

“OUR **BLAZER**
IS COMPULSORY
AT OUR SCHOOL
AND IF YOU **DON'T**
HAVE IT YOU GET
A **DETENTION**, NOT
EVERYONE HAS A
SPARE £45 JUST
LAYING AROUND.”



Level Trust
gives children
what they need
for learning.

Working across **75 Luton schools**, our aim is to ensure that school, college and nursery age children have everything they need to fully participate in their education.

This report outlines what we did last year, why we did it and what **impact we had.**

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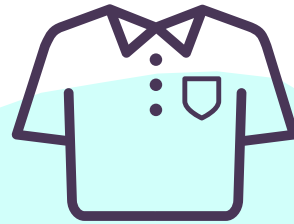
What we did.

Over 2024/25 we worked with children on **13,603** occasions, **1,339** more than the year before.

We did this by providing:



children with a computer through our work with **Luton Learning Link**.



10,571

children with a total of **15,112** items of free school uniform through our **Uniform Exchange**.

SMASH

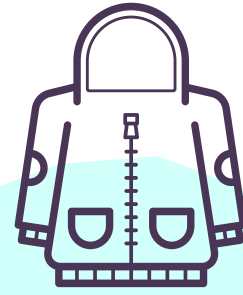
78

children attended **SMASH**.



136

children with **free**
school shoes.



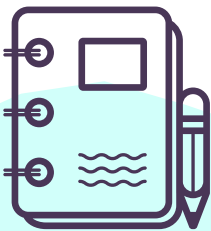
126

children with a **free**
winter coat, bedding
or warmth for their
homes.



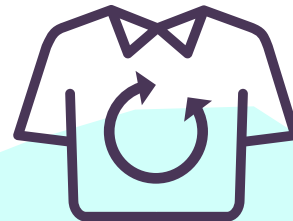
1,357

children with **presents**
at Christmas time.



1,303

children with **learning**
resources.



and by reusing school uniform
we helped Luton's children and
young people save...

44.6

tonnes of CO²
equivalent.



How did we listen?

To understand the impact our work had we:

- Talked to **78 children** who took part in our activity scheme.
- Surveyed **29 children** and **98 parents and carers** who used the Uniform Exchange.
- Ran community outreach sessions with **529 children** in twelve schools.
- Collected case studies and feedback from **23 school partners**.
- Recorded details of every **Uniform Exchange** and **Learning Locker** order.
- Collected diversity data from **78 children** who attended our activity scheme and requested diversity and postcode data from all parents and carers who used the **Uniform Exchange & Learning Locker**.

Why children needed us.

In 2025, Level Trust continued its unwavering commitment to alleviating the effects of poverty on children's education in Luton. Through a blend of innovative programmes, strategic partnerships, and grassroots engagement, we reached more beneficiaries than ever before, delivering tangible improvements in educational access, wellbeing, and community cohesion. This report summarises our key achievements, highlights the stories behind the statistics, and sets out our vision for the future.

In 2025, approximately **4.5 million children** were growing up in poverty across the four UK nations – **3 in 10 of all children**. In Luton this figure is considerably higher with almost **5 out of every 10 children** growing up in poverty. This is an inexcusable figure, with consequences that can cast a long shadow over a young person's life.

We know that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds face systematically worse outcomes at every stage in the journey from school to work. They're **2.5 times** more likely to be persistently absent

from school, five times more likely to be permanently excluded from school, **30%** less likely to get good GCSEs, and twice as likely to not be in education, employment, or training (NEET). These outcomes get worse the longer a young person spends on Free School Meals, yet the poverty rate across the UK has not meaningfully improved in 14 years.

Level Trust works tirelessly towards eradicating child poverty.

The upcoming Schools White Paper offers a real opportunity to intervene early, disrupting this cycle before challenges become entrenched. We endorse the Government's renewed focus on creating inclusive mainstream schools that can effectively identify needs early and provide timely support – including for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). By strengthening targeted and universal support for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, we can boost school attendance, reduce exclusions, address SEND early, and ensure every young person has the chance to thrive.

House of Commons Library, School Attendance in England, 2024. A Klein and others, Understanding School Attendance, Educational Attainment and Labour Market Outcomes, 2024. CPAG, Evidence submitted to the House of Commons Education Select Committee inquiry into persistent absence and support for disadvantaged pupils, 2023

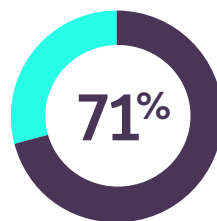
If a young person struggles to engage with school, they can't learn – which risks holding them back further. In their 2025 Impact Report, Impetus states:

Getting GCSEs is crucial for progress into regular employment. Every step up the qualification ladder roughly halves a young person's chances of being not in education, training or employment (NEET) in their early 20s.

