



# end child poverty

## Child Poverty in the News

### Liberal Democrats commit to ending child poverty by 2020

We are delighted that the Liberal Democrats have signed up to the targets on child poverty, we warmly welcome the new political consensus across the three main parties that child poverty must be eradicated from our society and recognise the added pressure that their statement of support places on the Government to start achieving its aims to halve child poverty by 2010.

This announcement comes at a key time as the Government prepares its Comprehensive Spending Review. Without significant additional resources committed in the review the 2010 target will be missed. We look forward to all political parties engaging the public, private and voluntary sector in a vigorous debate around how this important target can be met.

### Earning money from benefit claimants?

It was uncovered by Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Association (DUWA), that the DWP has 1,947 telephone numbers using the local rate prefix 0845 including the new deal and winter fuel payments calls and has received £268,000 through their use by those claiming benefits.

Colin Hampton, spokesperson for the DUWA, said "Its ridiculous that people have to pay to access their benefit entitlement... All Government departments should

..make sure that this kind of thing can't happen."

Since DUWA brought media attention to this fact the DWP have announced that 0800 freephone numbers will be used in future for all working age benefit claims. Jim Murphy MP, the minister responsible said "Many of our customers are among the poorest in society...We have to make sure that those who need help can make a claim quickly and easily and without being hit in the pocket." Well done to DUWA!

### Low-income parents still struggling to afford school uniforms

Some parents are still struggling to pay for expensive school uniforms because their children's school insists on specific uniform from expensive suppliers not available on the high street, says a coalition of charities and the NUT. This is despite DfES guidelines which say that "school governing bodies are expected to give high priority to cost considerations."

(For more information see Pg. 6) For free copies of the Costs of a free Education publication email us at [info@ecpc.org.uk](mailto:info@ecpc.org.uk)



### In Government:

The Chancellor Gordon Brown MP, Beverley Hughes MP, Minister for Children and Families and Jim Murphy MP Minister for Employment & Welfare Reform met with five London School children at the Treasury on Universal Children's Day, the last day of our Month of Action, to receive season's greetings cards from the campaign to end child poverty.

Within the cards were the names of over 100 senior figures who support the campaign including Chief Executives and Trustees of member organisations, Religious leaders and the Kaiser Chiefs who have all signed up to join the Campaign to End Child Poverty's call to the Government to commit more resources to ending child poverty.



play ball Gordon!

The Ministers later met with representatives of the Campaign who urged the Chancellor to provide the extra resources needed to halve child poverty by 2010.



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## Child Poverty in the News cont.

### National Poverty Hearing

A one-day National Poverty Hearing was held on Wednesday 6 December 2006, by a wide ranging group of charities and anti-poverty organisations including ourselves, and Church Action on Poverty, Age Concern, Help the Aged, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Oxfam, Poverty Alliance, Refugee Council, Shelter and the UK Coalition Against Poverty. We engaged senior politicians, policy makers and opinion formers in the media and public life and grassroots anti-

poverty/civil society groups from across the United Kingdom.

The day highlighted the breadth and depth of poverty in the UK. Bringing together a range of organisations and poverty themes that do not normally share a common platform, the event acted as positive a stimulus to dialogue between people with direct experience of poverty and national policy makers and opinion formers. Our powerful presentation was



given by 11 young people, from St Thomas More School, North London, seen above with the Chair Lisa Harker. Narrated by Roshni Nagaria, the young people expressed the voices of children living in poverty, drawing attention to the educational & emotional impact poverty has on their lives.

### Thought for the Day 8.12.06 Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

“Two days ago as the chancellor was delivering his pre budget report I joined some 500 politicians, policy makers, heads of charities and religious leaders at a national poverty hearing. And it was sobering to hear first hand testimony from some of the people who live in real hardship: the homeless, the elderly, those caught in the trap of low incomes, and no less than 3.4 million children in Britain. Ask most people where poverty is and instinctively they say: Africa. It’s as if we have a kind of moral long sightedness that allows us to see destitution in the distance quite clearly, but only vaguely if at all when it’s close. Perhaps living standards for most have moved so far so fast that we forget the people left behind... [but] poverty isn’t just a place in Africa. It’s a street not far from where you live.”

