



Victoria
ACADEMIES TRUST

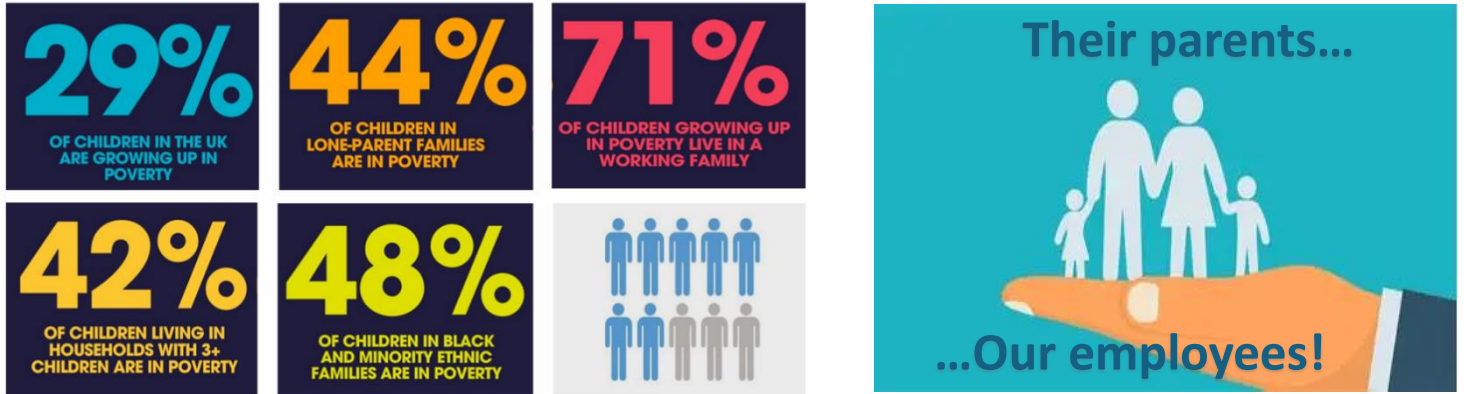
Community Partners Event

13th June 2025



What is Poverty Proofing?

- 16 million people in the UK are living in families in poverty
- 5.2 million are children, 9.2 million are working-age adults and 1.5 million are pension age adults
- Nearly one in four (24%) people in the UK are now judged to be in poverty



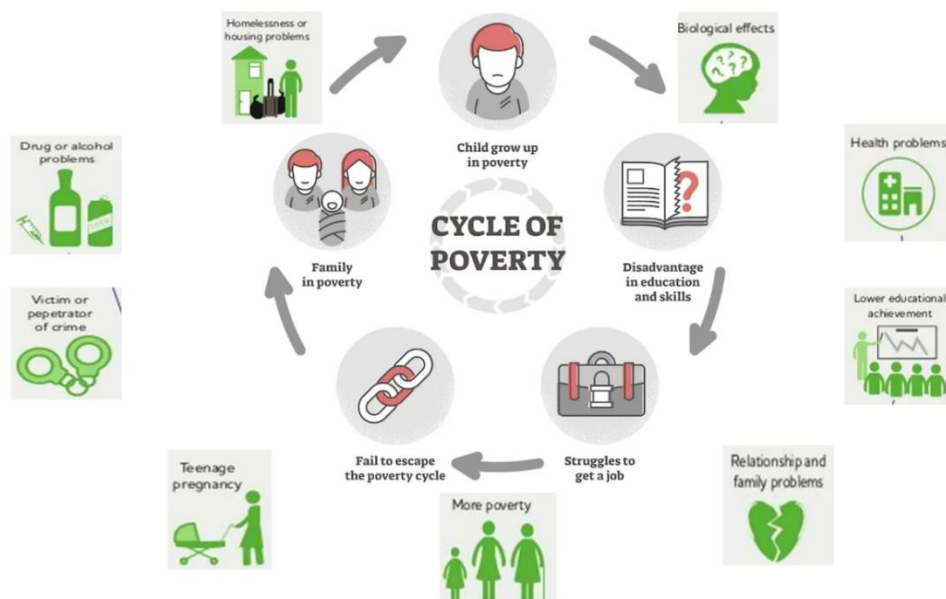
Some of our employee groups that are more likely to be in poverty are:

The following groups had the highest rates of relative poverty after housing costs in 2023/24:

