



# A MANIFESTO FOR ENDING CHILD POVERTY:

## Our Priorities for the 2021 Scottish Parliament Election

### Our priorities

Every child has a right to a decent standard of living that meets their physical and social needs and supports their development. We believe all children should be safe, warm, fed, and able to play and learn during this crisis and beyond. Yet not all families have an adequate income to meet these needs. Poverty is fundamentally about a lack of money and living on a low income, in effect, it excludes children from the everyday activities and opportunities that their better-off peers enjoy.

We have welcomed the Scottish Parliament's consensus on the need to tackle child poverty and the unanimous support for the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, which established statutory targets to eradicate child poverty. The continued prioritisation of the Scottish Child Payment is also very welcome; this game-changing benefit will lift tens of thousands of children out of poverty.

Even before Covid-19 hit, however, child poverty rates were high and projected to rise further. By May 2021, we are likely to see increased unemployment and more children experiencing the effects of poverty. We recognise that the next Scottish Government will be contending with tight budgets, challenges around the pandemic and its impact on the economy. But we will need to see decisive action across the different drivers of child poverty if we are to meet the interim child poverty targets (2023/24), which fall within the next parliamentary term.

Our goal is to secure policy change that raises family incomes, strengthens financial security for all families, and prevents and ends child poverty in Scotland. To achieve this, all political parties in Scotland must ensure their manifestos set out their strategy for meeting the interim and 2030 statutory child poverty targets. We must see bold steps taken in the next Scottish Parliament session (2021 - 2026) to significantly reduce child poverty and ensure a strong and fair social and economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Our key calls:

1. **Build on the Scottish Child Payment**
2. **Bolster current support provided to children in low income households**
3. **Ensure crisis support is adequate and accessible**
4. **Guarantee holistic whole family support – including practical, emotional and financial support – is available to all families needing help**
5. **Support migrant children and caregivers**
6. **Set out a child poverty focused labour market policy**

## Child poverty: A deepening crisis

Even before Covid-19, nearly one in four children in Scotland were growing up in poverty.<sup>1</sup> The pandemic has hit low-income families disproportionately hard; deepening poverty and dragging more families into financial insecurity.<sup>2</sup> Women are at particular risk of Covid-19 job disruption, including unemployment and enforced reduction of hours, which will have direct results for women's poverty rates, and subsequently child poverty rates.<sup>3</sup>

Children and families that End Child Poverty members work alongside are telling us about severe and increasing levels of need.<sup>4</sup> Almost half of families on Universal Credit and Child Tax Credits surveyed in Scotland by Save the Children and the JRF reported a reduction in income since March despite 86% reporting rising household costs<sup>5</sup>, while analysis by IPPR found that nearly half of families with children in Scotland were in serious financial difficulty or struggling to make ends meet.<sup>6</sup>

Families are reaching out to us with bare cupboards and fridges, struggling to cope with the impact of income loss, and forced to make increasingly difficult choices. There has been a sharp rise in the number of people, in particular families with children, accessing emergency food aid<sup>7</sup> with food insecurity being driven by acute income crises<sup>8</sup>. The return to blended learning approaches and further school and nursery closures present additional issues for women in balancing paid work and unpaid care, leading to some women reducing their hours or leaving work altogether in order to provide care for friends and relatives and childcare. The income crisis is being disproportionately experienced by the very priority groups most in need, as set out in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan: Black and minority ethnic (BME) families, women<sup>9</sup>, lone parents, families with a disabled adult or child, young mothers, families with a child under one, and larger families.

Scotland has ambitious child poverty targets and as the 2020 progress report on tackling child poverty shows, there is no question that important and welcome action has been taken on child poverty in Scotland. Yet it is also crystal clear that even before the Covid-19 crisis this wasn't enough to meet the child poverty targets unanimously agreed by the Scottish Parliament. Analysis suggests the number of children impacted by poverty will soar over the next few years, unless we act decisively.<sup>10</sup> Child poverty rises or falls because of the policies that a government implements. We can - and must - tackle child poverty.

