



Save the Children

CHILD LOCK

A CHILD LOCK IN EDUCATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
TREATED AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT	3
TIME FOR A 'CHILD LOCK'	3
INTRODUCTION	5
HEARING FROM CHILDREN.....	6
HEARING FROM PARENTS	6
SCHOOL FUNDING	8
EARLY EDUCATION	11
COST OF EDUCATION	13
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)	15
FINANCIAL EDUCATION	17
CONCLUSION	18

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over recent years, it has too often been left up to parents, food and baby banks, charities, teachers, and community groups to ensure children have the things they need. The UK government needs to provide a robust safety net to ensure all children get the best start in life. It needs a strategy, investment, and a laser focus to ensure that this generation of children are getting their fair share.

The number of children in poverty is rising, and there are now 4.3 million kids growing up in poverty. That's nine children in each classroom, or enough children to fill the House of Commons almost 7,000 times. We are at risk of holding back these children – with profound consequences for our country. These consequences are personal for the child affected, and have far-reaching roots for the nation's economy, health, and wellbeing, limiting progress and prosperity for generations. A healthy country needs low poverty levels.

TREATED AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT

Over the past decades, we've seen the services children need come under mounting strain. Schools have seen their budgets slashed, making it harder for children to succeed in the classroom. Mental health services for children and young people have been dramatically reduced, with thousands of children waiting

years to be seen by mental health professionals.

Policies like the unfair two-child limit, plus years of freezes to benefits, have made it even harder for families to make ends meet, pushing people into poverty.

Children in some families have it even harder. If you're a child in a family headed up by someone from an ethnic minority, you're twice as likely to live in poverty because of policies like these.

TIME FOR A 'CHILD LOCK'

The UK government can act. With a new government, a new child poverty strategy, and a widely shared ambition to invest in children, this government has the potential to make a lasting difference to children's lives.

We can be a society that values its children, investing in their present and their future. It's time the UK government started making choices to bring that kind of society about.

We're calling for a 'child lock', a double lock that would benefit all children by ensuring that children's social security payments – like Universal Credit and Child Benefit – increase by whichever is higher out of earnings or inflation.

But we do not believe that this principle of additional security for teachers, parents, and the services that work with them have to be limited to the social security system. The UK government should also look in investment in housing, mental health services, and – as we discuss in this paper – in the education system in England.

Falling pupil numbers present an opportunity for the Department for Education to reconsider education funding in England, and to ensure that funding for the most disadvantaged children is

protected, from the early years and beyond. The government should also seek to address the high costs encountered by many families in accessing education, consider the needs of children with SEND, and seek to make changes to the curriculum to improve financial education.

This paper incorporates the viewpoints and quotations from parents and children alongside expertise of those working in the education sector.



INTRODUCTION

The concept of a child lock in the social security system is quite simple: like the pensions triple lock, a 'child lock' would see benefits rise in line with inflation or growth, whichever is higher. (Though we see the child lock as a 'double', rather than 'triple', lock – excluding the 2.5%.)

While this lock has an obvious parallel within the social security system, we do not believe that the idea must be confined to the Department for Work and Pensions.

Instead, this concept could be replicated across government, to seek to redress some of the imbalances exposed in research published by the Children's Commissioner and the IFS¹, and by the Intergenerational Foundation², showing that spending on children has fallen across multiple categories, when compared to spending on pensioners.

Save the Children believes that every child deserves access to education. Years of funding cuts across education has left schools in need of an urgent lifeline. The pandemic and cost-of-living crisis have deepened that need, and without adequate spending, children living in poverty will be the worst affected by further inaction. Securing children's futures is good for all of

us and should be a priority for any government.

Investment in the education of our children is a solid investment in our future and yet, spending in education is below adequate, and has been for over a decade. This has long-term consequences for economic growth and risks even more children being left behind and failing to reach their full potential. It is only with investment that the sector can begin to rebuild and address the challenges that lie ahead.

“ Finances are in the front on my mind all the time, even when I'm in school. ”
Save the Children youth panel member

By protecting spending on education and introducing a child lock, the government could begin to turn the tide on the widening attainment gap, rising absenteeism and the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention³.

In this paper, we draw on evidence from parent and youth panels, providing a firsthand account of the challenges faced by low-income families and the potential benefits of a more secure education system.

