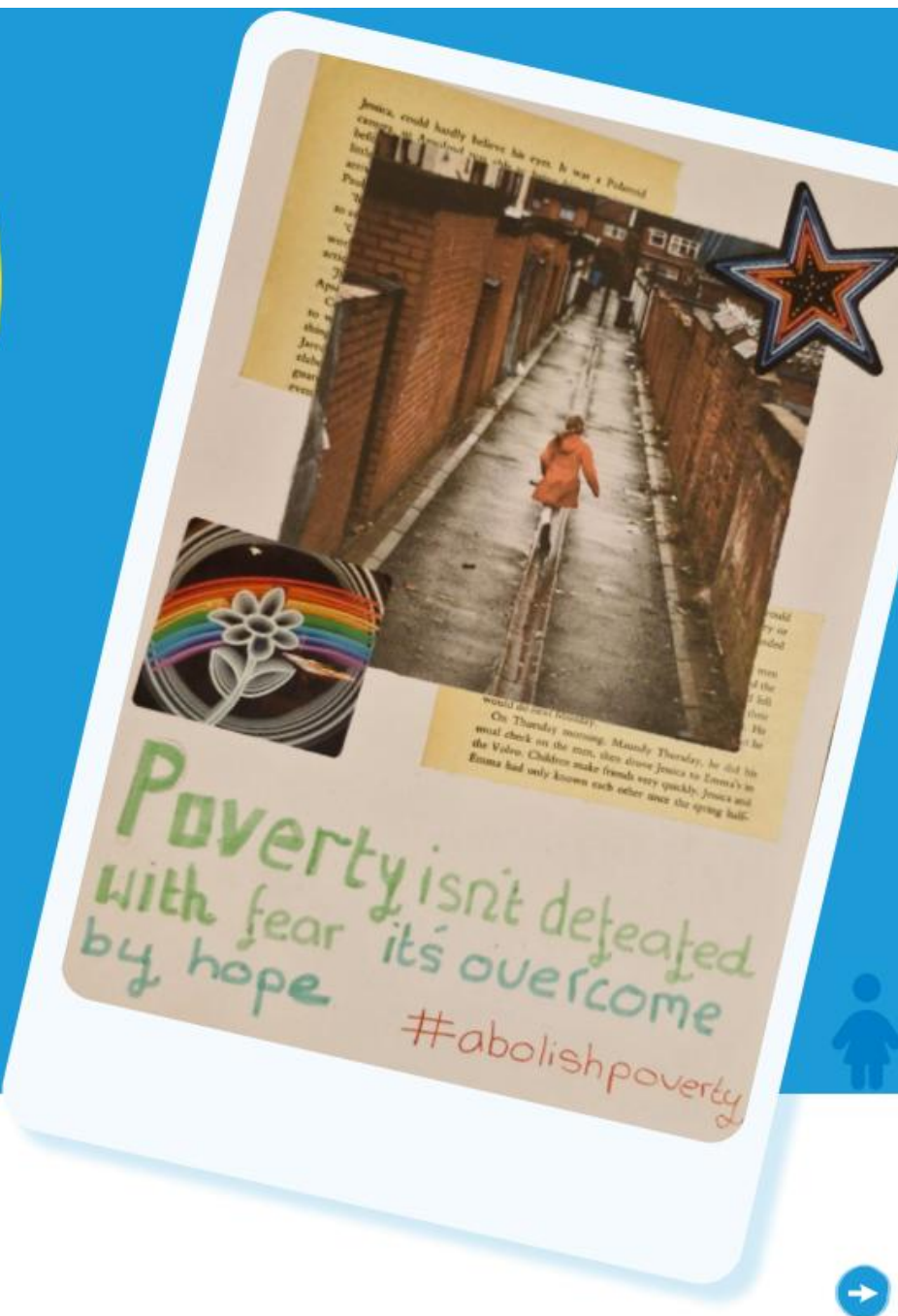


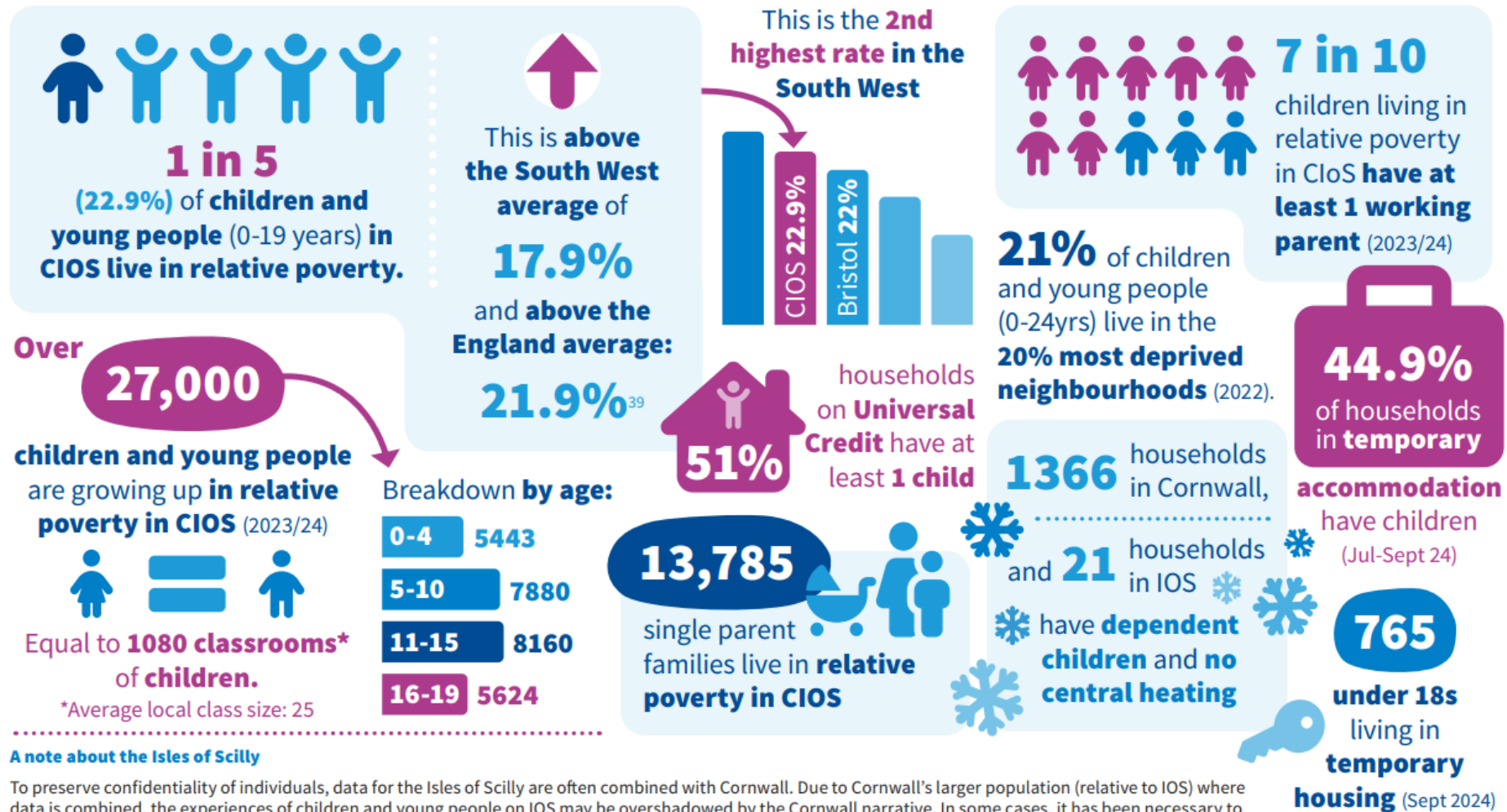
Growing up in poverty

The voices of babies, children and young people from Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