1 Scottish Government (2020), [Poverty and income inequality in Scotland: 2016-19](#)

2 IPPR Scotland (2020), <https://www.ippr.org/blog/covid-19-how-are-families-with-children-faring-so-far>

3 Close the Gap (2020), [Disproportionate disruption: The impact of COVID-19 on women's labour market equality](#)

4 Save the Children (2020), [Evidence of families' needs](#)

5 Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children (2020), [A lifeline for our children: Strengthening the social security system for families with children during this pandemic](#)

6 IPPR Scotland (2020), <https://www.ippr.org/blog/covid-19-how-are-families-with-children-faring-so-far>

7 Independent Food Aid Network (2020), [IFAN's latest figures collated from Scotland's independent food banks and the Trussell Trust \(2020\). Mid-year statistics data briefing](#)

8 A Menu for Change (2019), [Found Wanting: Understanding journeys into and out of food insecurity: a longitudinal study](#)

9 Engender (2020), [Gender & unpaid work: the impact of Covid-19 on women's caring roles](#)

10 IPPR (2020), [Estimating poverty impacts of the coronavirus pandemic](#)

## Why urgent change is needed

The Scottish Parliament has united in its commitment to tackle child poverty and the current Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan outlines the measures the Scottish Government is taking toward meeting the child poverty targets. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has created ever greater financial uncertainty for low income families across Scotland. The most recent evidence points to Scotland missing the interim child poverty targets within the next three years without further action.<sup>11</sup>

Articles 26 and 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) assert that it is a State's obligation to ensure a child's right to benefit from financial assistance and to an adequate standard of living. If the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill is passed by the end of this parliamentary term, Scottish Government will be required to review how these rights will be met.

Crucially, the implementation of the recommendations of The Promise<sup>12</sup> and other forms of family support will only be successful if accompanied by a concurrent focus on alleviating child poverty and addressing urgent financial needs. Family support, without ensuring that families have the means to bring up their children, is not sufficient. The Promise, for instance, is clear that *"when a family lacks financial resources, when they face sub-standard service provision, when the streets they walk are less safe than in other parts of town, when homes are cramped and when keeping food on the table is a struggle, meeting all the needs of a child can be challenging."*<sup>13</sup>

Sustained action is needed to address the systemic causes of low income for families, including low wages, welfare cuts and rising costs, as part of a step-change in how we value all those with caring responsibilities, including those looking after children.

All children have the right to be safe, warm, fed and to be able to play and learn. We must ensure children's right to an adequate standard of living is met now, and for good. Every tool at Scotland's disposal must be used to that end. Families should also have financial security. That means having an adequate income that meets material needs and enables participation in society, an income that is secure and reliable, ensures costs for essentials are manageable, families are supported to manage shocks to their income and have autonomy to make their own financial decisions.<sup>14</sup>

Experiencing poverty means living on a low income, so we must see a cash first response for families now and in the long-term. This must include targeted support for children and those who care for them. Families need predictable, consistent, and sustainable incomes. Where any level of government can do more to loosen the grip of poverty then it must. We can end child poverty – for good.

## A cash-first approach to tackling child poverty – now, and for good

Our calls are focused on ensuring income adequacy for families and ultimately ending child poverty. All parents in Scotland should have access to the resources that enable them to provide a decent standard of living for them and their children, and opportunities to thrive in paid work should not be restricted. By the end of the next parliamentary term, we should be at least halfway in meeting the 2030 child poverty targets. A combination of social security and labour market policies will be needed to boost family incomes. We would like to see our key calls reflected in party manifestos for the Holyrood election in spring 2021.

