

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

Tuesday 16th August 2021

Dear First Minister,

As a broad coalition of national organisations, community groups, academics, trade unions and faith groups, we are writing to you to urge you to use the upcoming Programme for Government to commit to doubling the Scottish Child Payment in this year's budget.

We welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to tackling child poverty, evidenced in the setting of statutory child poverty targets, introducing the Scottish Child Payment and the upcoming incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These steps have laid the foundation for tackling child poverty in Scotland and we have been delighted that they have been supported across Scotland's political spectrum.

This cross-party agreement was also evident in May's Holyrood elections, when all Scotland's five main political parties committed to doubling the Scottish Child Payment. Such political consensus is welcome, and provides the opportunity for your government to act quickly and decisively in doubling the payment now.

To do so would provide a lifeline to families who are struggling to stay afloat. Even before Covid-19, people across Scotland were being swept up in a rising tide of poverty, with child poverty rising in every Scottish local authority. And the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in Scotland and pulled many more people – particularly women, disabled people, and Black and minority ethnic people – into hardship. With women's poverty being inextricably linked to child poverty, the pandemic's impact has pulled children across Scotland ever-deeper into poverty. It has hit lone parents - the overwhelming majority of whom are women - particularly hard, a group already disproportionately affected by years of social security cuts.

Unlocking people from this poverty requires long-term work to tackle the structural inequalities around the labour market - particularly for women, disabled people and Black and minority ethnic people – and it will also require action like further expanding childcare provision. But we also need action now to boost incomes in the short term.

Every level of government has a duty to boost incomes where it can, and we are clear that the UK Government must scrap its planned and unjust £20 Universal Credit cut. But just as the UK Government has a moral responsibility to do the right thing, so too does the Scottish Government have a moral responsibility to use all of the powers at its disposal to loosen the grip of poverty on people's lives.

We have the powers, we have the urgent need, and we have the cross-party consensus to double the Scottish Child Payment. If your government is to truly make ending child poverty a 'national mission', and if we are to ensure that a more just Scotland emerges from the pandemic, then we must not delay. Children growing up in the grip of poverty right now – as well as their parents and care-givers - simply cannot endure until the end of this Parliament

to be unlocked from poverty. Their lives and life chances are too important for this action to wait.

The evidence is clear that if it is doubled now, it will represent the single most impactful action that could be taken to help meet the interim child poverty targets in 2023, and would signal that ending child poverty will be a defining priority for this Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament. If it is not, more and more children will be pulled into poverty and the opportunity to meet the interim child poverty targets will be missed. Under the current roll out plan and value, the Scottish Child Payment will reduce poverty in Scotland by between 2 and 3 percentage points. This could leave child poverty rates as high as 26% in 2023/24, when the interim target in legislation for that year is 18%. We cannot allow that to happen.

We therefore urge your government to do the right thing, to capitalise on the cross-party consensus that already exists, and to commit to doubling the Scottish Child Payment in this year's budget. We look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

Peter Kelly, Director, Poverty Alliance

Claire Telfer, Head of Scotland, Save the Children

Paul Carberry, Director for Scotland, Action for Children

SallyAnn Kelly, Chief Executive Officer, Aberlour

John Dickie, Director, CPAG in Scotland

Martin Crewe, Director, Barnardo's Scotland

Jamie Livingstone, Head of Oxfam Scotland

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

Amy Woodhouse, Joint Interim CEO, Children in Scotland

Christine Carlin, Scotland Director, Home-Start UK

Clare Simpson, Manager, Parenting Across Scotland

Anna Ritchie Allan, Executive Director, Close the Gap

Polly Jones, Head of Scotland, The Trussell Trust

Mary Glasgow, Chief Executive, Children 1st

Eilidh Dickson, Policy and Parliamentary Manager, Engender

Hugh Foy, Director, Xaverians UK Region

Russell Gunson, Director, IPPR Scotland

Dr Patrycja Kupiec, CEO, YWCA Scotland - The Young Women's Movement

The Rt Hon Lord Wallace of Tankerness QC (Jim Wallace), Moderator of the General Assembly, The Church of Scotland

Emma Cormack, Chief Executive Officer, The Health Agency

Gillian Kirkwood, Chief Executive, Y sort it Youth Centre

Agnes Tolmie, Chair, Scottish Women's Convention

Linda Tuthill, CEO, The Action Group

Steven McCluskey, CEO, Bikes for Refugees (Scotland)

