Open letter: Ensure families in temporary or supported accommodation do not miss out on Scottish child payment

23 November 2026

Dear Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing,

We are writing to you to raise our concerns that some families in temporary accommodation are missing out on Scottish child payment.

Scottish child payment is having a positive impact on families across Scotland, helping pay for essentials and improve the lives and wellbeing of children and parents. It is one of the most effective tools available to the Scottish Government for tackling child poverty, and we have seen the impact of this in the latest statistics which show child poverty in Scotland falling, while it has reached a record high for the UK as a whole.

However, some of the children who could benefit most from this support are being excluded from it.

Families living in temporary or supported accommodation can miss out on Scottish child payment because their housing costs are met through housing benefit rather than universal credit. As housing benefit is not currently a qualifying benefit for Scottish child payment, some families are denied this support solely because of the type of accommodation they are living in.

More than 10,700 children are currently living in temporary accommodation in Scotland. Families in temporary accommodation face additional day-to-day costs for example due to the location and conditions of their accommodation.

For these families, Scottish child payment could be a vital form of support to help cover the cost of essentials. If these families were in permanent accommodation, they would get help to pay the rent from universal credit, meaning they would receive Scottish child payment.

The fact that housing benefit is not a qualifying benefit for Scottish child payment creates a fundamental unfairness in the system for families who are already more likely to be in a vulnerable situation, such as survivors of domestic abuse.

However, with the new regulation-making powers in the Social Security (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2025, the Scottish Government now has the power to end this unfairness.

We are calling on the Scottish Government to make a commitment to use these powers to make housing benefit a qualifying benefit for Scottish child payment. We estimate at

least 3,700 children would benefit from this policy at a cost of £5 million to the Scottish Government.

This should be part of broader action and investment to tackle child poverty including increasing the value of Scottish child payment to at least £40 per child per week (and to £55 by the end of this parliament) and increasing investment in the Affordable Housing Supply Programme to buy and build more social homes, with a focus on acquisitions of family-sized homes.

Scottish child payment has shown us all that child poverty is not inevitable and change is possible. Families across Scotland are benefitting from this investment in children, and the Scottish Government should act now to ensure that families in temporary accommodation are not missing out on this support.

Yours sincerely,

John Dickie, Director, Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland

Gordon Llewellyn-MacRae, Interim Director, Shelter Scotland

Nicola Killean, Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland

Emma Jackson, Assistant Director of Policy and Research, Citizens Advice Scotland