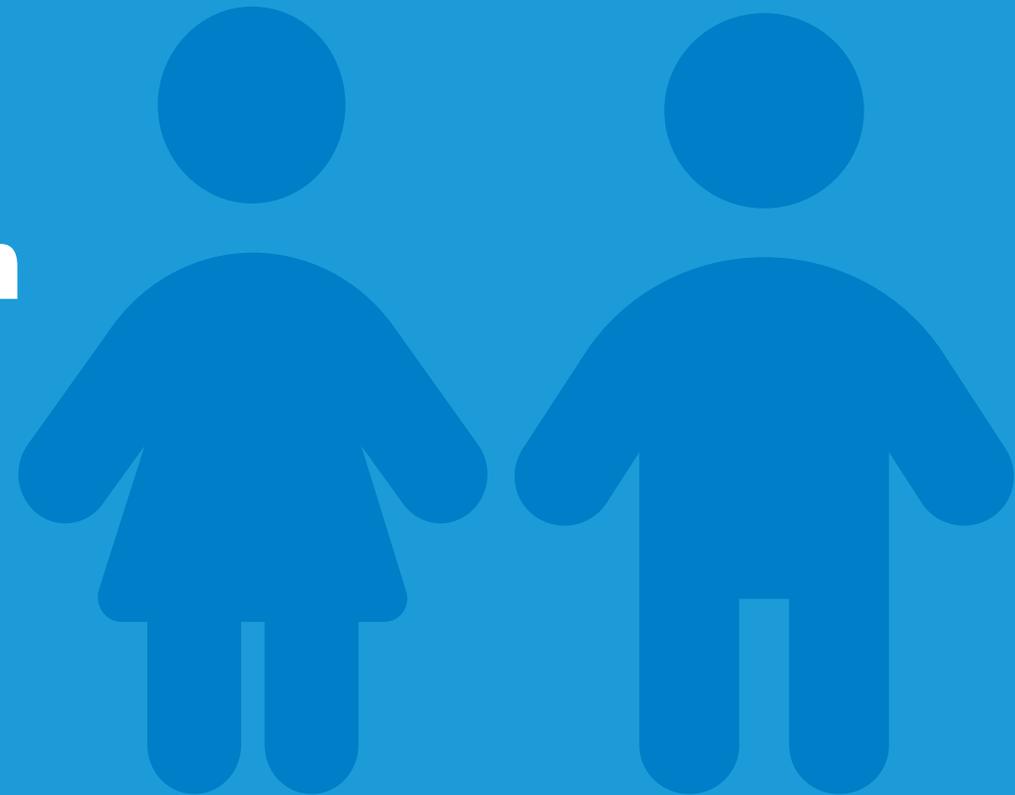


Growing up in poverty

A summary for children and young people

Director of Public Health
Annual Report 2025/26

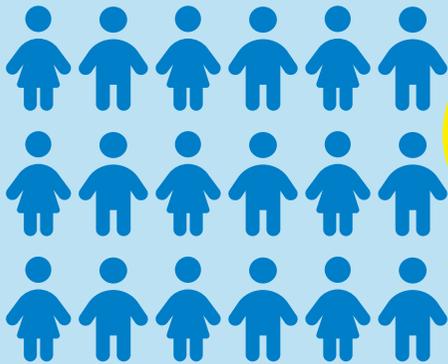


Why we made this report...

In Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, over

27,000

babies, children and young people are **growing up in poverty.**



That's

1,080

classrooms full of children.

Poverty means not having enough

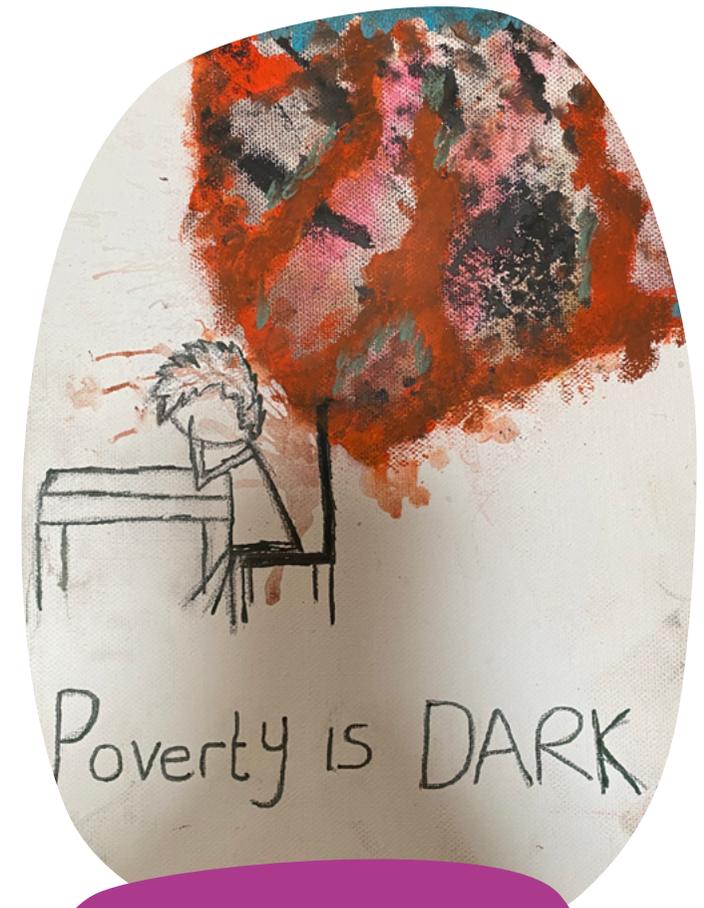
money **for the things you need**, like **food, heating, clothes, or a safe home**. It can also mean **missing out** on fun **things like hobbies, school trips, or birthday parties.**

Every child has the right to..