The themes we chose to focus on in this paper: school funding, SEND, financial

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<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2018/06/Public-Spending-on-Children-in-England-CCO-JUNE-2018.pdf>

² Melissa Bui, 'Age Bias: How government spending is skewed against the young', Intergenerational Foundation, 2022.

³Executive Summary - Education Policy Institute (epi.org.uk). What is happening to school funding and costs in England? | Institute for Fiscal Studies (ifs.org.uk). Teacher recruitment: DfE slashes secondary targets (schoolsweek.co.uk). committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/13813/pdf/

education, early education, and the cost of the school day, emerged as a result of conversations with these parents and young people.

HEARING FROM CHILDREN

We know that children should be heard on policy issues that affect their lives. Living in poverty can be isolating for children, and can limit their lives and futures, as well as their ability to participate in discussions about them. Through **focus groups and our youth panel**, we spoke to **45 young people**, 22 through one-off focus groups, and 23 through school-based panel sessions that met for 5 months during the beginning of 2024.

Children know that poverty makes their lives smaller, and they feel this as embarrassment, worry, and feelings of insecurity around their identity. Young people feel limited because of poverty and a shared frustration that they can't be who they want to be because they don't have the financial resources to explore their interests and talents. Young people we spoke to were keen to talk about the relationship they saw between poverty and mental health, the unfairness they saw in the housing system, and the need for high-quality education, as they have a hope for the future and aspirations to move out of poverty. The UK government have a duty to match these aspirations, restore their hope, and lock in a better safety net for all children.

“ Young people are being affected hugely by financial worries and I think it's time for politicians to start to listen to young people's voices as it is affecting our education. ”

Youth panel member

Of the young people we spoke to as part of the **regular panel**, the age range was 12-16, with 13 girls and 10 boys. The total number with care experience was five (3 long-term and 2 short-term). We were aware of three young carers (looking after disabled siblings and parents) as well as two young people who had significant responsibility for younger siblings due to their parent's work commitments. There were four young people of colour across both settings. All were based in South-East England.

Of the young people we spoke to during the **one-off focus groups**, 11% had a disability, two-thirds of participants were people of colour, and two-thirds were female. These young people were based across England.

HEARING FROM PARENTS

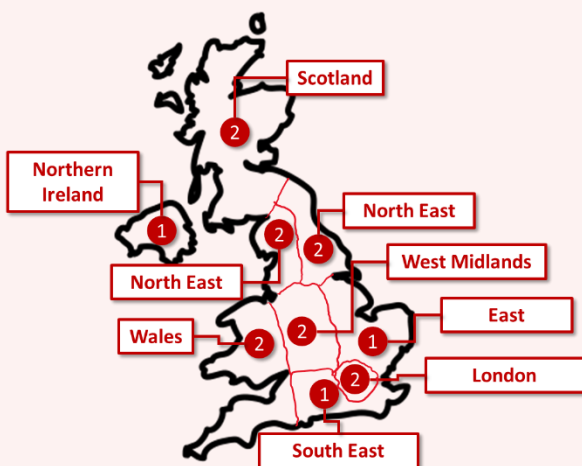
As part of the child lock campaign, we spoke to 31 parents – 16 through one-off focus groups, and 15 through a long-term panel that has met regularly since the beginning of 2024.

To recruit for the panel, we reached out to Save the Children staff, parent networks within Save the Children, partner organisations, and external organisations in the sector from all four nations. Materials included a blurb, leaflets, posters, a role profile, and a presentation for organisations

to fully understand the project and what it would involve. We met parents one-on-one to present them with an overview of the project, to provide an opportunity to discuss it, and to get a sense of the personal circumstances of each parent and family.

The aim for the Parent Panel was to incorporate a diversity of experiences into this work. Going wide with recruitment allowed us to reach and select parents with different experiences.

Geographical spread:



Different family sizes:

Families ranged from **1-5 children**

Ethnicity:

2 parents were people of colour

Migration:

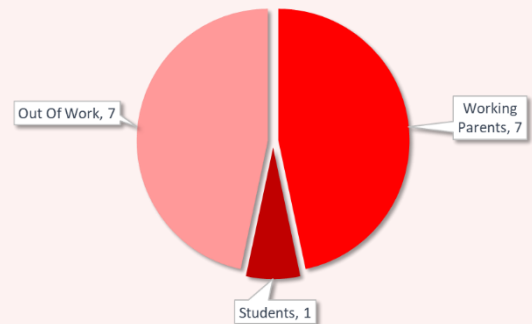
2 parents were first-generation migrants

Disability:

There were **8 parents** with at least one child with a disability.

