

A new vision for social security

Welcome to the autumn issue of *Poverty*. I'm really pleased to announce – hot off the press – that CPAG has launched a new project, 'Secure Futures for Families and Children', aiming to develop a new vision for the future of social security. Our current system falls down against too many of the principles which we believe should underpin social security, and we're excited to be undertaking this piece of work: thinking afresh, going beyond the improvements we are pushing for in universal credit, and exploring the bigger questions of how we move away from the current dominance of means testing and rebuild a system which provides real security. Get in touch for more details or to get involved.

CPAG uses a wide range of approaches in its efforts to prevent and end child poverty, and articles in this issue tell the story of two very different ones. Our legal challenge to the benefit cap recently ended in defeat at the Supreme Court – a great disappointment for us and for the thousands of single parents and their children who continue to find themselves the main victims of this cruel policy. But it galvanised campaigners and did a great deal to raise the profile of the cap. And the judgment of the Supreme Court established a number of important legal points which could be helpful in future challenges. Carla Clarke, CPAG's Head of Strategic Litigation, explains the arguments at play in the case and discusses what we have learned from this experience and the potential for challenges of a similar nature in the future.

CPAG now hopes to take its legal challenge of the 'two-child limit' – described by Professor Jonathan Bradshaw as 'the worst social policy ever' – to the Supreme Court. Michelle – a mother of three – describes the impact the policy has had on her and what motivated her to attend parliament to talk about her experience. Stories like hers – and statistics showing the devastating impact of this policy – strengthen our resolve.

A very different approach is described by Rosie Ilett, co-ordinator of a project to develop participatory budgeting in Glasgow. Through a series of exercises, residents set priorities and awarded funds to local projects aimed at reducing child poverty or supporting struggling families and children. The Scottish government has a target that 1 per cent of all local authority budgets will be set using participatory budgeting, making this experience particularly important in informing future projects.

Our third feature turns to universal credit and looks in detail at the experiences of young people involved in the Youth Obligation – a programme of intensive support for 18–21-year-olds, supposed to help them find a job, apprenticeship or training. Abigail Gill from Centrepont discusses their recent research, and some of the findings are very worrying: despite starting with a variety of disadvantages and support, young people in the programme were more likely than others to be sanctioned, and universal credit was unable to offer them the sort of tailored support they need. And in our last feature, Eileen Evason and Kevin Higgins update us on the state of play for Northern Ireland's mitigation programme.

The last word goes to Ben Lomas, a passionate Member of the Youth Parliament who is championing a motion calling on the government to take action on poverty, especially among children and young people. We hope it will go all the way to a Youth Parliament debate in the House of Commons. ■

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Poverty is the policy journal of the Child Poverty Action Group. It aims to carry articles and features that will inform, stimulate and develop the debate on the nature and causes of poverty in its various forms and on the action required, especially by governments, to relieve and ultimately prevent it. Our objective is to publish material that achieves a high standard of analysis, without sacrificing clarity or accessibility, to specialist and non-specialist alike.

Editorial staff

Editor: Josephine Tucker
Production editor: Alison Key
Diary: Caroline Paskell

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 Telephone: 020 7837 7979
 staff@cpag.org.uk
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