See his full thought for the day on our website  
[www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)

### Newsround, The Wrong Trainers, CBBC

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/specials/2006/the\\_wrong\\_trainers/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/specials/2006/the_wrong_trainers/default.stm)

Newsround recently launched this special programme, which investigates child poverty in the UK; It demonstrates the variety of current experiences of children in the UK by enabling 5 young people to narrate their stories over a series of animations. This powerful expose is must-see TV, and sets out very clearly the scale of the challenge ahead. The website is one of Newsround's most popular sites ever; it engages children in further debate around child poverty, with a quiz and also a interactive section 'how would you splash your cash' to highlight budgeting choices for families on a low income; The site

questions who is responsible for the solutions; highlights how to cope with difficult situations such as bullying or temporary accommodation and also offers a simple opportunity for viewers to vote asking is the Government doing enough to end child poverty by 2020? – so get on there quick and register your opinion!

### Evicted BBC One, 29.11.06

As part of the No Home Season on the BBC this film shows the reality of homelessness for children in the UK. Watch the trailer here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nohome/tvandradiio/evicted.shtml> “Evicted was an emotional film from BAFTA award-winning director Brian Woods. It was a damning indictment of the failure of the government to adequately address the problem of homelessness in 21st century Britain. It followed three young girls and their families into the nightmare of homelessness and their search for a home.”



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## Campaign Activities

### Month of Action to End Child Poverty



This autumn we launched the first Month of Action to End Child Poverty.

From the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on October 17<sup>th</sup> until Universal Children's Day on November 20<sup>th</sup> the month will become established as a regular time in the yearly calendar to campaign for change, to call attention to the millions of children in poverty and demand action.

Together with all the members of the Campaign to End Child Poverty we led this Month of Action calling on the Government to place child poverty firmly at the centre of their agenda and asking the chancellor to 'play ball!' to deliver, in the Comprehensive Spending Review, the resources needed to end child poverty, once and for all.

The month included a wide variety of activities across the country, with the aim to highlight the causes and consequences of child poverty and showcase solutions. A key target for this month of

action was parliamentarians, and we succeeded in engaging with over 70 MPs through a number of different parliamentary events that they could attend during the month.

On October the 17<sup>th</sup> the Secretary of State, Rt. Hon John Hutton MP, addressed the **All Party Parliamentary Group on Poverty** as part of the launch of the month. Members were able to ask him questions as well as to speak to two young people, who have experience of poverty. Helen Dent, a trustee of the Campaign to End Child Poverty and Director of the Family Welfare Association; and Donald Hirsch, Special Adviser to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and author of their latest research on the costs of ending child poverty also spoke at the event.



Chair, APPG on Poverty Rt Hon John Battle MP supporting the Campaign's call for more resources to end child poverty.

Other events during the month included a seminar co-hosted by ECP and SMF with the Secretary of State for Education, Beverley Hughes MP, Prof Leon Feinstein Patrick Diamond and Ann Rossiter discussing the role education can play in tackling inequalities; a **National MP's Day Out** where

over 50 MPs visited local projects which help to alleviate child poverty in their constituency and also a roundtable discussion on the particular difficulties faced by BME groups in London between members of the Black and Refugee communities and the DWP Minister Jim Murphy MP.



On the final day of the month we went to the Treasury with hundreds of supporters demanding action from the Government (see picture above), and expressing outrage that more than one in four children are still living in poverty in the UK.

Representatives of the Campaign later met with the Chancellor to make the call for more resources. We also organised an opportunity for families, children experiencing poverty and members of the campaign to speak with MPs at a tea party for **Universal Children's Day**. The event was hosted by Ed Balls MP, Economic Secretary to the Treasury at the House of Commons, 20 November.



Visit our new Website for more details of the Month of action

[www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)



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## Party Conferences:

This year the campaign, along with its members have ministers and backbenchers out in force.

