

It's time Labour saved the children

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According to a report in The Mirror this morning, which is based on government data sorted by council ward:

According to the latest figures from the [DWP](#), a record-high 4.5 million children across the country were found to have been living in poverty in the year ending March 2024 - the last full year under the Conservative government. That's an extra 121,000 children compared to the year prior

They add:

Some parts of the country are faring much worse than others. Local level figures, which are calculated slightly differently to the national ones, show that in over 130 neighbourhoods, the majority of children are living in poverty.

For example, they note:

In the Newport ward of Middlesbrough, six out of every seven children - that's 85% of them - are living below the breadline. That's the highest proportion of any electoral ward in the UK. The Manningham area of Bradford has the next highest proportion, with nearly three quarters (72%) of children living in poverty. That's followed by Bordesley Green in Birmingham (71%), Heartlands in Birmingham (70%), Daneshouse with Stoneyholme in Burnley (69%), Bradford Moor in Bradford (69%), and Gipton & Harehills in Leeds (69%).

As they point out:

The figures show a stark regional divide when it comes to child poverty, with the 20 worst affected areas all in the North of England and Birmingham.

Just 1% of children in Godalming Holloway in Waverley and Oatlands and Burwood Park in Elmbridge were living in poverty last year.

Do children in poverty and their parents care about fiscal rules?

Do they think balancing budgets is the highest priority of the government?

Do they vote for parties that promise prudence?

Of course, they do not.

They care about jobs, pay, benefits, public services, the creation of opportunities, and the availability of decent housing. They want hope.

Labour does not offer any of those things. Its policies are, however, no doubt going down quite well in Godalming and Elmbridge.

A party that does not put people first does not deserve to govern this country.

The troubling fact is that for many people, Farage looks to be the only person who cares. He doesn't. He cares as much about people in the Northeast and Birmingham as he does those in Johannesburg and Jakarta, by which I mean, he really does not care at all. But that is not the point: like Trump, he can persuade people he does, even if he has no intention of delivering on any promise, except to himself.

Labour can ignore this issue of child poverty, and it will lose.

It can address it, and it may survive.

But even if it doesn't, children, the families they live in, and whole communities might benefit if they do the right thing. Right now, they are not.

And it is that last point that is crucial. Politics should not be all about the electoral equation of winning and losing. It should be about doing the right thing, for the people in need, whose lives the government can improve the most.

Labour has forgotten that. If and when they ever recall it, they might have a chance again. Right now, they have none and do not deserve it.