

**CHILD  
POVERTY  
ACTION  
GROUP**

# campaigns newsletter

Issue No. 65

July 2009

## Child Poverty Bill success for campaigners

**C**hild poverty campaigners, who have been calling for the child poverty target to be enshrined in legislation, have won a victory with the publication of the new Child Poverty Bill. However, while the Bill responds to many of the campaigners calls, CPAG's Head of Policy, Paul Dornan, warned: 'It's a great step forward, but not perfect. MPs must strengthen key areas and it must not distract from the immediate needs of low income families for greater financial support.'

The Government's decision to bring forward a Bill to enshrine the 2020 target to end child poverty in legislation followed lobbying from CPAG, Gingerbread and other partners in the Campaign to End Child Poverty. Kate Green, CPAG Chief Executive, said: 'This is an important success for child poverty campaigners. For the first time we will not only have all three main parties committed to eradicating child poverty, but laws requiring whichever of them is in government to take action to achieve it and publish a detailed strategy.'

As well as the 2020 target, the Bill requires government to publish a three-year strategy, laying out how progress will be made towards the target and incorporating interim milestones. A commission will be created with a remit to comment on progress and a duty for government to have regard to its recommendations. Local government in Eng-

land will be required to assess local needs and publish local strategies for child poverty eradication.

A key part of the Bill is how it proposes to measure child poverty. A basket of four measures will be used: relative income poverty; absolute poverty; persistent poverty; and material deprivation. Although there is a 5 per cent end point target for material deprivation, CPAG is concerned that the proposed end point for relative income poverty is set at 10 per cent or lower. We are

campaigning for it to be reduced to 5 per cent or lower.

CPAG also wants clarification that the Bill will not be undermined by an 'affordability clause'. A clause on 'economic and fiscal circumstances' is intended to require government to 'have regard to budgetary constraints and value for money'. This must not allow governments to revisit and alter the targets. We will be discussing with MPs how we can ensure this does not become a loophole for governments failing to take the action

### 2010 target: what now?

*Following disappointing child poverty figures and a Budget that did not further progress on the child poverty targets, CPAG's Chief Executive, Kate Green, looks at the challenges for government and campaigners.*

One question has been put to me again and again since April's Budget and May's disappointing child poverty figures: 'Can the 2010 target to halve child poverty still be met?'

Without doubt the target is much less likely to be reached on time, but we certainly mustn't give up. The Government is still set to have lifted a million children out of poverty by 2010 – a genuine achievement. But ministers must do better than this. This isn't just a numbers game; it's about children's lives.



Kate Green, CPAG Chief Executive

The Government deserved the criticism it received for not doing more in the Budget. But politicians and campaigners must move on from scoring political points over another government target likely to be missed. Politicians across the political spectrum must now demand the Government does as much as possible to approach the target in the time remaining, using *continued on page 2*

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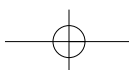
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## In The House

**Sally Keeble MP** wins this issue's nomination for CPAG's **MP of the Year**. As a member of the **Treasury Select Committee**, she pressed a series of excellent questions on child poverty progress on witnesses including **Chancellor Alistair Darling** during the inquiry into the **Budget**. Her questioning ensured that important recommendations on child poverty formed a substantial part of the committee's report on Budget 2009. She also pressed the issue during the Finance Bill debate, calling on **former Financial Secretary, Yvette Cooper MP**, to recommit to the target to halve child poverty by 2010/11. Although a clear commitment was not made by the minister, Sally's action to keep progress on child poverty on the parliamentary agenda is tremendously valuable and will help keep a high profile for child poverty up to the crucial **Pre-Budget Report** in the autumn.



*Sally Keeble MP*

The lack of action in the Budget also met with strong consternation beyond the Treasury Committee. **Dai Davies MP**, the independent member for Blaenau Gwent, has tabled Early Day Motion 1382 with support from 30 MPs on '**Child Poverty Funding**'. It describes the 38.4p a week rise in child tax credit as 'paltry' and contrasts it with the '£200 billion plus' given to the banks.

Outside of the Budget, MPs are now considering the **Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Bill**, which has already been through the House of Lords. CPAG will be tabling amendments to ensure fair protections for parents seeking British citizenship and their children.

In the House of Lords, Peers are now debating the Welfare Reform Bill (see column 2). They have also been debating the state of the economy. **Lord Bishop of Bradford** warned that the **recession is worsening child poverty**. He said: 'If these levels of poverty become embedded in the fabric of our society, this will be extremely costly for the country in the future because it will affect these children for the whole of their lives.'

Meanwhile party business has, of course, been taking place against the backdrop of tremendous turmoil due to the expenses scandal, European elections and the Cabinet reshuffle. Key changes relating to child poverty include **Yvette Cooper MP** as new Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, and **Dawn Primarolo MP** as Minister for Children.