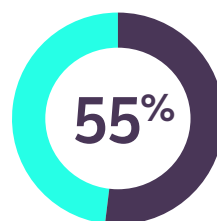
The gap in employment outcomes for this group isn't getting narrower, and the need for support is growing.

Level Trust exists to support some of the most disadvantaged children in our community access their education, giving them a chance at a brighter future, free from the devastating impact that poverty can have on a person's life.

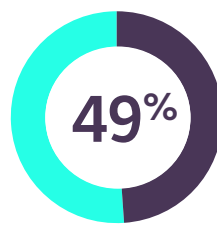
From the data we collected from families using the Uniform Exchange, it is clear that they were finding making ends meet increasingly challenging:



were going without **essentials**.



reported not having enough **money for food**.



were in arrears with their **household bills** or behind on scheduled **lending repayments**.

The economic situation for families in the UK in 2025 remains difficult due to a combination of high, cumulative costs of living, stagnating disposable incomes, and the ongoing impact of high interest rates on housing. While inflation has eased from its 2022 peak, prices for essentials remain high, leading to a "deepening" of poverty and significant financial strain.

(House of Commons Library, High cost of living: Impact on households, January 2026)

Growing up in poverty can severely affect children's health, happiness, and safety.

Poverty is a devastating force that can deprive a child of their right to safety, security, and education. For thousands of children across our town, their daily struggle begins in a home where there isn't enough to eat, there's no access to adequate washing facilities, and no safe place to sleep.

Growing up in poverty can have profound and long-lasting effects on a child's life.

Lack of education: Children from impoverished backgrounds are far less likely to attend school. Without regular education and achieving well academically, they are often trapped in a cycle of poverty, limiting their future opportunities.

Poor health and nutrition: Poverty leads to poorer health outcomes and a lack agency and motivation to access appropriate healthcare. Children become susceptible to illness, and their physical and cognitive development can be severely impacted.

Higher vulnerability to exploitation: Without the protection of a stable family, children are at high risk of exploitation and abuse. They may be forced or coerced into inappropriate work or become victims of criminal gangs.

Psychological trauma: The stress and uncertainty of poverty can cause severe mental health repercussions. Children often suffer from anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress, which may affect their ability to form healthy relationships and build a stable future.

At Level Trust, we are working towards making Luton a place where our services are no longer needed. However, while this is not the case, we work closely with our partners to support, guide and champion vulnerable children in Luton who live in poverty. We know that all children and young people have the capacity to be healthy, happy and productive members of our community and that they are full of aspirations and hopes and dreams for their future. Our job is to make sure that they are able to fulfil their potential, regardless of their background or start in life.

We are extremely grateful to our school partners for the work they do alongside families; their care is exemplary. Sadly, since last year's impact report, school staff continue to paint a picture of struggle, challenge and deepening poverty for families. The number of families accessing the support of Level Trust corroborates this assertion; demand for services – particularly for essential items such as uniform – continues to increase.

We asked almost **100 families** about their ability to be able to purchase basic items that their child(ren) need for school. For a diverse range of factors, the majority of respondents told us that they could not afford shoes, coats, school uniform and P.E. kit. The two most common reasons families gave were being a single parent family or having insecure and/or irregular work alongside coping with

the burden of debt all while trying to pay for household essentials such as food, heating and clothing. Parents regularly share with staff the challenge of trying to find well- paid, secure employment that is also compatible with picking up and dropping off young children at school. Families are struggling; while the cost of essentials remains persistently high, wages are stagnating leading to households feeling the ‘squeeze’ even further.

Reason cannot afford school uniform*	Percentage of families who gave this reason	
	2023–24	2024–25
Family trauma	3%	2%
Long term illness or disability in the family	20%	17%
Insecure & irregular work	59%	52%
Job loss	11%	14%
Changes in benefits	8%	6%
Debt	31%	42%
More than four children in the household	14%	8%
Recently arrived in the UK	21%	11%
Single parent	63%	55%
Living in temporary accommodation	14%	9%

*This data came from the **98 families** who answered our survey.



level trust
SUMMER HATS

DONATE TO LEVEL TRUST
WAYS YOU CAN DONATE
TAP USING YOUR CARD/PHONE
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UNIFORM EXCHANGE

UNIFORM EXCHANGE



level trust

What happens to children when their families cannot afford costs associated with learning?

