



oration in living standards and high stress levels a new report from

The report, *Poverty in the pandemic: The impact of coronavirus on low-income families and children* - based on a survey of families with children who are eligible for free school meals - found around eight in 10 respondents reported being in a worse financial position than before the pandemic, and half were much worse off because their income had fallen while costs have.

Nearly nine in 10 respondents reported spending substantially more than before on food, electricity, and other essentials – usually because they have been at home much more. Many families also said that the cost of food had gone up significantly during the early part of lockdown.

The Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, who speaks for the Church of England on matters relating to children and families, said: "Although some commentators have talked about the last few months as an opportunity to live a simpler lifestyle, this report sets out in stark detail how for many families it has been a constant struggle.

"It bears out what churches have experienced first-hand in every community: that families have been placed under huge strain; that the worst off have again been worst hit and, for many, things now could get worse rather than better.

"In these unprecedented times, we all need to ask ourselves urgently how we can help our neighbour. It is also imperative that the Government does all that it can to protect families and children by implementing the practical recommendations in this report. We all must play our part."

Alison Garnham, Chief Executive of Child Poverty Action Group, said: "Low-income parents have been living under a cloud of anxiety in lockdown - trying to find money for family basics as their costs have been rising. That's taken a very heavy toll on the health and well-being of the worst affected parents and children.

"We all want to protect children and families from the effects of the coronavirus recession and to prevent a growth in poverty following the pandemic. But the support we offer low-income parents just doesn't meet the additional costs of raising children and there was nothing in the Government's emergency support schemes to correct this shortfall. Child benefit alone has lost £5 of its value since 2010 because of sub-inflationary uprating and freezes.

"Re-investing in children's benefits and widening access to free school meals should be the priorities now to protect family incomes and to support children's life chances. As the Government's Covid-19 emergency support schemes are tapered away in the coming months, more help will be needed for struggling families who have lost jobs or taken income drops. Otherwise they will have only more hardship on their horizon."

[Read the full report.](#)

More information

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