

# Baby banks in the UK report overwhelming demand amid appalling poverty

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Research from the Baby Bank Alliance, commissioned by Save the Children UK, has revealed that 400,000 children in the UK were supported by baby banks in 2025. This represents an 11 percent increase compared with the previous year.

The rising demand indicates increasing financial hardship and impoverishment among families with young children.

There are 400 baby banks in the UK. According to the Baby Bank Alliance, “They are a lifeline for families who need help: providing parents with support, and children with the items they need to survive.”

Baby banks are funded by donations and run mainly by volunteers. Their very existence is an indictment of a society that cannot provide for the basic needs of its most vulnerable members and its future generations.

To qualify for support from a baby bank requires a referral from a professional such as a health visitor, midwife, General Practitioner, or social worker, though some charities accept self-referrals.

According to the research, baby banks supported an average of 1,096 children per day last year. Demand for essential items such as baby formula, cots and beds increased significantly. Baby formula distribution rose by 26 percent compared with the previous year.

These are heartbreaking statistics but are in line with the number of poor children in the UK. In 2015, the Conservative government introduced the two-child benefit cap, which limited universal credit payments to the first two children in a family, condemning larger families to penury.

Despite the boasts of the Starmer-led Labour government at ending the two-child benefit cap—after originally attempting to maintain it—more than four million children nevertheless reside in households classed as living in poverty.

This translates to eight children in an average class of 30 living in poverty. Contrary to the myth spread that poverty is the result of worklessness, seven out of 10 children living in poverty have at least one parent or carer in work. Children from Black and Asian communities, in families with a

member who is disabled, or in single-parent households are disproportionately affected by poverty, according to the Child Poverty Action Group.

In the UK, poverty is determined as living in a household with an income of 60 percent or less of the national median—in the low to mid £20,000s depending on household size. By this measure, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 14.2 million people are in poverty in the UK (one in five): 7.9 million are working-age adults and 4.5 million are children.

The JRF also publishes a Minimum Income Standard, which finds that a couple with two children would actually need a combined income of £74,000 for a genuine, socially acceptable minimum standard of living. Two adults earning the “National Living Wage” make just 82 percent of that figure.

Charities warn that baby banks are increasingly acting as a safety net for poor families. Sophie Livingstone, chair of the Baby Bank Alliance, said: “Families are needing help for systemic reasons, not because there’s a one-off shock to their lives.”

Around 75 percent of families supported by baby banks report unsuitable or insecure housing. Housing costs are a particular driver of poverty, after the sell-off of 2.8 million council and social rented dwellings, and the virtual abandonment by governments of all political stripes of new council house building—despite the desperate shortage of affordable homes to buy or rent.

One mother in the study, who wished to remain anonymous, said her rent went up from £795 a month to more than £1,500 in the space of a few years.

This is confirmed by Livingstone, who is also chief executive of a network of baby banks in London known as Little Village, which affords support to families in substandard and squalid housing.

“We often have families needing us to replace all their children’s clothes because they’ve been rotted by mould,” she said.

The prevalence of damp housing, all too common in the

private rental sector, can result in significantly worse outcomes than damaged clothes.

In 2022, a coroner ruled that the tragic death from respiratory complications of two-year-old Awaab Ishak in Rochdale, Greater Manchester, two years before was directly attributable to prolonged exposure to mould spores in his family's rented flat.

Little Village, said Livingstone, "never has enough large nappy sizes." She suggested this reflects the circumstances many families face. Children living in cramped housing, including temporary accommodation, may take longer to potty train because of the impact of those conditions on their development. "My assumption is that it's linked to the fact that it is going to take a child longer to potty train if they're in that situation," she said.

The Baby Bank Alliance found that, along with high housing costs, factors behind increasing demand for their help were childcare costs and rising food and energy bills—the latter exacerbated by the ongoing wars in the Middle East and Ukraine. Baby formula has risen to between £12 and £20 per tub.

The demand for cots and beds is also increasing. "We never have enough beds," noted Livingstone. "It's really difficult when we come across a family sleeping on the floor in rodent-infested accommodation."

Outside London and the South East, North West England has the highest number of families supported by baby banks. For example, The Little Lighthouse baby bank in Wythenshawe, Greater Manchester, reported growing demand since it opened in 2019, particularly for baby formula.

Until he recently stood down and won the Makerfield by-election in a bid to replace Keir Starmer as Prime Minister, Greater Manchester was overseen for nine years from 2017 by Labour Party Mayor Andy Burnham.

Should he take over from Starmer, despite media attempts to portray Manchester as a booming city due to his efforts, there will be no alleviation of the poverty that blights the lives of millions of families.

The hype around the "King of the North" (a moniker for Burnham) and "Manchesterism" (his model for economic growth, based on public-private sector partnerships) cannot hide the fact that inequality and child poverty have increased.

What is booming is the property market and property values. Over the past decade, thanks to loans worth up to £1 billion from Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), 25 glittering skyscrapers (over 100m) have come to dominate Manchester's skyline, offering luxury apartments for sale or rent but hardly any affordable rentals.

When Burnham became mayor, he made great fanfare

about eliminating rough sleeping and homelessness. There were 5,915 homeless families in Greater Manchester in temporary accommodation in 2025, a figure which includes around 8,600 children.

GMCA's housing investment fund has lent around £800 million to companies linked to developer Daren Whitaker's Renaker property empire, which is the leading high-rise developer of luxury residential properties in Manchester.

The so-called miracle of regeneration based on public-private partnerships boosted the Renaker property empire's profits to £9.7 million in the year to October 2025, up from £6.3 million. This boon has not trickled down to working-class families, however, or alleviated child poverty.

A Sky News report last month noted how upmarket apartments had attracted a wealthier layer to the city centre and boosted profits but also created a growing chasm between the city centre and poverty-stricken districts just a few miles away.

Reporter Sam Coates explained that "One in three households here [Greater Manchester, with a population of around 3 million] are still among the most deprived in Britain." He noted that one "part of central Stockport remains the least well-off in Greater Manchester and sits within the top 1 percent most deprived in the entire country."

Victoria Bettany, Head of Programmes at the Centre for Local Economies, told Sky News, "The type of growth we've seen in Greater Manchester... in retail, in real estate, and in the health and social care sectors... is increasing the gross value added—but the profit they're making is generally not coming back out in worker wages.

"What we've seen in Greater Manchester for the last 10 years is... child poverty that's got worse. 37 percent of children and young people in Greater Manchester are in poverty—and seven out of ten of those are living in working households."



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