Children are at risk of harm

One of the most recent qualitative and quantitative studies carried out by Child Poverty Action Group demonstrates how children of less well-off families face multiple issues in fully accessing the state education that is available to them and are being further disadvantaged at the very start of life.

In recent years, improving school attendance has been a top priority for policymakers in every nation of the UK. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated a rise in the number of children and young people missing school on a regular basis, and although the latest data shows that average attendance levels are beginning to improve, progress is slow, and some groups still remain below pre-pandemic levels.

Persistent absence – defined as missing 10 per cent or more of school sessions each term – is more common among children eligible for free school meals, and rates increase as children grow older, with the highest absence rates among children attending secondary school. Research into the reasons why so many young people are missing from their

classes has found the causes are complex and multifactorial. Triggers can include mental and physical health challenges, unmet special educational needs, family illness or disability, feeling excluded at school or falling behind on schoolwork. Absence is sometimes grounded in a combination of these factors.

Research with educators, families, children and young people across the UK also shows that not being able to afford uniforms, school supplies, trips, and transport to school are key reasons why children are not attending their lessons.

When families consistently struggle with these costs, the odd missed day can turn into persistent absence. CPAG's research focussed on the extent to which lack of money plays a role in attendance at school.

They found that:

- **16%** of all 11–18-year-olds in the UK say that they have missed school at least once because they didn't have something they needed to attend.
- This number increases significantly among children who qualify for means-tested free school meals, with more than one-in-four (**26%**) saying this has been the case.
- Almost half (**47%**) of all young people who missed school because they didn't have what they needed said they did so because they did not have the correct uniform or kit.

Across all secondary school pupils, those in receipt of free school meals were more than three times as likely to give this reason for missing school than their peers.

- **23%** who didn't have what they needed said they didn't attend school because they didn't have the money to pay for school meals, while **20%** said difficulty affording a packed lunch had kept them off.
- Children in receipt of free school meals are also sometimes lending their free school meal allowances to friends who need food.
- Children in low-income households were also more likely to report needing time off school for mental health challenges compared to their peers.
- Over a quarter of all young people (**26%**) who missed school because they didn't have what they needed said this was because they couldn't afford transport to get to school, and more than a quarter (**27%**) said a lack of money for going on trips meant they sometimes didn't attend school.
- Subject costs also presented challenges, with **16%** of all pupils reporting that costs or worries about the cost of some subjects prevented them from choosing a subject to study.

- Children in receipt of free school meals were also twice as likely to report being sent home from school for not having the right uniform or kit compared to those not eligible for free school meals.

Research clearly demonstrates that lack of money itself prevents children from attending school. It also shows that children in lower-income households are more likely to face sanctions, such as being sent home from school for not having what they need, which further impacts on the amount of time they spend learning.

CPAG's new research highlights the ways in which money itself prevents secondary-aged pupils from attending school and limits their time in school.

There are a number of factors that contribute to poor children's lower levels of school attendance in comparison to their peers.

Uniform costs can prevent attendance and reduce time in classrooms.

Most schools require families to purchase a uniform for children to wear to school. While all nations have existing or proposed guidance on uniform affordability, those surveyed told us the following:

62% of those surveyed still say their school uniform is expensive to purchase. More than two-thirds (**68%**) of secondary pupils in the UK attend schools that still require branded uniform, although this varies across the nations.

16% of all pupils say they are required to have five or more branded items of uniform.

In England, the government is bringing in legislation to restrict the number of branded items to three items in secondary schools or four, if one item is a tie.

One child stated that:

“Our blazer is compulsory at our school and if you don't have it you get a detention, not everyone has a spare £45 just laying around.”

Secondary student

CPAG's previous research into the cost of sending children to school shows that families now face paying almost £450 a year for basic secondary school uniform, bags and PE kit.

Lacking suitable uniform can prevent children from attending school in several ways. Children may stay at home if they do not have the right clothes to put on in the morning. Almost half (**47%**) of young people who missed school because they didn't have what they needed said they did so because they did not have the right uniform or kit. Across all secondary school pupils, those who were eligible for free school meals were three times more likely than their peers to miss school for this reason (**13%** compared to **4%**).

“We sometimes receive calls to the school to say a certain pupil can't come in today because they maybe only have one uniform and that's in the washing and it's not dry so they'll be off today.”

