

# Budget 2008: Darling's £1 billion for poor children

**D**espite a tight spending round, the Chancellor responded to child poverty campaigners by finding just short of £1 billion extra annual investment for the poorest children.

Expectations increased ahead of the Budget when ministers told child poverty campaigners that, when the going gets tough, they will redouble their efforts. The media further fuelled speculation with reports in the days before the Budget that Cabinet debate on spending priorities for the meagre finances available had resulted in agreement to make child poverty the main priority.

The majority of the new investment will be channelled through a £50 increase to the annual amount of the child element of child tax credit and a new disregard for child benefit in the assessment of housing benefit and council tax benefit. The latter change could be worth £17 a week for the first child to working families receiving both CTB and HB.

Make Child Benefit Count campaign supporters will be pleased to see an increase to £20 for child benefit for the oldest child brought forward, but campaigning continues to ensure younger children receive the same amount too. This move would lift another 250,000 children out of poverty.

Child Poverty Action Group's Chief Executive, Kate Green, said: 'This is excellent news for Britain's poorest children. It keeps the 2010 target to halve child poverty in reach. It won't take us all the way there, but the intent is clear and a significant step forward has been taken.'

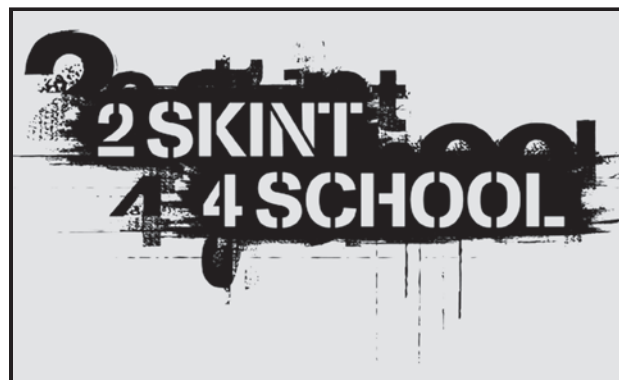
CPAG, along with partners in the Campaign to End Child Poverty, now believes



the outstanding extra annual investment needed to ensure the 2010 target is met is £3 billion. The next 12 months will see increased public campaigning, including a major event in Trafalgar Square on 4 October (make a note in your diary!) to ensure the investment poor children still need is found.

Kate Green pressed the case for continuing progress, saying: 'We must end the moral disgrace and social and economic costs we suffer because so many more British children live in poverty than in other wealthy countries. It is not acceptable, affordable or in Britain's interests to continue failing millions of children. This year's Budget must be more than a fleeting victory – it must mark the start of a renewed and ongoing commitment by British people and politicians to end our nation's child poverty shame'.

Published alongside the Budget was the Child Poverty Unit's first report. *Ending child poverty: everybody's business* sets out steps towards the 2010 target and new approaches to be piloted for 'a renewed drive on child poverty for the next decade'. A budget of £125 million has been allocated for the next three years to explore a range of initiatives, including new work incentives in London, a child development grant to promote engagement with Children's Centre services and the development of new local authority strategies and schemes.

**Inside:****Support  
CPAG's new  
campaign on  
poverty and  
education**

# 2 skint 4 school campaign to end classroom divide

A major new campaign, **2 skint 4 school**, has been launched by CPAG to continue work on the links between child poverty and education. We need your support, so please visit the campaign website, [www.cpag.org.uk/2skint4school](http://www.cpag.org.uk/2skint4school), and encourage any teachers you know to contribute their views to our **teachers' survey**. Non-teachers are also invited to send their views on the campaign.

An initial report has been published on the campaign website and a full report with final recommendations drawing on the teachers' survey will be published later in the year followed by major campaigning activity. Our campaigning will focus on themes around:

- family incomes for education;
- homes fit for learning;
- genuinely free education;
- support for teachers;
- schools for all.