11 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2020), [Poverty in Scotland 2020](#)

12 The Independent Care Review (2020), [The Promise](#)

13 The Independent Care Review (2020), [The Promise](#)

14 IPPR Scotland (2020), [Weathering the winter storm: Strengthening financial security in Scotland through the ongoing Covid-19 crisis](#)

## 1. Build on the Scottish Child Payment

The introduction of the Scottish Child Payment (SCP) is a landmark use of social security powers to tackle child poverty that could lift up to 30,000 children in Scotland out of poverty.<sup>15</sup> Yet we know, based on the current value of the payment, it won't in itself go far enough to meet child poverty targets.<sup>16</sup>

The SCP is a new benefit for low-income families, to be phased in, starting from the end of February 2021 for families with children under the age of six. Low income families, on a qualifying benefit (such as Universal Credit), are entitled to £10 per child per week. Scottish Government analysis shows that this benefit has the potential to have a direct impact on child poverty, reducing the proportion of children in poverty by 3 percentage points. However, because of expected increases in child poverty rates, even a 3 percentage-point reduction in relative child poverty in 2023/24 could leave relative poverty in Scotland at 26%, far away from the interim child poverty target of 18% set out in legislation.<sup>17</sup> These estimates were produced before the economic shock created by the pandemic.

We welcome the recent passing of the Social Security Administration and Tribunal Membership (Scotland) Bill, which will ensure the SCP is uprated annually with inflation. But Scotland won't succeed in meeting our child poverty targets unless the value of the payment is more ambitious. According to modelling, a further £10 per week for families with the youngest child under six would lift an additional 10,000 children out of poverty; for all eligible 0 – 16 years olds, an additional 20,000 children would be lifted out of poverty.<sup>18</sup>

For families with children under 16, the Scottish Child Payment will be rolled out by the end of 2022. We are concerned eligible families will need to wait another two years to receive this additional financial support, especially given the Scottish Fiscal Commission's estimate that there has been a 14% increase in eligible children since the pandemic hit.<sup>19</sup> We welcome the recently announced £100 winter payment to low-income families, entitled to every child on Free School Meals.<sup>20</sup> Building on this commitment, we urge Scottish Government to explore how the current timetable could be fast-tracked or use existing mechanisms to provide an equivalent cash boost to families in the short term.

Government should also keep the delivery mechanism under review to ensure the payment take-up is maximised. The Scottish Fiscal Commission has projected that only 80% of eligible families will receive the Scottish Child Payment in its first year, leaving 39,000 eligible children without support.<sup>21</sup> The delivery mechanism must ensure the payment is reaching all those who need it most and the projected impact on child poverty is met.

Whilst not subject to the UK social security system's two child limit or benefit cap the potential impact of the Scottish Child Payment is inevitably undermined by these policies. End Child Poverty members have welcomed action to mitigate the benefit cap through discretionary housing payments (DHPs) - awarded at the discretion of local authorities. However, our members' evidence highlights that the use of DHPs to mitigate the benefit cap is inconsistent. Unlike for claimants affected by the 'bedroom tax', there is currently no guarantee that a DHP will be awarded to those affected by the benefit cap. In relation to the two-child limit whilst the policy does not apply directly to the Scottish Child Payment, entitlement to the new payment is based on receipt of a qualifying benefit in which the two-child limit does apply. Certain families with some income lose entitlement to Universal Credit or tax credit when the two-child limit is applied. They also then lose entitlement to the Scottish Child Payment because they are not receiving a qualifying benefit.

**The introduction of the Scottish Child Payment must be quickly built upon by:**

- **At least doubling the value of the payment to £20 per week;**
- **Accelerating the full roll-out of the Scottish Child Payment for families with school-aged children or using alternative channels to provide equivalent financial support;**

15 Scottish Government (2020), [Scottish Child Payment: updated position paper – January 2020](#)

16 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2019), [Poverty in Scotland 2019](#)

17 Resolution Foundation (2019), [Wrong direction: Can Scotland hit its child poverty targets?](#)

18 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2019), [Making the most of the Scottish Child Payment](#)