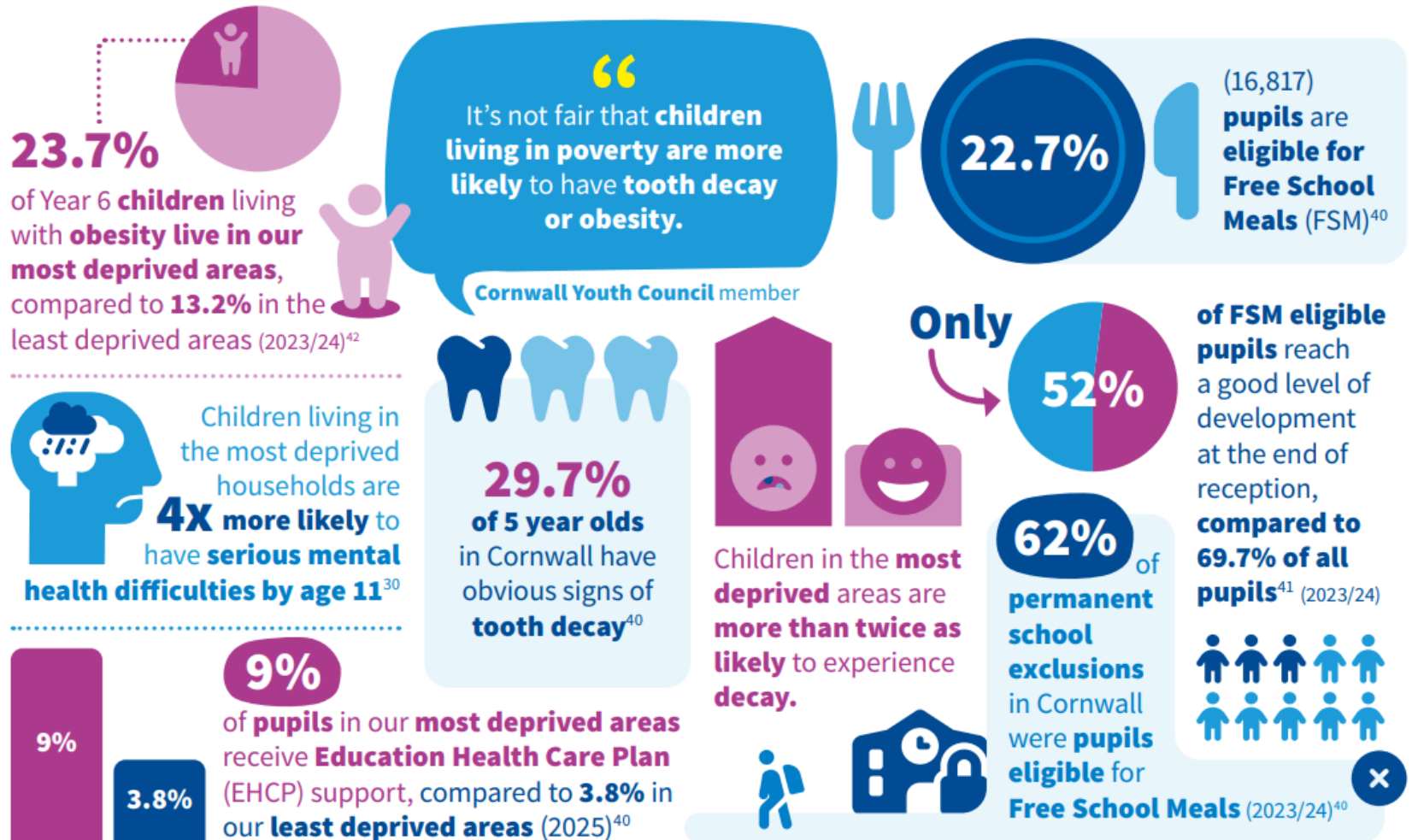
Director of Public Health Report 2025/2026 in partnership with the Directors of Children's Services for Cornwall Council and The Council of the Isles of Scilly.



Child poverty in numbers | Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (CIOS)



Child poverty in numbers | Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (CIOS)



We partnered with



local VCSE
organisations

We held



engagement events
with **Cornwall Youth
Council** members



195 parents and carers
took part in creative sessions

868



babies, children and young people shared
their voices through creative sessions

82

practitioners
told us what
they are seeing
through our
online survey



We
received

21

pieces of
artwork from
schools.



12

RESPECT FOR
CHILDREN'S VIEWS

Over to our babies, children and young people

We cannot understand or address the impact of child poverty unless we involve babies, children and young people with direct experience of poverty.

To explore poverty better, we talked with children, young people and their families in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Supported by an array of local voluntary and community organisations and embracing a creative approach, we are able to share insights into our residents' experience of poverty. This report includes a selection of the powerful contributions. We invite you to explore all of the contributions in our [online gallery](#). These experiences and thoughts come from the heart of our communities...

Article 12

"All children have the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously."