Office staff member, secondary school

Young people are also being sanctioned for not having the right uniform and subsequently missing time at school and in classrooms, with certain groups at a higher risk of this. Children in receipt of free school meals were more

In Scotland only 46% of secondary schools required branded uniform, in England and Wales this was 73% and in NI 79%. CPAG, The minimum cost of education in the UK, 2025. These figures relate to the whole sample, not just those who answered 'yes' to missing school because they did not have something they needed.

than twice as likely than their peers to be sent home from school due to incorrect uniform or kit. They are also more likely to miss lessons due to incorrect kit or uniform, with one in 10 pupils in receipt of free school meals saying they were taken out of class or prevented from taking part in activities such as school trips because they lacked the correct clothing.

“School uniform is expensive – especially for the branded items. I had to use Klarna [a buy-now-pay-later service] for the non-branded stuff. I can’t pay for it and I just delete the emails reminding me to pay because it makes me feel sick.”

Mother of four children accessing Level Trust’s services

“By ensuring children have the necessary clothing, Level Trust helps to make sure they are not prevented from attending school or fully participating in school life, and this helps to overcome the impact of poverty on their education.”

Luton family worker

“Level Trust reduces the stigma associated with poverty by ensuring all children have access to clean, appropriate school uniforms, promoting equality in the classroom.”

Senior leader, a Luton secondary school

School trips are also a driver of lower attendance

When surveyed, a quarter of all young people (26%) said having less money at home makes it harder to participate in school trips.

27% of young people who have missed school because they don’t have what they need say they were unable to attend because they didn’t have money for a school trip.

“My mum couldn’t afford the school trip so I pretended to be sick. I don’t get free school meals but my family does not have much money. If you get free school meals, you can get the trip for nothing but that’s not me so I didn’t go.”

Year 9 Luton secondary school student

Young people who may stand to benefit most from trips and experiences outside of school are also more likely to be excluded

for financial reasons. Subject and curriculum costs, e.g., art and design materials and musical instruments, also presented challenges for secondary school pupils, with **16%** of all pupils reporting that costs or worries about the cost of some subjects prevent them from choosing a subject to study.

“My mum and dad get so stressed about doing a food shop. They are always saying ‘don’t ask for this and don’t ask for that’. If I said I was going to do food tech, they would have just gone on about the cost of the ingredients. The hassle wasn’t worth it.”

Luton secondary school student

“Extracurricular activities foster personal growth, enhance social skills, boost academic performance, and cultivate valuable life skills like teamwork, leadership, and time management, ultimately preparing students for future success. I regularly see our poorest families not being able to afford to pay for extras such as swimming lessons, music lessons, sports clubs and other activities that

would be hugely beneficial for their children. This means that the gap just widens between the children growing up in the poorest families and the children who have access to all these opportunities.”

Family Support Worker, a Luton Primary School

Mental health related absenteeism is more prominent in lower-income pupils

Children who face poverty are more likely to experience mental health challenges than their peers.

Living without enough food and heating and not being able to socialise or take part in activities can all contribute to low wellbeing and self-esteem. On top of this, poverty-related stigma can also have a detrimental effect on children’s and young people’s mental health. Research found that secondary aged pupils who are in receipt of free school meals were more likely to report missing school for mental health challenges (e.g., feeling anxious or depressed) than secondary school pupils more widely. Over one in five (**21%**) secondary pupils in receipt of free school meals said they have missed school for this reason, compared to just **17%** in families who aren’t eligible for this benefit.

Mind, Facts and figures about poverty and mental health, 2021. Poverty-related stigma is a process whereby individuals or communities are devalued, because they live in poverty, and/or access specific services designed to support those living on low income, such as food banks This is perpetuated in different ways, for example the language used to talk about those living in poverty and the policies and systems that affect them. The Poverty Alliance, Report of inquiry into poverty related stigma, 2023

We work in partnership with Luton Foodbank to make sure that families are referred and/or signposted to this service should they be experiencing food insecurity. As part of Level Trust's holiday provision for disadvantaged children, we also ensure that all children who attend are given breakfast, lunch and snacks throughout the day. Where there are concerns that children and their families may not be able to access an evening meal, children are sent home with food parcels that will contain enough food to feed all members of their family that evening.

“At this point, I just have to carry on. My kids’ dad just up and left one day. Just went. He got another girlfriend. How can I pay all the bills just on my wage? It’s not enough and so I had to go to the foodbank. When I went the first time, I couldn’t even look the people there in the eye. I felt embarrassed like they were thinking that I was a bad mum. They were really nice to me but I just wanted to get out of there as fast as I could.”