19 Scottish Government (2020), <https://www.gov.scot/news/scottish-child-payment-could-support-up-to-194-000-children/>

20 Scottish Government (2020), <https://www.gov.scot/news/winter-support-fund-for-families-and-children/>

21 Scottish Fiscal Commission (2020), [Scottish Fiscal Commission estimates](#)

- Keeping the delivery mechanism under review to ensure the payment take up is maximised, is being accessed by a main carer, is reaching all those who need it most and the projected impact on child poverty is achieved;
- Guaranteeing sufficient DHP funds to local authorities to fully mitigate the benefit cap, as has been done in relation to the bedroom tax, and considering how the two-child limit could also be mitigated.

## 2. Bolster current income supports provided to children in low income households

Best Start Grants, Best Start Foods, School Clothing Grants and Free School Meals all provide much-needed support to low-income families. This was brought into sharp focus during lockdown, with many low-income parents relying on free school meal replacements.<sup>22</sup> We believe that all this support must be protected and increased.

We know that the stigma attached to being entitled to free school meals significantly hampers take-up. This could be tackled entirely by making all children and young people eligible for free school meals.

**We are calling for a plan to bolster much-needed existing support for children in poverty, including:**

- Increasing the value of Best Start Grant payments and ensure the value of the payments are updated in line with inflation;
- Building on support through School Clothing Grants by increasing their value;
- Extending eligibility to Free School Meals to all children in primary school and at the very least to all secondary school pupils where a parent or guardian is in receipt of universal credit or equivalent benefit;
- Ensure local authorities adopt a cash-first approach to provision of free school replacement support over the school holidays and other periods children are unable to attend school with a minimum level of support across Scotland, like School Clothing Grants.

## 3. Ensure crisis support is adequate and accessible

For many people, the Scottish Welfare Fund represents a much-needed lifeline when facing the income shocks created by the inadequacies of the social security system. Yet our organisations have mounting evidence that the Fund is often neither adequate nor accessible, with best practice models of delivery not always implemented<sup>23</sup>, and these concerns have been further highlighted during the pandemic. The additional investment in the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) in response to Covid-19 was widely welcomed and much needed, with record levels of applications.<sup>24</sup> However, there are significant and longstanding issues with the adequacy and accessibility of SWF, as well as public awareness of the Fund.<sup>25</sup>

A number of applicants to the Aberlour and One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) hardship funds during the pandemic had unsuccessfully applied to SWF first, either applying for Crisis Grants for financial support or for Community Care Grants (CCGs) for essential goods and items. Aberlour alone has seen a 1,400% rise in applications to its Urgent Assistance Fund during the pandemic, and since mid-April OPFS has provided 3,500 emergency energy grants to single parents. Around 10% of applicants to Aberlour's fund reference an unsuccessful application to SWF in the same period prior to applying to Aberlour for assistance. This has been spontaneous, unprompted self-reporting when applying to Aberlour and is likely, therefore, to be an underestimate. Even when families have accessed the SWF, we know that the amounts provided are often inadequate to meet the need behind the application.

22 Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland (2020), [Evidence to the Education and Skills Committee](#)

23 Scottish Poverty & Inequality Research Unit (2019), [Are pupils being served?](#)

24 Scottish Government (2020), <https://news.gov.scot/news/funding-for-those-who-need-it-most>

25 A Menu for Change (2019), [The Scottish Welfare Fund: Strengthening the Safety Net: A Study of Best Practice](#)

In many cases SWF does not appear to be acting as the safety net it is intended to be for families in urgent financial need. The experience of organisations working directly with those families and providing help and support, such as Aberlour, OPFS and Save the Children through their hardship funds or the Trussell Trust through their food banks, is that families are turning to charities and other support organisations and not realising their potential eligibility to support from SWF. These are issues that long pre-dated the pandemic.

