insisted that her mum sent me a picture of the bed fully made when it was done.”*



Will (name changed) works for Barnardo’s in the north-east:

*“I support women who have previously had children removed from their care and are currently pregnant. One mum I worked with was struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. Things were getting worse as she’d been trying to heat her home – the property was poorly insulated and she was on a pre-payment metre. She’d also got into arrears on her gas and electric debts were getting recuperated during the top up process. It meant that, **like many disadvantaged families, she’d been caught in a continuing cycle of debt.** I was able to provide some additional bedding to give her more time to wash and dry the bedding which is very important during the winter period when drying things can be difficult.”*

What is the impact on specific groups of children?

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Some respondents highlighted the specific impact of bed poverty on different groups of children, including children with SEND. Fiona (name changed) works for a Barnardo's service in the north-west:

*"All of our children have some level of special educational needs. **Some have continence issues and this means they need replacement bedding more often. Some are also in hospital or placement settings far from their family home so a lot of the family income is going on travel expenses for visits.** That means that when the child returns home and the family want to make their room welcoming they don't have the funds to do so."*

Angela (name changed) also supports young people with special educational needs:

*"I supported one single parent who was unemployed and the full-time carer for a young person with special educational needs. The young person needed a new bed as theirs was damaged and unsafe, causing sleeping difficulties and stopping them getting rest they needed as were awaiting surgery. **The parent didn't have enough money to purchase a bed – they told me that when the young person tried to sleep they were banging their feet on the footboard causing extreme pain and discomfort and leading to poor sleep and emotional dysregulation.**"*

Catherine (name changed) works at Barnardo's supporting young people with special educational needs:

*"**The costs for beds and bedding can be considerably more than for non-disabled children and families. Some children need bedding that met their sensory needs to support better sleep.**"*

Younger children

A number of survey respondents mentioned how bed poverty could make it harder for families to move children on from sleeping with parents. This was also raised in interviews with Barnardo's staff:

Rachel (name changed) works for Barnardo's in the South-East of England and described the support she gave a three-year-old girl who was still sleeping in a cot, as her mother couldn't afford to purchase a bed for her:

"We applied to this local charity to get a single bed for the girl because there just didn't look to be any sort of possibility that the mum would be able to save up to buy a bed for her daughter. We really wanted to help the family move their daughter onto the next stage with sleeping. She still was quite keen to go back into mum's room, so it took a while to get her used to it. I think the older they are, the harder it is for a child to get used to realising they've got a different bedroom. It was really the only way of sleeping she was aware of, you know, because they didn't travel, they didn't go anywhere. It was just her cot next to the bed and that was all she knew."

We moved her into her own room, and helped make sure it was a comfortable cosy space for her to go to sleep in because we thought maybe that would help. Some children get really set in their ways, something what is supposed to be restful can actually be quite a battle for them when they actually don't want to be in their new room, because they're used to the way it was."

Care-experienced young people

Barnardo's supports children in foster care and residential care as well as young people who have left the care system, who are statistically more likely to live in poverty.³⁰ A number of our frontline workers mentioned specific challenges this group can face in relation to bed poverty. Tom (name changed), works for Barnardo's in the South-West of England:

*"I was supporting a care-experienced young person with bedding as they were experiencing homelessness. **They had exhausted all other avenues for help like a Leaving Care Grant from the local authority.** I managed to get help to purchase bedding. It really helped the young person stay warm and get a good night's sleep."*

Tania (name changed) works for a Barnardo's service supporting young people going through the care system:

*"Our **care-experienced young people often move into independent accommodation and require bedding**, as they're often on a low income or have spent their new homes grant allocated by the local authority."*

Callum (name changed) works for a Barnardo's Employment, Training and Skills project:

*"One young person I supported was moving into their own place after being an inpatient in hospital. They had no money to buy a bed and they were unsure of what to do but thankfully I had access to support from Barnardo's and house grants. **We were able to give them a bed to help create a safe, comfortable space so they could start to rebuild their life.**"*



Lack of support from local agencies

Families facing crisis often turn to their local council for help, but rising need and reduced resource means the safety net isn't catching everyone.³¹ Ellie (name changed) works for Barnardo's supporting families fleeing domestic abuse:

"I supported one family who escaped domestic abuse and were placed in furnished homeless accommodation for six months. After this they were placed in an appropriate home – but it was completely unfurnished, including no items in the kitchen, no flooring (concrete floors) and no beds. I needed to immediately support mum to buy a bed for herself and her three children and get blankets as the house was freezing due to the lack of flooring. This issue comes up all the time in our services."