Two parents have a disability themselves.

Working & non-working

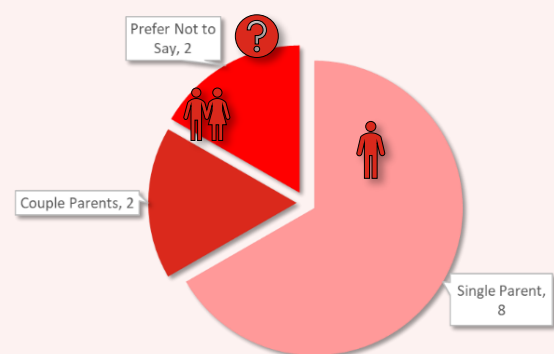


Different ages

 Parents: 20-55 years old

 Children: 1-25 years old

Single and couple parents:



SCHOOL FUNDING

The education sector is in crisis. Since 2009/10, insufficient funding for schools has driven teachers and teaching assistants to leave the profession, contributed to the widening attainment gap for pupils, created a crisis in special educational needs and disabilities provision, and is the driving force for the unprecedented squeeze on school resources. A failure by UK government to adequately fund schools following the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis will haunt a generation of children, with an estimated damage to the economy of £31.4bn at today's prices⁴.

The education crisis is compounded further by severe cuts to money that flows towards families and children, as discussed above. The weakening of the social security safety net by years of benefits freezes, plus the two-child-limit and the benefit cap, has disproportionately impacted children. Spending on children's and youth services that offer early intervention and support has been decimated, with schools often left to pick up the pieces. This is evident in the classroom as school staff increasingly report tired and hungry pupils who struggle to learn.⁵ Schools are responding by providing foodbanks, with over 4,000 schools supporting families in this way.⁶

If this trajectory continues, many schools will reach breaking point as they face a tidal wave

of challenges driven by poverty and unmet needs.

School funding has not kept pace with rising costs and levels of inflation. Education spending fell as a share of national income, from 5.6% in 2010–11 down to 4.4% in 2022–23.⁷ Because of rising pupil numbers, funding per pupil has fallen even faster: between 2009–2010 and 2019–20, school spending per pupil fell by 9% in real terms, and only by 2024 did spending reach the same level as it was in 2009–10, despite an increase of 15% in pupil numbers, leaving many schools with deficit budgets.⁸ Due to cost rises including teachers' pay and increases to the national living wage, schools need an additional £700m in the 2024–25 budget just to bring their purchasing power back to last year's – already low – levels. If the Department for Education wished to go further, and attempt to compensate for the cuts since 2010, this would require an additional £3.2bn in funding.⁹

This crisis is amplified by single-year funding settlements. Being unable to plan ahead has added to the recruitment and retention crisis across the sector, with children in the most deprived areas disproportionately impacted.

⁴ [A-generation-at-risk-rebalancing-education-in-the-post-pandemic-era.pdf \(nuffieldfoundation.org\)](#)

⁵ ['There is only so much we can do' - school staff in England | CPAG](#)

⁶ [Baker Feeding Hungry Families Food Banks in Schools in England.pdf \(bristol.ac.uk\)](#)

⁷ [Annual report on education spending in England: 2023 | Institute for Fiscal Studies \(ifs.org.uk\)](#)

⁸ [The latest picture on school funding and costs in England | Institute for Fiscal Studies \(ifs.org.uk\)](#)

⁹ [The latest picture on school funding and costs in England | Institute for Fiscal Studies \(ifs.org.uk\)](#)

In the coming years, schools will face even more uncertainty around funding due to the UK's falling birthrate and the subsequent drop in pupil numbers, as this figure is used to determine the basic entitlement allocation.¹⁰ Despite the decrease in pupil numbers, school budgets will remain high as staffing, energy bills and day-to-day running costs remain unchanged.¹¹ Additionally, despite the rising need for support following the pandemic and the current cost-of-living crisis, the Pupil Premium has fallen in real terms, and the 2024-25 rate has been set by the Department of Education at less than a 2% increase.¹² This will lead to a continued widening of the attainment gap with significant long-term consequences for the economy due to lost earnings.¹³