CPAG believes our schools should meet every child's needs. But, under current circumstances, the poorest benefit least from their time in school. Research shows child poverty is the main factor in educational failure. Ending child poverty will help ensure every child fulfils their potential and Britain's education results get better.

Education spending has increased since 1997, but the shocking attainment gap between rich and poor pupils increases every year as they progress through the system. The initial *2 skint 4 school* report looks at how educational disadvantage is consolidated by selection, concentration of disadvantaged pupils, complex funding streams, poorly targeted interventions, and higher exclusion rates for disadvantaged children.

Costs within schools, like charging for

cultural, social and educational activities, are causing educational exclusion, at times even from core national curriculum requirements. Disadvantaged children are also more likely to experience school as a punitive environment. As so much education takes place outside of school, the campaign will address the incomes families need to pay for extra-curricular activities.

The DCSF's efforts to enhance children's lives and engage the trust of disadvantaged families are being undermined by DWP's punitive approach to welfare reform. Benefit sanctions to encourage what ministers call 'behaviour change' among disadvantaged groups reduce family incomes,

increasing child poverty and exacerbating educational inequalities.

The final report will look further into this major contradiction at the heart of the Government's child poverty strategy and make recommendations.

For a number of years, CPAG has actively campaigned on universal free school meals. This will continue as part of our 2 skint 4 school campaign. You can also read in this issue about the piloting of free school meals in Hull and the exciting progress being made in Scotland to extend free school meals for our children.

We look forward to your support for our important new campaign. Success in education is vital to ending child poverty by 2020. But just as our previous briefing on education *Chicken and Egg* showed, poverty itself undermines educational attainment.

As long as there is child poverty, there will be educational failure. So please do all you can to support 2 skint 4 school campaign actions over the coming months.



## In the House

### MP of the Year nominee: Kerry McCarthy MP

It has been a very positive few parliamentary weeks for children in poverty. **Kerry McCarthy** joins **Simon Hughes** as a nominee for CPAG's MP of the Year for rounding up 70 MPs to write to the Chancellor ahead of the **Budget**, calling for it to bring the Government back on track for the target to halve child poverty by 2010. Campaigners believe Kerry and her colleagues made a vital contribution to winning a further **£1 billion investment for poor children** on 12 March.

The **Work and Pensions Committee** report *The Best start in Life?* on the **eradication of child poverty** was published to strong press interest on 3 March, adding to growing pressure for a priority to be made of progress on child poverty promises. Its long list of excellent recommendations makes the Government's response a highly anticipated and important document for later this year.

**Fiona MacTaggart** secured a tremendously well-attended 90-minute parliamentary **Adjournment Debate on Child Pov-**

**erty**. In addition to **Beverley Hughes**, **Annette Brooke** and **Tim Loughton**'s front bench speeches, important contributions were made by **Oliver Letwin**, **John Battle**, **John Penrose**, **Terry Rooney**, **John Barrett** and **Roberta Blackman-Woods**. The Debate demonstrated the extent to which child poverty has risen up the political agenda over the last year.

**EDM 1234** on the **Impact of School Costs on Families and Child Poverty** has been tabled by the Chair of the Poverty APG **John Battle**, in support of recommendations in the School Costs Coalition's report *Adding Up: the range and impact of school costs on families*. **David Anderson** has tabled **EDM 1262** on **Child Poverty** to welcome the new investment provided by the Budget, and **Brian Iddon** has cited **CPAG's** research in **EDM 1249** on **Free School Meals**, which notes the benefits to family incomes of extending the scheme. **Sharon Hodgson's EDM 1325** is calling for universal free school meals to remove stigma, reduce obesity and improve school performance.

*Please go to the campaigns section of the CPAG website and send a quick and easy email to ask your MP to support these motions.*

## Purnell responds to Child Poverty Challenge

CPAG Chief Executive Kate Green joined Secretary of State for Work and Pensions James Purnell, Louise Bamfield (Research Fellow at the Fabian Society) and Stella Creasy (prospective Labour parliamentary candidate for Walthamstow) at the launch of the Fabians' Child Poverty Challenge at the Labour party spring conference on 1 March.

