

First Minister
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Tuesday 28th November 2023

Dear First Minister,

As a broad range of charities, community groups, academics, trade unions and faith groups, we are writing to urge you to ensure that your first Budget as First Minister includes significant additional investment across government portfolios to tackle child poverty.

In particular, as a first step we call on you to **increase the Scottish Child Payment to the £30 per week you committed to during your leadership campaign**¹. [Independent analysis](#) actually suggests a payment of £40 per week will be needed to be sure child poverty falls in line with government targets. By April 2024, this crucial payment will not have been increased for 16 months. Yet, during that period, families have been facing inflation rates that haven't been seen for decades – with costs still rising, and low-income households worst affected.

As organisations and individuals working with and for families struggling on low incomes, we welcomed your promise in May that “[shifting the dial on poverty – and child poverty in particular](#)” will be a “defining mission” of your government during this Parliament. Your subsequent promise to “[maximise every lever at our disposal to tackle the scourge of poverty](#)” is also highly encouraging. These commitments build on the very real progress being made on child poverty because of policies the Scottish Government have already put in place – not least the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment and increases to its value. These are making a real difference to the lives of children across Scotland and have laid a strong foundation, which must now be built upon.

The harsh reality is that tens of thousands of children remain locked in poverty – with children in lone parent families, in families affected by disability and in minority ethnic families amongst those at particularly high risk. [Your own government's analysis](#) shows that existing policies are not yet sufficient to meet statutory child poverty targets. Substantial further action and investment is therefore still urgently needed to realise your promise to ‘shift the dial’, while ensuring that our legal targets are delivered in full.

The upcoming Budget is therefore a critical test of your government's willingness to match ambition with the tax and spending plans needed to realise that ambition. For the tens of thousands of children still locked in poverty, further action and investment cannot come soon enough.

Alongside social security, additional investment is, of course, needed across a range of government portfolios, to fund action in areas such as early learning and childcare, employability, fair work, whole family support and housing. Action is also needed to further tackle the gender inequalities, such as women's low pay, that are inextricably linked to high levels of child poverty. The budget

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2023/mar/07/snp-leadership-debate-live-hamza-yousaf-kate-forbes-and-ash-regan-to-set-out-visions-for-scotland> and <https://twitter.com/CPAGScotland/status/1633482352193052673>

must harness and allocate sufficient resources to ensure the range of measures set out in the statutory child poverty delivery plan – [Best Start, Bright Futures](#) – can be fully implemented and built upon. We therefore urge you to apply a robust test across the budget: will this meaningfully support Scotland’s child poverty ambitions?

Of course, we understand that the government faces a difficult financial context. But with hard-up families across Scotland already making impossible choices between putting food on the table, paying the bills or getting into debt, it is vital that your government makes the choice to prioritise addressing child poverty in all tax and spending decisions.

After all, investing in the social security and public service infrastructure needed to prevent child poverty is not only the right thing to do for our children, it is also essential for our collective economic wellbeing and the future sustainability of our public finances. [Analysis for CPAG](#) shows the cost of child poverty – in additional public spending and lower earnings in adulthood – has risen to £39 billion a year across the UK, whilst [work by IPPR for Save the Children and the JRF](#) suggests child poverty is costing the Scottish economy £2.4 billion a year.

We therefore collectively urge you to double down on the investment the Scottish Government is already making by ensuring the forthcoming Budget resources the further action needed to deepen progress. Crucially, this must include delivering the vital increase to the Scottish Child Payment that you rightly highlighted as being so important in your leadership campaign, alongside systematically proofing every budget decision for its impact on child poverty.

Only by taking these steps, coupled with the use of the Scottish Government’s wider powers, can our shared vision of a Scotland free of child poverty be realised.

Yours sincerely,

SallyAnn Kelly OBE, Chief Executive, Aberlour Children’s Charity

Fiona Steel, National Director for Scotland, Action for Children

Martin Crewe, Director, Barnardo’s Scotland

Mary Glasgow, Chief Executive, Children 1st

Dr Judith Turbyne, Chief Executive, Children in Scotland

Anna Ritchie Allan, Executive Director, Close the Gap

John Dickie, Director of CPAG in Scotland

Nancy Louks, Chief Executive, Families Outside

Martin Dorchester, Chief Executive, Includem

Angela Moohan, Chief Executive, The Larder

Satwat Rehman, Director, One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS)

Jamie Livingstone, Head of Oxfam Scotland

Amy Woodhouse, Chief Executive Officer, Parenting Across Scotland

Peter Kelly, Director, Poverty Alliance

Claire Telfer, Head of Scotland, Save the Children

Polly Jones, Head of Scotland, The Trussell Trust

Danielle Flecher-Horn, Founder, AberNecessities

Linda Tuthill, CEO, The Action Group

Arlene Astley, Operations and Development Manager, Advocard

Drew McKinney, Manager, Agape Wellbeing and Sensory Hub

Mariam Ahmed, CEO, Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre.