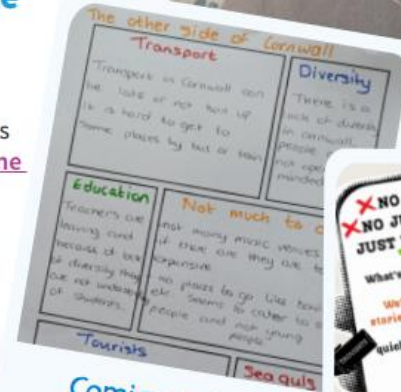
Podcasting



Postcards and drawing



Circus skills



Comics and zines



Barnaby Chatbot



Puppetry and film



Play and poetry



Baby observations



Collaging

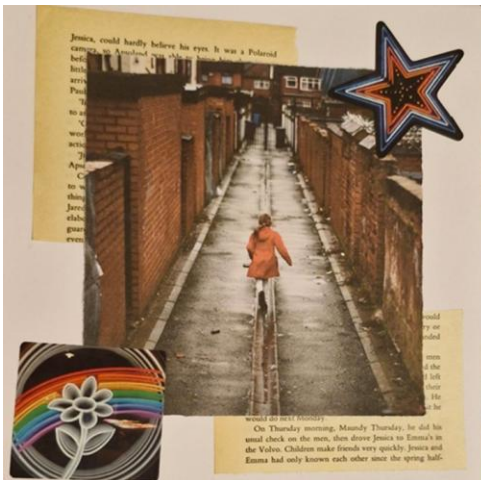
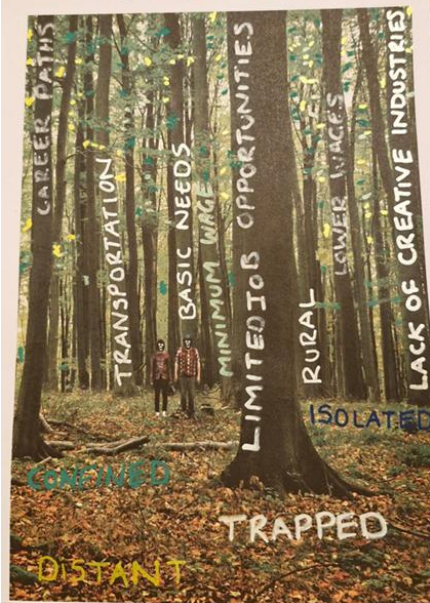