**As a minimum, the SWF must provide consistent and adequate support in a crisis including when families face exceptional pressures. In order to achieve this:**

- **The enhanced investment in SWF must be maintained;**
- **A full review should take place, covering the guidance, accessibility, administration and adequacy of grants provided, and urgent action on areas needing improvement must follow.**

## 4. Guarantee holistic whole family support – including practical, emotional and financial support – is available to all families needing help

Emotional and recovery support for children and families that need it cannot be separated from practical and financial support. We need a clear commitment to sustainable investment in holistic whole family support, if we are to ensure early and preventative help is available to all families who need it in line with the recommendations of the Independent Care Review (The Promise)<sup>26</sup> and children's rights as set out in the UNCRC. We believe that this will limit the possibility of families' problems developing into crises and patterns of intergenerational trauma repeating themselves, due to a lack of adequate help and support from systems that don't work.

A holistic approach to working with families builds on their existing strengths and enables the development of strong, trusting relationships with and within families. We recognise the variety of structures in which families exist, and holistic support that aims to ensure all families get the help they need must also recognise and respond to how families recognise and define themselves. Working in partnership alongside families to identify solutions to the challenges they experience is key to helping develop and maintain safe, nurturing and loving environments where children can thrive, and making sure families can stay together.

The Promise outlines that this commitment to early intervention and prevention is best realised through providing intensive support services for the families who need it and through upscaling universal services' capacity to provide the support that families need and to mitigate the impact of poverty. Additionally, the UNCRC is clear that it is the state's responsibility to provide parents with the help they need to bring up their children, where they may struggle to do so on their own due to the challenges in their lives. As Scotland looks to incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law next year, our national approach to the provision of family support must reflect that obligation.

Income adequacy is a fundamental element of holistic family support provision. Articles 26 and 27 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) outline that it is a government's responsibility to ensure the financial support necessary is made available through social security measures for families who need financial assistance, in order to provide an adequate standard of living to meet children's needs.

We believe that any commitment to providing holistic family support and to incorporating the UNCRC cannot be realised without an explicit commitment to ensuring income adequacy and the necessary financial support for families at risk of being pushed or falling further into poverty. Making sure that families have the means to provide for themselves is essential if we are to begin to address the conditions that perpetuate poverty and help them to recover from trauma.

**We are calling for:**

- **A national approach to holistic whole family support to be developed that guarantees practical, emotional and financial help and assistance to all families across Scotland who need it.**

## 5. Support migrant children and caregivers

Many migrant families and children may be excluded from, or face a range of barriers accessing mainstream social security benefits, regardless of how acute their need is.<sup>27</sup> They may legally have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), no right to reside or be 'subject to immigration control' (PSIC), all of which have implications in terms of access to social security and the benefits social security entitlement passports people towards. ECP members experience is that knowledge of migrants' rights is very limited within public services and too often based on an assumption that migrant families and children cannot be provided with financial support.

NRPF particularly disadvantages migrant women who are more likely to rely on this assistance due to caring responsibilities and as a result of being concentrated in low-paid work or because they may be reliant on a partner for their income.<sup>28</sup> This leads to unacceptable levels of destitution as well as additional vulnerability to exploitation and abuse and harmful impacts on children's health, wellbeing and development. Local Authorities have limited powers and some statutory duties to provide support through social services, however, this is very limited and often inadequate to lift families out of extreme poverty and meet children's essential needs.

In 2017, the Equalities and Human Rights Committee found tangible evidence of destitution in Scotland for families with NRPF.<sup>29</sup> Subsequent evidence sessions have highlighted how these issues have persisted and are increasingly affecting European Economic Area (EEA) nationals and their families as Brexit impacts. There is a significant potential that economic uncertainty caused by both the public health crisis and Brexit will impact migrant workers with insecure status and increase the number of people with no or limited access to social security in need of assistance.

We note the Ethnic Minority National Resilience Network Recommendations to the Expert Advisory Group (Scotland) on COVID and Ethnicity<sup>30</sup> and agree that payments for families with NRPF must be provided. We note, however, that given the Home Office decides which public funds cannot be accessed by those with NRPF, if the Scottish Government were to create a new benefit in Scotland this entitlement could also be added to the list. We therefore believe that support should be provided by other routes, such as using local powers to provide direct financial support through local authorities to advance the wellbeing of children (for example under s22 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 or via financial support under the power in s20 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003).