- Working-age adults (43%) and children (62%) living in a family where nobody was in work
- People in social rented (40%) and private rented (37%) accommodation
- Children in families with three or more children (44%)
- People in families where someone is disabled (28%)
- People in Bangladeshi (53%) and Pakistani (47%) households

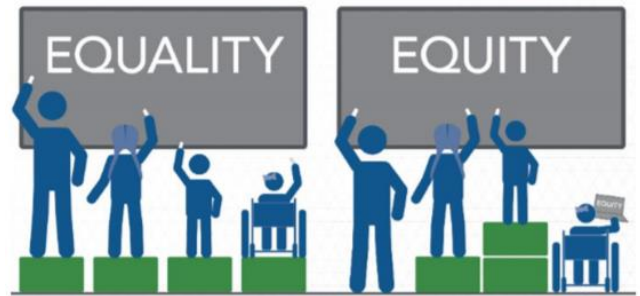
With no change in government policies, an extra 1.5 million people including 400,000 children will be living in relative poverty by 2029.

Impact of the cycle of poverty on society:



What is Poverty Proofing?

Schools and organisations can pro-actively engage with adopting a poverty-proofing approach to lessen poverty stress and shame associated with family income pressures. This involves taking practical steps to remove poverty-based exclusion and stigma and protecting children (and employees) from disadvantage.



“Poverty-proofing” a business means creating systems, policies, and practices that prevent workers, customers, and other stakeholders from falling into or staying in poverty. It’s a long-term strategy to build resilience, equity, and sustainability in your organisation and the wider economy. Here are practical, actionable suggestions for poverty-proofing a business:

Pay a Living Wage

Go beyond minimum wage and commit to paying the real Living Wage based on cost of living in your region.

Ensure Secure Work

Offer guaranteed hours where possible. Avoid zero-hour contracts unless absolutely necessary so your employees know what their income is.

Offer stable schedules with advance notice to allow workers to plan their lives.

Benefits That Reduce Financial Stress

Subsidise transport, meals, and childcare if feasible.

Offer emergency grants or no-interest loans for employees in financial crisis.

Provide a solid wellbeing package - healthcare, wellness, or mental health support where possible.

Upskilling & Career Development – raising aspirations!

Provide training, mentoring, and internal mobility so employees can grow into higher-paying roles.

Fund certifications or qualifications that improve long-term employability.

Advocacy & Partnerships

Support policies like affordable housing, public transport, and universal childcare.

Collaborate with other businesses and non-profits to address poverty systemically.

Transparency & Reporting

Measure and report on how your business impacts income inequality, job quality, and community wellbeing.

Set poverty-related KPIs: % of staff earning a living wage, monitor turnover among low-paid workers, etc.

Employee Voice

Create safe, inclusive channels for workers - especially low-paid staff - to share concerns and shape decisions.

Decision making

Always consider ‘how would this impact our most disadvantaged employees or groups of employees?’, so that you are mindful of additional pressure you may possibly add.



When addressing poverty within an organisation, businesses should ask thoughtful, respectful, and non-intrusive questions that can uncover hidden challenges while preserving dignity and trust. Here are several types of questions companies could ask their employees - ideally through anonymous surveys or one-on-one conversations with HR or wellbeing staff:

Understanding the Employee's Financial Wellbeing

- Do you feel your current income meets your basic living needs (e.g. food, housing, utilities)?
- Have you had to skip meals or go without essentials due to financial constraints in the past 12 months?
- Do you feel financial stress impacts your ability to focus or perform your work effectively?
- Are you currently working multiple jobs to meet your household needs?

Access to Support and Resources

- Are you aware of any financial wellbeing support (e.g. hardship funds, salary advances, financial advice) offered by the organisation?
- Have you ever needed to access any workplace support due to financial hardship? If so, was it helpful?
- What types of support or resources would help ease financial strain (e.g. childcare help, transport assistance, food programmes)?

Organisational Culture and Inclusion

- Do you feel comfortable discussing financial difficulties with someone at work (e.g. a manager or HR)?
- Do you believe the organisation understands and responds effectively to the impacts of poverty on staff?
- Have you ever felt excluded from workplace activities (e.g. social events, team lunches, dress code expectations) due to cost?

Improving Systems and Policy

- What changes could the organisation make to better support employees experiencing financial hardship?
- Do you think the organisation offers fair and equitable pay for the work you do?
- Would flexible working, paid time off, or different scheduling support your financial and personal wellbeing?

