



end child poverty

Child Poverty in the News

PBR announced – A mixed response to the Chancellor's plan

The long-awaited pre-Budget report (PBR) drew mixed reactions from Campaign members, with some strongly criticising Government plans and others cautiously welcoming changes to the current benefits system.

The Chancellor announced an increase in the amount families can receive without it affecting their benefits from the current £10 per week to £20 next year and £40 in 2010. He also increased the child tax credit by £25 a year from next year, adding to the £150 increase announced in last July's budget. An additional increase of £25 will be included in 2010. This is expected to lift 300,000 children out of poverty.

Many members of the Campaign were deeply disappointed by the PBR, saying it only targets a fraction of the 3.8 million children currently living in poverty in the UK and comes nowhere close to providing the £4 billion necessary to halve child poverty by 2010. Others also said the changes are a necessary first step in reforming a punitive benefits system that makes it virtually impossible for some poor families to get ahead.

<http://business.guardian.co.uk/prebudgetreport2007/story/0,,2187660,00.html>

The cost of child poverty

Failure to adequately address child poverty is estimated by the TUC to cost the UK economy £40 billion per year, amounting to £640 per person, or £2500 for a couple with two children. The figures are based on a

conservative US model showing that child poverty can drain as much as 4 per cent of GDP. The estimates also show failing to address child poverty is costing 10 times more than it would to meet the target of halving rates by 2010.

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/childpoverty/cuttingthecost.pdf>

Around the houses

Some good news for Campaign members calling for better housing to relieve some of the effects of child poverty. In July, the Government announced an £8 billion investment in affordable housing, with plans to build 3 million homes by 2020, 2 million of these to be delivered by 2016.

<http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/politics/article2795661.ece>

Targets in doubt

There is growing concern that the Government's targets to halve child poverty by 2010 and eradicate it by 2020 may be in jeopardy, following the Chancellor's pre-Budget report targeting just 300,000 of the 3.8 million currently living in poverty in the UK.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies says the Government will need to provide £3.5bn - £4bn a year in tax credits in order to reach the 2010 target, something that will become increasingly difficult in the face of reduced revenue projections.

Government Ministers contend that they are on the right track, but agree that more will need to be done to reach the "ambitious goal." <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7054286.stm>



Poverty and the party conference season

Child poverty was one of the political footballs kicked around during the party conference season, with each of the main political parties making it part of their platform pledges.

In his first speech to the Labour conference as Prime Minister, Gordon Brown re-affirmed his pledge to tackle child poverty. The opposition parties have also been working to claim the high ground over poverty issues. David Cameron took up the issue at the Conservative conference and accused Brown of failing to adequately address the issue. The Conservatives have yet to sign up to the 2010 and 2020 child poverty targets, although Cameron made another speech on poverty, which is linked below. Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrats endorsed the 2010 and 2020 targets and called for a poverty premium to help people at the bottom of the economic ladder.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,2176175,00.html – Labour Coverage

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=487872&in_page_id=1770

Conservative

http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,2171934,00.html – Liberal Democrat

2007 Month of Action

The launch of the 2007 End Child Poverty Month of Action (MOA) achieved significant coverage in print and broadcast media across the UK, including a positive write up in Polly Toynbee's column, and the continuous activities through until 21 November will sustain this media interest.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Columnists/Column/0,,2194797,00.html>

The MOA events offer a chance for people and organisations to get involved in the Campaign, and to make a difference in the fight against child poverty at a national and local level. Forthcoming MOA events incl.:

2 Nov – Visit Your MP Day

7 Nov – Rally at the Treasury, ECP supporters meet the Chancellor

12 Nov – London Children Speak Out

21 Nov – Young People's Question Time

For a complete list of Month of Action activities, go to

www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/monthofaction

Campaign members are encouraged to support the MOA, to come to the rally and to call on the Chancellor to make ending child poverty his priority with our eaction

www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/action

Dare to Care – Volunteering

End Child Poverty has teamed with CSV, the UK's largest volunteering and training organisation, to launch *Dare to Care: Make time to help end child poverty*. The initiative, which runs through the end of Feb 2008, aims to encourage 35,000 to volunteer their time to help children living in poverty.

Over the five months, CSV, Barnardo's, The Children's Society, Children's Links and NCH will each lead a month of activities around a specific theme. The themed months are:

Oct – Make a Difference Day – CSV

Nov – Education – The Children's Society

Dec – Families – Barnardo's

Jan – Health – Children's Links

Feb – Money – NCH

Dare to Care is an excellent way for Campaign members and anyone else concerned about the impact of child poverty to make a difference. For more information about how to get involved, go to the *Dare to Care* website – www.daretocare.org.uk

ECP – 90-plus and growing

End Child Poverty now has more than 90 members and is quickly closing on the 100 mark. We're looking forward to reaching this milestone, which will highlight the growing support for the Campaign. We invite all of our members to help by recruiting others to join the campaign. Our strength is in our numbers. If each supporter brings just one other organisation on board, we'll soon reach 200!