“ It isn't children's fault that they are in poverty... for them to have a bright future they need a good education, but they can't take the blame for not having enough money. ”
Save the Children youth panel member

Children living in poverty stand to gain the most from adequate investment in education. Insufficient education budgets, coupled with

reduced spending in children's support services, have left many schools filling the gap in the welfare needs of their pupils. Between 2010 and 2021, the most deprived secondary schools saw real-terms cuts of 12% compared with 5% for the least deprived.¹⁴

This has placed an additional strain on teaching time and staff reserves, with many using the Household Support Fund (HSF) to provide additional support for an ever-growing number of children in need.¹⁵ This is not appropriate: the HSF was intended as an emergency payment available for those struggling to meet their essential needs – funding is short-term, and demand for HSF exceeds supply.¹⁶ The HSF is not a sustainable funding stream for schools to support their most vulnerable pupils, and cannot be relied on to fill the obvious funding gaps in education.

The government should lock in school funding to 2024/25 figures at current levels for the next five years and reinvest the funds into the deprivation factor of the National Funding Formula. This would mean the deprivation share of funding would increase by £1bn by 2030.

¹⁰ [National pupil projections. Reporting year 2023 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

¹¹ [School-funding-model-Effect-of-falling-rolls-FINAL-EMBARGO.pdf \(epi.org.uk\)](#)

¹² [Pupil premium: overview – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

¹³ [Executive Summary – Education Policy Institute \(epi.org.uk\); A-generation-at-risk-rebalancing-education-in-the-post-pandemic-era.pdf \(nuffieldfoundation.org\)](#)

¹⁴ [Annual report on education spending in England: 2023 | Institute for Fiscal Studies \(ifs.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁵ [ASCL – ASCL President condemns government for 'deplorable' state of children's support services](#)

¹⁶ [Get help with the cost of living from your local council – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Deprivation funding with reinvestment policy (£billions)



The government should urgently invest in education by:

- **uplifting core and high needs** funding in real terms and ensure additional funding is available to schools to meet pay uplifts.
- setting out a plan and timeline, in consultation with the education sector, to urgently agree a **multi-year settlement that enables school leaders to plan** ahead and begin to address the recruitment and retention crisis.
- committing to **raising the pupil premium each year** in line with inflation or earnings, whichever is higher.
- **locking future school funding levels to 2024/25 figures**, despite falling pupil numbers, for a period of five years, and reinvest the funds into the deprivation factor of the National Funding Formula.

EARLY EDUCATION

Children need strong, secure foundations. When this is eroded by poverty, the consequences can be far-reaching and long-lasting. But when government provide adequate investment, the outcome can be transformational.¹⁷ Parents are children's first educators and can provide the solid foundation for learning at school. For children growing up amidst the stress and insecurity of poverty, this foundation can be harder to build, and evidence shows that the attainment gap begins before children even get to school and continues to widen as pupils get older.

For those children born during the Covid-19 pandemic and those navigating early education during the same period, the impact is even more pronounced. According to figures from the Department for Education between January 2020 to January 2021, take-up of the early education entitlement for disadvantaged two-year-olds decreased seven percentage points from 69% to 62%.¹⁸ Additionally, four- and five-year-olds who missed a large portion of their reception year were less likely to reach their developmental milestones in 2021 compared to children in 2019.¹⁹

In 2022/23, 72% of non-FSM eligible children achieved a good level of development at the end of the early years foundation stage, compared to 52% of FSM-eligible children.²⁰

Research from Kindred² has revealed a growing lack of school readiness, with 50% of reception teachers stating the situation was worse in 2023 than the previous year, and 93% saying their school is increasing or reallocating resources to manage the issue.²¹

This redirection will bear heavily upon children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Early education represents a 13% return on investment: for every £1 spent on early education, £7 would have to be spent to have the same impact in adolescence.²² Despite this, spending in early education has remained low. In 2024-25 the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) will see providers awarded up to £353 per eligible child compared to £1,455 for primary school pupils. The Early Years National Funding Formula core funding rate for disadvantage has fallen from 60% in 2017-18 to 38% in 2023-24.²³ Children entitled to the EYPP face severe long-lasting developmental disadvantages compared to their wealthier peers. By increasing the EYPP rate to the primary school rate, at an additional cost of £128m²⁴, the government could begin to reduce the pre-school attainment gap ensuring fewer children are behind when they start school.