Revd William Nolan, Archbishop of Glasgow

Suzanne Slavin, Chief Executive Officer, Ayr Housing Aid Centre

Professor Mike Danson, Chair, Basic Income Network Scotland

Tanveer Parnez, Director of National Developments, BEMIS Scotland

Brian Buchanan, Director, BRB Electrical Ltd

Frank Mosson, Bureau Manager, Bridgeton Citizens Advice Bureau

Gary Meek, CEO, Blue Triangle

Ruth MacLennan CEO, and Margaret Caldwell, Chairperson, Care for Carers

Richard Meade, Director, Carers Scotland

Becky Duff, Director for Scotland, Carers Trust

Jen Wallace, Director of Policy and Evidence, Carnegie UK

Claire Burns, Director, CELCIS

Nicola Killean, Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland

Rami Okasha, Chief Executive, Children's Hospices Across Scotland (CHAS)

Gareth McNab, Director of External Affairs, Christians Against Poverty

Emma Jackson, Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group, The Church of Scotland

Derek Mitchell, CEO, Citizens Advice Scotland

Sensei Karl Kaliski, Director, Cloud Water Zen Centre

Rachel Cackett, CEO, Coalition of Care & Support Providers in Scotland

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Teresa Sutherland, CEO, Community Help & Advice Initiative

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Ewan Aitken, CEO, Cyrenians

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Roslyn Neely, CEO, Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity

Brenda Black, CEO, Edinburgh Community Food

Bethany Biggar, Director, Edinburgh Food Project

Andrea Bradley, General Secretary, EIS

Frazer Scott, CEO of Energy Action Scotland

Catherine Murphy, Executive Director, Engender.

Cathy Sexton, Director, Fathers Network Scotland,

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Cheryl Ward, Chief Executive Officer, Family Fund

Laura Millar, Strategic Manager, Fife Gingerbread

Charlene Gold, Business Operations Administrator, Food For Thought Foodbank

Biddy Kelly, Managing Director, Fresh Start

Ashley Thomson, Youth Programmes Manager, Fuse Youth Cafe, Shettleston

Helene van der Ploeg, Chief Executive, Grassmarket Community Project

Professor Chik Collins, Director, Glasgow Centre for Population Health

Ian Bruce, Chief Executive, Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector

Fatima Uygun, CEO, Govanhill Baths Community Trust

Carol Reid, Director of Customer Services, Grampian Housing Association

Sara Redmond, Chief Officer of Development, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

Hannah Barrows, Deputy Chief Officer (Interim), Highland First Sector Interface

Peter Grigg, CEO, Home-Start UK

Margaret-Ann Brünjes, CEO, Homeless Network Scotland

Jim Elder-Woodward, Chairperson, Inclusion Scotland

Sabine Goodwin, Director, Independent Food Aid Network

Celia Tennant, CEO, Inspiring Scotland

Philip Whyte, Director, IPPR Scotland

Dave Watson, Director, Jimmy Reid Foundation

Chris Birt, Associate Director for Scotland, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Jill Kent, Chairperson, Justice and Peace Scotland

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Marguerite Hunter Blair, Chief Executive, Play Scotland

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Rachel Green, Director, The Ripple

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Dr. Carey Lunan, Scottish Deep End Project

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Sally Thomas, CEO, SFHA

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Mandy Morgan, Chief Executive, Scottish Pantry Network

Professor John McKendrick, Co-Director, Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit

Rozanne Foyer, General Secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress

Euan Leitch, Chief Executive, SURF - Scotland's Regeneration Forum

Dr. Marsha Scott, CEO, Scottish Women's Aid

Agnes Tolmie, Chair of The Scottish Women's Convention

Mollie McGoran MSYP, Chair, Scottish Youth Parliament

Alison Watson, Director, Shelter Scotland

Trishna Singh OBE, Founder/Director, Sikh Sanjog

Ravinder Kaur Nijjar, Advisor, Sikhs in Scotland

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