Deborah Ball works for Barnardo's in Manchester, supporting children in the care system:

"What we want to do is keep children in their own homes. We've had cases where children are being placed back into families where they've caused issues and have upset the dynamics. Those parents still take that chance on their whole lives being disrupted again. The families don't even get the support of funding for a bed for their child to sleep in. It just blows my mind - I've got other young people in placements that must be costing thousands every month, when you factor in the support worker and the accommodation. I just don't understand how children's social care can turn down a bed for a family, especially in that situation where that family is saving them thousands of pounds a year by taking that child in."

Amanda (name changed) works for Barnardo's on child protection cases:

"I think at least 70% of the poverty support we've requested for families has been related to either a bed or furnishings for beds. Quilt sheets, pillows, covers, that kind of thing. And for these families, particularly if they are fleeing domestic issues, they're having to set up an entirely new home. And what I find with social care is that although they say 'yes, this is something that you need', they then take a long time to seek funding to support the family, it's a very lengthy process."

I think families feel like they're forever waiting. The processes behind it might take social care six, seven, even eight-to-ten weeks, and that's a really long time when you're in a child protection process. I meet with professionals every few weeks and they're looking to see positive changes, but if the local authorities are taking too long, then the family can't implement them because the support's not there. And they think 'well, you're not actually supporting us, you're not making a difference. We don't feel safer.'"

Rachel (name changed) works on a Barnardo's helpline service: "I was able to help a family to buy bedding and blankets to help keep them warm as they were experiencing issues with the heating in their social housing. The family are refugees and have limited money and funds. They were placed in social housing by the council with their young child and the heating was not working and the house was cold so they wanted help with getting warm clothes, blankets and bedding."

Freedom of Information Requests to Local Authorities on bed poverty

To understand how local crisis support was being used to address bed poverty we sent a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to 317 councils in England.³² We asked them for the number of applications for beds and bedding they had received in their crisis support services for the last five financial years and how many applications had been successful. We also asked for this information for children's beds and bedding. We received the following response:

Of the 101 councils that held data, only 38 councils could provide a complete dataset for beds and bedding for the last five financial years and only 21 could provide a full dataset for children's beds or bedding.

It is clear that the extent to which local authorities are collecting robust data on what support they are giving and to whom varies considerably across the England. This is likely to be due to a number of factors, including:

- the differing ways local authorities are running schemes, if they are at all;
- differences in the systems local authorities use to collect data and monitor impact;
- differences in how local authorities stored data over the last five financial years, affecting the ease with which it could be retrieved;
- that some local authorities reported that their data collection systems had changed so historical data could not be provided;
- some local authorities said that the costs of retrieving the data would take them over the threshold so they were not obliged to provide the data.³⁵

Council type	Response received		No Response ³³
	Held data	Did not hold data	
District Council ³⁴	26	107	31
County Council	8	7	6
Unitary Authority	26	23	14
London Boroughs	19	5	9
Metropolitan District	22	6	8
Total	101	148	68

Provision of beds and bedding

Despite the variance in data return by local authorities, we know from the 101 that returned data that they received at least 187,478 applications for beds and bedding (for all age levels) and were able to provide support for 147,045 applications in the last five years (78%).

Some local authorities recorded when applications were for children. There were at least 42,116 applications for beds and bedding for children in the last five years, with local authorities able to provide support for 28,362 applications (67%). This is expanded in the table below from the 101 councils that provided data:

It is difficult to draw trends from this data due to the varying quality of data provided. For example, many local authorities could provide data for only some financial years and some local authorities provided the number of successful applications but not the number of applications they received. The information provided does show that there are a large number of people requesting beds and bedding, including for children, and that local authorities are not always able to fully meet need.