For the first time, the campaign to End Child Poverty went to the Trade Union Congress to engage with Unions to discuss the role they can play in the campaign. The National Unemployed Centres Combine jointly held an event with us, where we had engaging contributions from Gerry Bartlett, NASUWT, Chris Pond, Director of One Parent Families, and Julia Sweeney from DWP.

At our Liberal Democrat conference fringe event David Laws MP agreed they need to do more on child poverty. Since then members of End Child Poverty have met with them and Rt Hon Menzies Campbell MP has just announced their commitment to the Child Poverty targets (see page one) but they are still considering evidence for their policy strategy, and would welcome contributions from

## Make Child Benefit Count

Child Benefit and its predecessor, family allowances are 60 years old this year.

To mark this anniversary the Make Child Benefit Count campaign is calling on the Government to increase child benefit and ensure that younger children get the same rate as the oldest child. Ask your MP to sign up to Early Day Motion 150 to show their support for this, visit: [www.makechildbenefitcount.org.uk](http://www.makechildbenefitcount.org.uk)

members of the campaign – Please do write with policy recommendations to David Laws MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

End Child poverty was a key issue at the Labour Party conference both on the floor of the conference, it was highlighted by both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown while in fringe meetings Ministers Ed Balls, Jim Murphy, Beverley Hughes, Alan Johnson and Stephen Timms reiterated the Government's commitment to the target. How they will meet those targets and what needs to be done was the subject of debate. Labour Students announced they were launching a year-long campaign on child poverty and were ready to challenge the Government on the issue.

Oliver Letwin MP spoke at our fringe at the Conservative Party conference to discuss with members if the Government were doing enough. Mary Marsh, NSPCC, chaired the event and other speakers included Claire

Tickell NCH, and Chris Pond from One Parent Families.

## Stop penalising the poor, energy suppliers urged

A call to energy suppliers to stop charging the poor more for gas and electricity was made recently by a coalition of charities and consumer organisations. Children living in poverty, disabled people, older consumers and the fuel poor are suffering most from rocketing gas and electricity prices. End Child Poverty, Child Poverty Action Group, Disability Alliance, Help the Aged, Age Concern, Citizens Advice, National Consumer Council, National Energy Action and energywatch are so concerned they have united to press for a better deal for struggling households.

We have since heard from Scottish and Southern electricity suppliers who are planning to increase their prices from January 2007, but will only increase prepayment prices by a smaller percentage to put them in line with quarterly bill payers.



If you would like to contact anyone at the End Child Poverty campaign about the information in this newsletter, for submissions for future newsletters or any other matter then please do get in touch at

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email: [info@ecpc.org.uk](mailto:info@ecpc.org.uk)



## **Publications of Interest**

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### **A Stronger Voice, Report by the Migrants Resource Centre & Oxfam Poverty Programme**

<http://www.migrantsresourcecentre.org.uk/documents/MRCGetHeardReport.pdf>

The report documents how migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers view and experience poverty and social exclusion in UK society today, as one participant describes it 'You feel powerless and isolated.' A *Stronger Voice* presents the findings of a number of workshops organised by the Migrants Resource Centre in London and recommendations focus on ways of combating discrimination, improving access to education and employment and enhancing transport and housing services. These workshops were part of the UK-wide *Get Heard* project, feeding into the 2006 National Action Plan on Social Inclusion.

### **Chance of a lifetime: The impact of bad housing on children's lives report written by Lisa Harker, Published by Shelter, September 2006**

<http://england.shelter.org.uk/home/home-906.cfm/searchterm/chance%20of%20a%20lifetime/book/11076/>

Shelter has produced a devastating & comprehensive account of the impact that bad housing & homelessness has on children's life chances. Using quotations alongside statistics this well-argued document demonstrates the urgency with which the Government must tackle the housing crisis.

### **The Lone Parent Handbook, One Parent Families, to order, call 0845 450 0404. £35.00**

[http://www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk/1/lx3x1oix283x1/0/0/201206/0/0//Lone\\_Parent\\_Handbook\\_2006-07.htm](http://www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk/1/lx3x1oix283x1/0/0/201206/0/0//Lone_Parent_Handbook_2006-07.htm)

A comprehensive advice guide to the crucial issues affecting lone parents. Chapters include: practical advice after relationship break-up; domestic violence; contact and parental responsibility; maintenance and the Child Support Agency; benefits and tax credits incl. maternity, adoption and paternity benefits; childcare; housing and homelessness; personal finance; education or training for adults and children - Incorporating all the relevant information across this wide range of topics for lone parents and their advisers.