¹⁷ [The short- and medium-term impacts of Sure Start | Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)

¹⁸ [Implications of COVID on Early Childhood Learning and Care \(nuffieldfoundation.org\)](#)

¹⁹ [The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's... | EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](#)

²⁰ [Closing-the-attainment-gap.pdf \(suttontrust.com\)](#)

²¹ [School Readiness Survey | Projects | Kindred² \(kindredsquared.org.uk\)](#)

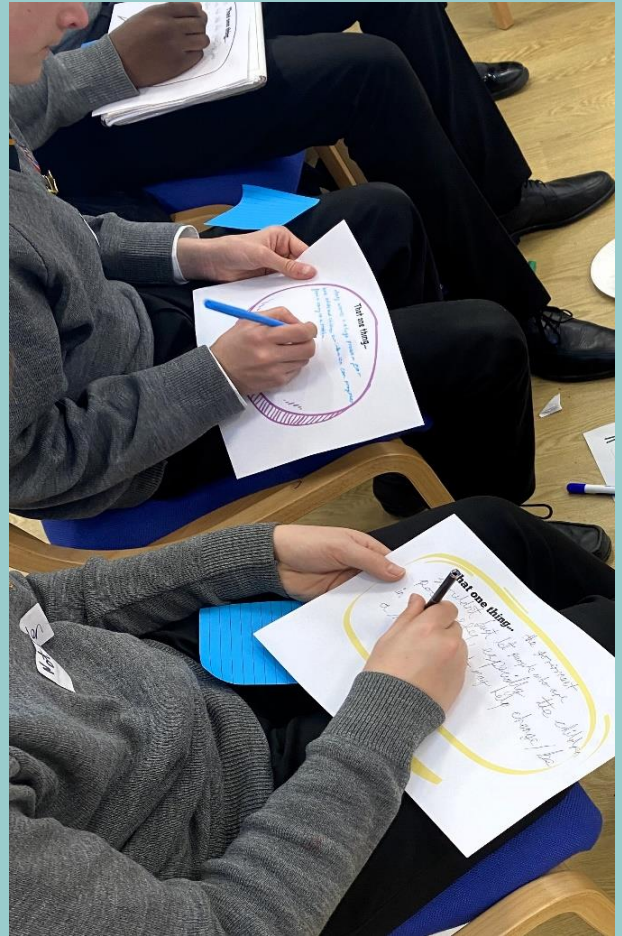
²² [A-Fair-Start---World-Class-Global-Learnings-For-England-On-Early-Years-Policy.pdf \(suttontrust.com\)](#)

²³ [Inequality-in-early-years-education.pdf \(suttontrust.com\)](#)

²⁴ From modelling completed by Public First

The UK government must ensure all children get the best possible start in life and arrive at school ready to learn by:

- **matching the rate of Early Years Pupil Premium** (EYPP) to the primary school rate.
- **locking in eligibility for pupil premium** throughout the primary years, regardless of their parents' income, once a child qualifies for EYPP.



COST OF EDUCATION

Not all children have the same experience at school. Children growing up in poverty often struggle to access education in the same way as their better-off peers. As families struggle to meet their basic needs, the financial resources available for education are limited or simply not available at all. When children face barriers to their education, this impacts upon their ability to participate, learn, and enjoy a sense of belonging. This came through strongly from our work with young people.

“ The school is supportive in loads of ways, like revision books for exams, but look [*shows interviewer torn jumper*]. I get pulled up on this all the time because it's torn and they say it needs replacing, but I know I can't ask my mum because it's so expensive. Like I've got 5 months left at school, so why should she buy a new jumper. But it's embarrassing being told off all the time in front of your friends. ”
Save the Children youth panel member

“ I think the amount of money that they get for a free school meal is not enough. ”
Save the Children parent panel member, mother of 3, London

“ The school does so much to help me. Like yesterday when things got bad, they paid for a taxi for me to get home, but I wish some teachers could be more lenient with equipment, because I don't always have the right stuff. If I lose things I can't replace them straight away and then I get into trouble. ”
Save the Children youth panel member

