



HUMAN RIGHTS

Council of Europe Urges UK Action on Child Poverty to Uphold Fundamental Rights

by [OpenVoice UK News Team](#) — on July 8, 2025 — [Edit](#)



OpenVoice
UK News
Team

Author

Child poverty in the United Kingdom has reached critical levels, prompting a warning from the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, who called for immediate government action to safeguard the rights of vulnerable children. Following a five-day



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education, and basic welfare.

The Commissioner emphasised that tackling child poverty is not simply a matter of social policy, but a human rights obligation. He criticised the UK government for lacking a coordinated strategy and urged ministers to introduce targeted reforms with clearly defined benchmarks. While acknowledging the government’s commitment to developing a child poverty strategy, O’Flaherty stressed that this must go beyond rhetoric and deliver measurable change.

Among the most concerning findings were reports from children themselves, who described living in conditions likened to “almost Dickensian” hardship. Accounts included families forced to choose between food and heating, and children without access to clean clothing or proper shelter. The Commissioner noted that these conditions violate children’s rights to an adequate standard of living, as outlined in international human rights frameworks.

O’Flaherty specifically called for the reversal of the two-child benefit cap and an increase in direct support for low-income families, including better access to free school meals

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and transport. He also urged action to

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forced to live in cramped and unsafe
environments for extended periods.

Devolved governments in Scotland, Wales,
and Northern Ireland were praised for their
more proactive approaches, with the
Commissioner recommending that the UK
adopt a unified strategy informed by these
regional successes. He further advocated for
greater involvement of children and young
people in shaping the policies that affect
them.

Schools, charities, and advocacy groups
echoed the Commissioner's concerns, with
headteachers reporting they are increasingly
stepping in to provide food and essentials
for students. Civil society leaders stressed
that unless child poverty is treated as a
national emergency, the country risks
breaching its legal and moral obligations.

While recent funding packages, including
crisis support funds, have offered some
relief, O'Flaherty concluded that structural
reform is essential. Without decisive action,
he warned, the UK risks failing an entire
generation, undermining its commitment to
equality, dignity, and the rule of law.

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