Mother of three children accessing Level Trust services

When surveyed by Level Trust, multiple children told us that they did not have breakfast before they went to school because there was no food at home or they told us they were eating junk food for breakfast such as crisps or high sugar snacks as there were no breakfast items available. Many schools across Luton are doing a wonderful job of providing breakfast for children who are experiencing food instability but more needs to be done to ensure that all children can start the school day with a nutritious and filling breakfast thereby setting them up for the day ahead at school.

“I am hungry a lot of the time. Sometimes I go and get (steal) some food like a chocolate bar from the shop. I have never been caught. One day I think I will.”

Year 5 child, a Luton primary school

During our conversations with children who access our services, we heard from Josh. Josh lives with his mum and dad and his 5 siblings. Josh shares a mattress on the floor with 2 of his younger siblings.

“Freddy is my best friend, and he has got his own bedroom. In his bedroom there are so many things. He has got his own iPad and a Man Utd wall and bed. I wish my house was like Freddy’s house. When I am older, I am going to get rich and buy loads of stuff and get Nandos all the time.”

Seven-year-old child, a Luton Primary School

Children feel worried

25 out of 29 children surveyed said they worried about not having the right things for school and **92 out of 98 parents** said they worried about it too. Young people told us that they felt anxious about getting in trouble with teachers or being bullied for looking different.

“When I was younger, I didn’t know we were poor. All my friends were the same. Now I am at high school, it just gets worse and worse. I don’t let anyone come to my house. I don’t want them to make fun of me.”

Year 9 child, Luton

“I hate my life. Never being able to do the things my mates do, it's s**t.”

Year 11 child, Luton

The impact we had.

Children's basic needs were met

Over the year we gave **10,571** Luton children **15,112** items of school uniform, **136** pairs of school shoes, **126** winter coats, **1,303** sets of learning resources and **32** laptops.

15 out of 15 (100%) schools surveyed said our work met children's basic needs for warm and waterproof clothing.

One of our members of staff told us the following:

“One of the greatest things about my job is being able to speak to families and hear their stories,” she said. “As heartbreaking as many of them are, there is also so much strength. We see families come back to us later on and say things started to improve after they came here.”

“Level Trust supports us week in and week out, year in and year out. They have provided uniforms, school shoes, warm coats and bedding to our families who are living in the most difficult of circumstances helping to take some of the financial strain off their household. We are proud to work closely with the charity and its staff to support our families who mean the world to us.”

Family worker, a Luton primary school

98 out of 98 parents who answered our survey question told us they would use the money they saved through using Level Trust to help them pay for more essential items for their children and families. This included food, school trips, clothing, household bills and paying off debts.

“My child’s school told me about you and I am so glad. I got all the uniform I needed for free and I went straight to the shop to get some food with the money I didn’t have to spend on school stuff.”

Father of two accessing Level Trust services

“If you want to know what care and compassion is, go to the Uniform Exchange or talk to one of the Level Trust staff. Nothing – and I mean nothing – is too much trouble for them. One of the members of staff was telling me about the lived experience of the employees, volunteers and trustees and this really shines through. Families who go to the charity for support are treated with the utmost respect, in a dignified way and come away feeling empowered, held together and willing to return should they need support in the future.”

Senior leader, a Luton secondary school

Children participated more in learning

97 out of 98 (99%) families surveyed said that using the Uniform Exchange reduced the risk of their child missing school. Children told us that they now could take part in P.E. and go to school. Schools told us that through the provision of digital devices, their young people were more engaged in their home learning and removed one of the barriers to them attaining in line with their non-disadvantaged peers.

“Students have been supported to access digital devices that they have used for their home learning and to participate fully in the school environment. We are extremely grateful to Level Trust for supplying the devices for our young people who are experiencing digital poverty.”

Pastoral Lead, a Luton Secondary School

Schools also noted that Level Trust is able to support families and children by providing educational toys and also helped children to remain dry and warm by donating weather-appropriate clothing.

“Level Trust’s engagement with our families is excellent. They have provided warm coats to children whose parents cannot afford the cost of these items of clothing and are always at the end of the phone to help us to provide all the essential items our poorest children need to access their education on a level playing field.”

Family worker, a Luton primary school

“The Uniform Exchange is such a warm and welcoming place because of the staff there. They are always ready to welcome families with a smile and to help them find the things they need for their children.”

Luton Borough Council employee

“Level Trust very kindly supplied several of our families with school shoe vouchers after they told us they could not afford new shoes. Parents could go and choose their child’s shoes and the child was none the wiser about the fact their parent did not have the money to buy shoes. It’s an amazing scheme!”