Child poverty and government

Concerns remain about Welfare Reform Green Paper

Government proposals to change the system under which lone parents receive benefits are continuing to draw fire from anti-child poverty campaigners. Proposals in a new Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Green Paper – “In work, better off” – would force lone parents to re-enter the job market when their children are younger. The current system provides income support for a lone parent until the youngest child is 16. Under the new rules, from next year lone parents will be moved on to Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) when their youngest child is 12 and from 2010 when their youngest child is seven.

Critics of the new proposals say the DWP risks losing the “hearts and minds” of lone parents. They say individualised, tailored solutions are a better way of getting people back to work, something the new system would not do. They point to a 2005 DWP opinion on moving lone parents from income support to JSA that said “an unrestricted requirement to search for work is inappropriate given the complex and difficult circumstances many parents face. We think such an approach would be expensive, unfair and ineffectual.”<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/in-work-better-off/>

32 leaders in ECP member organisations came together to support a letter published in the Guardian expressing concern about these reforms.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/letters/story/0,,2201944,00.html>

Opportunity for all update released, but format changed

The Government has changed the format of its annual report on poverty and social exclusion it has produced since 1999, saying much of the information is already provided in other reports.

In a letter to ECP explaining the changes, Caroline Flint, Minister of State for Employment and Welfare Reform, says the Government has clearly set out its strategy for tackling child poverty in the UK over the coming years through a number of recent publications, including the pre-Budget agreement, PSA delivery agreements and the DWP Green Paper.

To see the new form of the report, go to:
www.dwp.gov.uk/ofa

Child poverty PSA remains in Treasury plans

The child poverty PSA has survived a major cull by Treasury officials that saw the number of Public Service Agreements (PSAs) slashed from 110 to just 30.

Although there are fears in the sector about the ultimate fate of the targets to halve child poverty 2010 and eradicate it by 2020, Whitehall officials say tackling child poverty remains a key Government goal.

The move to scrap the majority of PSAs is part of a major restructuring effort. Each PSA will now have a lead secretary of state and its own cabinet committee including other top officials involved in the targets.

Service delivery agreements and key indicators will measure progress of each PSA, which have been grouped into five areas. Child poverty is part of the “Fairness and opportunity for all” group, which includes other initiatives designed to address health, education, safety and employment prospects for children and adults in disadvantaged communities.
http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/economics/pbr_2007/article2625963.ece

End Child Poverty campaign activities

ECP/Daycare Trust picnic



Ed Balls MP and Peter Hain MP with friends at the ECP/Daycare Trust picnic in St James' Park in July

ECP held a picnic for more than 100 children from low income backgrounds with Daycare Trust on 31 July, to celebrate the Trust's 21st birthday and to highlight that the provision of quality childcare is key to ending child poverty. With many fun activities for the children, and sponsorship from Catalyst Lend Lease, this was an exciting event which attracted two Secretaries of State (Rt Hon Ed Balls MP and Rt Hon Peter Hain MP) for a photocall very early on in the new administration.

End Child Poverty campaign briefings

A series of four campaign briefings have been prepared by Campaign members about the impact of child poverty on education, income, housing and employment and child care. The briefings set out our policy calls and demands for Government. These have been posted to all MPs, along with news of the launch of the Month of Action. All four are available to download on the ECP website. Let us know if you would like hard copies by email to info@ecpc.org.uk

Month of Action

We launched the Month of Action on 17 October – World Poverty Day – with the release of a fresh look at child poverty across the UK in the press and two events, a TUC conference and a policy seminar at the National Adult and Children's Services conference.

The TUC event – a Minimum Social Wage conference – was hosted by the Unemployed Workers Centre in support of the Campaign to End Child Poverty. This conference was well received and we have had reports from attendees impressed with the energy and momentum in the room. Secretary of State for DWP Peter Hain reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the issue of ending child poverty. ECP Director Hilary Fisher and other members of the Campaign were also invited to speak and take part in the panel.

On the same day Jo Coles, ECP Trustee, Caroline Abrahams, Programme Director for Children and Young People, LGA and Claire Kober, Head of Policy and Campaigns, FWA, spoke at the ECP policy session – "How Local Government services can end unequal choices for children in poverty". This session attracted a great deal of interest from more than 70 Council representatives and Directors of Children's services.

During the Month of Action, Richard Exell, ECP Trustee and TUC Senior Policy Advisor has been touring regional TUC meetings to give presentations on the Campaign and to encourage their involvement, following significant interest in the TUC's Costs of Child Poverty report.

In other Month of Action activities, Hilary Fisher addressed 1,500 people at the National Pensioners Convention Parliamentary Lobby, highlighting the links between elder poverty and child poverty and encouraging their engagement in our Campaign activities. Hilary also spoke at the Forum 3 Seminar on volunteering to help to end child poverty as part of the promotional activities around *Dare to Care: Make time to help end child poverty*. For a complete list of Month of Action or for more information about *Dare to Care*, visit the ECP website or www.daretocare.com.

