

OPEN LETTER TO SNP LEADERSHIP CANDIDATES

12th March 2023

Dear Kate Forbes MSP, Ash Regan MSP and Humza Yousaf MSP,

We are writing to you as SNP leadership candidates to urge you to commit to building on the hugely positive progress toward ending child poverty that has been made under the current First Minister.

The securing of unanimous cross party support for the 2017 Child Poverty (Scotland) Act; the use of devolved social security powers to deliver, and increase, the Scottish Child Payment and other family benefits; the place of child poverty as a '[national mission](#)'ⁱ and one of the government's [top three strategic priorities](#),ⁱⁱ and the way tackling child poverty has been prioritized across government departments and portfolios has all ensured the building blocks are now in place for real progress.

Encouragingly, Scottish Government and independent modeling all suggest we will see significant reductions in child poverty in the coming years, with the interim target to reduce child poverty to less than 18% by 2024 now within reach. As a recent [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)ⁱⁱⁱ analysis demonstrated low-income families are substantially better off than their counterparts elsewhere in the UK as a direct result of Scottish tax and benefit policies.

As a result, many families are now able to put food on the table without the indignity of relying on food banks, children are able to join their friends in activities previously denied to them, and struggling parents have felt their financial worries lessen and mental health improved. The extra cash support provided by the Scottish Child Payment has been spent on nappies and other essentials, and it has also helped parents travel to interviews, a new job, or college – opening up opportunities that have the potential to create long term routes out of poverty.

We were very pleased to hear you all agree on the need for further increases to the Scottish Child Payment in the first televised leadership debate. But we know the job is very far from being achieved and we now **ask you to commit to keep ending child poverty at the very top of the Scottish Government's priorities**, if you become the new leader of the SNP, and subsequently the next First Minister.

One in four children are still officially recognised as living in poverty and [recent analysis](#) from Loughborough University shows a harsh reality of rising costs outstripping additional Scottish government supports.^{iv} Between April and September 2022, the Trussell Trust network alone distributed almost 40,000 parcels for children in Scotland, the most ever.^v These levels of child poverty damage not just individual children and families, they also impose huge costs on local and national government budgets and place a brake on our economic future.

Meeting Scotland's legal 2030 targets toward ending child poverty will require a Scottish Government that does not just sustain and secure current policy but builds on it. Further investment in the Scottish Child Payment will need to be accompanied by action to: tackle women's poverty; close disability and race employment gaps; increase family friendly employment opportunities; increase person-centered employability support; ensure paid employment is a reliable route out of poverty; enhance access to funded high quality childcare; and ensure that holistic whole family support – including practical, emotional and financial support – is available to all families needing help.

We therefore **ask you to set out the additional polices you would bring forward to address these barriers to further progress and commit to ensuring the statutory targets set out in the 2017 Child Poverty (Scotland) Act are met.**

There is nothing inevitable about child poverty. With political will, sustained and deep commitment, and the right policies in place it can be eradicated. We now look forward to hearing your views on how you will build on the progress already made and help turn the vision of a Scotland free of child poverty into a reality.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Ann Kelly, Chief Executive, Aberlour Child Care Trust

Fiona Steel, (Interim) Director for Scotland, Action for Children

Martin Crewe, Director of 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 Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland

Christine Carlin, Director Scotland, Home-Start UK

Martin Dorchester, CEO, includem

Craig Samuel, Scotland Representative, National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers (NAWRA)