Earlier that day, the Prime Minister described child poverty as 'the scar that demeans Britain' and repeated the Government's pledge to eradicate child poverty in a generation. Kate Green warmly welcomed his remarks, arguing that action



L–R: Kate Green, Jemima Olchawski (meeting chair, Fabians) and James Purnell

on child poverty should be a good news story for the Government, but that repeated ministerial messages portraying families reliant on benefits as 'scroungers' or 'work-shy', undermine public support for the investment needed to end child poverty. Commenting on increased conditionality on lone parents and disabled people, and suggestions that benefits should be conditional on good behaviour, she said: 'We should not have a different social contract for those who are poor from those who are not.'

Purnell reiterated the Government's commitment to ending child poverty in the strongest terms: 'We have an unyielding determination to end child poverty in our generation', he said, 'and our commitment to the goal of ending child poverty is non-negotiable... because it is a scar on our conscience as a nation and... because it is fundamental to achieving life chances for all children in this country.'

The Government has agreed to some additional flexibility for lone parents following our lobbying alongside other organisations. CPAG is continuing to press our concerns to ensure that full consideration is given to lone parents' child-care needs and that they are not forced into work if they will not be genuinely better off. Meanwhile, CPAG is also continuing to campaign and lobby parliamentarians on our concerns about the inadequately low rates that have been announced for the new employment support allowance that will replace incapacity benefit for new disabled claimants and people with health conditions.

## 'Eat Well, Do Well' does work

**A compelling case for free school meals has been provided** by the final report from Hull City Council's pioneering scheme for primary school pupils. The report states: 'The impact of "Eat Well, Do Well" is beyond doubt – both in the school and in the home.'

Major benefits include the creation of a calmer learning environment in the classroom, improved behaviour in dinner breaks and greater certainty about an adequate daily nutritional intake for pupils.

The report recommends that Hull City Council re-introduce free, healthy school dinners for all primary school children across the city and continue to provide free, healthy breakfasts, fruit and after school snacks. However, the Liberal Democrat-run Council which inherited the scheme from the previous administration has scrapped it, and take-up has fallen below the level prior to the scheme starting.

CPAG has long campaigned for free school meals, and welcomed the Hull pilot scheme. Chief Executive of CPAG Kate Green said: 'The current national approach of limited targeting to the poorest has failed to reach all those children who need it. Free school meals for all leaves no child behind and no child too hungry to learn.'

'If Britain is to have better schools, we cannot leave an important report that proves what really works gathering dust. Every politician who has promised voters to improve school behaviour, improve school results, support teachers, support parents and end child poverty, must now sign up.'

## 4 October: Day to End Child Poverty

**CPAG is delighted that, alongside its partner organisations in the Campaign to End Child Poverty, it has been given permission to hold a major rally in Trafalgar Square.**

Planning is already underway to help campaigners from across Britain to attend. It is crucial that as many people as possible are there to prove the strength of support for progressive policies to realise the promise to end child poverty. It will take place very shortly before the Pre-Budget Report – the more support we can show, the better the result we can achieve from this year's Pre-Budget Report and from the 2009 Budget.

More information will follow the official announcement in May, and CPAG will be leading efforts to get as many people as possible along for the day. It is the most important action to end child poverty that we have yet asked you to take. The strength of conviction of politicians from all parties to end child poverty will benefit greatly if we can prove how much it matters to British people.

More information will follow soon in CPAG's campaign emails. If you are not already signed up, please subscribe to our email newsletter using the link on the CPAG website homepage.

**Please mark down 4 October in your diary!**

## 'Snakes and ladders' at Scottish party conferences

CPAG in Scotland, along with other members of End Child Poverty working in Scotland, continued a series of 'fringe meetings with a difference' at the Scottish Liberal Democrat and Scottish Labour party conferences in Aviemore.

