

Renée and family: ‘Well, we’re not rich...’

[Hackney, Inner London]

Renée: I wouldn’t say I’m rich. I wouldn’t say I’m well off. So I would put myself in between – poor/mediocre.

Renée: Well, financially, for this month, with my bills, my telephone bill has been cut off because I haven’t got the finance to pay it. I’ve got my gas bill outstanding at the moment, my electricity bill outstanding.

Edith: You have to use your brain nowadays to think how can I pay that, when can I pay? Sometimes people running you down, and you are rushing, going from head to toes to get the money to pay the people.

Girvan: I think my family sometimes struggles with the bills but I know that in London there is always someone that is always worse off than you.

Renée: Childcare. Childcare is a mortgage. At the moment, for my daughter I am paying £115.80 a week for nursery. Due to my work pattern I also have to get a cab to take my daughter to nursery. I think I am coming up to £1000, and that’s in arrears. And I am thinking, what do I do? Do I pay for the cab fare or do I leave my telephone cut off? Every month I have to make a sacrifice.

Renée: I get help from the government. A chunk goes out for her nursery fees. A chunk goes out for Tyrone, for after school club because of the hours I work. Then I’ve got to pay for their lunch fees because I don’t get no help with school meals. I don’t get no uniform allowance. I have to do that all by myself.

Edith: This generation it is harder. We have nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. When you have a little, it’s still hard.

Tyrone: I have never had my friends come around to my house before.

Renée: It’s heartbreaking to think about it because I could have more friends coming around, have more social life, which I don’t – it’s like at a standstill. Then for the children – their social lives – their friends don’t come here. They like to go out and explore. They don’t want to be enclosed, so when I do have that time or if I have the finance I do take them out.

Cheyrice: For my school trips we haven’t been anywhere, like abroad. Most of the trips we have been on are free or the school pays for us.

- Renée:** Three years ago I took them to Welbourne safari park, could even be longer. They would like to do more activities but they do understand it's only mummy. The money's not there. We have to make do.
- Cheyrice:** If I wanted to ballet or dance or something like that I don't think I'd be able to afford it.
- Tyrone:** I would like more exciting books. I don't have any of those books that involve something that we're learning in class.
- Renée:** You also think about the future. What's going to happen if they want to go to university? Where would I find that surplus of money to pay for them?
- Tyrone:** I would like to be a lawyer. When I am a lawyer I would like to give people advice about house rents and all their problems.
- Renée:** My dreams for my children – the foremost is for them to be happy, to be comfortable, have their education, see that they have a good job, and they can go on their merry ways and enjoy their life. That's my dream for my children.

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