

Funding the Future

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The government has claimed it has 'hit the ground running' when it comes to child poverty [by setting up a task force](#) that will begin meeting 'in the next few weeks' to consider the issue.

They have said:

The Prime Minister has today [Wednesday 17 July] appointed the Work & Pensions Secretary and the Education Secretary as the joint leads of a new ministerial taskforce to begin work on the Child Poverty Strategy.

A new Child Poverty Unit in the Cabinet Office - bringing together expert officials from across government as well as external experts - will report into the taskforce. The new unit will explore how we can use all the available levers we have across government to create an ambitious strategy.

Recognising the wide-ranging causes of child poverty, Secretaries of State from across government will take part in this work, with the first meeting set to take place in the coming weeks.

In the immediate term, the taskforce is expected to consider how we can use levers related to household income as well as employment, housing, children's health, childcare and education to improve children's experiences and chances at life.

Let me stand back for a moment and consider what poverty is. This is a definition from the [Cambridge English Dictionary](#):

the condition of being extremely poor

Their definition of being poor is:

having little [money](#) and/or few possessions

I think this gives us enough on which to base a discussion.

First, most children living in poverty live in a household where adults are at work.

Unless the parents of children are to be paid more for their work than others, there is no solution to child poverty there, unless minimum wages are to rise universally.

Second, children are in poverty now. Not in a few weeks, or a year or two when this task force reports, and certainly not in the five years hence when housing, children's health, childcare and education might (and I stress, might, subject to there being no money left) be reformed. This is a current crisis.

Third, the crisis is caused by the families in which these children live having insufficient money. That is the beginning and the end of the explanation of child poverty. They need that money now. To pretend otherwise is patronising, paternalistic, and dogmatic nonsense.

Providing more money means ending the two-child benefit cap as a starting point.

That would cost £1.7 billion. There are a number of ways to raise this in the [Taxing Wealth Report 2024](#).

Having done that, the next step is to improve other benefits.

In that case, this task force faces a choice. It can prevaricate for a year or two and then issue a report which they know will not be acted upon. In other words, they can be the enablers of continued child poverty, which, as far as Labour is concerned, can only fuel the rise of Reform.

Or, they can report by October, saying end the two-child benefit cap and then move on to spend more having achieved that goal, because that is the only way to end child poverty.

Child poverty is caused by a lack of money. Only more money for those in poverty can solve it. There is no point in pretending otherwise.