Financial year	All applications for beds or bedding			Applications for beds or bedding for children		
	No. of applications	No. of successful applications	Gap ³⁶	No. of applications	No. of successful applications	Gap ³⁷
2018–19	61453	38519	37%	14233	6381	55%
2019–20	45205	33672	26%	10692	7324	32%
2020–21	35920	30146	16%	7619	8260	0% ³⁸
2021–22	25868	22915	11%	6021	3705	39%
2022–23	19032	21793	0% ³⁹	3551	2692	24%
Total	187478	147045	22%	42116	28362	33%

Local crisis support

What is local crisis support?

Local crisis support includes a range of publicly administered schemes designed to help people experiencing financial crisis.⁴⁰ Its role is distinct from wider social security; local crisis support should provide rapid support whilst the wider social security system should address underlying drivers of people's hardship.

What is the history of local crisis support?

The Social Fund (1988–2012)

The Social Fund was a nationally administered scheme, started in 1988,⁴¹ which provided community care grants and crisis loans.⁴² In 2012 the Government abolished these discretionary grants as a nationally administered scheme and instead devolved money to local authorities to administer emergency support locally through 'Local Welfare Assistance' schemes.⁴³

In 2011, Barnardo's warned the Public Bill Committee working on the Welfare Reform Bill that: "The decentralisation of the Social Fund will, in the current financial situation, inevitably lead to less money getting through to people who need it unless it is accompanied by a robust guidance. Without such guidance and tight monitoring by the DWP as to how Local Authorities administer the Fund there is a risk of inappropriate and confusing regional variation".⁴⁴ This risk materialised with some councils scrapping their crisis support schemes entirely, a concern we raised in our 2015 report, 'Feeling the Pinch'.⁴⁵ In our evidence to the Committee we also opposed the abolition of the Social Fund Commissioner.⁴⁶ This role provided independent oversight that helped to improve the operation of the Fund, a key function that is missing from contemporary local crisis support.

Local Welfare Assistance Schemes (2012 to the present)

Local Welfare Assistance schemes followed the Social Fund. They form a relatively small but vital part of the social security system, providing a simple mechanism for councils to support low-income households. The type of support provided varies but includes cash grants, low-cost loans, vouchers, or essential items such as white goods and furniture. End Furniture Poverty estimate that furniture spend comprised 44% of Local Welfare Assistance expenditure in 2021/22, however 35 Local Authorities did not operate a scheme at all.⁴⁷

Guidance is provided for local authorities on how to administer the schemes, however significant discretion is given to local authorities.⁴⁸ In 2015 Barnardo's raised concern about the level of funding provided.⁴⁹ The local government financial settlement for 2015/16 allocated only £74m from the DWP to fund local welfare assistance schemes. This compared to allocated funding in 2013/14, for example, of £178 million.

In 2020 the Children's Society published a report on local welfare assistance.⁵⁰ It included analysis of the squeeze on local welfare assistance schemes or equivalent schemes, adjusted to 2020/21 prices, across the preceding decade. (See graph below). This research found that funding for local welfare declined significantly during that time.



Local crisis support (cont.)

Recent iterations of local crisis support

During the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis the UK Government and local authorities recognised the need to provide short-term support to individuals. In recent years the DWP have funded local authorities to deliver six successive schemes. These have often been announced at short notice, causing difficulties for local authorities seeking to deliver the schemes.