Giant dice and a life-size games board replaced the usual 'top table', as politicians, activists and other delegates took part in games of snakes and ladders, where 'snakes' represented the barriers children growing up in poverty face accessing educational opportunities and 'ladders' the policies and actions that are needed to ensure children are able to overcome those hurdles.

The events highlighted key themes of CPAG's 2 Skint 4 School campaign and the need to end child poverty to reduce educational inequalities. Lib Dem spokesperson for Education and Young People Hugh O'Donnell MSP highlighted the link between promoting equality – particularly in relation to women and work – family incomes and educational disadvantage. At the Labour event, Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Education Rhona Brankin MSP, announced the establishment of a literacy commission to help find ways of overcoming the links between illiteracy and poverty.

### Your donations make a difference

Child Poverty Action Group is a charity promoting action for the relief directly or indirectly of poverty among children and families with 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;
- enable those eligible for income maintenance to have access to their full entitlement.

Your donation will help us to fight the injustice of poverty: improving children's lives today and helping to abolish child poverty tomorrow.

#### 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.

#### Add Value. Gift Aid It!

Donations to CPAG qualify for tax relief. For every £1 that you donate we can receive an extra 28p. Anyone who pays income tax (on a salary, a pension or investments) or capital gains tax can complete a Gift Aid declaration form.

For more information visit our website [www.cpag.org.uk](http://www.cpag.org.uk), email [staff@cpag.org.uk](mailto:staff@cpag.org.uk) or write to CPAG, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.

### Free school meals

As a lead member of the campaign for Free School Meals, CPAG in Scotland has met with Children's Minister Adam Ingram MSP to discuss progress in delivering the Scottish Government's plans to roll out free school meals for all children in the first three primary years.

Pupils in five pilot local authority areas are currently receiving free school meals, and ministers have committed to legislation extending the scheme across Scotland for all P1 to P3 pupils from 2010.

The pilots' funding ends in June 2008, prompting concern that momentum will be lost between then and the 2010 national start date, with a negative impact on children and families who are currently benefiting from them. Mr Ingram suggested that local authorities may be enabled, subject to parliamentary approval, to continue pilot programmes or introduce free school meals ahead of the 2010 timetable.

Welcoming the Minister's support, John Dickie, Head of CPAG in Scotland, said: 'We urge local authorities and ministers to work together to continue free school meal provision in the pilot areas until the agreed 2010 roll-out. An extension of the pilot will play a vital role in maintaining the momentum behind this important initiative and protect children and families from the negative consequences of losing what has already proved valuable to their lives and development.'

### Scottish Government discussion on tackling poverty

Head of CPAG in Scotland John Dickie has contributed to stakeholder discussions with Scottish government officials as part of an ongoing consultation on the discussion paper on tackling poverty, inequality and deprivation.

CPAG has welcomed the paper, particularly: its recognition of the role inequality plays; the emphasis on tackling route causes; the clear commitment to the 2020 and 2010 child poverty targets; the recognition that economic growth in itself will not necessarily reduce poverty and inequality; and the proposition that income maximisation, benefit take-up and provision of advice and information have a vital role to play in the Scottish Government's strategy to tackle poverty.

John Dickie said: 'The challenge for the Scottish Government is to prioritise action that will achieve the low inequality and poverty levels seen at the Scandinavian end of the "Arc of Prosperity", which ministers wish Scotland to emulate.'

CPAG would encourage all supporters to respond to the consultation. See [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/02/01150409/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/02/01150409/0).

Editor  
Tim Nichols

Production Editor  
Sara Carbone

Contributors  
John Dickie  
Kate Green  
Gabrielle Preston

Typeset by  
Boldface  
020 7833 8868

Printed by  
Wernham Printers Ltd  
020 8808 1677

Next edition  
July 2008