

## **According to a recent study there are a million more UK children living in poverty than in 2010.**

The TUC state that around 3.1 million children of working parents are now below the breadline after the government's benefits cuts. Of these, about 600,000 children whose parents work have been pushed into poverty not only because of these cuts but also public sector pay restrictions.

There's a saying in our society- 'it pays to work', but when working parents are forced to use foodbanks, and cannot clothe their children properly, can this saying actually be true?

'Working Poor' terminology is something that has been banded around in research, reports and evaluations in recent times, but this is not something that is new to Home-Start.

For many years Home-Start has seen an increase in supporting families who are struggling to cope financially and who live in households where at least one parent works.

Often, Home-Start finds that families who have seen a reduction in working hours or cuts to working tax credit fall the hardest. These are families who have seen a time when they have had a disposable income, whose children do take part in hobbies and out of school activities and who have in the past, been able to afford more than the basics. Sadly these are the same families who are now struggling to feed their children a hot meal every night.

What Home-Start has also found is that parents who are now struggling financially are also struggling with the impact this has on their family- relationship breakdowns, partners moving away to find work, (causing loneliness and isolation), an increase in poor mental health- stress and anxiety. And the social stigma of having to accept help when they didn't have to before.

Because our volunteers are non-judgmental and Home-Start support is confidential, we do find that such families will open up to us and accept some support. That support comes in many different ways- help with signposting to agencies who can help navigate the complex benefits system, advice on how to cook healthy cheap meals on a budget, and sometimes emotional support- listening to a parent's concerns about their financial situation.

Whilst the government has denied the figures in this recent report- saying that the route out of poverty is to work, we know that many families who are working are living in poverty. We know they are because we see it in family's homes every single day across Greater Manchester.

If you have parenting or caring experience, can spare a couple of hours each week and want to offer some support to a local family, please do find out about volunteering for Home-Start. There are six local Home-Starts working in communities right across Greater Manchester, to find the one closest to you, please visit [www.gmhomestarts.org.uk](http://www.gmhomestarts.org.uk)