

Child poverty campaigners to make history on October 4th



'We need every supporter in Trafalgar Square.'

As the date for the 'Keep the Promise' rally in Trafalgar Square on 4 October fast approaches, Child Poverty Action Group Chief Executive, Kate Green, has called on CPAG supporters to seize this historic opportunity.

'The political landscape is going through tremendous changes,' she said. 'For the first time ever, a Conservative leader has publicly backed the importance of addressing relative poverty. The Labour Government, facing difficult times in the polls and leadership speculation, is under pressure to re-connect with its core values. It is not just a time of uncertainty, it is a time of opportunity and we must seize it. We need every CPAG supporter possible in the Square,

so that ending child poverty is at the heart of all politicians' priorities.'

Despite the Government's success in lifting 600,000 children out of poverty, progress has stalled and is starting to reverse. Budgetary announcements should see new progress over the next two or three years but CPAG estimates that without further action the target to halve child poverty by 2010 will be missed by around half a million children.

Experts from the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies say the 2010 target can be met if the necessary investment is made. Members of the Campaign to End Child Poverty estimate that an additional £3 billion is required.

'The amount needed is not astronomical,' says Kate Green. 'Even in tough economic times it can be afforded – it would be a lack of moral courage, not a lack of national wealth if we fail.'

The rally in Trafalgar Square will be the biggest ever event calling for an end to child poverty in the UK. It is a crucial chance to prove the scale of support for keeping the promises to halve child poverty by 2010 and end child poverty by 2020. The presence of as many people as possible on the day is vital if campaigners are to realise this unique opportunity to capture the public's imagination and convince voters child poverty can, and must, be ended.

The Director of the Campaign to End Child Poverty, Hilary Fisher, said: 'If

there was ever a chance to stand up and be counted, a chance to demand an end to Britain's child poverty shame, this is it. We can prove we're not morally indifferent to the 3.9 million UK children living in poverty. These children's lives matter, so please be there to make your support heard.'

Over 130 organisations will be participating in the event. The organisers say an important statement will be made, but that it will be a day of family fun too.

Key information for Saturday 4 October

11.30am onwards

– Assemble on Millbank, near Lambeth Bridge (CPAG supporters should look out for the big

CPAG banner, at which to congregate).

12.30pm – March through Westminster to Trafalgar Square.

2pm – Family fun and speakers in Trafalgar Square.

Sign up to 'Keep The Promise' at www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/promise





In the House

MP of the Year nominee: John Penrose, for his support for Keep the Promise and the Campaign to End Child Poverty.



The last few weeks of parliamentary action before MPs' long summer break have been fairly quiet for business of interest to child poverty campaigners. Over 50 MPs, however, made their way to a photo-call in support of the **Keep the Promise** rally in Trafalgar Square on 4 October. Confusion in Conservative ranks over whether supporting the event was in line with their 'aspiration' to end child poverty kept all but two of them away. But **John Penrose MP** and **Andrew Selous MP** stepped

forward to make clear their support for ending child poverty. John Penrose, who has also taken on the mantle of 'Child Poverty Champion' within the Conservative Party to improve liaison with child poverty campaigners, gets this issue's nomination for CPAG's MP of the Year for his backing of Keep the Promise and his ongoing efforts within the party.

An exception to the relative period of quiet has been the publication of yet another new **welfare reform Green Paper** (*No One Written Off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility*). Secretary of State **James Purnell MP** seems eager to make his mark with his first major Bill. CPAG welcomed the re-stating of the **targets to end child poverty** and a new **full disregard of child maintenance** in benefit entitlement calculations. However, Chief Executive Kate Green warned it ignores the responsibilities of employers to open up access to decent, well-paid jobs, and ignores evidence that **benefit sanctions are not effective and can harm children**. She said: 'Bad employers must now be the urgent target for welfare reform.'

Parliament returns on 6 October. A key debate on the **employment and support allowance** regulations is expected and a new **welfare reform Bill** to follow the Green Paper is likely to get a first reading in the autumn.

Rich man, poor man: taxman or thief?

In June, CPAG ran a session at the Compass conference held at the Institute of Education in London. Chaired by Neal Lawson from Compass, the speakers were John Harris from the *Guardian*, Michael Meacher MP and CPAG's Head of Policy, Paul Dornan.

The fringe was held against a backdrop of growing public disquiet about the huge profits and personal wealth of a privileged elite (exemplified by the row over taxing 'non-doms') compared with recent treatment of low-paid workers (the scrapping of the 10p income tax rate).