Free school meals are a lifeline for families on low incomes and help ensure children get the nutritious food they need to grow and learn, as well as relieving pressures on stretched family budgets. As child hunger continues to rise in the UK, the £7,400 per year threshold for free school meals is much too low, denying approximately 900,000 children living in poverty in England the benefits of free school meals.²⁵ Despite other social security benefits increasing in line with inflation, the government have failed to increase the eligibility threshold since 2018, making it the most restrictive of all the devolved nations²⁶. Furthermore, the parents and young people we spoke to revealed that the FSM allowance was inadequate to cover the cost of a hot nutritious meal in secondary school, while suppliers are reporting difficulties in covering their costs with the allocated rate across the primary and secondary sector.²⁷

²⁵ [Destitution in the UK 2023 | Joseph Rowntree Foundation \(jrf.org.uk\)](#) and [Free school meals: third of kids in poverty miss out | CPAG](#)

²⁶ [The policy menu for school lunches: options and trade-offs in expanding free school meals in England | Institute for Fiscal Studies \(ifs.org.uk\)](#)

²⁷ [The policy menu for school lunches: options and trade-offs in expanding free school meals in England \(ifs.org.uk\)](#)

Research from the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) estimates that, per year, it costs families £864.87 to send a child to primary school and £1,755.97 to secondary school. School uniforms are one of the most expensive elements of education at an estimated annual cost of £352.86 for a primary school child and £481.77 for a post-primary child.²⁸ Despite new laws meant to protect parents from unnecessary school uniform costs, the children and parents we spoke to consistently reported the cost of uniforms as a barrier to education.²⁹

“One of my daughters, year 11, lost her blazer, so she had detention because she wasn’t wearing it. She decided not to tell me that she lost it on the bus. I asked her, ‘why, why are you not wearing your blazer?’ She said, ‘mum, I didn’t tell you, because it costs £40, and I didn’t want to tell you’.

Parent of 5, North East England

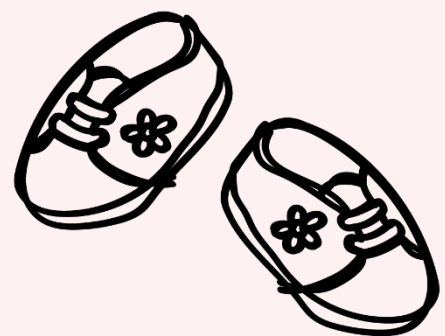
Extra-curricular activities provide long-lasting benefits for both social and emotional development and can help improve attendance and attainment. But they often come with a cost that makes them inaccessible for children living in poverty and provision varies from school to school, making quality and access unequal across the country.³⁰

Children living in poverty should not be denied the long-lasting benefits provided by extra-curricular activities. Education should be equitable and inclusive but under current

funding settlements the government are failing to deliver that for hundreds of thousands of children.

The UK government must intervene to:

- ensure **schools have the funding they need to deliver FSM** and offer affordable meals to all children. They should annually increase the free school meal rate in line with inflation and expand free school meals to all children in families receiving Universal Credit.
- establish a plan to enable **auto-enrolment for FSM**.
- protect families from expensive school uniforms by **strengthening the school uniform legislation** with a price cap, and lock in protections for low-income families by including a national school uniform grant.



²⁸ CPAG, [School Sums What does going to school really cost families? May 2023](#)
[School sums what does going to school really cost families.pdf \(cpag.org.uk\)](#)

²⁹ [CBP-8414.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#)

³⁰ [EC-and-outcomes-final-1.pdf \(epi.org.uk\)](#)

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

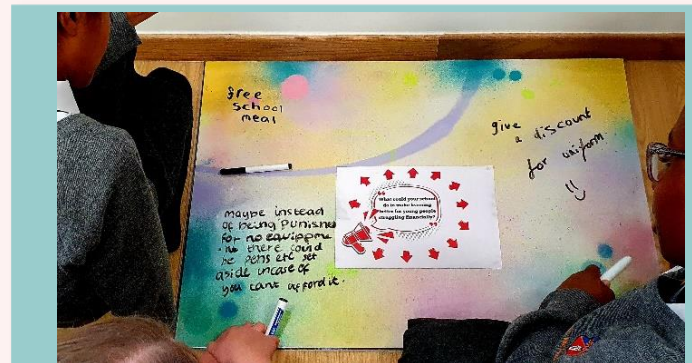
The UK government have underfunded special educational needs and disability education for years, despite a growing number of children requiring Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) support. Evidence from school leaders, parents and young people reveals the sector has reached crisis point with rising levels of pupils waiting for Educational and Health Care Plans.³¹ Thousands of children are bearing the brunt of underfunded high-needs budgets as their needs cannot be met under the current funding settlement. Instead of an inclusive education, many are being excluded.

