The evidence below is submitted by [Alder Hey Children’s Charity](https://www.alderheycharity.org/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAp4O8BhAkEiwAqv2UqFKsef9hbpV-Gu5jgGMxKhgYR5bUu-SdmEXnRFhd41WFveuax_Y1bBoCkUcQAvD_BwE) (Registered [Charity Number 1160661](https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5055078)) to the attention of the Child Poverty Taskforce.

For any questions or additional information and supporting data - please email steve.leonard@alderhey.nhs.uk and alderhey@bbpartners.co.uk

Additionally, the Charity is always open and willing to provide oral evidence regarding any upcoming inquiries and areas of work of the Taskforce.

With best wishes,

Fiona Ashcroft

Alder Hey Children’s Charity Chief Executive

**The Case for Urgent Action on Child Poverty and Health Inequalities**

Child poverty in the UK has reached record levels, affecting 4.3 million children, with an alarming tripling of extreme poverty cases between 2019 and 2022.

These socioeconomic factors directly drive poor health outcomes, as evidenced by:

* UK child mortality rates are worse than 60% of developed nations, with 3,743 child deaths in the year ending March 2023 (31.8 per 100,000 children).
* A 70% higher risk of chronic conditions, such as asthma, among children living in poverty.
* Rising cases of obesity, with 20% of five-year-olds overweight, disproportionately affecting those in deprived areas.
* Poverty also exacerbates barriers to healthcare access, from financial costs of appointments to delayed interventions. To break this cycle, child poverty must be tackled as a cornerstone of all decisions taken by this Government and this Taskforce.

**Key Recommendations from Alder Hey Children**

1. Make Children and Young People a National Priority

* Allocate fair resources: Although children represent 25% of the population, they receive only 11% of NHS funding. Equitable budget allocation is crucial to address disparities.
* Address root causes: Implement a national child poverty strategy that integrates health, education, housing, and social care to tackle inequality.

2. Invest in Prevention to Mitigate Health Inequalities

* Focus on economic interventions: Eliminating policies like the two-child benefit cap could significantly reduce infant deaths and improve overall child health.
* Expand community-based support: Universal Family Hubs and health visitor programmes must be restored to provide early, preventive care.
* Tackle obesity: Targeted initiatives are essential to reverse rising obesity rates, which disproportionately affect low-income families.

3. Strengthen Community Care Models

* Build paediatric-appropriate infrastructure: Expand community services like Alder Hey’s Family Wellbeing Hub to provide holistic care closer to home.
* Digital innovation: Scale-proven programmes like Little Hearts at Home, which reduce hospital stays and improve health outcomes through remote monitoring.
* Reduce waiting times: Mandate shorter wait times for paediatric surgeries, speech therapy, and mental health services to mitigate lifelong consequences.

4. Invest in Data-Driven, Technological Solutions

* Digitise children’s health records: Modernising the Red Book and integrating data systems will ensure continuity of care and better-targeted interventions.
* Address digital inequality: Ensure equitable access to digital health services for families in deprived areas.

5. Bolster the Paediatric Workforce

* Expand training and recruitment: Reverse reductions in health visitors and school nurses to strengthen preventive care.
* Prioritise paediatric expertise: Balance workforce planning to address disproportionate increases in adult nursing positions over child-focused roles.

**Why This Matters**

Childhood is a critical window for intervention. Addressing child poverty and health disparities not only prevents lifelong health issues but also creates a healthier, more equitable society. Public health inequalities already cost £39 billion annually, with childhood mental health challenges alone accounting for £18.8 billion. Tackling these systemic issues is both a moral imperative and an economic necessity.

By embedding children at the centre of the 10-Year Health Plan, the government has a unique opportunity to transform outcomes for millions of children and create a legacy of health equity.