

Dear First Minister,

### **Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payments**

We are writing as a broad range of organisations, community groups, academics, trade unions and faith groups, all working with and for families struggling on low incomes across Scotland.

Your government has been doing the right thing by investing in financial support for families, not least through the Scottish child payment. This is already making a big difference, as the recent initial [evaluation](#) on its impact lays out, and which the families we talk to make clear. The doubling of the payment since April has been especially timely in providing additional support to families with children under six at a time of soaring food and energy prices.

However, as you know, families with older children are yet to benefit. The roll out of the payment to eligible over fives and the further increase to £25 a week are not due until the end of the year. [Bridging payments](#), originally introduced to provide “[equivalent](#)” support to the child payment for at least some of those older children, have **not** been doubled. At a time when further massive increases to household bills are looming, this is leaving a significant gap in the cash support available to families across Scotland.

We are therefore **writing to urge your government to help bridge that gap and, at the very least, double the October and Christmas bridging payments from £130 to £260**. This would be one straightforward and effective way of getting more cash support to many of the households struggling most in the face of the cost of living crisis. It would **help keep families afloat until the child payment itself is increased and fully rolled out**.

The families we work with are facing increasing hardship as the cost of energy and food spirals ever higher. Parents tell us they are going without food to feed their children, of feeling ashamed at the basics their children are going without, and of dreading the coming winter bills. A recent [Scotpulse](#) survey found that over half of adults with children felt their mental health was being negatively impacted by the cost of living crisis, with women particularly affected. Many of our organisations are, often with support from your government, doing everything we can to provide further assistance to those facing the greatest disadvantage. However charity hardship support cannot ever be a replacement for direct cash payments to low income families, and it should not be the role of charities to plug the financial support gap.

We will continue to urge the UK government to live up to its responsibility to provide a further package of support in response to the ongoing and worsening hardship that families are facing. In the meantime we **urge you and your government to continue do the right thing, prioritise support for children and commit to doubling the bridging payments** as part of wider action to support households through the cost of living crisis. We know and understand the pressure the Scottish budget is under but the budgets of our lowest income families are under even greater pressure. Acting to provide further cash support to families would help prevent further long term damage to individual families and children, and would also support Scotland’s much welcomed child poverty ambitions. We urge you to take this action.

We look forward to hearing from you.