E-action campaign

Over the summer, we ran an e-campaign calling on Gordon Brown to make child poverty a priority in his new position as Prime Minister. Many member organisations pushed the e-action on their websites and to supporters and more than 900 messages were sent to the PM.

Conference rounds

It was a busy autumn conference season, with ECP participating in a variety of events. During the TUC conference, ECP was involved in two fringes, one with the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), the other by the Unemployed Workers Centres (UWC).

At the UWC event, chaired by Bob Braddock, Coordinator of The People's Centre, Frances O'Grady spoke powerfully of the need for all unions to come together in support of the Campaign, and of the urgency of the task ahead for Government. CPAG's Kate Green emphasised the extent of child poverty in families in work and highlighted the link between in work and out of work poverty, while Colin Hampton addressed the shocking levels of out of work benefits and the impact this has on families.

ECP was also busy with the party conferences, holding joint receptions at all three with Barnardo's, NCH, NSPCC, The Children's Society and Save the Children.

At the Lib Dem conference, Rt Hon Sir Menzies Campbell MP addressed our reception, reiterating their commitment to tackling child poverty. This event, hosted by Mary Marsh, CEO, NSPCC, was very well attended with a number of Councillors and interested MPs, including Danny Alexander, the DWP Shadow, staying for the duration.

At the Labour conference, Secretary of State for DCSF Ed Balls arrived at the end of what had been a packed reception, hosted by Jasmine Whitbread, CEO, Save the

Children, to give an encouraging speech that included assurances about the Government's commitment to child poverty. Five other Government ministers also attended the reception, along with interested MPs, Cllrs and Campaign supporters.

At the Conservative conference, Shadow DWP Spokesperson Chris Grayling MP spoke at a late evening reception, hosted by Claire Tickell, CEO, NCH.

ECP Vice-Chair Chris Pond featured in the video running at ATL's stand at all the conferences speaking about the Campaign and the links between education and child poverty. You can watch this video at <http://lewislive.co.uk/ATLChildPoverty/>



Mary Marsh, Hilary Fisher, Ed Balls MP, Claire Tickell, Jasmine Whitbread and Martin Narey at the ECP reception at the Labour conference.

Member activities

EDCM is launching a new Private Members Bill to give families with disabled children a legal right to short break care. More information about the Disabled Children (Family Support) Bill 2007 can be found at www.edcm.org.uk/righttobreaks

There is a special offer for ECP members to attend the Daycare Trust Conference 14 November 2007, The Cost of Quality – What is Childcare Worth? CBI Conference Centre, London, WC1. For more information see www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/members-campaign-activities

ECP Members' Comment

Richard Exell, Trades Union Congress



“For many years, anti-poverty campaigners have pointed out the hardships poverty causes and produced facts and figures that are highly regarded academically. But it has had very little political

impact.

One of the problems we face is that many voters see child poverty either as problem of the past or of the developing world. If there are any children in Britain in poverty, then it must be because their parents are lazy, or don't care or are drug addicts.

To persuade them that child poverty stunts lives and is cruel and unfair we are going to have to persuade them that that it is also *inefficient* and that we are all worse off as a result.

More than a fifth of UK children are poor: a huge fraction of the future workforce are going to be less productive workers. They will tend to have worse health, which means that their working lives will be shorter with more and longer absences during their economically active years.

On top of this cost of inefficiency there's also the extra costs we all have to pay because of poverty.

The TUC estimates that the costs of child poverty in the UK from reduced productivity and economic output are £13 billion a year, the raised costs of crime are £13 billion and the costs of poorer health are £12 billion. This works out at £40 billion, or £640 a head, or more than £2,500 a year for a couple with two children.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the number of children in poverty drastically increased. Despite the improvements of the last ten

years, British children are still twice as likely to be poor today as they were in 1979. And other European countries have much lower levels of child poverty.

In 1999, the Prime Minister pledged to end child poverty within a generation and made that promise credible by giving it a timescale and milestones: child poverty should be halved by 2010 and eliminated by 2020. The money they have spent on benefits and tax credits for children has produced results – the number of children in poverty has been cut by 600,000 – but there is still a long way to go.

In 2006, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation calculated that spending an extra £4.3 billion on the Child Tax Credit would give the Government a 50:50 chance of hitting the 2010 target.

Taking into account the improvements announced in the 2007 Budget, the Institute for Fiscal Studies calculates that that figure can now be cut to £4 billion. The Government will miss its 2010 target unless it turns to this policy.

If £4 billion for child poverty is not set aside in either the 2008 or 2009 Budgets, then it seems likely that a once-in-a-generation chance to end child poverty will have been missed.”

Richard Exell is a Senior Policy Officer at the Trades Union Congress and a member of the Board of End Child Poverty.

If you would like to write a Members' Comment piece for the next newsletter, or you have a Campaign Activity that you would like us to feature then please do let us know.

Email laura@ecpc.org.uk with your news or call the Campaign team on 0207 278 6541.