Family and External Pressures

- Do financial pressures outside of work (e.g. caring for family, school costs, housing) affect your work life?
- Are you a caregiver for a child, elder, or relative, and does that impact your financial wellbeing?

Optional Demographics (for deeper insight, always anonymised)

- Household size
- Commuting distance/time
- Dependents (children, elders, etc.)
- Access to transportation, internet, or stable housing



Who are Victoria Academies Trust?

We are a family of schools, united in our passion for inspiring pupils to achieve more than they imagine possible. We have a positive influence on children's lives in areas where we can make the most difference. We are ambitious for our children. Our high expectations of them, the memorable experiences and opportunities they have in our schools, along with the kindness and compassion which is at the centre of our Trust, means that they will be successful in whatever they choose for their future. We are at the heart of our communities; a place where local people can turn to for help, support and guidance, working with us for the greater good of our shared community. We are aspirational for our people, who are given opportunities to grow, develop and become experts in their chosen fields. Our people feel valued and supported; they show ambition, courage, and resilience, but most of all are kind and respectful.

What is our Community Partners event all about?

This event brings together the fantastic partners that we currently work with across Victoria Academies Trust, as well as new partners and organisations who are working in or serving the same communities within which our schools are based. The idea of creating our Community Partners is driven by one of our key commitments: to ensure that all children who attend Victoria Academies Trust schools can access a range of high quality and life changing experiences.

Through establishing our Community Partners, we aim to:

- Build a network of individuals and organisations that want to support the children and families that attend our schools in the West Midlands. By working with people that we trust, we can do this together
- Offer greater opportunities for our children to have life changing experiences, created and driven by this network
- Create a sustainable model that will allow us to generate income and opportunities, that can make these life changing experiences possible and achievable
- Build a network of organisations that will benefit, in tangible ways, from supporting our schools



Why do we need your help?

As educators, we know it is vital that pupils gain these learning experiences. It teaches them about the world around them and raises aspirations to look beyond their immediate community. They can see and learn things other than the situation that they know, and aspire towards an adulthood where they may strive beyond the social deprivation they may have been trapped within.

We want children to understand more of the curriculum and need them to have these cultural experiences – not only to help them to remember, but to be truly inspired! Furthermore, providing these experiences for our children with special educational needs is absolutely vital for learning; creating connection to the world they are learning about.

These children may be your future workforce. They may be your future customers. They may forever remember the experiences that they gain in school, thanks to working with partners like yourselves.

How can we become a VAT Community Partner?

Being a VAT Community Partner might look different for different organisations, depending on your own business model, how you want to engage, your capacity, corporate social responsibility agendas, your marketing budget, your opportunities for volunteering or for financially supporting us with this commitment.

There are three main ways that you can become one of our VAT Community Partners:

- Becoming a **VAT Community Member**, at the subscription level most appropriate to your organisation
- Becoming a **VAT Learning Experience Partner**
- Becoming a **VAT Supporter**, by offering your in-kind support opportunities and engagement



VAT Community Member – Our subscription model

By subscribing for regular monthly or yearly amounts, we can use funds to direct towards learning experiences that are felt to be the most important to schools and the children.

This model is the most cost-effective way for partners to engage, as it allows for predictable amounts to be supporting our overall cause, whilst allowing partners to financially plan.

For regular engagement in our subscription model, partners will receive specific benefits:

<i>Level of engagement and cost</i>	<i>Benefits for engagement</i>
Bronze <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly subscription - £12.50 per month• Yearly subscription - £150 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logos and blurb about your support on our VAT website partners page• Logos featured during our VAT conference
Silver <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly subscription - £25 per month• Yearly subscription - £300 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logos and blurb about your support on our VAT website partners page• Logos featured during our VAT conference• Termly featured extracts and advertising in our VAT all staff newsletter
Gold <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly subscription - £50 per month• Yearly subscription - £600 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logos and blurb about your support on our VAT website partners page• Logos featured during our VAT conference• Termly featured extracts and advertising in our VAT all staff newsletter• Individual logo and blurb on all schools' entrance area screens, promoting your company and support of Trust schools to all parents
Platinum <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly subscription - £75 per month• Yearly subscription - £900 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logos and blurb about your support on our VAT website partners page• Logos featured during our VAT conference• Termly featured extracts and advertising in our VAT all staff newsletter• Individual logo and blurb on all schools' entrance area screens, promoting your company and support of Trust schools to all parents• Complimentary exhibitions stand at our yearly VAT conference



VAT Learning Experience Partner - sponsoring specific Learning Experiences

A particular company may wish to offer sponsorship towards the cost of every child in a year group across the Trust (550 pupils across the 10 schools) to take place in one of the five identified learning experiences that feel fundamental to their curriculum offer. These 5 learning experiences are: to visit the beach; a farm; a site of historical interest such as a castle, museum or settlement; to watch a theatre performance; and a visit to a science centre.

