



WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY

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

30 August 2024

Dear First Minister,

Programme for Government 2024-25

Ahead of the publication of the Programme for Government in September, our organisations have come together to urge you to put action aimed at ending the injustice of poverty at the heart of that policy prospectus.

Too many people across Scotland, including 24% of our children, are having their life chances restricted by preventable poverty. The continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis have contributed to a rising tide of poverty as people struggle to access adequate incomes that would enable them to live a dignified life.

There continues to be an increased risk of poverty for unpaid carers, LGBTI+ people, disabled people, Black and minority ethnic people and women, particularly single mothers. Data also points to a recent worrying increase in deep poverty amongst pensioners. Evidence shows that the rising costs crisis is having a disproportionate impact on people in these groups. We also know that poverty affects urban and rural Scotland in different ways. Our responses to poverty must, therefore, embed equalities considerations to ensure we leave no one, and no place, behind, and that we build a more equal Scotland for everyone.

Poverty is a breach of our human rights. It is vital that the Scottish Government take forward the high-profile commitment to the Human Rights Bill in the Programme for Government to ensure that duty-bearers work proactively to realise our individual and collective rights. In making real those commitments, you can help to create a Scotland where no one is left behind and where our fundamental human rights are not just rhetoric but are a reality for all.

The organisations in our network strongly welcome the focus this Government has placed on the development of strategies designed to tackle poverty and inequality in Scotland; and the introduction of statutory child poverty targets. While this leadership

email: admin@povertyalliance.org - web: www.povertyalliance.org

The Poverty Alliance is a network of community, voluntary, statutory, and other organisations working together to combat poverty

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is extremely important, and Scottish Government actions are forecast to lead to a fall in child poverty, the latest scrutiny report from the Poverty and Inequality Commission concluded that progress in reducing poverty has not been at the scale required to meet our legally-binding targets.

Following your appointment as First Minister in May 2024, you confirmed eradicating child poverty as the single most important policy objective for your Government. We agree that this is the correct priority and share your belief in the need to use all of the powers at your Government's disposal to loosen the grip of poverty on people's lives. This belief and commitment must be embedded into the forthcoming Programme for Government with tangible actions and clear timescales for implementation. We know that people living in poverty cannot wait, and the time for action is now.

We believe that the policy asks developed ahead of Challenge Poverty Week 2024 offer a strong platform for tackling the injustice of poverty. We urge the Scottish Government to embed these priorities into the Programme for Government with action to:

- **Ensure that everyone has access to a safe, secure and sustainable home that meets their needs** including action to adequately fund the delivery of new social homes and ensure all tenants are aware of, and can exercise, their rights.
- **Improve the affordability, accessibility and reliability of public transport** including action to expand concessionary travel to under 25s, people in receipt of low-income and disability benefits, unpaid carers.
- **Ensure that everyone has access to an adequate income by delivering a Minimum Income Guarantee** with initial steps such as expanding the funded childcare entitlement for low-income households; increasing the Scottish Child Payment to £40 per week; and maximising income through full coverage advice services and the automation of social security support.
- **Ensure people have dignified access to good quality, healthy and sustainable food** by boosting the value and administrative responsiveness of the Scottish Welfare Fund; and delivering universal free school breakfasts and lunch provision to all pupils in Scotland.
- **Introduce fair and sustainable funding of three years or more for the third sector** which recognises the value of the third sector and includes awards that cover the payment of the real Living Wage, inflation-based uplifts and full costs.

Working together to realise these policy objectives will provide a lifeline to families who are struggling to stay afloat, helping to build a country where poverty is a thing of the past. With the Poverty and Inequality Commission stating that, without urgent and concentrated action, the Scottish Government will miss the 2030 child poverty targets, this action could not be more pressing.

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We realise that the Scottish Government is facing an extremely difficult fiscal environment. However, the injustice of poverty demands prioritisation and we urge you to seize the opportunity to put action to tackle poverty at the heart of the forthcoming Programme for Government.

Kind regards,

Peter Kelly, Chief Executive, The Poverty Alliance

Agnes Tolmie, Chair, The Scottish Women's Convention

Agnieszka Morrison, Policy Officer, Feniks

Aileen McLeod, Director, Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland

Alison Watson, Director, Shelter Scotland

Amanda Miller, Director of Community Services, Eildon Housing Association

Amy Woodhouse, Chief Executive, Parenting across Scotland

Andy Gilbert, Project Coordinator, Easthall Residents Association

Andy Peline, Chief Executive Officer, SWAMP Community Development Trust

Anna Ritchie Allan, Executive Director, Close the Gap

Annie McCormack, Chair, Broke Not Broken

Annie Tothill, Project Manager, Kairos Women+

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Carolyn Currie, Chief Executive, Women's Enterprise Scotland

Catherine Murphy, Executive Director, Engender

Craig Anderson, CEO, Stirling District Citizens Advice Bureau Ltd

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Dr Lindsey MacDonald, Chief Executive, Magic Breakfast

Dr Neil Dawson, Trustee, Strathnairn Development Company

Dr Rebecca Don Kennedy, Chief Executive, Equality Network

Elaine Morrison, Foodbank Manager, East Lothian Foodbank

Ellie Wagstaff, Senior Policy Manager, Marie Curie Scotland

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John Palmer, Director of Influencing and Engagement, Independent Age

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