*continued from page 1*

the Pre-Budget Report, and setting out a roadmap to halve child poverty as fast as possible.

Meanwhile, the harsh realities faced by the families struggling most in the recession demand that the Government prioritises their needs in actions towards economic recovery. Yes, ministers have acted to protect jobs, but families need more cash now – cash that they will spend to boost their local economies, helping not just their children's wellbeing, but protecting jobs and businesses.

## Reforming welfare reform

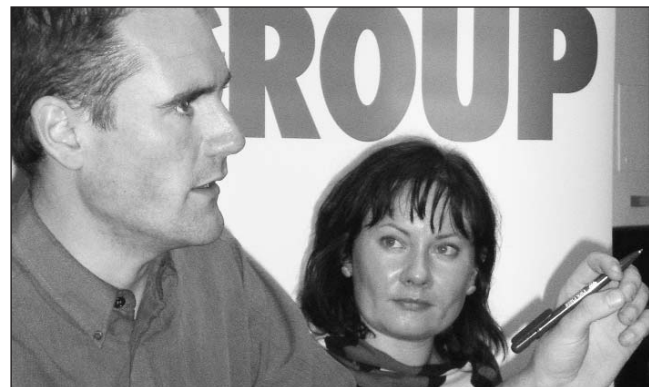
CPAG has been working hard with members of the House of Lords to secure improvement to the Welfare Reform Bill. The appointment of Yvette Cooper as Work and Pensions Secretary provides opportunities to address the Bill's failings

Amendments have been tabled following CPAG's lobbying on areas including parental choice over childcare provision, protection of families from sanctions, a guaranteed right to high quality employment-related support, and retaining income support.

CPAG's Parliamentary Officer, Tim Nichols, said: 'Peers have responded really well to our concerns. The Bill just puts in place a complex bureaucracy for issuing orders and handing out punishments. It doesn't address barriers to decent work or guarantee an entitlement to the high quality support claimants want to get into decent jobs. Pushing parents into sub-prime jobs with low pay and poor prospects helps no one. And giving the DWP the final say on childcare choices strips away what should be a fundamental parental right.'

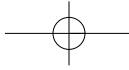
He added that the Bill does not guarantee a route out of poverty through decent jobs, saying: 'The changes to the Bill we are calling for would not only better protect the wellbeing of parents and children, but would lead to more parents moving into decent jobs than the Government's flawed plans.'

An amendment proposed by the charity Gingerbread is also being backed by CPAG. It proposes that lone parents should receive a premium as a positive incentive to engage in work-related activity in the same way as disabled people do under the new employment and support allowance.



*CPAG's Paul Dornan and journalist Libby Brook at a Compass conference seminar on welfare reform in June.*

The childcare sector needs a cash injection to prevent the recession causing a collapse in capacity. And the advertising budget for the Government's benefit fraud campaign should immediately be transferred to fund a benefit take-up campaign to help ensure all families hit by the recession access their full welfare rights. With benefit fraud at its lowest ever recorded level and unemployment surging, it is the many who fail to claim, not the few who fraudulently claim, who must be the priority now.



# Free school meals success

A coalition campaigning for universal free school meals has got off to a positive start. At an initial planning meeting last year, attended by CPAG and convened by Labour MPs Sharon Hodgson and Roberta Blackman-Woods, objectives were set to secure government funding for pilot schemes and to recruit a full-time campaigner.

Both these objectives have now been met. Coalition member the British Heart Foundation is funding a full-time campaigner post and government-funded pilots will be starting this autumn in Durham, Newham and Wolverhampton. The Durham and Newham pilots will provide universal free school meals while the Wolverhampton pilot will extend means-tested provision to a wider group of low-income families than currently qualify.

Meanwhile the London Borough of Islington has decided to fund its own trial of free school meals in some primary schools. Islington councillor and free school meals campaigner, Richard

Watts, said: 'It will mean more children receive healthy, nutritious school meals. All children in Islington deserve a fair start in life, and with a free healthy meal in school each day, we can make a real difference.'

The priorities for the campaign are now to:

- press for election manifesto commitments to free school meals;
- recruit new organisations to build a large coalition;
- hold a major parliamentary seminar before the summer recess;
- hold campaigning events at the party conferences in the autumn.

CPAG will continue to play a central role in the campaign. To stay up to date on how you can add your voice and make a difference on this and other CPAG campaigns, sign up to *News from CPAG* at [www.cpag.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.cpag.org.uk/campaigns).

# CPAG and GMB spotlight low pay Britain

CPAG has joined with the GMB union to publish a new report *Stop in-work poverty: end sub-prime jobs*. The report expands on the *Stop in-work poverty* chapter of CPAG's manifesto. It argues that while preventing and reducing unemployment must be a major priority, the recession should not be an excuse to hold back on improving conditions for low paid workers. This would only pass the costs of the economic downturn onto the lowest paid.