The table below is adapted from a joint briefing published by the Child Poverty Action Group, Trussell Trust, The Children’s Society and others.⁵¹

Emergency Assistance Grant July 2020 – July 2021	This funding was not ringfenced and was provided to local authorities in England to use to support people who were struggling to afford food and other essentials due to COVID-19.
Covid Winter Grant November 2020 – July 2021	80% was ring-fenced for households with children, with 20% available for any household type. 80% was allocated for food, energy and water costs.
Household Support Fund October 21 – March 22	At least 50% of the total funding was ring-fenced to support households with children, with the remaining 50% available to use flexibly.
Household Support Fund April 22 – September 22	At least one third of the total funding is ring-fenced to support households with children, at least one third of the total funding is ring-fenced to support pensioners, with the remaining third available to be used flexibly.
Household Support Fund October 2022 – March 2023	£500m additional funding provided. Guidance encouraged councils to provide to support to households who may not be eligible for the other support (e.g. Cost of Living Payments).
Household Support Fund April 2023 – March 2024	An additional £842m provided to upper tier local authorities. The guidance states that the Fund should primarily be used to support energy bills.

What are the key challenges with local crisis support?

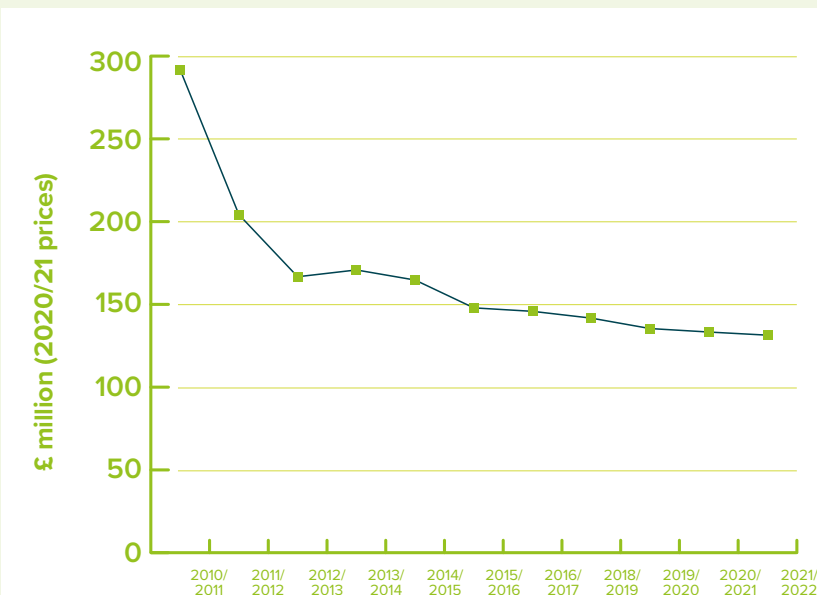
Funding for the Household Support Fund will run out in March 2024. Without renewal of the funding, local crisis support will need to be significantly curtailed. Unless a new package of support is announced imminently local authorities could also struggle to retain staff and design systems to deliver the schemes, risking a delay in provision.

Current guidance to councils on the Household Support Fund encourages the Fund to be used to provide support for energy bills and food. While reference is made to “wider essentials” and appliances there needs to be a greater focus on supporting families with essential items of furniture.⁵²

In recent years locally-administered support funds have been designed inconsistently and on a short-term basis.⁵³ The short-term nature of funding has not enabled local authorities to plan and deliver schemes properly.⁵⁴ This has meant many councils that operate schemes have implemented restrictive criteria to limit spending, leaving many charities – including Barnardo’s – to fill the gaps.

Our FOI analysis and interviews with Barnardo’s staff highlight how variable crisis support can be across England. Analysis by the Children’s Society found that one in seven local authorities do not have a local crisis support scheme and that funding for local welfare declined by 55% in real terms in England between 2010 and 2020.⁵⁵ We are concerned that underfunding means that too many families struggle to get help when they need it most and in some cases are not able to seek support at all.

Analysis in The Children’s Society’s Report ‘Leave no Family Behind’⁵⁶ Funding for local welfare provision (2013/14 to 2020/21) and equivalent components of Discretionary Social Fund (2010/11 to 2012/13), in 2020/21 prices.



Recommendations

1. End the 'sibling penalty'

2. Implement an Essentials Guarantee

3. Fix the Fund

It would lift

250,000

children out of poverty, and a further 850,000 children would be in less deep poverty at a cost of £1.3bn.

