

## **End Child Poverty coalition statement of principles: Legislating for the eradication of child poverty by 2020**

We welcome the Government's commitment to enshrine the 2020 commitment to eradicate child poverty in legislation during the 2009 session of Parliament. We believe that putting the target into legislation is a major opportunity to shape and drive policy to tackle poverty and thereby improve children's chances and the quality of their childhood. Well designed legislation can offer a solid framework to appropriately direct policy and resources, and a robust monitoring framework to hold Government to account so that the UK keeps on track to a 2020 free of child poverty. Sufficient investment by Government will be vital to the success of this Bill in meeting the goal of ending child poverty by 2020.

It is vital, however, that the journey to 2020 has the best possible start - the focus on 2020 should not detract from the pressing need for Government to invest the necessary resources to reach the interim target of halving child poverty by 2010.

This document provides a set of principles that we believe must underpin the legislation, and this will form the basis of our organisations' lobbying on the forthcoming Bill. We are pleased at the political consensus that recognises child poverty as a major scar on British society and a cost we can no longer afford. Our organisations look forward to working with Government and Opposition parties to build on this consensus and provide an effective legislative base for eradicating child poverty once and for all.

### **Child poverty legislation must:**

**1) Define 'eradication of child poverty'.** The Government currently measures children experiencing relative low income, before housing costs<sup>1</sup>, in three ways:

- a) Children living in a household whose annual income is below 60 per cent of the contemporary median equivalised household income
- b) Children living in a household that is both materially deprived and whose annual income is below 70 per cent of the contemporary median equivalised household income
- c) Children living in a household whose annual income is below 60 per cent of the equivalised median income level in 1998/99, held constant in real terms.

The Government has indicated that the UK should be among the best in Europe on measure (a) and that measures (b) and (c) should approach zero; we agree. The relative low income target should be set at a precise numerical target of 5%<sup>2</sup> or below. This is to ensure that the UK sets its ambitions at achieving the lowest, sustainable rate possible. In addition, we wish to see the inclusion of a measure of persistent poverty which should approach zero.

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<sup>1</sup> The Government measures child poverty using before housing costs, the End Child Poverty Coalition uses after housing costs, which reflects the actual disposable income available to families in poverty.

<sup>2</sup> The Government has stated that the UK should be the 'amongst the best in Europe'. The lowest historically in Europe has been 5 per cent.

- 2) **Place a duty on Government for publishing annual progress reports, including data** on the extent of child poverty, to highlight progress made and set future priorities. Such reports must be laid before Parliament.
- 3) **Include a statutory duty on the UK Government to work with the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.** Any income targets would be UK wide as the tax and benefits system is not devolved. However, different elements of social policy, for example health and education, are devolved across the UK and achieving sustainable progress will require different tiers of Government working together.
- 4) **Establish a clear process and timescales for the publication of the first and subsequent strategy documents on child poverty.** Strategy documents must be comprehensive, consider all aspects of child well-being and how all families will be ensured an adequate income. They must be prepared in consultation with the Devolved Administrations as well as with delivery agencies – for example, representatives of local government, and the voluntary sector. There must be a duty on Government to publish strategy documents every three years and lay them before Parliament.
- 5) **Specify interim dates by which steps or key milestones towards the 2020 goal should be achieved** so that the UK's progress can be judged.
- 6) **Ensure that the process for formulating strategy is firmly linked to Government spending decisions – including, Comprehensive Spending Reviews and annual pre-budget reports and budgets.** Sufficient resources must be agreed by Parliament. Achieving constant, sustainable progress on raising family incomes and narrowing the gaps in other outcomes, such as housing and education, will require adequate resources at both national and local level. This could include new funding, bending existing funding streams to benefit the poorest families, or through making efficiency or other savings. Such decisions need to be taken within existing Government processes for allocating and reviewing expenditure.
- 7) **Require 'poverty-proofing' of all policies at both national and local levels.** As a wide range of policies impact on children, the Government must ensure there is a duty on all Whitehall departments and on local authorities to undertake and publish a poverty impact assessment of all policies. . The Government must work with the Devolved Administrations to ensure that this practice is replicated.
- 8) **Establish a clear role for inviting independent external challenge** through a scrutiny body and engagement with stakeholders, including families and children. Legislation should require the Government to have regard to the scrutiny body when setting the 2020 strategy, when reviewing the strategy or producing annual progress reports, and to lay these documents before Parliament.

- The 88 members of the coalition that have signed up to the common principles are:

4Children	Family Action	Pre-School Learning Society
Action for Children	Family Fund	Research in Practice
Association for Family Therapy	Family Parenting Institute	RNID
Association of Teachers and Lecturers	Fawcett Society	Royal College of Nursing
ATD 4th World	Frank Buttle Trust	Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Barnardo's	Hartnell Communications	Save the Children
British Humanist Association	Junior League London	Scope
Care Coordination Network	Kids Company	Scottish Out of School Care Network
Caritas Social Action Network	Leonard Cheshire Disability	Shelter
Catch 22	London Play	Spurgeon's
Children in Wales	Mission and PA Council of Church of England	St John's Ambulance
Clic Sargent	NASUWT	Straight Talking Peer Education
Communication and Workers Union	National Assembly of Women	The Adolescent and Children's Trust
Community Links	National Autistic Society	The Children's Society
Contact a Family	National Childbirth Trust	The Scout Association
Council for Disabled Children	National Children's Bureau	Trades Union Congress
CPAG	National Energy Action	Treehouse
Credit Action	National Unemployed Centres Combine	UCU
CSP	National Union of Students	UK Autism Foundation
CTU&UWRC	National Youth Agency	UKCAP
Daycare Trust	Nationwide Group Staff Union	UNICEF
Disability Alliance	NDNA	UNISON
Disabled Parents Network	Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network	Unite Wales
EDCM	Northern TUC	WellChild
Elizabeth Finn Care	NSPCC	Westminster Children's Society
Energy Action Scotland	NUT	Whizz-Kidz
European Anti-Poverty Network England	One Parent Families	Women's Budget Group
Families Need Fathers	One Parent Families West of Scotland	YWCA England and Wales.
	Oxfam	Z2K
	PCS	
	Poverty Alliance	