Research undertaken by Aberlour and Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) on the use of existing local authority discretionary powers for financial assistance found that "*financial assistance remains crucial to many families and support is sourced and brought together through various routes such as s.12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 or s.22 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995*".<sup>31</sup> However, awareness of these powers amongst local social work teams was not widespread and therefore guidance and awareness raising would be required to meet the aims and to ensure the effectiveness and of such a policy.

**Nobody should be pulled into destitution. We are calling for:**

- **Clearer information and guidance to public bodies on the different types of status that migrant children and families are subject to, and greater support for, and accountability of, public bodies to make maximum use of the powers they do have to support families accordingly;**
- **Local authorities to receive the funds that would allow them to use local powers to provide payments to migrant families whose status (e.g. NRPF, no right to reside, PSIC) limits their rights to social security benefits and who are at risk of destitution. These could be used to provide equivalent financial support to the Scottish Child Payment and should provide sufficient financial support to meet essential needs whilst they apply for the NRPF condition to be lifted or are otherwise supported out of poverty and destitution;**

27 There is a list of 'public funds' that people have no recourse to, contained in the Immigration Rules. These include housing and homelessness assistance and the majority of benefits. (Benefits that you can get if you have paid sufficient national insurance contributions are not included on the list, like contributory employment and support allowance.)

28 Women's Budget Group (2020), [Migrant Women and the Economy](#)

29 Equalities and Human Rights Committee (2017), [Hidden Lives – New Beginnings: Destitution, asylum and insecure immigration status in Scotland](#)

30 Ethnic Minority National Resilience Network (2020), [Recommendations to the Expert Advisory Group \(Scotland\) on Covid and Ethnicity](#)

31 Aberlour (2020), [Responding to Covid-19: Supporting children, young people and families at Aberlour](#)

- **Guidance to be produced for social workers and those working with children on the use of discretionary powers under s22 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 or via financial support under the power in s20 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.**

## 6. Set out a child poverty focused labour market policy

Women account for most low-paid workers in Scotland, and two-thirds of workers being paid less than the living wage are women. The Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan highlights the inextricable link between women's poverty and child poverty, rendering action to address women's labour market inequality integral to tackling child poverty. Tackling women's low pay and addressing child poverty should therefore be viewed as intertwined ambitions. This is particularly true in the context of the current crisis. Low-paid women are at particular risk of Covid-19 job disruption, and women, particularly lone parents, have been disproportionately impacted by the need for more unpaid care.<sup>32</sup>

Gendered patterns of care have been replicated during lockdown, and in many cases magnified. Action is needed to better value and invest in care, including unpaid care like childcare, whilst protecting those who provide it – most of whom are women – from poverty.<sup>33</sup> However, school and nursery closures and increased caring responsibilities in the home have also drastically affected women's ability to do paid work.<sup>34</sup> Covid-19 has consequently made it even more pivotal that the Scottish Government prioritises action to tackle women's in-work poverty when trying to meet child poverty targets.

There is evidence that investing in the care sector can create significant numbers of valuable new jobs.<sup>35</sup> However, to make paid employment a meaningful and sustainable choice for people caring for children the available work must be decent work, with appropriately remunerated jobs, sufficient hours, job security, flexible working patterns and clear progression pathways.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to targeted interventions to tackle persistent labour market barriers faced by women with caring responsibilities, the Government must boost the provision of accessible, affordable and flexible childcare<sup>37</sup> through the delivery of the increased funded childcare entitlement for young children at the earliest opportunity. Childcare is the most immediate barrier to women being able to work, study and train; the high cost of childcare means that 25% of parents living in absolute poverty in Scotland have given up work, a third have turned down a job, and a further 25% have not been able to take up education or training.<sup>38</sup> Childcare can also play an important role in local economic regeneration strategies in terms of dealing with area-based poverty through offering employment, providing opportunities for mothers to access the wider labour market, and improving the quality of provision for children in areas of deprivation.