- Enough healthy food
- A safe, warm home
- Warm clothing
- Good health
- Go to school and learn
- Support for their family
- Time to play and relax

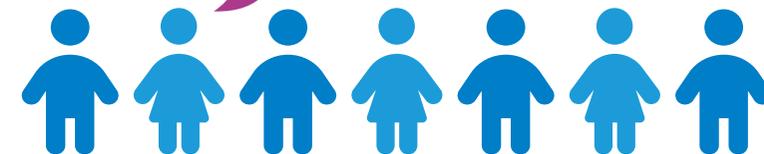
But growing up in poverty can make it harder for children to enjoy these rights. It makes it harder to stay healthy, do well in school, and can make children feel unsafe. This isn't fair, and we believe it can change.

We therefore made this report to help people understand what poverty feels like for babies, children and young people and what needs to change to make things better.



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Growing up in poverty can make it harder for children... **This isn't fair, and we believe it can change.**



How we made this report...



The team who made this report:

- **Read** lots of research and looked at local data
- **Asked** people who work with families to fill in a survey
- **Worked with** 24 community organisations to hear real stories from babies, children and young people. These stories were shared in really creative ways so everyone could express themselves in their own way - like artwork, poetry, films, puppets, podcasts and even a chatbot!
- **Collected** artwork about what being happy and healthy means to children
- **Spoke to** members of Cornwall Youth Council

We looked at everything babies, children and young people shared and grouped their ideas into themes to help us understand what growing up in poverty is really like.



What we heard: The 7 Big Issues

- 1 Basic Needs**

Many families don't have enough money for essential things like food, warm clothes, heating, or hygiene products. Some families with babies told us that they can't afford essential things for their baby like a cot, nappies or infant formula.
- 2 Housing**

Lots of families told us about how they struggle to pay rent, and some children live in homes that are overcrowded, damp or unsafe. Some families are forced to move around a lot or live in temporary places, which can make life really hard.
- 3 Transport**

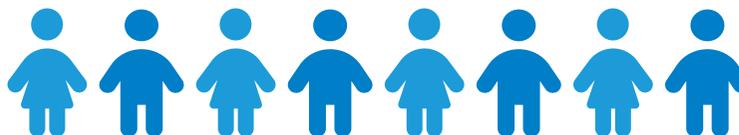
Using public transport to get to school or college, doctor's appointments, or fun activities can be difficult and expensive, especially in rural areas of Cornwall and on the Isles of Scilly. Some young people told us that learning to drive was the only way to access more opportunities, but they couldn't afford the cost of lessons or a car.
- 4 Leisure and social activities**

Poverty can stop children from playing, relaxing or joining in with clubs and trips. It can make them feel left out or alone.
- 5 Feelings about poverty**

Poverty doesn't just affect what people have, it affects how they feel. Living in poverty can make children feel anxious, judged or ashamed. Some told us they get bullied for not having the latest brands. Some feel hopeless about the future.
- 6 Family support**

Poverty affects parents and carers too. It can make them feel anxious, isolated or guilty. Some parents said they skip meals so their children can eat. Families can find it really hard to get support to help them.
- 7 School costs**

Education is meant to be free, but things like uniforms, trips, transport and equipment cost money. These hidden costs can stop children from fully taking part in school life.





A call to action!

To finish the report, we looked at the main themes (the things that came up again and again) that babies, children and young people told us, like:

- **What it feels like** to grow up in poverty
- **What they need** to feel safe, happy and healthy
- **What changes they want** to see in their communities

Then, we turned these themes into a letter, written in the voice of children and young people. It's a powerful message to adults, asking them to listen, take action, and help build a Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly where no children live in poverty.

What happens next

The report shows that child poverty is a big problem in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. But if leaders, organisations and communities work together, this can change. The Directors of Public Health and the Directors of Children's Services for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly have made lots of suggestions for change in the report.



They've suggested we should:

- **Set up a Child Poverty Taskforce** – this group will be responsible for making sure change happens
- **Talk about poverty** in a kind and respectful way
- **Make sure schools, services and jobs are fair** and include everyone
- **Help families to get the money and support they are entitled to** – like free school meals
- **Continue to listen** to babies, children and young people regularly, and act on what they tell us.



Click to hear our young people reading their Call to Action letter aloud

Thank you

Thank you to all of the babies, children and young people who took time to share their stories with us, we couldn't have created this report without you. We'd also like to thank the Cornwall Youth Council, who played an important role in shaping this report.