1. End the 'sibling penalty'

The Government should end the two-child limit on benefits for families with over two children:

- This policy effectively operates as a sibling penalty, affecting families entitled to benefits who have had a new baby since 2017. These parents are denied £3,235 per year per child, if they already had two children and have any more.
- We know from our frontline work that this policy penalises children who happen to have more than one brother or sister, despite the fact that poverty is already highest in families with more than two children.
- Ending the sibling tax is one of the most cost-effective means of lifting children out of poverty. It would lift 250,000 children out of poverty, and a further 850,000 children would be in less deep poverty at a cost of £1.3bn. Unless it is abolished, the number of children affected by the policy could reach 3 million by the mid-2030s.

2. Implement an Essentials Guarantee

The Government should implement an Essentials Guarantee as proposed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Trussell Trust that would ensure that, at a minimum, Universal Credit protects people from going without essential items.⁵⁴ This would enable families that are struggling to better accommodate unexpected costs, like replacing broken beds or bedding. This would mean implementing legislation to:

- Create an independent process to regularly determine the Essentials Guarantee level. This process should be modelled on the Low Pay Commission's function advising on the minimum wage. This independent process would determine what is needed to afford essential items, based on their cost, evidence and input from people who have experienced poverty.
- The legislation should ensure that Universal Credit's standard allowance must at least meet the Essentials Guarantee level and never pull support below this threshold, such as with deductions or because of the benefit cap.

3. Fix the Fund

The Government needs to fix the Household Support Fund so that families in crisis can get help with essentials like beds and bedding for their children when they are in most need. That means:

- Taking action in the Autumn Statement 2023 to extend the HSF so that the scheme does not end in March 2024. Local authorities need time to deliver the programme and the clock is ticking.

- Embedding efficiency into the HSF by committing to a three-year funding programme in the Autumn Statement, increased by 16% (currently £842m).
- Ending the postcode lottery of local welfare support by reforming the HSF to require all local authorities to provide a minimum level of crisis support. The HSF guidance should be updated to encourage councils to use funds to support families with access to white goods and essential items of furniture, like beds and bedding. This will ensure every child in every family can get the help they need, regardless of where they live.
- Establish a Local Crisis Support Commissioner to provide independent oversight of schemes and the publication of basic monitoring information. This role should focus on promoting best practice and supporting local authorities to deliver their schemes effectively. The requirement to produce monitoring information should be developed with local authorities to ensure it is not too burdensome but allows for effective comparison between different delivery models to ensure opportunities for improvement can be easily identified.
- Amplifying, simplifying and speeding up the application process. Robust guidance should be issued to local authorities to ensure they do enough to build awareness of the scheme, keep the application process simple and process applications within 48 hours.

Appendix

The FOI request submitted to local authorities

Dear FOI request team,

I am seeking information on the number of applications to your crisis support services for help with beds and bedding. These services could include a local welfare assistance scheme ('LWA scheme'), the Household Support Fund, Covid grants, or any other type of crisis support.

LWA schemes are typically a named service to which members of the public can apply for crisis support (such as for furniture or help with bills) and provide direct grants (cash or in kind) to an individual or household.

Would you be able to provide the number of applications that match the criteria in column 2 to column 5 for the last 5 financial years? Where this information is incomplete, please indicate this in the table below.

Background to local authority changes

Due to the structural changes implemented to local government between 2019–2023, some of the local authorities that responded to the FOI requests were unable to provide full data sets. This is because they had not been running for the full timespan requested, with information on previous years no longer being accessible after previous councils were abolished.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
	No. of applicants		No. of successful applicants	
Financial year	Number of applications to your crisis support services where applicants have sought help with access to any of the following items: Beds, cots, bedding or mattresses.	Number of applications in column 2 where the application was made for a child (i.e. the application was for beds, cots, bedding or mattresses for a child)	Number of applications in column 2 that have been successful. (i.e. help with beds, cots, bedding or mattresses was provided.)	Number of applications in column 3 that were successful (i.e. help with beds, cots, bedding or mattresses for a child was provided.)
2022–23				
2021–22				
2020–21				
2019–20				
2018–19				