Contrary to stereotypes, most poor children in the UK have a parent in work. For these families, work has not delivered the solution to poverty politicians often claim. Too often jobs are insecure and badly paid with little flexibility around parents' childcare needs. The recession makes this worse as many parents lose working hours and some employers use the recession as an excuse to hold down pay for those at the bottom.

Tracking patterns of low pay and wage inequality, the report shows that in previous recessions average earnings continued to rise, showing little evidence that fair wage rises for the lowest would prevent recovery. It highlights how the public purse picks up the tab of low paying employers through working tax credit,

and argues that narrowing wage gaps by increasing wages for the low paid is essential to sustained progress on child poverty.

The report concludes with recommendations for increases in the national minimum wage and to extend its coverage to all younger workers. More must be done to tackle pay discrimination, with the public sector taking a lead on improving pay and investing more in training. Finally the report argues for a decent minimum income to underpin employment policy and make sure all families are lifted out of poverty.

You can read the report online at [www.cpag.org.uk/manifesto](http://www.cpag.org.uk/manifesto).



CPAG's Kate Green and Paul Kenney, General Secretary of GMB, launch the report at the GMB conference in Blackpool.

## Help us make a difference

CPAG is the leading charity campaigning for the abolition of child poverty in the UK and for a better deal for low-income families and children. We aim to:

- raise awareness of the causes, extent, nature and impact of poverty, and strategies for its eradication and prevention;
- bring about positive policy changes for families with children in poverty; *and*
- enable those eligible for income maintenance to have access to their full entitlement.

Your donation will help us to fight the injustice of poverty.

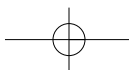
### Please make a donation

- Send us a **cheque**, **postal order** or **Charities Aid Foundation** voucher made payable to 'Child Poverty Action Group'.
- By **credit card** online at [www.cpag.org.uk](http://www.cpag.org.uk).
- Set up a **standing order** through your bank to make a regular gift.
- Make a will and leave us a **legacy**.
- Set up **Give As You Earn** (payroll giving) with your employer.

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For more information visit [www.cpag.org.uk/support](http://www.cpag.org.uk/support) email [staff@cpag.org.uk](mailto:staff@cpag.org.uk) or write to:  
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# campaigns scotland

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## Joint government action needed on child poverty

**T**wo new reports put child poverty in Scotland in the spotlight again, following a horribly disappointing UK Budget and new official figures showing a deplorable lack of progress in reducing the number of children living in poverty in Scotland.

The Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee published its report on child poverty in Scotland, following a year long inquiry initiated after lobbying by CPAG and other members of the Campaign to End Child Poverty in Scotland.

The Committee called for greater co-ordination of child poverty policy between Scottish and UK governments, urging they collaborate to improve issues such as access to affordable childcare, flexible working and benefit take-up to lift children out of poverty. Duncan McNeil, Convener of the Committee, said: 'The targets set by the UK Government to halve child poverty by 2010 and eliminate it by 2020 are supported by the Scottish Government. However, the targets can only be met if both governments work together and local authorities play their part.'

CPAG submitted written and oral evidence, which was reflected in many of the committee's proposals, including the development of a toolkit to support local approaches to child poverty; the inclusion of specific child poverty outcomes in local authority single outcome agreements (SOAs); and regular progress reports on the effectiveness of SOAs on tackling child poverty. A review of advice provision and funding for advice agencies and action to enhance childcare provision and encourage fam-



*Duncan McNeil MSP, Convener, Local Government and Communities Committee*

ily friendly employment were also recommended.

Meanwhile the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's report *Child Poverty in Scotland: Taking the Next Steps* highlights the implications of the Scottish Government's wish to increase the proportion of income going to the bottom 30 per cent of households and the success of the Scottish Government in avoiding the 'povertyism' characteristic of some UK government statements. The authors, based at Glasgow Caledonian University's Scottish Poverty Information Unit, argue the Scottish Government could be doing more to remove barriers to work, sustain people in employment and tackle low pay, including a Scottish living wage that would be guaranteed to public sector workers.

Responding to the reports John Dickie, Head of CPAG in Scotland, said:

'With progress on child poverty grinding to a halt and rising unemployment these are timely and important reports. The Scottish, UK and local governments

must listen and respond by providing the investment and co-ordinated policy needed to end the scandal of child poverty in a country as rich as Scotland.

'As the reports make clear we need to see more investment in quality childcare so that children get the best early learning opportunities available and their parents are able to work when they want to. We also need to see action to tackle the low pay and lack of family friendly work policies that mean work is too often not the route out of poverty it should be.

'Real investment is needed from the UK government to boost benefits and tax credits for families in and out of work, backed up by action from Scottish and local government to support advice services to help every family get the financial support they are entitled to.

'After the desperately disappointing Budget, the UK government must use the next Pre-Budget Report to make the investment in child benefits and tax credits needed to halve child poverty as soon as possible.'