

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

22 May 2024

Dear First Minister,

We are writing as members of the End Child Poverty coalition in Scotland to congratulate you on your election as First Minister. We have been hugely encouraged by your commitment to make eradicating child poverty your number one priority - your 'principle policy interest'.

The recent Scottish Government data showing that one in four children in Scotland remain locked in poverty is deeply concerning. There is no question, as you are aware, that more action will be needed to make the scale and pace of progress required to meet Scotland's statutory child poverty targets in 2030, never mind eradicate child poverty altogether. As a crucial first step, and to demonstrate the priority you attach to reducing child poverty, we urge you to deliver an immediate above-inflation increase to the Scottish Child Payment and commit to ensuring it reaches at least £40 per week by the end of the parliament. We believe this step would secure support across Parliament, make a very immediate difference to children's lives, and deliver a substantive impact on the child poverty figures. We also urge you to use the Scottish social security system to make additional payments for those families affected by the UK government's punitive two child limit and young parent penalty.

Building on the Scottish Government's positive track record to restore the value of social security for families amid the continuing cost-of-living crisis is vital to preventing child poverty. However, action is also needed to increase income from paid work and to reduce the costs families face. As members of the End Child Poverty coalition, we believe delivering on your ambition to eradicate child poverty will need action across Cabinet portfolios to:

- specifically tackle intersectional gender inequality and women's poverty,
- invest in a system of childcare that enables women's socio-economic and labour market equality, advances children's rights, and addresses child poverty,
- close disability and race employment gaps,
- increase employment opportunities that work for parents and unpaid carers while using every devolved-lever available to encourage employers to provide good quality work,
- target action for the priority groups within the Child Poverty Delivery Plan, for example, children living in minority ethnic households, given their disproportionately high child poverty rate,
- increase employability support which is tailored to meet the needs of parents in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan priority families,
- deliver an adequate supply of affordable, secure, and good quality family housing,
- boost support to migrant women and children,
- invest substantially in paid and unpaid care, those who experience it and all those who provide it, and work to address the undervaluation of caring in our society,

- ensure that holistic whole family support – including practical, emotional and financial support – is available to all families needing help,
- tackle the debt crisis and the role public debt plays in trapping families in poverty,
- use devolved tax powers progressively and ambitiously to raise the revenue needed to boost investment in the full range of actions needed to end child poverty.

We would be very happy to discuss with you and your government how progress can be made across all these areas – drawing on our expertise and those of the families we work with.

Members of End Child Poverty work with a wide range of families and can help bring an understanding of how poverty impacts on different types of families – including the priority groups rightly identified in the child poverty delivery plan – in ways that official statistics do not always pick up. We can help bring an intersectional understanding of how families experience poverty to help ensure policies meet the needs of all children in Scotland.

As you have made so clear yourself, 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 look forward to hearing from you and to working with you and your government to help turn our shared vision of a Scotland free of child poverty into a reality.

Yours sincerely,

SallyAnn Kelly OBE, Chief Executive, Aberlour Children’s Charity
 Fiona Steel, 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
 Jatin Haria, Executive Director, The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER)
 Calum Campbell, on behalf of the End Child Poverty Youth Ambassadors
 Catherine Murphy, Executive Director, Engender
 Prof. Nancy Loucks, Chief Executive Officer, Families Outside
 Martin Dorchester, CEO, includem
 Satwat Rehman, Director, One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS)
 Jamie Livingstone, Head of Oxfam Scotland
 Amy Woodhouse, 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

On behalf of the members of the End Child Poverty coalition in Scotland