

Local parents at risk of forgoing food to provide for their children
while being in poverty causes their children miss out at school

A third of struggling parents supported by MammaKind say they would have had to go without food (32%) to provide for their children without help from the local baby bank.

In a survey of clients supported during March and April this year, a further third of parents (32%) told the charity they would have had to skip paying bills including utility bills and rent to provide essential items for their children including clothes, nappies and toiletries.

This feedback resonates with a recent report by Trust for London¹ which found one in three children in Greenwich (36%) and Lewisham (33%), where the majority of families supported by MammaKind live, experience household poverty. According to Lewisham Council² the cost-of-living crisis caused an estimated 61,000 residents to fall behind on their energy bills in 2022.

When asked whether they were worried about providing for their children before receiving help from MammaKind, eight in ten respondents gave a resounding yes (82%). An equivalent number also said support from the charity had helped to relieve pressure on their household finances (86%).

Poverty has devastating consequences for children. Young children from low-income families are eight months behind in reading skills by the time they are five, when they miss out on high quality childcare during their early years³.

Access to early childhood activities can help to close the educational divide but last year a quarter of two-year-olds missed out on the 15 hours of free, weekly childcare they were entitled to⁴, making them less likely to succeed in a school environment.

The MammaKind survey found providing clothes, nappies, prams, toiletries and other essentials helped to relive some of the barriers that prevent parents from taking their children to activities that help to level the playing field in early education:

- One in five (18%) told the charity their child could now be transported safely thanks to the pram or baby carrier provided
- One third (36%) also said they feel part of the community after benefitting from MammaKind's help
- Two thirds (68%) confirmed their child's needs were met
- Half (50%) reported their child now had appropriate and stimulating toys
- Each and every person surveyed (100%) said MammaKind had met their needs

Insufficient sleep is another hurdle created by poverty. 14% of survey respondents needed a bed or cot and every child received sleepwear. Research shows quality sleep in young children (age 5 and under) is critical for brain development, impacting everything from learning and memory to emotional regulation⁵.

A professional who refers families to MammaKind said: *"The provision of a new cot/bed for this client will mean that the mother and child are no longer co-sleeping... this mother can put her baby to bed in their own sleep space, reducing the risk of cot death and also providing a safe space to sleep"*.

All families receive age-appropriate toys and books for their children. These seemingly inconsequential items contribute to cognitive, motor, psychosocial, emotional, and linguistic abilities. Ultimately, they play a vital role in fostering self-confident, creative, and happy children⁶.

One respondent said: *"I was really worried as I couldn't afford new clothes and shoes and adequate toys/books and the kind amazing people at MammaKind helped take all of those worries away."*

Kirsty Lowe, Co-Founder and Chair at MammaKind said: *“Small but impactful steps can make a big difference in helping all children have an equal chance to succeed in education. For example, a functioning stroller means a mother can take her toddler to free activities at a children's centre. Secure sleep through a cot and sleepsuits helps a baby rest well. Age-appropriate toys and games stimulate young minds, while properly sized nappies, wipes, and nappy cream prevent infections and discomfort. Good hygiene and being well-rested is essential for children to reach their developmental milestones.*

“There is still work to be done to address the further problems that hold children back, such as affordable nutrition, however, removing some the practical barriers caused by poverty is an important and achievable first step.”

ENDS

About MammaKind

MammaKind is a baby bank that aims to prevent and relieve poverty amongst socially and financially disadvantaged families with young children. We collect preloved and new clothes, toys, toiletries and equipment for children aged 5 and under and distribute them among families who are struggling financially. Since we started in 2020 we have helped almost 8,000 families and distributed over £1million worth of new and preloved equipment among them.

About the survey

MammaKind conducted a sample survey of a small number clients who had been supported by the charity in March and April 2024. In total, 22 clients responded to the survey via an anonymous online survey tool (Typeform).

Additional findings

- 100% reported that MammaKind met their needs
- 100% of those who interacted directly with MammaKind were satisfied or very satisfied with their interaction
- 100% reported that MammaKind's support improved their wellbeing
- All respondents who entered their sex were female (77%)
- Respondent ethnicity: 27% white; 27% African or Caribbean; 27% mixed ethnicity

Additional sources

1. Trust for London <https://trustforlondon.org.uk/data/child-poverty-borough/> (2021/2022)
2. Lewisham Council (2023) <https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s108198/2023%2024%20Budget%20Report%20Council%201March.pdf>
3. The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (2016) <https://www.jrf.org.uk/we-can-solve-poverty-in-the-uk>
4. Sleep Foundation <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/children-and-sleep>
5. The Family and Childcare Trust (2023) <https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/tackling-barriers-access-early-education>
6. Children's only profession: Playing with toys (2021) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8430366/>

For further information contact

Kirsty@mammakind.org.uk / 07980 649501