Primary school SENDCo

Our holiday activity days gave children the opportunity to try new things and do fun activities. It also supports parents to continue to work during the long school holidays.

“Level Trust’s holiday activity days have been wonderful for some of our most vulnerable children. We know that they are being seen by trusted adults and, should there be any concerns, we will be notified allowing us to step in to support the family and keep the children safe. The children also LOVE going to the activity days. They always come back after the holidays saying how much fun they had.”

Primary School Family Worker

Children grew in confidence and had fun

100% of children who took part in our holiday schemes showed an improvement in their confidence.

“I won the game we played 4 times! Virginia said I was an expert!”

Maddie, age 9



**“I had a
brilliant,
excellent,
brilliant,
excellent
time!”**

Key Stage 2 child who attended
a holiday activity day

**“The adults
are all *funny*
and make
me laugh.”**

Rory, age 10

“I love it!”

Mohammad, age 11



Children also told us that they enjoyed the activities, trying new things and valued the interactions with trusted adults. One child said their favourite thing about Level Trust's holiday scheme was ***“the grown-ups are never cross and they always say things like ‘you can do it!’”***

Children and parents felt less worried and had a sense of pride.

Schools told us that our work helped to lift the financial burden off their families and parents told us that, because of this, they felt less worried.

“Level Trust is one of our most valued partners. We regularly direct parents to the Uniform Exchange and Learning Locker and to the holiday activity schemes which are greatly appreciated by our working parents as they are free of charge and enable them to carry on working throughout the school holidays. Parents tell us that they greatly value the support the charity provides to their families.”

Luton primary school family worker

It was notable in the feedback that children and parents had a sense of pride in using the Uniform Exchange because they could donate school uniform to help other children and support the environment at the same time.

“I always bring back the uniform that I got from the Uniform Exchange back to the Uniform Exchange so that other children can use it. My children grow so quickly that almost as soon as they have got it, they have grown out of it so there is still plenty of wear in it.”

Mother of two children using the Uniform Exchange

Parents also felt less worried knowing that Level Trust would be there to support them.

“One day I was at an event with my work. I got chatting to J who works at Level Trust. She told me all about the services they provided to families and how it was open to anyone in need. I was in need, but I didn't say that. At the weekend I went into the shop. A lovely woman helped me and let me know that she was there to help me. When I was at home, I thought that Luton is such an amazing place with amazing people and amazing charities like Level Trust. I tell everyone about the charity and the help it will give to struggling families.”

Youth worker, Luton

Children were able to enjoy their childhood

Thanks to the very generous donations from partners at Christmas, we were able to provide **1,357** children with gifts at Christmas time. This meant that families did not need to worry about the additional cost of buying presents and prevented many families from going into debt. Father Christmas was able to visit hundreds of children on Christmas Eve and via events held in Luton providing gifts for children who otherwise would have been without presents at this special time for many members of our community.

“Thank you so much for everything. I am so overwhelmed with joy. The women are speechless. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.”

CEO, a Luton, based community interest group

“Last year my youngest had a meltdown because they had no present for Christmas. I tried to lie and say that Christmas was not for another week so I could get something after I got paid. My credit score is bad as I missed my payments on my credit card because I didn't have the money so I couldn't even get a loan to get them something. It was bad. This year, someone told me that Level Trust helps families who cannot afford to buy their kids presents. I phoned and the woman told me that I could go into the shop in The Mall to get something. They gave me gifts for my kids and the wrapping paper and even the Sellotape. I went straight home and wrapped them all. I was so relieved and the kids had massive smiles on their faces this year.”

Luton mum of two primary-aged children



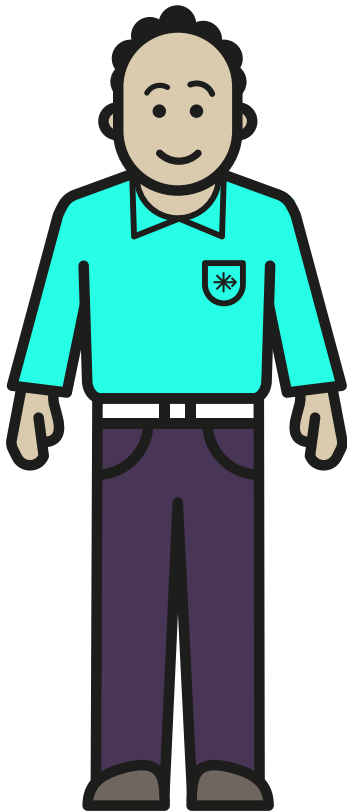
Children's Stories.