### **Out of Reach: benefits for disabled children, Child Poverty Action Group, November 2006**

<http://www.cpag.org.uk>

This new report exposes serious problems faced by parents of disabled children accessing vital welfare entitlement.

- 46% believe they have missed out on benefits and tax credits because they have not been told they could apply.
- 43% had not claimed Disability Living Allowance or took more than 2 years to find out their child could be entitled.
- 39% had been put off applying because of claim forms.
- 30% have not had advice about benefits entitlement in over a year.

Based on interviews with parents of disabled children, *Out of Reach* identifies barriers to accessing benefits for a disabled child and provides recommendations for how delivery of this vital support for vulnerable children can be improved.

### **Delivering on Child Poverty: What would it take? A report for the Department for Work and Pensions by Lisa Harker November 2006**

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2006/harker/harker-full.pdf>

Harker's report to the DWP sets out a wide range of reforms necessary to make progress towards the 2010 targets including a more individualised Welfare to Work programme, whilst acknowledging that a "work first approach is not sufficient to end child poverty, since nearly half of children in poverty now live in a family where someone is already in employment." The DWP are set to respond with their strategy early in the New Year.



## ECP Members' Comment

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Claire Kober, at Family Welfare Association writes:

Rachel is a lone parent with five school-aged children. Her support worker wrote to FWA earlier this year because Rachel was struggling to meet her children's school costs:

"Rachel has mental health problems and has recently parted from the father of her youngest two children due to domestic violence. Her sons are both large and C in particular has grown substantially in recent months. Rachel has been unable to replace their uniforms or PE kits as required and I am aware that the boys have begun to miss days from school because they do not have the appropriate clothing. I know that Rachel would be very grateful for any financial help you might be able to offer her."

Rachel's story is one of hundreds that FWA's grants service hears every year. The service has experienced a year on year increase in the number of parents applying for help with school costs. Last year, in partnership with Barclaycard, FWA distributed almost £50,000 in school uniform grants.

Expensive school uniforms can be a major source of worry for parents in low-income families and the situation is getting worse, not better. New research from Norwich Union reveals that UK parents spend, on average, £1,300 per child per year on the everyday costs of going to school – a rise of £200 over the last four years. In total parents can expect to spend an average of £14,000 per child for school-related costs from age five to 16.

Children whose parents cannot afford the correct school uniform often report feeling isolated, stigmatised and bullied at school. Yet there remains very little financial support available to families who struggle to meet school costs. Research conducted by Citizens Advice, reveals that despite having powers to provide school uniform grants, almost half of all local authorities provide low income families with no financial assistance at all.

Parents are most likely to struggle to afford their child's uniform if the schools' uniform policy includes 'designer' items that are high cost because they are only available from one specialist outfitter. The school costs coalition, consisting of Barnardo's, Child Poverty Action Group, Citizens Advice, End Child Poverty, the Family Welfare Association, One Parent Families, NUT and Save the Children is pushing the Government to enforce its own guidance which state that '**No school uniform should be so expensive as to leave pupils or their families feeling socially excluded**'.

The coalition is also recommending that:

- Local authority scrutiny committees should undertake enquiries into the impact of school costs on families and to review what support is available.
- School governing bodies should ensure that their school uniform is kept simple, and is available from more than one outlet.
- DfES should produce a model charging policy for schools outlining good practice.
- As part of the school inspection process OFSTED should assess the extent to which school policies promote the inclusion of children from low-income families.
- The Government should consider placing a statutory duty on local authorities to provide school uniform grants for children from low-income families. Central government should make funds available to enable local authorities to provide grants.

For more information on the ongoing campaign and the Family Welfare Association please visit [www.fwa.org.uk](http://www.fwa.org.uk)