

**EMBARGOED exclusive for 00.01 Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May**

## **Campaigners call for emergency cash boost to prevent child poverty crisis**

- **Over 100 organisations and academics sign letter to First Minister**
- **“Grave concern” regarding impact of crisis on family incomes and children’s wellbeing**

Over 100 children’s charities, faith groups, academics, think tanks, poverty campaigners and trade unions have today written an open letter to the First Minister calling for a direct financial boost for all families living on low incomes to support them through the coronavirus crisis.

The letter expresses “grave concern” that families across Scotland are struggling to stay afloat through the crisis, and that her government’s progress on tackling child poverty is being put at huge risk.

Signatories include the STUC, Scottish Women’s Aid, Scottish Association for Mental Health, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, IPPR, Barnardo’s, Poverty Alliance, Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland and One Parent Families Scotland. They say that a payment equivalent to at least £10 per week per child is needed to provide families “a lifeline now to help them weather the storm.”

The letter highlights the impact of the coronavirus crisis on low income families, particularly on those already at greater risk of poverty, such as lone parent households. The organisations behind it say the families they work with “are reporting increased financial stress and associated anxiety, loneliness, and more complex mental health problems,” and that the charitable hardship funds many of them operate have come under massively increased pressure. Aberlour’s Urgent Assistance Fund alone has, they say, seen a 1400% increase in demand.

The groups urge the First Minister to use “every tool at your government’s disposal to deliver an emergency package of financial support to all low income families”.

They set out a range of ideas for delivering the payment. Options include new or increased Best Start grants, an increased school clothing grant, additional investment in the Scottish Welfare Fund to provide a ‘coronavirus crisis grant,’ topping up UK children’s benefits and the use of local government powers. They also say additional targeted support could be delivered through increases to discretionary housing payments and Best Start Food payments.

Commenting on the letter John Dickie, Director of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland, one of the signatories, said:

“Families are already being pulled under by the financial impact of coronavirus, undermining children’s education, health and life chances, and putting progress on child poverty at real risk. It’s right that government at every level should use every power at its disposal to provide an anchor of financial security through these extraordinary times. Boosting family incomes now is vital to shore up the foundations on which the recovery from coronavirus can be built and future progress on child poverty made.”

SallyAnn Kelly, CEO of Aberlour said:

“We urgently need to get money directly to the thousands of struggling families across Scotland who are being pushed, or falling further, into poverty as a result of coronavirus. Families already at breaking point are struggling to put food on their tables or to meet the

basic needs for them and their children, and so we are calling on the Scottish Government to take immediate action and use all the measures available to them to get money to those families most in need.”

Claire Telfer, Head of Scotland at Save the Children said:

“All children should be safe, warm, fed and able to play and learning during this crisis and beyond. But, the financial strain on families risks children’s wellbeing now and in the future. Far too many families are struggling to keep afloat – not knowing how they will pay for their next meal or pay their bills. We are concerned the number of children in poverty could soar as a result of the crisis. Emergency support through the Wellbeing Fund and other support from government has been very welcome. It’s not enough to fully protect families. Families need predictable, consistent and sustainable financial support. That is why we are calling for a cash first response for families with children.”

ENDS

Full list of signatories to the letter:

1. SallyAnn Kelly, CEO Aberlour
2. Paul Carberry, Director for Scotland, Action for Children
3. Martin Crewe, Director, Barnardo’s Scotland
4. John Dickie, Director of Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland
5. Jackie Brock, Chief Executive, Children in Scotland
6. Mary Glasgow, Chief Executive, Children 1st
7. Satwat Rehman, Chief Executive, OPFS
8. Jamie Livingstone, Head of Oxfam Scotland
9. Peter Kelly, Director, The Poverty Alliance
10. Claire Telfer, Head of Scotland, Save the Children
11. Tracey McFall, CEO, Partners in Advocacy
12. Dr Neil Henery, Director, Camphill Scotland
13. Clare Cable, Chief Executive and Nurse Director, Queen’s Nursing Institute Scotland
14. Alistair Brown, National Director, Scottish Association of Social Work
15. Justina Murray, CEO, Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol & Drugs
16. Ewan Aitken, Chief Executive, Cyrenians
17. Martin Dorchester, Chief Executive, Includem
18. Janis McDonald, Chief Officer, deafscotland
19. Professor Ian Welsh OBE, Chief Executive, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)
20. Prof Morag Treanor, Heriot-Watt University
21. Nancy Loucks, CEO, Families Outside
22. Matt Forde, National Head of Service, NSPCC Scotland
23. Ella Simpson, Chief Executive, EVOG
24. Duncan Dunlop, CEO, Who Cares? Scotland
25. Jimmy Wilson, CEO, FARE Scotland
26. Dr Anne Mullin, Chair, the Deep End Group Scotland
27. Craig Samuel, NAWRA representative Scotland
28. Jo Derrick, CEO, Staf
29. Dr Hayley Bennett, Social Policy Research Fellow, University of Edinburgh
30. Prof Adrian Sinfield, University of Edinburgh
31. Claire Burns, Director, CELCIS
32. David Thomson, Destiny Church