George*

George is 13 and living in a household facing severe financial hardship. The Christmas period presents a significant emotional and material challenge for his mum. Due to a variable hours contract, his mum can struggle to balance paying the utility bills, food bills and rent as well as paying for Christmas. As Christmas got closer, it became clear to George's mum that she could not afford Christmas. She told Level Trust that she felt stressed and isolated as she was too ashamed to tell her friends and family what was happening.

George's mum used Level Trust's services to support her with the children's school uniforms and when she was in the Uniform Exchange before Christmas, one of the staff asked her if she was ok getting everything for Christmas and whether there was anything Level Trust could do to help. At first, George's mum said that she was fine but, a few days later, she came back and asked if she could have some help. Staff were able to show her the gifts that had been donated by partners, and she was able to choose a selection of toys and gifts that she knew the children would love.

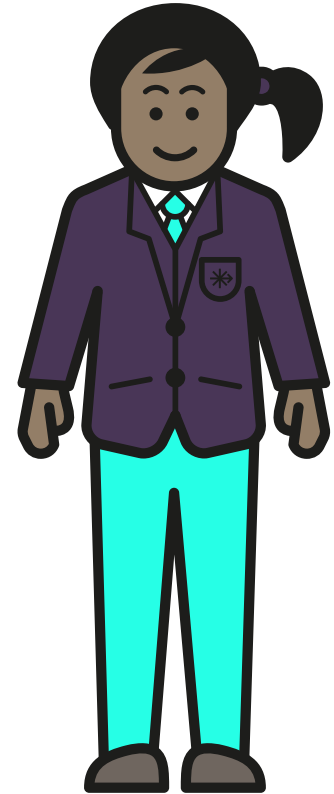
In January, she phoned the charity to say thank you. At the time, she said that she was so overwhelmed and that she now wanted to make contact let us know how much it had meant to her and the children. Level Trust's involvement replaced a potential period of hardship with one of stability and inclusion, demonstrating the vital role of local third-sector organisations in supporting vulnerable families during peak times of economic pressure.



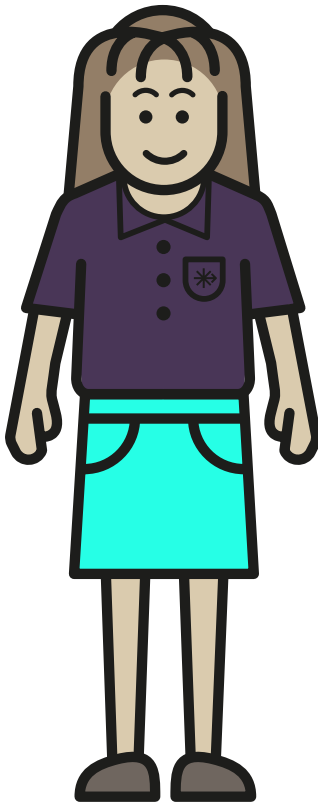
Zainab*

Zainab's mum told us that Zainab had told her that one of her classmates had said that she looked 'dirty'. When Zainab's mum asked her what she meant, she said that her blouse was grey and her shoes had lines on them. Zainab's mum and dad both work full time but, after they have paid the bills, there is simply nothing left to buy school uniform or the other essentials that Zainab and her brothers need for school. Zainab started telling her mum that she did not want to go to school.

When Zainab's mum reached out to a family worker at the children's school, she was directed to Level Trust. We were able to provide the family with shoe vouchers to provide them with appropriate footwear for school and all the uniform the children needed for their school. Mum told the family worker that, after she had got her new uniform, Zainab went back to school with her 'head held high'.



Sophie*



Sophie's parents have substance misuse issues. Social workers have a long history of supporting her family, but her home situation remains tough. Professionals involved with the family shared that the children were missing school on a regular basis as they did not have the correct uniform and PE kit and they were refusing to go to school as other children had made comments about their clothes.

The children were brought to the Uniform Exchange where they were able to choose their own uniform and PE kit to make sure that they felt comfortable. Appropriate school bags were purchased and they were given all the learning resources they needed (including digital devices) to be able to access their education. Shoe vouchers were provided so Sophie and her siblings were able to go and choose school shoes that would help them to feel that they fitted in with their peers. Sophie and her siblings are now back in school and the pastoral lead reports that they have excellent attendance.

“Thank you for your support. We really appreciate all that you have done for the family and the care and love they felt when they came to you.”

