



Support workers' perspective of child poverty in cities across the UK

What support can increase chances for these children?

Amelia Smith, PhD

Impact and Evaluation Manager, Buttle UK



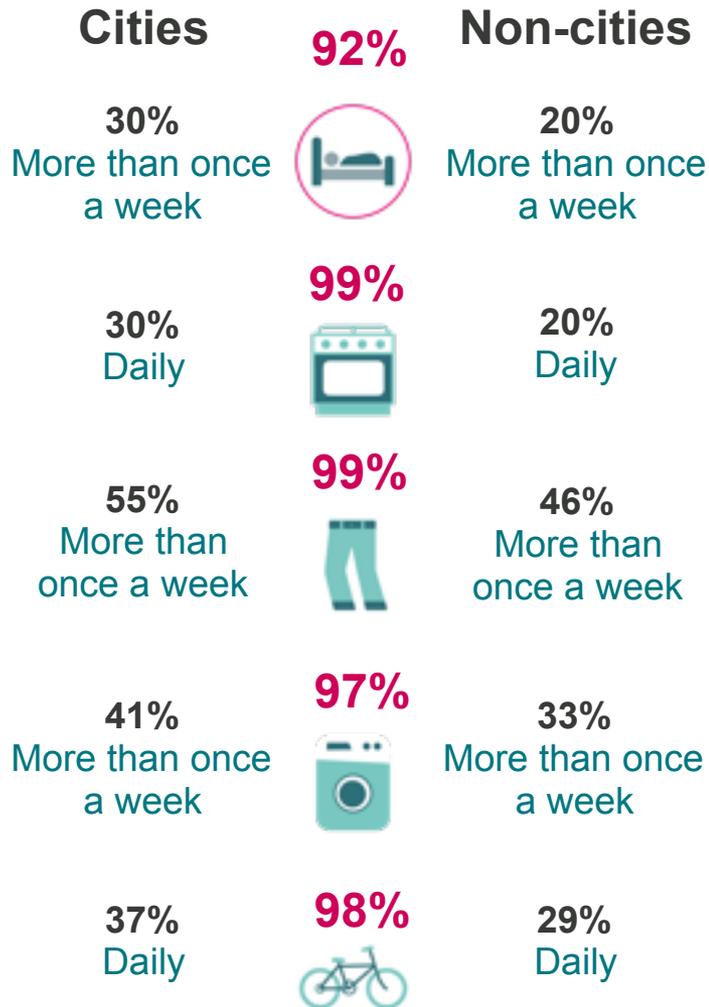
Buttle UK State of Child Poverty 2019

Survey aims and methods

- Survey of 1290 frontline workers
 - 660 from UK cities
 - 630 from UK non-cities
- Highest city responses:
 - London
 - Birmingham
 - Leeds
 - Sheffield
 - Edinburgh
 - Durham
- How regularly do frontline workers see children experiencing issues due to poverty?
- What is the impact of poverty for children?
- What support is available to tackle poverty?
- Created with intention of rolling out every year



Day-to-day challenges: The basics



It is hard to do as well when you are hungry. Children are limited to having a bath once a week as they cannot afford to heat the water... They are missing out on sports activities as they do not have the right clothes or equipment... I have seen an increase in scabies as sheets are not washed so often.



Families forget to enjoy each other and to enjoy life. They are too focused on survival



Parents tend to make their children their priority and will get them the things they need, but cleanliness of old and existing clothes are the issue.

Poverty and Education

97% 52% v 45% **88%** 37% v 28%
 More than once a week  More than once a week

Schools filling the gap:  **91%**  **50%**

97% = Access to the same things as peers

56% = High negative impact

97% = Opportunities to develop and learn

52% = High negative impact

96% = Achievement

51% = High negative impact

“ Branded school uniforms - some schools won't accept non-branded uniforms which are a massive expense upon families especially if they have multiple school aged children. Families will go with essential items and put themselves in food poverty in order to try and afford uniforms.

“ Children are absent from school because parents do not have the money to pay for transport... This is a particular problem because families are frequently moved so are not within walking distance of school.

“ Families are not in a position to help their child with school work. This is sometimes due to over-crowded accommodation, but can also be due to poor education and English language skills on the part of parents. Parents frequently lack confidence in accessing the school system.

“ Schools are excluding huge number of vulnerable pupils. These pupils are abandoned, left with no education, in poor families often already in chaos, financially insecure and with significant levels of trauma. [They receive] no support in schools due to cuts of pastoral staff that would support them in the classroom, so if there are any behaviour issues (which are... a consequence of their chaotic life styles), they are pushed out.

Poverty and accommodation

Difficulty maintaining tenancies

98%
25% = daily
54% more than once a week 50%

Unsuitable homes

98%
30% = daily
60% more than once a week 45%



Overcrowding / unsuitable homes

Common = 88% v 79%
Severe = 80% v 73%

Evictions

Common = 67% v 60%



Families are living in bed and breakfast accommodation, sometimes for more than 6 weeks and we have to challenge this. I supported a lone parent with a newborn baby who was placed in a hotel at a service station just off the motorway. They had no fridge and [parent] had to feed the other child (a toddler) UHT milk.



