

# **Association of British Paediatric Nurses (ABPN) Position Statement on Child Poverty**

## **Introduction**

Child<sup>1</sup> poverty has long been recognised as having an adverse impact on children's physical and mental health. The 54 articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child underpin the requirement that governments must meet children's basic needs and help them reach their full potential. In particular, Article 6 states that children and young people have the right to survive and develop and Article 27 the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

## **Background**

Over 4 million children live in a low-income <sup>2</sup>family in UK.

The UK Government established a [Child Poverty Taskforce](#) (17 July 2024), launched by the Prime Minister. The Ministerial Taskforce is being led by the Work and Pensions Secretary of State and the Education Secretary. The Taskforce aims to kickstart work to address child poverty. The Child Poverty Unit, based in the Cabinet Office, will report to the Taskforce.

The focus of work will be on how to use levers related to income, employment, housing, child health, child care and education to alleviate child poverty and to ensure the Government's manifesto commitment that "no child should grow up in poverty" is achieved.

In 2022 the Trades Union Congress published a [report](#) that child poverty is increasing in key worker households. In 2020 the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) published their report '[State of Child Health](#)', in which they state "Too many children in the UK grow up in families experiencing poverty and deprivation. Socioeconomic status and geographical variation significantly impact child health outcomes".

More details and sources of information are included in the ABPN Background Paper on Child Poverty.

## **Why this matters**

Poverty means that children go without basics, they may be hungry, they may not have a bed, they have reduced opportunities to develop interests and talents. There may

---

<sup>1</sup> The term child/children is used to describe infants (including neonates), children and young people up to the age of 25 years

<sup>2</sup> Households are classed as being in low income if they live on less than 60% of the median net disposable equivalised UK household income

be stigmatisation or bullying by peers in school resulting in reduced attendance at school and lower academic achievements

The impact on child health is well recognised. Children born to parents living in poverty are more likely to have low birth weights; are less likely to survive the first year of life; are more likely to have asthma and more likely to have poor mental health.

Families with children who have disabilities or health needs find it more difficult to work (especially full-time hours) due to increased difficulty in arranging child care and have extra demands on their time and finances such as managing additional health and care needs, providing direct care and therapies, and attending appointments.

### **ABPN Position Statement in relation to Child Poverty in UK:**

The Association of British Paediatric Nurses recognises the wide-ranging impact of child poverty on the health and wellbeing on children, young people and their families.

We support the UK Government's statement that "no child should grow up in poverty" and welcome the establishment of a Ministerial Taskforce on Child Poverty, which should help ensure that the UK meets the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Articles 6 and 27.

We recognise that children with additional health needs due to disability or health conditions and their families are highly likely to require extra support to be able to take advantage of steps to promote equity in accessing services such as childcare, education and employment which aim to reduce child poverty.

We call upon the governments of UK and devolved nations to ensure that funding and structures are in place to ensure universal access to children's health and social care systems. In particular, the UK nations need urgent investments in community services and early intervention programs to tackle these disparities, improve access to care, and prevent long-term negative impacts on children's health and life chances.

September 2024