



WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY

3rd Floor, 94 Hope Street, Glasgow, G2 6PH
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First Minister
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

22nd August 2023

Dear First Minister,

Programme for Government 2023-24

People in Scotland believe in justice and compassion. Ahead of the publication of the Scottish Government's new policy prospectus in September, we have come together to urge you to put action aimed at ending the injustice of poverty at the heart of Scotland's Programme for Government.

Too many people across Scotland, including 250,000 children, are having their life chances restricted by preventable poverty. Covid-19 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 women, particularly single mothers, unpaid carers, disabled people, and Black and minority ethnic people. Evidence shows that the rising costs crisis is having a disproportionate impact on people in these groups. Our responses to poverty must, therefore, embed equalities considerations to ensure we do not leave anyone behind, and that we build a more equal Scotland for everyone.

All of our organisations strongly welcome the development of key strategies designed to tackle poverty and inequality in Scotland, alongside the introduction of statutory child poverty targets. While this leadership is extremely important, and Scottish Government actions are forecast to lead to a fall in child poverty, this has not yet led to a meaningful reduction in overall poverty rates in Scotland. The latest scrutiny report from the Poverty and Inequality Commission concluded that, without urgent and concentrated action, the Scottish Government will miss the 2030 child poverty targets.

On your election to First Minister, you stated that the defining mission of your leadership should be to reduce, if not eradicate, the injustice of poverty. We share your belief in the need to use Scotland's powers to loosen the grip of poverty on people's lives. This belief and commitment must be embedded into the forthcoming

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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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 2023 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 an adequate income by delivering a Minimum Income Guarantee:** with initial steps such as expanding the funded childcare entitlement; increasing the Scottish Child Payment; accelerating the review of the adequacy of disability assistance; and ensure that the guarantee is not undermined by public sector debt recovery.
- **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; introduce a homelessness prevention duty; and provide support for energy efficiency measures.
- **Improve the affordability and accessibility of public transport:** including action to expand concessionary travel to under 25s, people in receipt of low-income and disability benefits, unpaid carers, and asylum seekers.
- **Ensure people have dignified access to good quality, healthy and sustainable food:** by boosting the value and administrative responsiveness of the Scottish Welfare Fund, ensuring everyone in Scotland has enough money to afford the essentials while supporting wellbeing through community food approaches.
- **Introduce fair and sustainable funding of three years or more for the third sector.**

Working together to realise these policy asks will help to ensure that poverty is a thing of the past, providing a lifeline to families who are struggling to stay afloat. We urge you to seize the opportunity to put action to tackle poverty at the heart of the forthcoming Programme for Government.

Kind regards,

David Reilly, Acting Director, The Poverty Alliance

Aditi Jehangir, National Secretary, Living Rent

Adrian Sinfield, Member, Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security

Agnes Tolmie, Chair, The Scottish Women's Convention

Agnieszka Morrison, Policy Development Officer, Feniks. Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services

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Ailsa MacKenzie, Chief Officer, The Pyramid at Anderston

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Ann McCacken, CEO, Skills Exchange SCIO

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Catherine Murphy, Executive Director, Engender

Celia Tennant, Chief Executive, Inspiring Scotland

Chris Birt, Associate Director for Scotland, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Chris Tulloch, Secretary, Ferguslie Community Council

Christine Schaffer, Chair, Musselburgh Pantry

Clair Coyle, Charity Manager, West Dunbartonshire Community Foodshare

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