“ Each child should be assessed individually for [potential] learning support or needs - there are so many children that want to learn, and can learn, but there are so many reasons why they can't - they just haven't got the support they need. Each child should be assessed and identified for what they need, and help they need. ”

*Save the Children parent panel member, mother of 1,
South East England*

“ [At] my son's school, if your child has any SEN they told their parents that, if a child's got autism, they can't attend the extracurricular activities unless a parent pays for an extra member of staff to be in there with them. So that was him excluded which is outrageous. ”
Save the Children parent panel member, mother of 3, London

For many of the children and parents we spoke to, the double whammy of poverty and SEND is having a devastating impact. This is played out in higher persistent absence rates, growing waiting lists for mental health support and a breakdown in the relationship between families and schools.³²



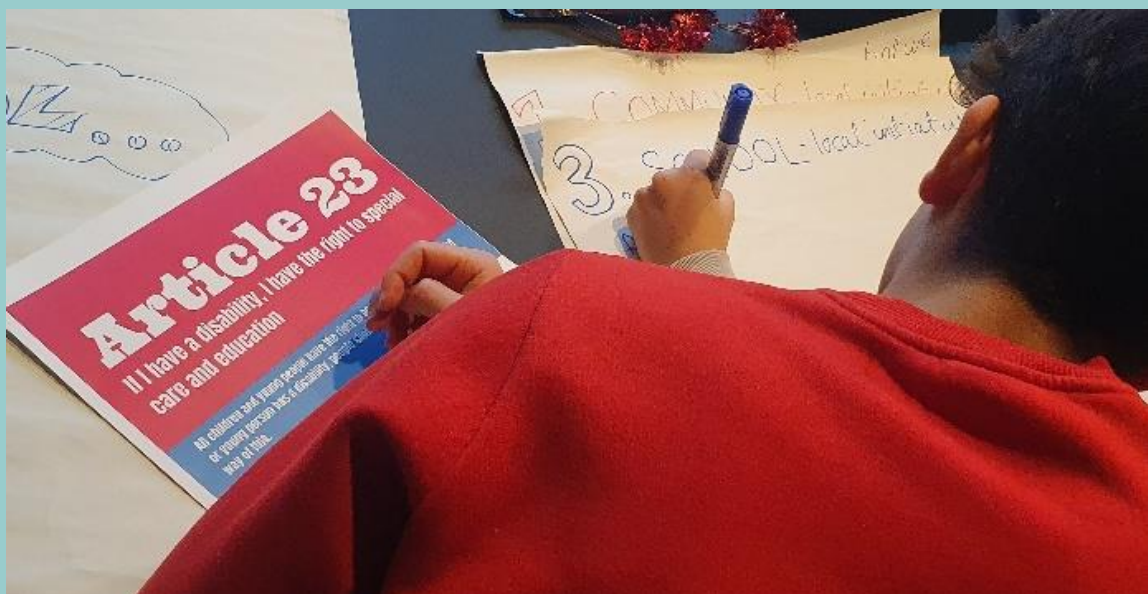
³¹ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/blog/new-statistics-on-education-health-and-care-plans-ehcp-for-children-with-special-educational-needs/>

³² [Pupil attendance in schools, Week 16 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-](#)

[statistics.service.gov.uk\), www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk, and CSJ- Persistent and Severe Absence-1.pdf \(centreforsocialjustice.org.uk\)](#)

The UK government must urgently address the SEND crisis by:

- implementing the **recommendations from National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)** to ensure adequate funding is made available for high-needs delivery and to tackle the backlog of children waiting for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- increasing spending on **Mental Health Support Teams to reach 100% of pupils** to enable more schools to meet the needs of their pupils.
- supporting families struggling with attendance by introducing a **mental health and wellbeing attendance code**.
- supporting schools struggling with attendance by providing **funding for education welfare officers** to offer direct support to pupils and families.