Trishna Singh OBE, Director, Sikh Sanjog

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

Jimmy Wilson, CEO, FARE Scotland

Ian Bruce, Chief Executive, Glasgow CVS

Revd Gary Noonan, Minister, Houston and Killellan Kirk

Jacqui Reid, Project Lead, EBI Unites

Innes McMinn, Manager, Independent Living Support

Suzanne Slavin, CEO, Ayr Housing Aid Centre

Fiona Rae, Interim Chief Executive, Community Food Initiatives North East

Mhairi Snowden, Director, Human Rights Consortium Scotland

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

Tressa Burke, CEO, Glasgow Disability Alliance

Martin Wilkie-McFarlane, Director, Wellhouse Housing Association

Morna Simpkins, Scotland Director, MS Society

Kara Batchelor, Operations Manager, Alexander's Community Development

Murray Dawson, Chief Executive, Station House Media Unit

Ashli Mullen, Creative Director, Friends of Romano Lav

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

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

Rob McDowall, Chair, Welfare Scotland

Karen Birch, Chief Officer, Abundant Borders

Liane Coia, Operations Manager, Maryhill Integration Network

Annie Tohill, Project Worker, Kairos Women+

Traci Kirkland, Head of Charity, Govan Community Project

Emma Jackson, National Director Scotland, Christians Against Poverty

Alison Bavidge, National Director, Scottish Association of Social Work

Mairi McCallum, Project Manager, Moray Food Plus

Zoe Jordan, Stepping Stones North Edinburgh

Chris Birt, Deputy Director Scotland, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Martin Dorchester, CEO, Includem

Bethany Biggar, Director, Edinburgh Food Project

Rachel MacDonnell, Bureau Manager, East & Central Sutherland Citizens Advice Bureau

Larry Flanagan, General Secretary, EIS

Shona Blakeley, Executive Director, Women's Fund for Scotland

Rhona Willder, Development Manager, Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Joan McClure, Manager, Easterhouse Citizens Advice Bureau

Roy O'Kane FRSA, Chief Officer, Kanzen Karate

Craig Samuel, Scotland Representative, National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers

Margaret Caldwell, Chairperson, Care for Carers

Louise Hunter, Chief Executive, Who Cares? Scotland

Derek Mitchell, CEO, Citizens Advice Scotland

Emma Walker, Director, Camphill Scotland

Claire Burns, Director, CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection)

Moira Tasker, Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion Scotland

David Nallarattam, Director, Cross Ethnic

Professor Ian Welsh OBE, Chief Executive, Health and Social Care Alliance (the ALLIANCE)

Louise Morgan, Director for Scotland, Carers Trust Scotland

Teresa Sutherland, Interim Executive Manager, Community Help and Advice Initiative

Graeme McAlister, Chief Executive, Scottish Childminding Association

Roz Foyer, General Secretary, STUC

Rachel Adamson, Co-Director, Zero Tolerance

Susan Capaldi, Manager, Home Start Cowdenbeath

Sabine Goodwin, Coordinator, Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN)

Pat Rafferty, Scottish Secretary, Unite Scotland

Gavin Yates, CEO, Homeless Action Scotland

Lorraine Kelly, Scottish Policy Officer, Magic Breakfast

Rosyn Neely, CEO, Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity

Biddy Kelly, Managing Director, Fresh Start

Professor Annette Hastings, Professor of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow

Margo Uprichard, Chief Executive Officer, The Louise Project

Alison Watson, Director, Shelter Scotland

Frazer Scott, CEO, Energy Action Scotland

Jane Brumpton, Chief Executive, Early Years Scotland

Alan Thornburrow, Country Director, Business in the Community Scotland

Pete Ritchie, Executive Director, Nourish Scotland

Elaine Downie, Co-ordinator, Poverty Truth Community

Jen Broadhurst, Bureau Manager, Argyll & Bute Citizens Advice Bureau

David Walsh, Public Health Programme Manager, Glasgow Centre for Population Health

Ewan Aitken, CEO, Cyrenians

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

John McIntyre, Principal Trustee, Ferguslie Community Development Trust

Elodie Mignard, Programme Manager, Scottish Refugee Council

Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary, NASUWT

Genevieve Ileris, British Psychological Society

Tanveer Parnez, Director of National Development, BEMIS

Sebastian Fischer, Chief Executive, VOCAL (Voice of Carers Across Lothian)

Professor Nick Bailey, Professor of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow

Professor Sharon Wright, Professor of Social Policy, University of Glasgow

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

Kate Polson, Chief Executive, Rock Trust

Jimmy Paul, Director, WEAll Scotland

Claire Cairns, Director, Coalition of Carers in Scotland

Jan Savage, Director of Campaigns and Membership, ENABLE Scotland

Alison Wright, CEO, Carers of West Lothian

Frank Mosson, Manager, Bridgeton Citizens Advice Bureau

Sharon McAulay, Chief Executive, STAR Project

Professor James Mitchell, Professor of Public Policy, University of Edinburgh

John Cassidy, Chair, Scottish Communities for Health and Wellbeing

Brian Reid, Manager, Scottish Christian Alliance

Lesley Ross, Project Manager Youth Work Services, Pilton Youth and Children's Project

Sally Thomas, Chief Executive, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations

Duncan Cuthill, CEO, Edinburgh City Mission

Marguerite Hunter Blair, Chief Executive, Play Scotland

Sharon Colvin, CEO, 3D Drumchapel

Paul Stuart, Branch Secretary, UNISON Housing & Care Scotland Branch

Kelly McCann, Clackmannanshire Women's Aid

Fiona Dyer, Director – Interim, Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ)

Professor Nancy Loucks, Chief Executive, Families Outside

Narek Bido, Chief Executive, Addictions Support & Counselling