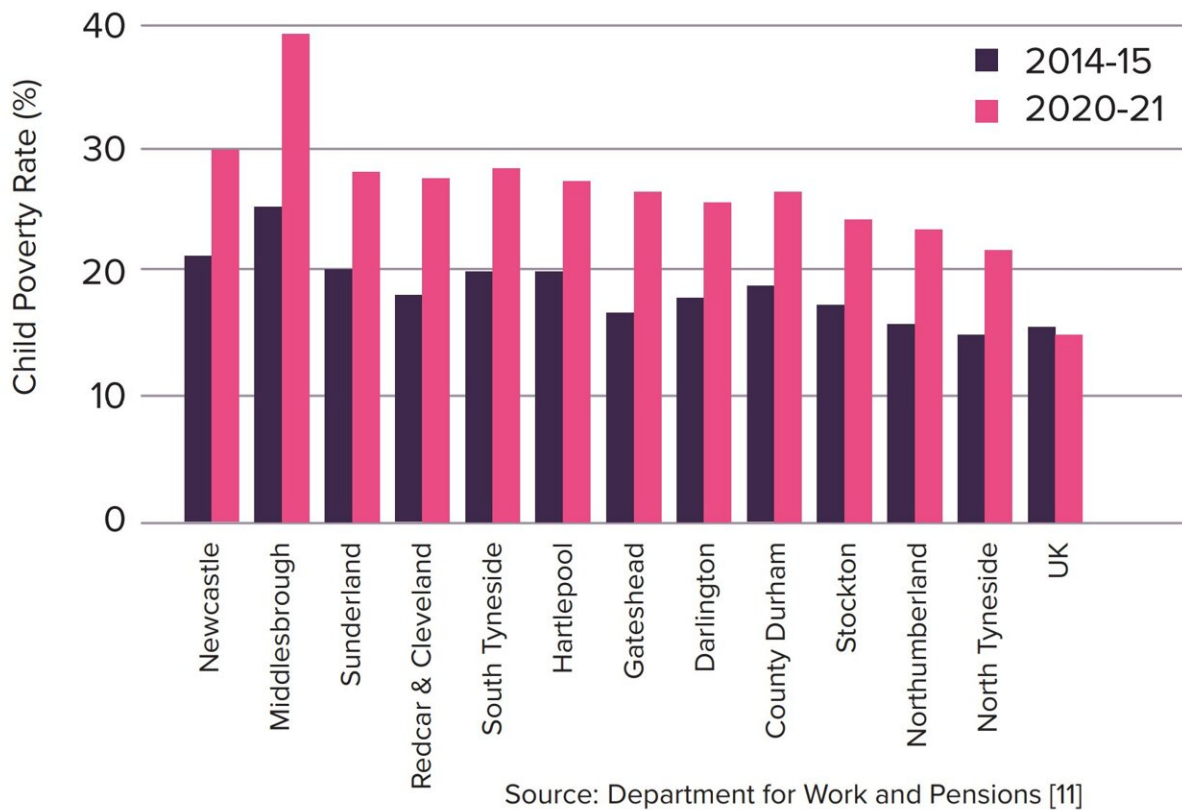


# UK report highlights link between child poverty and poor educational attainment

September 11 2023



Share of children living in absolute child poverty (before housing costs) in the UK and each North East local authority, 2014/15 and 2020/21. Credit: The Child of the North: Addressing Education and Health Inequity (2023).

University of York academics have contributed to a major report which

highlights how a failure to address childhood inequality is creating a "conveyor belt of disadvantage."

The [Child of the North: Addressing Education and Health Inequity report](#) highlights how children born into the poorest fifth of families in the UK are almost 13 times more likely to experience [poor health](#) and educational outcomes by the age of 17.

The report also highlights how northern schools are losing out on hundreds of pounds of funding per pupil compared to those in London.

## **Inequalities in funding**

Over the last 10 years, ongoing inequalities in funding have meant schools in the North of England have received less money from the National Funding Formula (NFF) on average than their southern counterparts.

The new analysis, by academics from the Child of the North group—a partnership between Health Equity North and N8 Research Partnership—on behalf of the Child of the North All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), found that on average pupils in London received 9.7% more funding than those in the North.