Physical storytelling

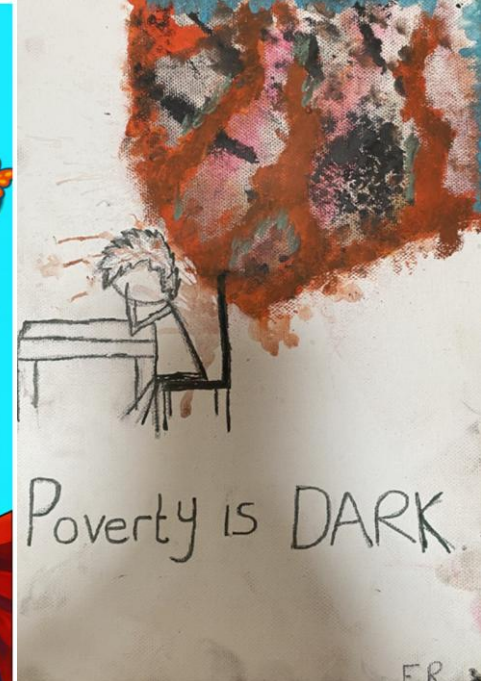


Conversations through cooking

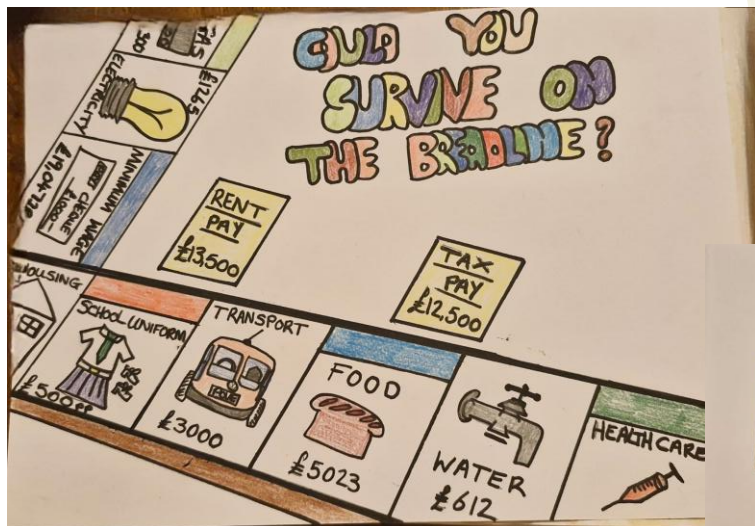
CAREERS OPPORTUNITIES



Poverty isn't defeated
with fear it's overcome
by hope #abolishpoverty



Davydenko-Orlova Nataliia, 2025



Empty plates and tear-stained eyes,
A world of dreams that slowly dies.
Small hands reaching, hearts so frail,
In poverty's shadow, hope sets sail.

Barefoot steps on streets so cold,
A story whispered, yet untold.
Innocence lost, a heavy cost,
A future stolen, a battle crossed.

Let kindness bloom, a gentle seed,
To mend the wounds of urgent need.
With love and care, a brighter day,
Where every child can laugh and play.

[Online gallery of submissions](#)

“

Every child has the **right** to be **heard**, to be **safe**, to be **healthy**, and to **thrive**. **Poverty undermines these rights.**

“Child poverty is both a cause and consequence of children’s human rights violations.”¹²



Life-stage themes...

Babies

- Struggling to afford baby basics
- Food poverty - the cost of infant formula & impact on weaning
- Infant mental health and bonding
- Baby safety

Pre-school

- Play and learning
- Clothing poverty
- Housing instability and its impact on child development
- High cost of childcare

School-age

- The cost of the school day
- Poverty related bullying
- Access to sports, leisure and social opportunities
- Sense of belonging
- Poverty driven crime and exploitation
- Poverty and SEND
- Hopes, dreams and aspirations

Young people 16-24

- The cost and availability of public transport
- Employment opportunities
- Mental health support
- Lack of affordable homes
- Hopes, dreams and aspirations

Parents/carers

- Impossible decisions
- Stigma and shame – powerful barriers
- Demands of parenthood
- Love and commitment
- Parental sacrifices



Themes reflect the breadth and depth of poverty's impact on children's lives in CIOS.

They are **interconnected** and experienced differently as the child grows.

Poverty impacts a child's **now** and their **future**.

“

Poverty shouldn't limit our opportunities.

Cornwall Youth Council member

A call to action...

New message

To @CornwallandTheIslesofScilly

Subject A call to action

To everyone who plays a part in our lives,

We are the future of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Some of us are still learning to walk and talk. Some of us are navigating school, friendships, and growing up. Some of us are preparing for our futures, dreaming of what we might become. But many of us are doing all of this while living in poverty.

We want you to know what that feels like.

It feels like going to bed hungry and waking up cold. It feels like wearing shoes that don't fit and uniforms that don't match. It feels like missing out on school trips, birthday parties, and swimming lessons. It feels like watching our parents worry, and knowing, before we should, that money is tight.

It feels like being left out.

We know our parents are trying their best. We see them skipping meals so we can eat. We hear them on the phone, trying to get help. We feel their stress when the bills come in. We know they love us.

We want to grow up healthy and happy.

We want to play, learn, and dream big. But poverty makes everything harder. It makes it harder to concentrate at school, to feel confident, to feel like we belong. It makes us feel ashamed, even though we've done nothing wrong.

As we get older, we start to understand more.

We see how poverty shapes our choices. Some of us miss school because we don't have the right shoes, equipment



Click to hear this letter read aloud by our young people

message

or period products. Some of us struggle to get to college because we can't afford travel costs. Some of us miss out on sports or clubs because they cost too much or are not for us. Some of us feel like we'll never be able to afford a home here, in the place we love. Some of us feel like we have to leave Cornwall or the Isles of Scilly to have a future.

We want people to understand that poverty looks different in different places. On the Isles of Scilly, it means expensive food and unreliable transport. It means fewer services, fewer choices, and sometimes feeling forgotten.

We don't want pity. We want change.

We want every child to have enough food, warm clothes, and a safe home. We want schools to understand that not everyone can afford the same things. We want travel that is affordable and run often, so we can get to school, college, or the beach. We want support for our parents, so they don't have to choose between heating and eating. We want to be listened to, not just in reports, but in real decisions.

