

Study shows an additional 10,000 children have entered care due to child poverty

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A new Liverpool-led study, published in *The Lancet Public Health*, offers evidence that rising child poverty rates are contributing to an increase in children entering care in England.

Children in care face adverse health outcomes through the life-course, relative to their peers. In England, over the past decade, the stark rise in their number has coincided with rising [child poverty](#), a key risk factor for children entering care.

Researchers from the University of Liverpool, together with colleagues at the University of Huddersfield, examined data from 147 [local authorities](#), over a 5 year-period (2015-2020). Linking data on the number of children living in [low income families](#), published by the Department for Work and Pensions, with data on rates of children entering care from the Department for Education, the researchers estimated the contribution of changing child poverty rates to changing care entry rates within areas.

Between 2015 and 2020, a 1 percentage point increase in child poverty was associated with five additional children entering care per 100,000, controlling for employment trends. The researchers estimated that, over the study period, 8.1% of care entries were linked to rising child poverty, equivalent to over 10,000 additional children. The short-run costs to local government alone are an estimated £1.4 billion.

Lead author Davara Bennett said: "This study offers evidence that rising child poverty is a major preventable driver of the increase in children being removed from the [family home](#) and taken into local authority care—one of the most drastic State interventions into families' lives. In England, the double burden has fallen disproportionately on the North East and parts of the North West. National anti-poverty policies are key to safely tackling adverse trends in care entry. This would, in turn, relieve the unsustainable pressure on local authority budgets increasingly devoted to costly placements for children in care at the expense of preventative children's services."

Senior author Professor David Taylor-Robinson said: "This study shows

that rising child poverty is putting unnecessary stresses and strains on families, increasing the risk of [children](#) being abused or neglected and ending up in the care system. This is all the more shocking since [child](#) poverty is preventable in a rich country like the UK."

More information: Davara L Bennett et al, Child poverty and children entering care in England, 2015–20: a longitudinal ecological study at the local area level, *The Lancet Public Health* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/S2468-2667\(22\)00065-2](#)

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