33. Dr Hartwig Pautz, Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences at the University of the West of Scotland and co-lead of the UWS-Oxfam Partnership
34. Mike J Kirby, Scottish Secretary, UNISON
35. Professor Mhairi Mackenzie, Professor of Public Policy, University of Glasgow
36. Nick Bailey, Professor of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow
37. Graeme McAlister, Chief Executive, Scottish Childminding Association
38. Colin Flinn, Chief Executive, Royal Caledonian Education Trust
39. Mark O'Donnell, Chief Executive, Royal Blind
40. Douglas Guest, Acting Director for Scotland, Home-Start UK Scotland
41. Billy Watson, Chief Executive, Scottish Association for Mental Health
42. Alan Thornburrow, Director, Business in the Community Scotland
43. Juliet Harris, Director, Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)
44. Bernard Harris, Professor of Social Policy, University of Strathclyde
45. Janet Haugh, Chief Executive, Ypeople
46. Cath Morrison, Chief Executive, The Lillias Graham Trust
47. Dr Mhairi Crawford, Chief Executive, LGBT Youth Scotland
48. Pat Rafferty, Scottish Secretary, Unite the Union
49. Professor Stephen Sinclair, Co-Director, Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit, Glasgow Caledonian University
50. Professor John McKendrick, Co-Director, Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit, Glasgow Caledonian University
51. Professor Sharon Wright, Professor of Social Policy, University of Glasgow
52. Hugh Foy, Director of Programmes and Partnerships, UK Region Xaverian Missionaries
53. Professor Chik Collins, Rector (Vice Chancellor) of the University of the Faroe Islands
54. Shaben Begum, Director, Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance
55. Dr David Walsh, Public Health Programme Manager, Glasgow Centre for Population Health
56. Emma Revie, Chief Executive, The Trussell Trust
57. Professor Steve Turner, Scottish Officer, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
58. Kate Wimpres, Chair, SURF – Scotland's Regeneration Forum
59. Angela Moohan, Chief Executive Officer, The Larder West Lothian
60. Nathan Sparling, Chief Executive, HIV Scotland
61. Neil Mathers, Chief Executive, Children's University Scotland
62. Steven McCluskey, Chairperson, Bikes for Refugees
63. Margo Uprichard, CEO, The Louise Project
64. Clare Simpson, Manager, Parenting across Scotland
65. Ron Culley, Chief Executive, Quarriers
66. Jane Brumpton, Chief Executive, Early Years Scotland.
67. Hazel Brown, Chief Executive Officer, Cornerstone
68. Anne F.Meikle, Convenor, Scottish Women's Budget Group
69. Larry Flanagan, General Secretary, EIS
70. Douglas Hamilton, former Chair of the Poverty and Inequality Commission
71. Emily Beardsmore, CEO, Light Up Learning
72. Virginia Radcliffe, CEO, Licketyspit
73. Roz Foyer, General Secretary Designate, STUC
74. Marie Ward, Chief Executive Officer, Cranhill Development Trust
75. Ian Bruce, Chief Executive, Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS)
76. Jacqui Hardie, Executive Strategic Manager, Fife Gingerbread

77. Professor Mike Danson, Chair, CBINS (Citizen's Basic Income Network Scotland)
78. Shona Blakeley, Executive Director, Women's Fund for Scotland
79. Emma Jackson, National Director Scotland, Christians Against Poverty
80. Sharon Colvin, CEO, 3D Drumchapel
81. Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary, NASUWT
82. Maragret Nakityo, Secretary, Afreshe
83. Traci Kirkland, Head of Charity, Govan Community Project
84. Rachel Sutherland, Bureau Manager, East & Central Sutherland Citizens Advice Bureau
85. Bishop Nolan, President, Justice and Peace Scotland
86. Jim McCormick, Associate Director for Scotland, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
87. Russell Gunson, Director, IPPR Scotland
88. Frazer Scott, CEO, Energy Action Scotland
89. Anna Ritchie Allan, Executive Director, Close the Gap
90. Tim Frew, Chief Executive, YouthLink Scotland
91. Shruti Jain, Chair, Saheliya
92. Marguerite Hunter Blair, Chief Executive, Play Scotland
93. Linda Tuthill, CEO, The Action Group
94. Rami Okasha, Chief Executive, CHAS
95. Irene Audain MBE, Chief Executive, Scottish Out of School Care Network
96. Rachel Adamson, Co-Director, Zero Tolerance
97. Dr Marsha Scott, Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Women's Aid
98. Dave Liddell, Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Drugs Forum
99. Sharon McAulay, Project Manager, STAR Project
100. Danny Collins, National President, Society of St Vincent de Paul (Scotland)
101. Emma Ritch, Executive Director, Engender