We are not just statistics. We are your future.

Please don't let poverty decide who we become. Help us build a Cornwall and Isles of Scilly where every child can thrive, not just survive.

With hope,

The babies, children and young people of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

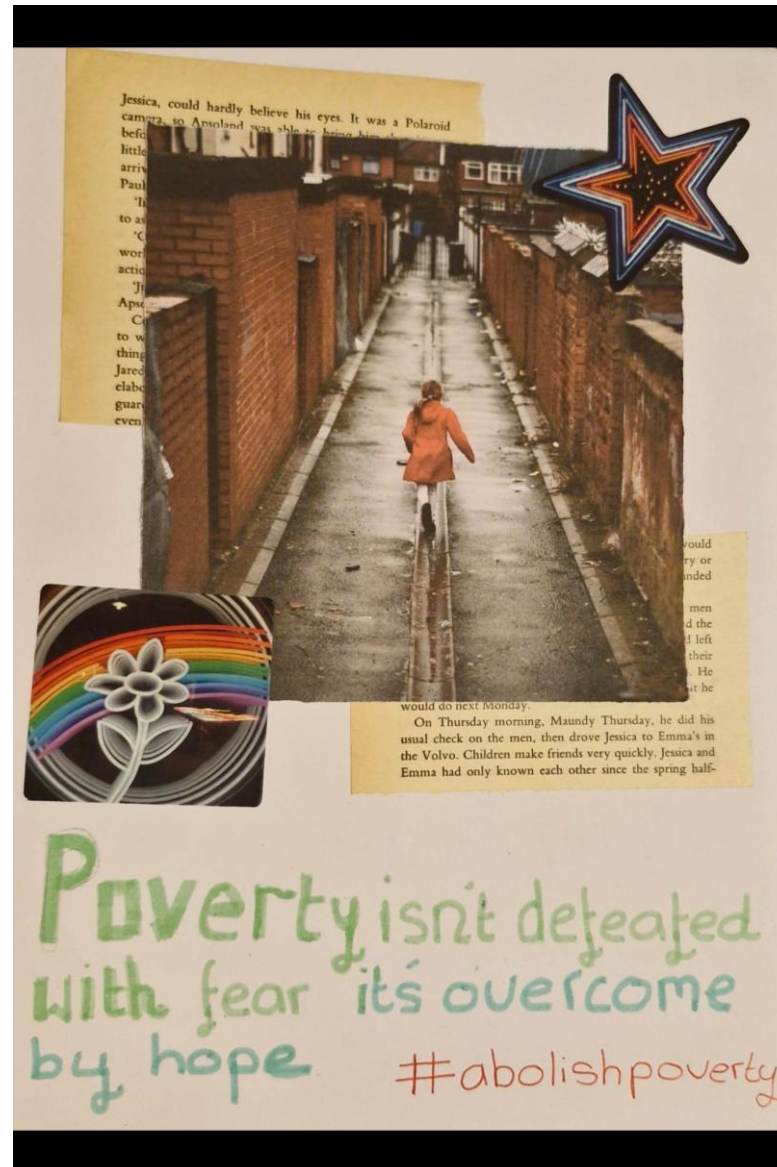


Send



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A call to action...



The way forward

This report brings together the voices of babies, children and young people, and the people who volunteer and work with them, from across CIOs. It highlights the urgent need to address child poverty. No single agency can solve the challenges of child poverty - we need to work together to make change happen.

Recommendations for action

For all readers and community members

- Reflect on how you, your organisation, or your community can create change and contribute to reducing the physical, emotional and social impacts of child poverty.
- Challenge poverty stigma by raising awareness of its harmful and powerful impact on individuals, promoting compassionate language, and raising awareness of the lived and living experience of poverty.
- Share and celebrate empowering and diverse stories from people and places across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to raise and encourage aspiration and hope.



For strategic leaders and policy makers

- Establish a local multi-agency Child Poverty Taskforce to develop and implement solutions informed by this report, aimed at reducing and mitigating the impact of poverty. This Taskforce will oversee the development of a local Child Poverty Action Plan which is aligned to national and local strategies, insights and priorities. This will drive forwards effective and efficient change.
- The Action Plan will be brought to Cornwall's Health and Wellbeing Board and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Integrated Care Partnership via the Committee in Common. It will also be shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board for the Isles of Scilly. This collaboration of senior leadership and insight will determine how to oversee and demonstrate impact in addressing childhood poverty.
- Ensure corporate policies and strategies (e.g. commissioning guidance, and safeguarding processes) consider both the immediate and

“

Educating other children and young people **about what poverty actually is** and **how people view it.**

**Cornwall Youth
Council member**

long-term impacts of child poverty. Champion a solution-focused approach that challenges individuals and services to do all they can to mitigate the impact of child poverty.