Families within my area are frequently (weekly) faced with having to live in overcrowded properties with not enough bedrooms for their children. They are unable to access the private rented sector as landlords refuse to accommodate families on benefits or unstable (16hrs) of employment.



Young parents are being offered accommodation more than 100 miles from family and support networks and then being told they are intentionally homeless if they do not accept.

Poverty and child involvement in crime

Increase in crime = 56% in cities; 46% non-cities

Knife Crime increase = 49% Gangs increase = 15% Gun crime increase = 9%

“
Organised crime gangs [are] taking advantage of vulnerable people... I think the change has occurred as there seems to be more vulnerable people in the community due to the hardship they have to live with, and the impact this has on them making good decisions or looking for quick fixes to problems, sometimes becoming involved with people who will take advantage of the situation for their own gain .

“
Our residents are vulnerable and are a prime target for drug dealers who are looking to recruit runners; the dealer is the young person's best friend until something goes wrong, which is when it can become extremely violent.

“
There are many reason, including the increase in the cost of living while the low income remains unchanged, the number of young people involved in drug dealing to support their families, young people who are unemployable due criminal records, and lack of qualifications. But perhaps the biggest cause of young people engaging in these activities is because there are no safe places for young people to go after school!... there is not a single youth club for young people. Young people living in difficult home situations can only seek solace in the brotherhood of gangs.

Poverty, ACEs and child mental health

Factors impacting mental health

- 58% - Family financial pressure
- 54% - Lack of sleep
- 53% - Social isolation
- 45% - Bullying
- 42% - Lack of exercise
- 29% - Family relationships
- 15% - Parent mental health issues



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- Parent separation - 88%
- Parent mental health issues - 84%
- Domestic violence - 67%
- Verbal abuse - 60%
- Parent alcohol misuse - 52%
- Parent drug use - 48%
- Physical abuse - 35%
- Parent imprisonment - 34%
- Sexual abuse - 13%



[Children's mental health is affected by] role reversal: a realisation that the adults around them are not coping and they feel a responsibility not to make it worse by sharing the impact of poverty on them as children, in school, with peers etc.



There is a lack of support services such as family support, free counselling for children whose needs are too high for general support but don't meet threshold for mental health support. Lack of support services at school.



Children are impacted when their friends are showing what they have, and it causes a lot of anxiety and stress with the ones who don't have these things, it can be a potential for bullying.

Availability and impact of support

Never been available

School uniform support: **7%**
 Help with utility bills: **12%**
 Help with rent arrears: **12%**

Increased

Food banks: **50%**
 Household items: **23%**
 Furniture recycling : **18%**

Decreased

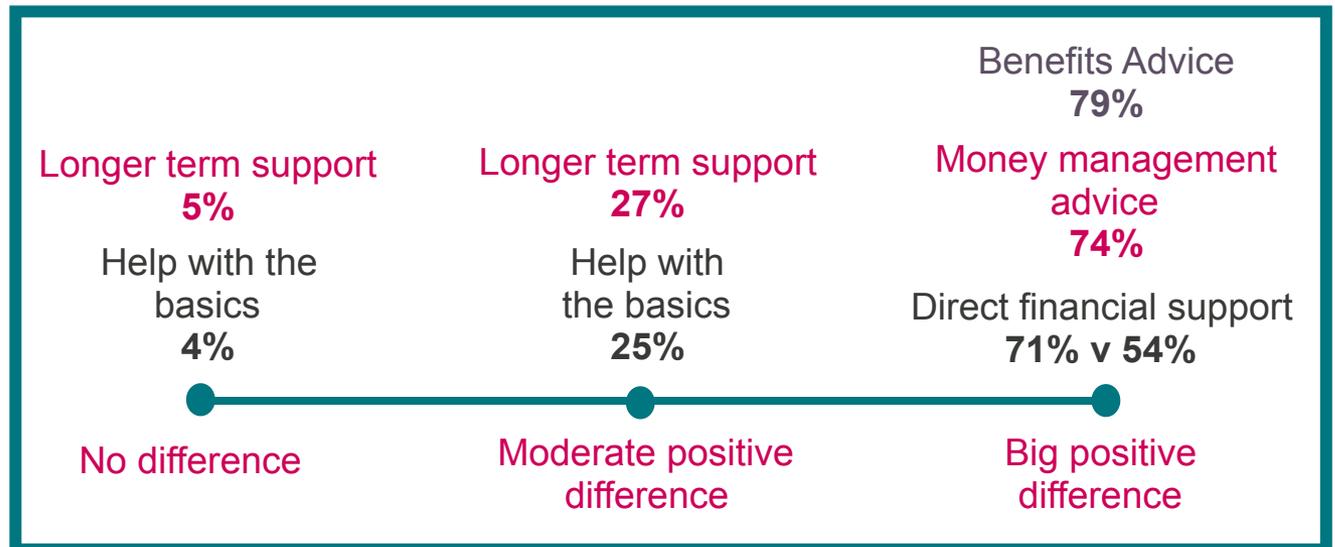
Affordable activities: **47%**
 LAWAS: **45%**
 Household items: **40%**



