



# end child poverty

## Child Poverty in the News

**The UNICEF report, *Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries* dominated the headlines in February.**

By comparing statistics from across 24 rich countries, in the first study of childhood across the world's industrialised nations it shows how Britain is failing its children. The report sparked serious debate about how children are treated in this society amongst broadsheet and tabloid journalists and broadcasters alike. You can see quotes in reaction to the report at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6359887.stm>.

Of particular concern to members of the Campaign, was the unsurprising result that the UK came so close to the bottom in a table which ranked rates of child poverty across these nations; (21<sup>st</sup> out of 24)

A fact which fuelled political debates about the best methods to achieve the child poverty targets among many political leaders and commentators.

See the reaction of the Campaign at <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/index.php?id=7> and in the later Campaign activities section.



A comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in the economically advanced nations

UNICEF  
United Nations Children's Fund

unicef

The terrible effects of this poverty on children's health, cognitive development, education, and employment prospects are well known. In the UK we need to recognize the impact this has on our society and come together to challenge the

Government on their progress.

The main Government criticism was that the data used on child poverty was taken from 2003/04 and did not recognise that the latest available figures show a reduction in child poverty of a further 100,000 children.

However, it is not evident that sufficient progress has been made to alter Britain's position significantly in a comparison conducted a year later. This may change when the Office for National Statistics release the latest figures on child poverty at the end of March.

The report clearly showed that with greater investment ending child poverty really is achievable. Nine countries, from northern Europe, have managed rates of child poverty below 10%, so it is possible for the UK to join them.

**Are you planning research, reports or campaigns etc on child poverty or in a related field? If so, then do get in touch so we can coordinate the Campaign's activities to support your work; Contact:**

**Campaign to End Child Poverty,  
94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF tel: 0207 278 6541 email: [info@ecpc.org.uk](mailto:info@ecpc.org.uk)**



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## Child Poverty in the News cont.

### THE POVERTY PREMIUM

Widespread coverage was recently given to the launch of a report by Campaign members, Family Welfare Association and Save the Children on the higher costs for goods and services that are borne by many families experiencing poverty.

Helen Dent, Chief Executive of the Family Welfare Association, said: *"The Government expends significant amounts of time and energy exploring the most effective ways to get more money into the pockets of low income families. Yet they spend very little time addressing the unequal way in which it comes out of those families' pockets. This has to change."*

**The Poverty Premium** report estimates that families experiencing poverty may face a 'poverty premium' of £1,000 for services such as gas, electricity and affordable credit. The report outlines seven steps to eradicate this premium; it calls on the private sector to do more to level the

playing field, and for Government to take the necessary steps to ensure that those on the lowest incomes, no longer pay the most for essential goods.

Other Members of the Campaign welcomed the report in a variety of press releases and statements, including TV appearances.

Download the report at [www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)

### IN GOVERNMENT:

**Freud Review: On 5 March this radical review of the welfare system, was published and welcomed by Government.**

**Carried out by David Freud the review recommends a complete overhaul of the delivery of benefits, with private companies and some parts of the voluntary sector encouraged to be involved in both the provision of benefits and sanctioning of claimants.**

**The report emphasises rebalancing the rights and responsibilities in the welfare system and places greater obligations on**

**single parents in particular.**

**This review is under consideration by the DWP and they are asking for responses and suggestions over the next six weeks.**

**Read more here:**

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/welfareform/seminars/>

**MPs held an adjournment debate 7 March in Westminster Hall,**

**sponsored by Kerry McCarthy MP and attended by leading politicians from all three main political parties. The 90 minute discussion covered a wide range of MP's concerns. Read the text of the debate here:**

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070306/hallindx/70306-x.htm>

### COMING UP LATER THIS MONTH:

- 21 March The Budget;
- 27 March Office of National Statistics release the Households Below Average Income report which will include the latest child poverty rates in the UK.
- Also we are expecting the DWP's Child Poverty Strategy to be published.