FINANCIAL EDUCATION

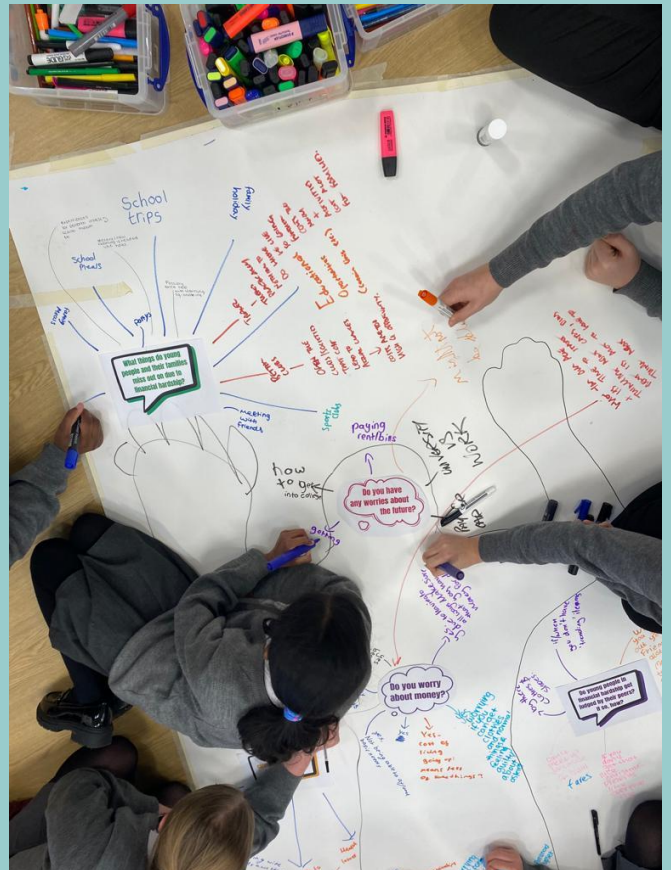
Financial education is a vital life skill that helps prepare young people for the future. Despite being part of the national curriculum, it has been suggested that the focus in schools remains inadequate, leaving many young people without the knowledge required for financial maturity.³³ Young people in our focus groups and panels showed a mixed level of knowledge about finances, but a keen desire to understand more. Young people felt they were not taught enough about the finances of things like student loans and apprenticeships, and expressed anxiety about entering adulthood and not feeling financially confident. Uncertainty about their children's preparedness for the world of work was a source of anxiety for our parent panels, too.

“ We need to know about budgeting, taxes, how to apply for jobs and university, how to properly structure a personal statement, job interviews. ”

Save the Children youth panel member

The UK government should ensure that, by the time they leave school, every child is equipped with the skills they need for financial maturity by:

- incorporating financial education modules into teacher training to improve the delivery of the topic within schools. These modules should be focused on practical education with real-world examples that are relevant to young people – on issues like student finance.



³³ Financial education in schools - House of Lords Library (parliament.uk) and Lost but not forgotten: the reality of

severe absence in schools post-lockdown
(centreforsocialjustice.org.uk)

CONCLUSION

Poverty is holding children back and acts as a barrier to accessing education. State spending on children has not been protected and between 2010 and 2020 fell by an estimated 17%.⁴⁴ The welfare state was designed to support families 'from the cradle to the grave', but the focus has moved away from the cradle and children living in poverty are disproportionately impacted.

Rising child poverty is just one aspect that is impacting children's education. Poor funding has left the education system in crisis, and we need to secure children's futures by investing in education, addressing the crisis in SEND, securing early years funding, reducing the cost of the school day, and providing better financial education for children.

The UK government must not spend in one area and then take away from another – what children need is long-term investment across the support services and systems they access. They need a social security system that protects them, and an education sector that is fully-funded, and allows them to thrive.

WE RECOMMEND:

- 1** Locking children's benefits so they rise each year in line with inflation or earnings, whichever is higher.
- 2** Scrapping the two-child limit and the benefit cap.
- 3** Locking in current levels of education funding, and reinvesting that money into the deprivation factor.
- 4** Matching the rate of the Early Years Pupil Premium to the primary school rate.
- 5** Seeking to reduce the cost of education by extending FSM eligibility to all children in Universal Credit households, and strengthening uniform legislation.
- 6** Addressing the SEND crisis by implementing the NAHT's recommendations, increasing spending on mental health support teams, and supporting schools and families with attendance.