- Embed “poverty proofing” into service design to help remove barriers, mitigate the impact of poverty, and avoid unintentionally increasing adversity or reinforcing stigma. This will be supported by practical ‘toolkits’ and guidance which will enable organisations to address poverty related challenges.
- Increase access to good jobs, apprenticeships, paid internships, mentoring, and inclusive recruitment practices.
- Prioritise continued and regular engagement and reflection with our babies, children, young people and families and collaboration with our VCSE partners including Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF) CYP Families Alliance.

“

Targeted funding creates an inherent stigma – this must be considered.

Cornwall Youth Council member

For organisations working with families

- Support income maximisation by promoting uptake of the full range of targeted statutory financial assistance that already exists and explore opportunities to make accessing support easier for families through initiatives such as auto-enrolment for Free School Meals, Healthy Start, funded childcare and parent/carer support programmes.
- Support dedicated activity that explores child poverty in the context of education and learning (e.g. Child Poverty Conferences, sharing of best-practice and guidance, increased understanding of the impact of poverty on attendance and school readiness, the role of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) to empower students).

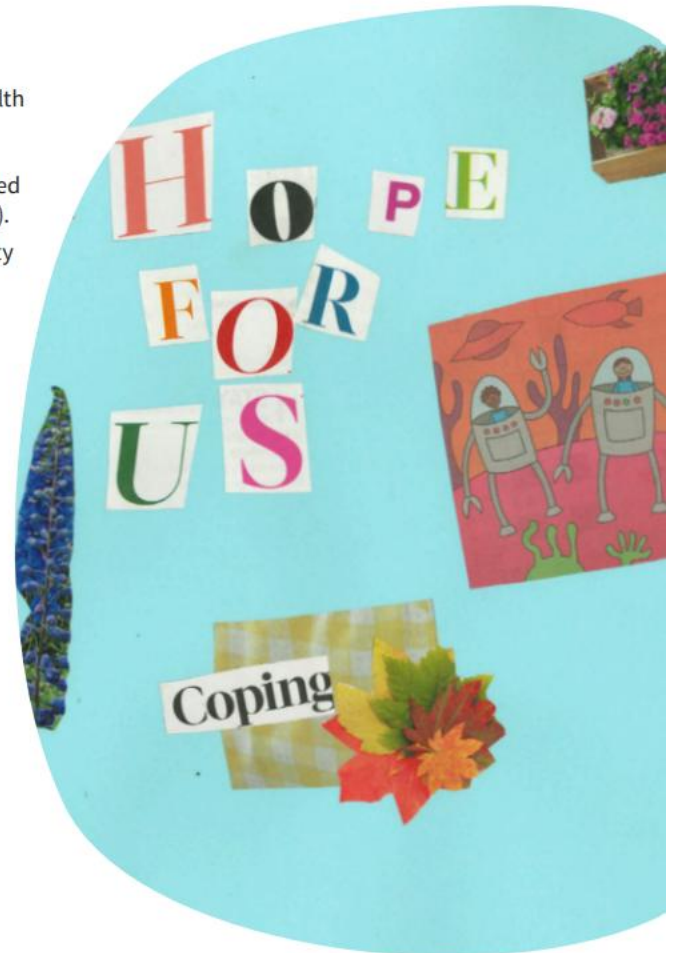
To further understand our data and intelligence

- Proactive focus on child poverty by our local Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) to further explore themes of this report and to identify where we need better insight (e.g. disabled children, kinship carers, impact of seasonal work).
- Better understand the temporal impact of poverty – the effect on a child's 'now' and on their short- and long-term future outcomes.
- Proactive collaboration with all sectors (e.g. health, social care, youth justice, community safety) to better understand and interpretate the available data to further inform our local understanding of the impact of child poverty and identify opportunities for mitigating action.

“

It's not just a holiday destination... it's our home and children should not go without.

Cornwall Youth Council member



Public launch...