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## Campaign Activities

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### **PETITION**

At ECP we are constantly encouraging all our members, colleagues, and friends to show they believe that child poverty can and should be eradicated. We have just started a petition which will be running until September to get thousands of people to show their support prior to the next Party Conference and put pressure on the new Prime Minister and the Labour Government to keep their promise. It reads as follows " We the undersigned petition the PM to fulfil his promise to halve child poverty by 2010 and end child poverty in the UK within a generation." Sign it right away and don't forget to pass it on!

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/endchildpoverty>

### **LETTER TO STEPHEN TIMMS**

Ahead of the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and following the UNICEF report the Campaign is calling on Government to invest more money in this country's children. The CSR is a timely opportunity for this

Government to show the strength of their commitment to the child poverty targets. The current levels of child poverty are inexcusable and without extra investment now the target to halve child poverty by 2010 will be missed. Join us in urging Stephen Timms MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury to ensure the investment of the £4 billion needed to reach the 2010 target of halving child poverty is committed in the CSR visit:

<http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/index.php?id=6>



### **ECP MEMBERS:**

Save the Children held an event in February under the ECP banner, with the UK Youth Parliament and others on Children and Young People's views of child poverty. John Hutton MP, Secretary of State for the Department of Work and Pensions, Philip Hammond MP and David Laws MP listened and talked with over 140

children and young people. Also Save the Children held a photo exhibition in the Palace of Westminster at the end of February, sponsored by Kerry McCarthy MP and opened by Jim Murphy which engaged over 60 MPs with the issue of child poverty in the UK.

### **AGM**

Campaigning on child poverty has gained increasing momentum over the last year and the expected changes in the political environment will present great opportunities for the Campaign. On Monday 12 March ECP will be hosting an exciting debate about the future challenges and opportunities that will arise. The event will also provide a chance for members to share ideas and experience to enhance the work of the Campaign for 2007. We are delighted to welcome David Walker, The Guardian, Carey Oppenheim, London Child Poverty Commission, and Martin Narey, Chief Executive, Barnardo's as speakers at the event.



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## **Campaign Activities cont.**

Have you been to our website lately? Since the new website was set up last year interest in and visits to the site have been increasing steadily. Have a look, let us know your comments, and also tell us if you have any campaigns that you would like us to feature on our members' pages. Visit [www.endchildpoverty.org.uk](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk)

**JUST CHURCH:** Poverty Action Sunday; On the 18 February churches across the UK used Poverty Action



CHURCH ACTION  
ON POVERTY

Sunday to reflect on the reality of poverty, and what can be done to tackle it. Church Action on Poverty produced a range of resources to help churches do this which are available here:

<http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/resources/PAS>

### **REFUGEE COUNCIL:**

On 19 February, to highlight to public and politicians



**JUST. FAIR.  
SLEEPOUT**

alike that many thousands of destitute asylum seekers have no home, The Refugee Council held a sleep out demonstration in Parliament Square in protest against the policy which leaves Asylum seekers, whose claims have been turned down, homeless and hungry.

A large team of volunteers were joined by asylum seekers, MPs and Peers, as well as curious passers-by, at this successful event to bring attention to the Just. Fair. Campaign.

Find out more [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/gettinginvolved/campaign/just\\_fair](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/gettinginvolved/campaign/just_fair)

### **CHILDREN'S SOCIETY:**

A new interactive micro site ([www.mylife.uk.com](http://www.mylife.uk.com)) has been developed by The Children's Society's Good Childhood Inquiry to empower children and young people to have their say as part of the

UK's first independent national inquiry into childhood.

The site features a variety of fun methods, which will enable children and young people to have their shout on the things that matter to them. It will also host a series of downloadable celebrity vod casts, where famous names will share their thoughts on what makes for a good life for children and young people.

**BARNARDO'S** are holding their annual conference in London, March 20/21 on Childhood Matters with high profile key speakers – to book your place visit <http://www.barnardos.org.uk>





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## **Publications of Interest**

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**Poverty in Scotland 2007** Eds John H McKendrick, Gerry Mooney, John Dickie and Peter Kelly, Published by CPAG in association with the Scottish Poverty Information Unit, the Open University and the Poverty Alliance. January 2007 £11.00 from [www.cpag.org.uk](http://www.cpag.org.uk)

This new edition of *Poverty in Scotland* examines how successful the combined efforts of Westminster and Holyrood have been in tackling poverty in Scotland. It expands on the information provided in the previous four editions, draws on the experience of people living in poverty, and includes measurements of poverty; living with poverty; groups vulnerable to poverty; rural poverty, community-based responses, financial exclusion, local taxation, employability and health.