Footnotes

- ¹ [Households Below Average Income, Statistics on the number and percentage of people living in low income households for financial years 1994/95 to 2021/22, Table 1.4a. Department for Work and Pensions, 2023](#)
- ² [Office for National Statistics \(2021\), 'How the population changed in Newcastle upon Tyne: Census 2021'](#)
- ³ [University of Leeds \(2017\), 'Lack of sleep damaging for children'](#)
- ⁴ 14% of parents in Barnardo's YouGov polling.
- ⁵ 5.1% of parents in Barnardo's YouGov polling (slept on a chair or sofa) and 1.7% of parents in Barnardo's YouGov polling (slept on the floor).
- ⁶ [Hysing M, Haugland S, Stormark KM, Bøe T, Sivertsen B \(2015\), 'Sleep and school attendance in adolescence: results from a large population-based study' Scand J Public Health. Mental Health Foundation \(2020\), 'Taking Sleep Seriously'](#)
- ⁷ 8.3% of parents in Barnardo's YouGov Polling.
- ⁸ 2.8% of parents in Barnardo's YouGov Polling.
- ⁹ 2.9% of parents in Barnardo's YouGov Polling.
- ¹⁰ 4.1% of parents in Barnardo's YouGov Polling.
- ¹¹ 2.5% of parents in Barnardo's YouGov Polling.
- ¹² 3.4% of parents in Barnardo's YouGov Polling.
- ¹³ 7.7% of children aged 8-17 in Barnardo's YouGov Polling.
- ¹⁴ [Child Poverty Action Group \(2023\), 'OFFICIAL STATISTICS REVEAL 1 IN 10 CHILDREN HIT BY TWO-CHILD LIMIT'](#)
- ¹⁵ [Barnardo's \(2022\), 'At What Cost? The impact of the cost-of-living crisis on children and young people'](#);
- ¹⁶ [Barnardo's \(2023\), 'A Crisis On Our Doorstep: The deepening impact of the cost-of-living crisis on children and young people in the UK'](#)
- ¹⁷ [Department for Work and Pensions \(2023\), 'Summary Results: Households below average income: for financial years ending 1995 to 2022', table 1.4b.](#)
- ¹⁸ [Office for National Statistics \(2021\), 'How the population changed in Newcastle upon Tyne: Census 2021'](#)
- ¹⁹ [House of Commons Library \(2022\), 'Benefits Uprating 2023/24'](#)
- ²⁰ [Food Foundation \(2023\), 'Food insecurity tracker: Round 13'](#)
- ²¹ [Trussell Trust \(2023\), 'Hunger in the UK', page 36.](#)
- ²² [Office for National Statistics \(2023\), 'Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain'](#)
- ²³ [Barnardo's & Co-op \(2023\), 'Youth Opportunities Tracker: Fairer Futures'. The research used a nationally representative sample of 5,001 10–25-year-olds across the UK.](#)
- ²⁴ [House of Commons Library \(August 2023\), 'Support for children and young people's mental health \(England\)'](#)
- ²⁵ [End Furniture Poverty \(2023\), 'The Extend of Furniture Poverty in the UK'](#)
- ²⁶ [Joseph Rowntree Foundation \(2023\), 'Unable to escape persistent hardship: JRF's cost of living tracker Summer 2023'](#);
- ²⁷ [Office for National Statistics \(2023\), 'Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain'](#)
- ²⁸ [Office for National Statistics \(2023\), 'Article: Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: February to May 2023'](#)
- ²⁹ [Office for National Statistics \(2023\), 'Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain'](#)
- ³⁰ [University of York for the Department of Health, 'Helping Care Leavers: Problems and Strategic Responses', see page 7.](#)
- ³¹ [End Furniture Poverty \(2022\), 'Resetting Crisis Support 2022'](#)
- ³² [The UK Government's most recent list of all local is available here: UK Government \(2023\), 'List of councils in England by type'. We believe we were unable to submit our request to five local authorities because on submitting our response we received an error message and could not identify another way to submit our request. Three of these were unitary authorities, two were district councils and one was a county council.](#)