You may wish to choose to offer sponsorship towards pupils taking part in your chosen specific experience because you believe it be important and aligned to your organisation purpose or vision.

<i>Learning experience</i>	<i>Why is this so important?</i>	<i>Cost for all children in VAT to undertake this learning experience in the academic year</i>
The beach	To experience the coast, the sand and the sea; to understand that the UK is an island and see where and what its coastline is like; to contrast a location so different to where they live.	A beach trip for each pupil costs £20 per head The total cost of all children in a year group across the Trust attending the beach is: £11,000.00
A farm	To recognise plants and crops that grow; to recognise animals and livestock; to contrast a location so different to where they live; to learn about the farming industry and its importance to the UK.	A farm trip for each pupil costs £20 per head The total cost of all children in a year group across the Trust attending a farm is: £11,000.00
A site of historical interest	To help understand the passing of time; to visit first hand sites significant to the time period they are learning about; to handle artefacts and replicas; to be inspired by archaeologists or curators who work in the historic fields, raising their aspirations into unknown careers; to recognise how different places were in the past.	A trip to a site of historical interest for each pupil costs £15 per head The total cost of all children in a year group across the Trust attending a site of historical interest is: £8,250.00
The theatre	To experience stories told in different ways; to experience awe and wonder; to laugh and enjoy a performance; to experience the world of the arts and theatre, feeling inspired by actors, musicians and staff working in theatres.	An experience of watching a theatre performance for each pupil costs £10 per head The total cost of all children in a year group across the Trust of watching a theatre performance is: £5,500.00
A science centre	To gain hands-on learning experiences of scientific equipment that are not possible to access in a primary school; to make abstract concepts more tangible by seeing processes occur; to learn about inspiring scientists, past and present.	A trip to a science centre for each pupil costs £15 per head The total cost of all children in a year group across the Trust to visit a science centre is: £8,250.00



VAT Supporter - in-kind support opportunities and engagement

If you or your organisation are unable to engage in our VAT Community Member or Learning Experience sponsorship, you can still become involved in different ways! There are a range of opportunities to become a VAT Supporter and help us to provide a variety of experiences for pupils, without the financial engagement.

- **Provision of Curriculum experiences**

Can your organisation help us to deliver high quality curriculum experiences to our pupils in an affordable manner? Alongside our specific Learning Experiences for each pupil in the Trust, all of our schools wish to provide high quality trips and experiences across all classes. Yet finance continues to be a major barrier, and we want to make sure this does not affect our ability to work with quality partners. We would love to discuss with you how we might work with you across our schools, to enhance the curriculum offer we can provide to our children.

- **Volunteering for staffing of trips / experiences/ in-school projects**

One of the major barriers to trips and experiences taking place is the significant impact it has on staffing in schools. To be able to support all children to take part in off site visits, we require a large number of staff to accompany groups and individuals at appropriate ratios. This often means affecting staffing in other classes, and with many members of staff attached to small groups or 1:1 provision, this sometimes makes trips impossible to run. Do you have members of your staff team who are DBS checked and would like to volunteer their time to accompany a school trip or to help with in-school projects like gardening or painting? If so, we would love for you to support us in this way!

- **Engagement in our VAT Careers Roadshow**

Can your company or organisation help us to create our newly envisaged Careers Roadshow? We are working to take on tour around the region a careers event for our year 6 pupils, exposing them to jobs and the world of work! Many of our children require the opportunity to meet role models, who work across a range of industries, to raise their aspirations of what their future may hold. Many of our schools are located in areas where they may not be exposed to many professional careers; higher or further education may have never been considered as an opportunity; or are growing up in families where they are not exposed to adults who regularly work.

By collaborating across the region and our schools within the Trust, we hope to share opportunities for the future that pupils may not have known as possibilities. We would love to have you feature as part of this roadshow, promoting your organisation and your industry to both pupils and their families.

How to express your interest

If you are interested in discussing opportunities for becoming a Community Partner with Victoria Academies Trust, please get in touch:

community.partners@victrust.org