**Letting the Future In Community Links, 2007** Available free of charge, by telephoning 0845 602 2260 and quoting stock ref LNF/LTFI or visit [http://www.community-links.org/ourwork/IdeasAnnuals\\_page171.aspx](http://www.community-links.org/ourwork/IdeasAnnuals_page171.aspx) Community Links have published a celebration of innovative community projects, supported by the Local Network Fund for Children and Young which are contributing to the five outcomes of Every Child Matters - the government policy framework for children and young people.

**Tackling child poverty in London: Implications of demographic and economic change** written by Nick Buck Holly Sutherland Francesca Zantomio Institute for Social and Economic Research Published London Child Poverty Commission (LCPC) February 2007 free to download from: <http://213.86.122.139/publications/iser-rpt-0207.jsp>

LCPC say "The report was commissioned to estimate future levels of child poverty in London and what measures would be required to halve child poverty in London from its 1998 level... In examining the prospects for child poverty the report takes into account projected changes in London's population, as well as that of the country as a whole, up to 2010/11. The report simulates potential changes in tax credit and benefit policies, as well as alternative scenarios for change in parental employment."

### **Other recent titles include:**

- **Report Card 7, Child Poverty in Perspective**, UNICEF February 2007 [http://www.unicef.org.uk/store/group\\_display.aspx?grp=B61F356A-EBDF-4425-AAC7-F84D829BC995](http://www.unicef.org.uk/store/group_display.aspx?grp=B61F356A-EBDF-4425-AAC7-F84D829BC995)
- **Fairness and Freedom: The Final Report of the Equalities Review**, February 2007 Can be downloaded at <http://www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk>



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## ECP Members' Comment

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### More sticks than carrots...

This week saw the publication of David Freud's rapid review of the welfare system, an independent report to the Department for Work and Pensions. Among the many proposals put forward by the former banker in order to 'reduce dependency and increase opportunity', perhaps the most eye-catching was the suggestion that lone parents with children aged over 12 should lose their eligibility to Income Support, and instead be asked to fulfil the far more stringent work conditions imposed by the Jobseekers Allowance regime. Moreover the review suggested that the Government should look to gradually reduce this age limit downwards as policy evolves.

The review is an independent report to Government, rather than a statement of policy, and we hope that Ministers will engage in the 'wide consultation' suggested before announcing or implementing any of the recommendations. As David Freud suggests, implementing further conditionality for lone parents would come with a price tag attached, and Ministers will have to decide whether this is where they

want to invest their limited resources for tackling child poverty. We know that this is now the number one aim of the Department for Work and Pensions, but the Freud report says surprisingly little about how child poverty levels would be tackled by the proposals for lone parents. Our view is that they would do very little; 69 per cent of parents with children in this age group are already in work, and even achieving a 100 per cent employment rate for this group would still leave us well short of the child poverty target.

And that's assuming that these proposals are what are needed to help more lone parents into work, an assumption that again is little discussed in the Freud report. Looking more closely at the constraints to employment faced by lone parents out of work with a child in this age group suggests that an approach dependent on sanctions rather than support would achieve little. Around a quarter of these parents have a child with a disability, and half of them themselves face a disability or health condition. Forty per cent have no qualifications. Without addressing these issues, alongside the need for flexible

working, affordable quality childcare options, and an assurance that work will pay, the few lone parents in this age group who are not in work are unlikely to be persuaded by a coercive approach.

The Freud review rightly suggests that the focus of welfare support must be shifted towards ensuring sustainable employment, rather than short-term job entry. Positive findings are now emerging from the Government's Employment Retention and Advancement project, showing real income gains for lone parents from a strategy emphasising skills training and continued support while in work, including access to emergency financial support for one off costs. We hope that when the Government announces its response to the review it will focus on these measures, which have real potential to tackle child poverty, rather than an approach that at present looks like a lot of stick and very few carrots.

**Written by Kate Bell,  
Policy Officer  
One Parent Families**