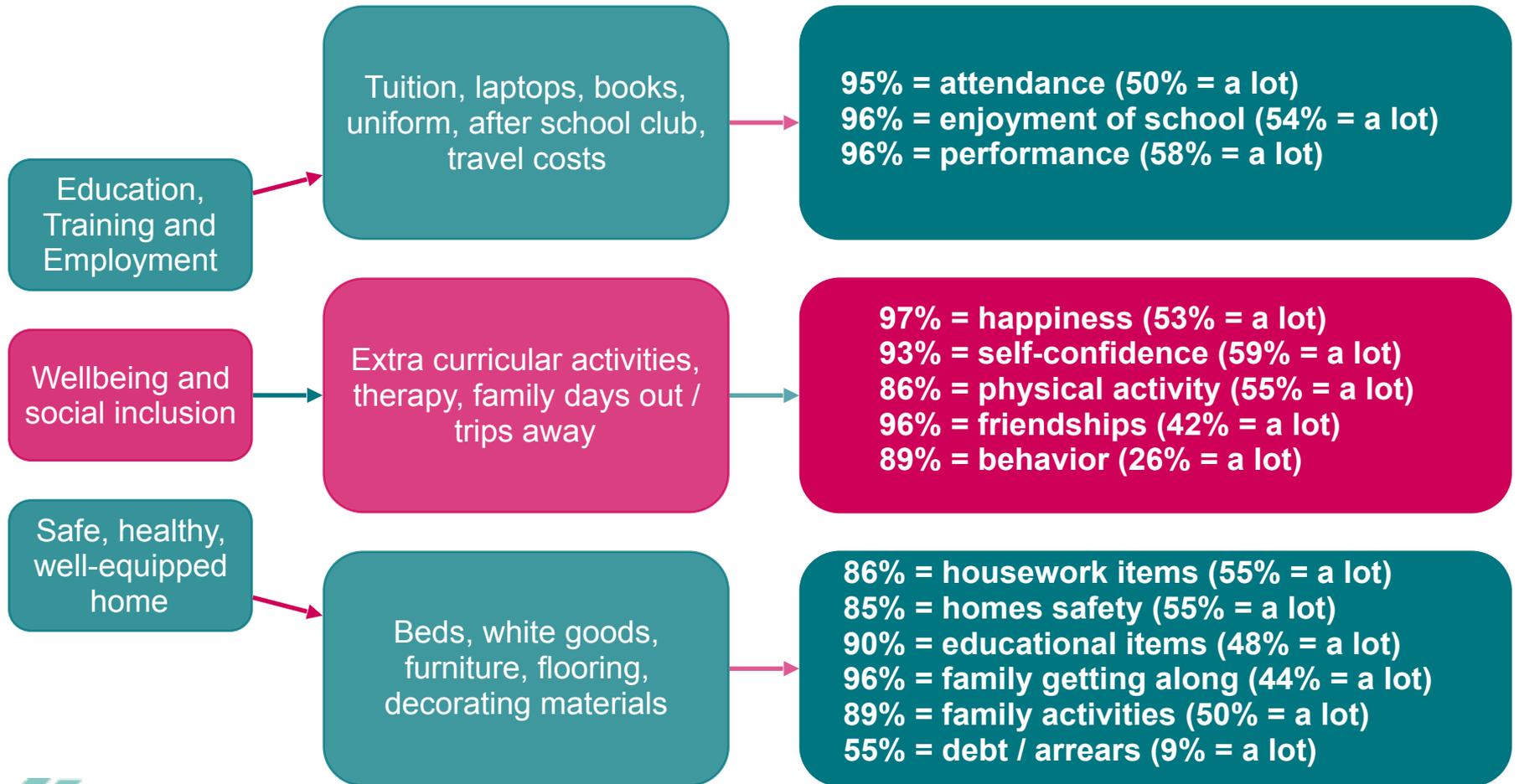
We have noticed a significant change in the response and positive actions taken by Children's Social Care, leaving families without the support they desperately need... this has left a significant number of our children in inappropriate living environments and in situations detrimental to their wellbeing.

Where families seek support

School **58%**
 Family and friends **51%**
 Charities **37%**
 Local authorities **35%**



Impact of Buttle UK support



Getting our house comfortable. We moved into a shell and had nothing. Buttle provided us with lots of the things we needed, mainly carpets which have made our house a home. The kids now play on the floors.



Amelia Smith, PhD
Impact and evaluation manager
amelias@buttleuk.org

Buttle UK
15 Greycoat Place
London
SW1P 1SB
020 7828

www.buttleuk.org