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

Jamie Livingstone, Head of Oxfam Scotland

Margaret Gibb, Interim CEO, Parenting Across Scotland

Peter Kelly, Director, Poverty Alliance

Claire Telfer, Head of Scotland, Save the Children

Polly Jones, Head of Scotland, The Trussell Trust

Suzanne Slavin, Chief Executive Officer, AYR HOUSING AID CENTRE

Frank Mosson, Bureau Manager, Bridgeton Citizens Advice Bureau

Ruth MacLennan, CEO, Care for Carers

Louise Morgan, Director of Scotland, Carers Trust

Jennifer Wallace, Director Policy and Evidence, Carnegie UK

Teresa Sutherland, Interim Project Manager, CHAI

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

Emma Jackson, National Director Scotland, Christians Against Poverty

Fiona Rae, Chief Executive, Community Food Initiatives North East

Marie Ward, CEO, Cranhill Development Trust

Ewan Aitken, Chief Executive, CYRENIANS

Jane Brumpton, CEO, Early Years Scotland

Roslyn Neely, CEO, Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity

Bethany Biggar, Director, Edinburgh Food Project

Andrea Bradley, General Secretary, EIS

Frazer Scott, Chief Executive Officer, Energy Action Scotland

Cat Murphy, Executive Director, Engender

Prof Nancy Loucks OBE, Families Outside

Jimmy Wilson, CEO, FARE Scotland

Biddy Kelly, Managing Director, Fresh Start

Chik Collins, Director, GCPH

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

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

Leo Starrs-Cunningham, Convenor, Inclusion Scotland

Sabine Goodwin, Director, Independent Food Aid Network

Philip Whyte, Director, IPPR Scotland

Chris Birt, Associate Director for Scotland, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Dr Niki Powers, Managing Director, Let's Talk (Young People)

Liane Coia, Operations Manager, Maryhill Integration Network

Mairi McCallum, Project Manager, Moray Food Plus

Pete Ritchie, Executive Director, Nourish Scotland

Glenn Liddall, Chief Executive, People Know How

Marguerite Hunter Blair, CEO, Play Scotland

Elaine Downie, Co-ordinator, The Poverty Truth Community

Shumela Ahmed, Managing Director, Resilience Learning Partnership

Dr Mairi Stark, RCPCH Officer for Scotland, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

Graeme McAlister, Chief Executive, Scottish Childminding Association

Dr Carey Lunan, Chair, Scottish Deep End Project

Justina Murray, Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol & Drugs

Irene Audain MBE, Chief Executive, Scottish Out of School Care Network

Dr Marsha Scott, Chief Executive, Scottish Women's Aid

Paul Traynor, Head of External Affairs, Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance

Trishna Singh OBE Founder/Director Sikh Sanjog

Sharon McAulay, Chief Executive, Star Project

Rozanne Foyer, General Secretary, STUC

Danny Collins, National President, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Scotland

Pauline Buchan, Strategic Manager, The Cottage Family Centre

Angela Moohan, CEO, The Larder

Juliet Harris, Director, Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)

Tracey Dalling, Regional Secretary, UNISON Scotland

Pat Rafferty, Regional Secretary, Unite Scotland

Lisa Hough-Stewart, Interim Co-Director, WEAll Scotland

Rob McDowall, Chair, Welfare Scotland

Carolyn Currie, Chief Executive, Women's Enterprise Scotland

Hugh Foy, Director: Programmes and Partnerships, Xaverians UK Region

Rachel Adamson and Laura Tomson, Co-Directors, Zero Tolerance

Annette Hastings, Professor of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow

Professor John McKendrick, Co-Director of Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit, Glasgow Caledonian University

Prof. James Mitchell, Professor of Politics and International Relations, University of Edinburgh

Adrian Sinfield, Professor Emeritus of Social Policy, University of Edinburgh

Prof. Sharon Wright FAcSS, Professor of Social Policy, University of Glasgow

ⁱ <https://www.gov.scot/news/prioritising-national-mission-to-tackle-child-poverty/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equality-fairer-scotland-budget-statement-2023-24/#:~:text=The%20Scottish%20Government's%202023%2D24,and%20achieving%20sustainable%20public%20services.>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/R242-Analysis-of-scottish-tax-and-benefit-reforms_0.pdf

^{iv} https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/Cost_of_a_child_in_Scotland_2022_update%20%281%29.pdf

^v https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/11/MYS-Nation-and-Regional-briefing_Scotland.pdf