- ³³ [Within the 20 working days legal time limit. See Information Commissioner \(2023\), 'Time limits for compliance under the Freedom of Information Act \(Section 10\)'](#)
- ³⁴ [Funding for the Household Support Fund, the latest funding of Local Welfare Assistance, is given to upper tier local authorities. Some upper tier local authorities appear to have delegated delivery to district councils but this was rare. We received several responses from upper tier local authorities stating that they did not hold the information, redirecting the request to district councils who in turn informed us they did not hold the information either.](#)
- ³⁵ [Freedom of Information Act 2000, Section 12](#)
- ³⁶ [Some local authorities were able to provide the number of successful applications but not the number of applications they received. The gap % cannot be used to understand the full extent of demand for beds and bedding and corresponding supply by local authorities.](#)
- ³⁷ See note above.
- ³⁸ See note above.
- ³⁹ See note above.
- ⁴⁰ [See the definition provided in Children's Society and others \(2023\), 'The Future of Local Welfare – Discretionary Support for Individuals and Families Facing Crisis'](#)
- ⁴¹ [Local Government Association \(2006\), 'The Social Fund and Local Government'](#)
- ⁴² [In 2011, Barnardo's raised concern regarding the provision of beds in crisis loans in evidence to the Welfare Reform Bill Public Bill Committee: "We are also greatly concerned about the changes announced to the Crisis Loan on the 3 March 2011, especially that help will no longer be available to purchase beds... This will have a great impact on the most vulnerable families which whom Barnardo's works and could force many to go to doorstep lenders". Hansard Session 2010-11 \(2011\), 'Welfare Reform Bill: Submission from Barnardo's to the Public Bill Committee'](#)
- ⁴³ [Some elements of the Social Fund are still in operation, for example budgeting loans. UK Government \(2023\), 'Apply for a Budgeting Loan'](#)
- ⁴⁴ [House of Commons \(2010–11\), 'Barnardo's Submission to the Public Bill Committee Debate on the Welfare Reform Bill'](#)
- ⁴⁵ [Barnardo's \(2015\), 'Feeling the Pinch', page 14.](#)
- ⁴⁶ [Hansard Session 2010-11 \(2011\), 'Welfare Reform Bill: Submission from Barnardo's to the Public Bill Committee'](#)
- ⁴⁷ ["End Furniture Poverty \(2022\), 'Resetting Crisis Support 2022'](#)
- ⁴⁸ [See for example guidance on Grant Funding Schemes.](#)
- ⁴⁹ [Barnardo's \(2015\), 'Feeling the Pinch', page 14.](#)
- ⁵⁰ [Children's Society \(2020\), 'Leave No Family Behind: Strengthening Local Welfare Assistance during Covid-19', page 9.](#)
- ⁵¹ [See the definition provided in Children's Society and others \(2023\), 'The Future of Local Welfare – Discretionary Support for Individuals and Families Facing Crisis'](#)
- ⁵² [Department for Work & Pensions, '1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024: Household Support Fund guidance for county councils and unitary authorities in England'](#)
- ⁵³ [End Furniture Poverty \(2022\), 'Resetting Crisis Support 2022'](#)
- ⁵⁴ [Children's Society and others \(2023\), 'The Future of Local Welfare – Discretionary Support for Individuals and Families Facing Crisis', page 5.](#)
- ⁵⁵ [Children's Society \(2020\), 'Leave No Family Behind: Strengthening Local Welfare Assistance during Covid-19'](#)
- ⁵⁶ [See Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Trussell Trust \(2023\), 'Guarantee Our Essentials'.](#)

About Barnardo's

Barnardo's is the UK's largest national children's charity. In 2021/22, we reached 357,000 children, young people, parents and carers through our 794 services and partnerships across the UK. Our goal is to achieve better outcomes for more children. To achieve this, we work with partners to build stronger families, safer childhoods and positive futures.

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- [The Local Government Association](#)
- [The Children's Society](#)
- [Zarach](#)

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