

## **4 in every 10: London's Child Poverty crisis, Joseph Howes, CEO Buttle UK**

Currently, 4 in 10 children in London live in poverty. That's nearly half of our capital city's children. While, according to new research published by the [End Child Poverty](#) coalition, child poverty has risen most sharply in parts of the Midlands and Northern towns and cities in the past four years, the greatest concentrations of children living in poverty are still in London and London boroughs dominate the list of local authorities where child poverty is highest. In fact, figures show the top ten local authorities in the list are all in London. Tower Hamlets is at the top of that list with 55% of children living there in poverty. As rents and housing costs continue to rise all over the country, families are finding that once their housing costs are paid, they do not have enough money to meet the needs of their children and are increasingly turning to organisations such as food banks. This is truest in London where housing costs are particularly high.

This London Challenge Poverty Week, we want to join others in shining a light on these growing inequalities that are pushing more and more families into poverty every day and understand what can be done to narrow the gap.

At Buttle UK we see first-hand the consequences for thousands of children and young people of living in poverty. Our Chances for Children grants offer up to £2,000 per family for children or young people who have been affected by crisis. We can fund items and activities to help improve their social and emotional wellbeing and increase their capacity to engage in education and learning. Although we work across the whole of the UK, unsurprisingly, our greatest regional spend is in London, which is currently 14% of grants awarded.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown, we have seen the need rise significantly. Families who were already vulnerable and living on low incomes, are now facing cuts to their earnings or losing their jobs altogether. Children and young people have been forced to spend more hours in homes that lack the basic essentials and comforts most of us take for granted, isolated, and with very little to distract them from their troubles. Many do not have access to computers or Wi-Fi and with schooling going online, means they will fall further behind their peers with their education. Alongside a lack of digital access, research from our recent ['State of Child Poverty 2020 Report'](#) showed that, since the beginning of the pandemic, food poverty and parental mental health are also having an increasing impact on children's education. At Buttle UK we have established the [COVID-19 Direct Emergency Response for Children and Young People Fund](#) in partnership with The National Lottery Community Fund and others, which will deliver £2 million in National Lottery grants to support vulnerable children and young people and up to £5m in total by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. But this will only go so far.

Something more dramatic must be done to try and reverse the damage done to these children's futures. As part of the End Child Poverty Coalition, we're calling on the Prime Minister to admit to the true extent of child poverty in our country and put children and young people in poverty across the UK at the heart of plans for the recovery. However, we must all play a part in building an economy and city that works for all and ensures everyone has a decent standard of living. Everyone, from national/local government and the Mayor, to employers and local communities, has a role to play.

*The experiences of parents trying to bring up children on low incomes in the capital is explored in the podcast by Lambeth based children's charity, St Michael's Fellowship - <https://anchor.fm/stmfellow/episodes/Parenting-and-Poverty-ekqhas>*

*For more information about Buttle UK's COVID-19 Direct Emergency Response for Children and Young People Fund click [here](#).*