Schools in London received an average of £6,610 per pupil compared to £6,225, £5,956, and £5,938 in the North East, North West, and Yorkshire and the Humber, respectively.

The Child of the North APPG members and report authors are calling for an overhaul of the current school funding formula, so it takes into consideration attainment inequalities and the [health](#) burden borne by schools, to prevent these disparities continuing to increase.

## Research and development

The report includes a chapter on how universities can be research and development departments for [local authorities](#), an initiative championed by N8 Chair and University of York Vice-Chancellor, Professor Charlie Jeffery.

The report reveals how at present, universities—and the world-class research, and researchers they produce—are disconnected from the societies they live in and alongside.

There is an urgent need to build relationships and systems that can hardwire universities into education, health, housing, social care, policing, and other public service systems. Universities will then be able to more effectively inform the development of these public services, as well as responding to what these services need.

The Child of The North consortium, led by the N8+ (a partnership of the eight most research-intensive and associated universities in the North of England), has developed two initiatives that demonstrate how to connect universities to public service organizations, and the benefits this can produce.

These are the Born in Bradford Centre for Applied Education Research (CAER) and the Child Health Outcomes Research At Leeds (CHORAL) program.

The report recommends the methodology used by CAER and CHORAL should be rolled out across the North of England to bring public organizations together to improve outcomes for children and [young people](#).

In addition, Professor Jeffery is exploring how integrated care boards

across the North of England can make best advantage of the R&D work and create a model through which the UK's public services can benefit directly from our world-leading university system

## **Citizen science**

The report also highlights the SAMHE (Schools' Air quality Monitoring for Health and Education) research project being co-delivered by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) at York.

As part of the project, schools across the country are being asked to take part in a huge citizen science project to help monitor and evaluate the quality of the air in our classrooms.

It is hoped more than 1,500 schools will sign up and help provide important data to scientists studying the quality of classroom air.

It is expected to be the biggest study of air quality in schools anywhere in the world.

Sarah West, Centre Director and Senior Research Associate, at SEI said, "I was delighted to contribute a [case study](#) about the SAMHE project to this important report, as citizen science projects like this can be an important way of empowering schools to better understand their environment and take low cost actions to improve it, thereby reducing inequalities."

The report illustrates how public services in the North of England have come together to create innovative approaches that bring health and education together to deal with the poor outcomes faced by children and young people.

It includes examples of regional evidence-based collaborative initiatives

that can provide a blueprint for transformational change nationally.

## **Working collaboratively**

The report highlights groundbreaking projects in the North that showcase the power of working collaboratively and resource sharing to achieve transformational changes on pupils' educational achievement and lives.

This includes a first-of-its-kind connected database in Bradford that contains the primary and secondary care health records of citizens linked with education records, [social care](#), and policing data.

The tool allows scientists, working with policymakers, to undertake holistic data science that can shine a light onto critical social issues that span disparate services. This provides a proven methodology that can be scaled up across the North of England to inform a national approach.

In addition, there are also insights from young people and school leaders who give a first-hand perspective on how the issues highlighted in the report affect them.

## **Investing early**

One of the report's authors, Professor Kate Pickett from the University of York's Department of Health Sciences, said, "It's critical that the UK starts to invest in all children and close the gap between children in the North and rest of the country—investing early in children's educational well-being pays off for the whole society, so this is an issue of cost effectiveness as well as social justice."

Anne Longfield, CBE, Chair of the Commission on Young Lives, who

wrote the report Foreword, said, "The link between health inequalities and educational attainment is undeniable. This report provides evidence-based recommendations offering political parties a route map for action. The costs of inaction during childhood are far too high for individuals, families, and society. The time to reverse the tide of growing inequality is upon us."

The report suggests practical steps that should be taken both at a local level and makes clear recommendations on the actions that central Government should take to improve outcomes for children and young people growing up in the UK.

**More information:** The Child of the North: Addressing Education and Health Inequity. [www.healthequitynorth.co.uk/ap ... G-REPORT-SEPT-23.pdf](http://www.healthequitynorth.co.uk/ap...G-REPORT-SEPT-23.pdf)

Provided by University of York

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