Luton school pastoral lead

Who did we work with?



Gender

98 out of 98 Uniform Exchange parents surveyed answered our gender question. **90% (89)** were female and **10% (9)** were male.

78 children who attended our holiday provision provided information about their gender.

29 children (**37%**) who attended Level Trust's holiday provision stated that they were female and **49 (63%)** that they were male.



Disability and special educational needs

From a sample of **98** Uniform Exchange parents **10% (10)** said they had a disability and **8% (8)** said they had a long-term illness.

For the children who engaged in our holiday scheme, **22% (17)** had a disability, long-term illness or special educational need.



Pupil Premium Children

36 (46%) of children who attended our holiday programmes were eligible for free school meals. Applicants for free school meals who are in receipt of Universal Credit must have an equivalent annual net earned income of no more than **£7,400** in order to be eligible for free school meals.

Ethnicity of UE users 01.09.24 – 31.08.25		%	%
Afghan	0.1	Italian	2.1
African	18.8	Jordan	0.08
Albanian	2	Kashmiri	0.08
Algerian	0.02	Kurdish	1.24
Angolan	1	Kuwaiti	0.08
Arab	2.1	Lebanese	0.16
Asian	5.3	Lithuanian	0.2
Bangladeshi	1.5	Mix	1.45
Black African	1.3	Moroccan	0.18
Black African & Caribbean	0.09	Other	7.1
Black British	1.4	Pakistani	12.0
Brazilian	0.01	Filipino	0.11
British Asian	4.2	Polish	0.9
Caribbean	2.2	Roma	1.1
Chinese	0.15	Romanian	2.2
Eastern European	1.6	Sri Lankan	0.35
Egyptian	0.03	Ukrainian	1.1
European	1.9	White & Asian	1.3
French	0.5	White & Black African	2
Greek	0.6	White & Black Caribbean	0.9
Hungarian	0.5	White Asian	0.85
Indian	5.1	White British	13.1
Iranian	0.45	White European	3.1
Iraqi	0.14	White Other	1
Irish	4		

**THANK
YOU.**

A huge and heartfelt **thank you** to the children, families and schools who contributed to this report. You are amazing and we feel so privileged to work with you all.

Contributors

Main Funders & Donors

Thank you to all those who make our work possible.

Amateurs Trust

Awards 4 All

Aviva Brokers Fund

*Beds and Luton Community Foundation – Luton Rising
Community Fund*

Connolly Foundation

Garfield Weston Foundation

Gosling Foundation

Hobson Charity

Momentum Insurance Brokers

Postcode Places Trust

Steel Charitable Trust

Swire Charitable Trust

Wixamtree Trust

The generous donors of Luton and Bedfordshire.

Partners

Partnership is key to how Level Trust works. Our partners refer children to our services and share their skills, experience and resources. The expertise they bring and the time they give, makes our work possible.

To deliver this work we worked with **75 schools** and multiple partners across Luton.

This year our partners included:

Adventures Into
African Activities
Boxing Saves Lives
Caritas-Diocese of Northampton
Citizens Advice Bureau
Dan The Skipping Man
Discover Islam
Hygiene Bank
KidsOut
Lugus Ceramics
Luton Council Education Service
Luton Council Refugee Service
Luton Foodbank
NGYT
NOAH Enterprise
Salvation Army
Somali Voices Enabled
Stepping Stones
Stockwood Park RFC
Wholehearted Childhood Charity
Youthscape

Thank you for all your time, advice, effort and generosity.

A special thank you to the following schools for your engagement and commitment to partnership working:

Beechwood Primary School
Challney High School For Girls
Chantry Primary Academy
Chiltern Academy
Chiltern Learning Trust
Chiltern Teaching School Hub
Cutenhoe Primary School
Denbigh High School
Denbigh Primary School
Downside Primary School
Farly Junior School
Ferrars Junior School
Foxdell Junior School
Hillborough Junior School
Icknield High School
Leagrave Primary School
Lea Manor High School
Maidenhall Primary School
Norton Road Primary School
ParkLea Primary School Lower
Pirton Hill Primary School
Putteridge Primary School
Riverbank Primary School
Sacred Heart Primary School
Southfield Primary Academy
St Joseph's Catholic Junior School
St Martin De Porres Catholic Primary & Nursery School
St Mathews Primary School
Stockwood Academy
Stopsley Primary School
Waulud Primary School
Warden Hill Infant School
Warden Hill Junior School
Wenlock CE Academy
Whipperley Infant Academy
Whitefield Primary Academy
William Austin Infant School



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