Delays in the extension of the funded entitlement to 1,140 hours could trap women in low-paid part-time work or prevent women from re-entering the labour market which will have clear implications for child poverty rates. The planned expansion should be a stepping stone towards further increases in the number of funded hours<sup>39,40</sup>, with measures to ensure those employed in childcare are also protected from poverty. We also know that high-quality childcare can improve long-term outcomes for children and can help to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap.

Women who were already struggling are now under enormous financial pressure, being pushed further into poverty, adding to a growing child poverty crisis. It is vitally important that economic recovery policymaking and action to address child poverty prioritises measures to build a labour market that works for women.

32 Close the Gap (2020), [Disproportionate disruption: The impact of COVID-19 on women's labour market equality](#)

33 Oxfam Scotland (2020), [Care, Climate and Covid-19](#)

34 Children's Society (2020), <https://www.ein.org.uk/news/childrens-society-finds-no-recourse-public-funds-leaves-thousands-children-growing-long-term>

35 Engender (2020), [Gender & unpaid work: the impact of Covid-19 on women's caring roles](#)

36 The UWS-Oxfam Partnership with the support of Warwick Institute for Employment Research (2016), [Decent Work for Scotland's Low-Paid Workers: A job to be done](#)

37 Women's Budget Group (2020), [A Care-Led Recovery from Coronavirus](#)

38 Scottish Government (2020), [Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland: Report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery](#). It highlights New Zealand's Provincial Growth Fund which it says applies conditions on recipients of public loans, including in relation to social indicators.

39 Zofia Lapniewska (2016), [Growth, Equality and Employment: Investing in Childcare in Scotland](#)

40 First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (2018), [First Report and Recommendations](#)

We would also like to see wider employment support for parents, both those in and out of work. This pandemic has already disproportionately impacted low-paid workers, and further unemployment and hardship is likely to follow as the UK Government's job retention scheme is wound down and the economic recession takes hold. We therefore need to see family incomes protected and stabilised through employment support for all parents, particularly building on the existing Parental Employment Support Fund. Employability support cannot push people, particularly those with caring responsibilities, towards paid work while taking too little account of the structural barriers, such as affordable and accessible childcare, which trap people in poverty. Employability must offer holistic support to help people towards the labour market and to realise a sustainable livelihood, with the support provided shaped by those accessing it. At the same time, expectations on business to both improve the quality of work they provide and increase the support they offer to those with caring responsibilities should be increased, Procurement rules and voluntary accreditation schemes should be enhanced to help drive this improvement.<sup>41</sup>

**We are calling for:**

- **Action to be taken to tackle the gender pay gap and women's labour market inequality, building on the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan;**
- **Gendered approaches to all labour market policymaking and ensure action to address occupational segregation and the undervaluation of "women's work" are core to the economic recovery;**
- **A focus on women's quality jobs and wages in reforms to social care, while ensuring there is sufficient funding in place to realise this;**
- **Greater use of public procurement and state and public body wage-setting powers to drive improvements in the quality of work, particularly in female-dominated sectors such as social care and childcare – including addressing low-pay - through payment of the real Living Wage - and insecure work;**
- **Roll-out of the delayed early learning and childcare expansion as quickly as possible – ensuring this is high-quality, accessible and flexible – and then seek to further expand this entitlement;**
- **Greater conditionality to be introduced for companies accessing public money with requirements for them to increase the quality of work they offer, as well as improve the support they provide to those with caring responsibilities, while also strengthening voluntary accreditation initiatives;**
- **Ensure flexible, person-centred employability support, including by building on the existing Parental Employment Support Fund and ensuring it supports parents both in and out of work to realise a sustainable livelihood.**

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