This situation, in which we have a super-rich elite and large numbers of families paying tax despite having incomes below the poverty line, fuelled calls for a more progressive taxation system as an anti-poverty measure. Making tax fair was a theme echoed by both speakers and participants alike. There were calls too for a decent tax base from which to invest to meet goals like ending child poverty.

Participants in the session were concerned that the key issue of fairness had not been sufficiently taken up as a concern, and repeatedly called for greater political leadership in making the case for fairer taxes.

A strong theme running through the event was the need to coin and popularise a new language around inequality and the 'Low Tax Elite'.

The political debate should recognise the dangers of allowing a small minority of people to exclude themselves by opting out of the mainstream. This impacts on us all. Everyone living in Britain should contribute fairly to solve our shared social problems.

CPAG at the party conferences

Please come along to our party conference fringes:

Lib Dem event: *Sixty Years of the Welfare State: celebrating its success and securing its future*

CPAG with Centre Forum and PCS

8pm, 13 September

Sherborne Suite, Highcliffe Marriott Hotel, Bournemouth.

Chair: Alasdair Murray, Centre Forum

Speakers include: Jenny Willott MP, Liberal Democrat Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary; Kate Green, Chief Executive, CPAG; PCS speaker

Labour event: *Charging at the School Gates: school costs and poor families*

CPAG with NUT

12.45pm, 23 September

Victoria Room, Midland Hotel, Manchester.

Chair: Robert Evans MEP

Speakers include: Rt Hon Ed Balls MP, DCSF; Kate Green, Chief Executive, CPAG; Christine Blower, Director General NUT

Conservative event: *Local Communities and Child Poverty: what can the Conservatives do?*

CPAG with Inclusion

12.45pm, 1 October

Hall 10B, ICC.

Speakers include: Mark Harper MP, Disability spokesperson; Kate Green, Chief Executive, CPAG; Paul Carter, Leader Kent County Council; Dave Simmonds, Chief Executive, Inclusion

Free school meals on the menu

Interest in extending free school meals to all primary pupils is being considered as a possible Labour Party manifesto commitment.

Child Poverty Action Group has long campaigned for universal free school meals. As part of our 2Skint4School campaign (see www.cpag.org.uk/2skint4school) we are returning to the issue. We have also joined forces with a strong coalition of other organisations, including trade unions and campaigners for healthy and sustainable food, to call for free and sustainable school meals.

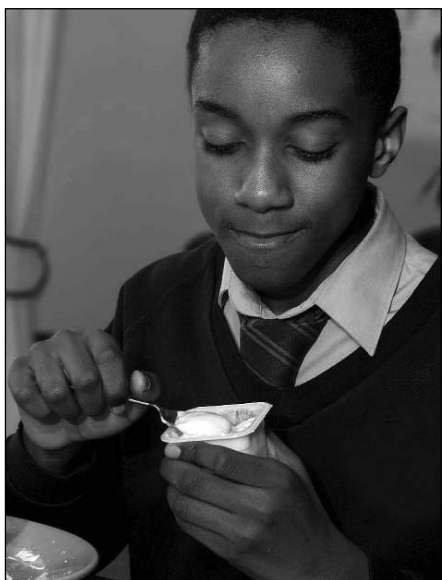
The Labour proposal has the backing of many trade unions and backbenchers. Sharon Hodgson MP, one of the leading voices, said: 'All parents are feeling the pinch and universal free school meals would ease the pressure on purse strings at home and, eventually, in the Treasury.'

Meanwhile, although the Conservatives have made no public comment, they are investigating the costs of different options of extending free school meal provision. Campaigners believe that the positive impacts on children's health and socialisation will be of particular interest now that David Cameron has made child wellbeing a top priority.

A pilot in Hull, reported in previous editions of *Campaigns Newsletter*, found several benefits, including better eating habits outside school, calmer classrooms, reduced health disadvantage and savings for stretched family budgets. A spokesperson for the Department for Children, Schools and Families confirmed that it is looking at the pilot, although there are currently no plans for its extension.

CPAG's Head of Policy, Paul Dornan, said that where free school meals for all had been tried, they had been a great success: 'Children who sit down every day to a good quality meal together are healthier, happier, learn better and socialise better. Universal free meals would be good news for all children, especially low-income families facing rising prices, who would save £300 per child on the costs of paying for school meals or packed lunches.'

The cost of school meals for poorer families will be among the issues discussed at CPAG's joint fringe meeting with the National Union of Teachers at the Labour Party Conference. 'Charging at the School Gates: school costs and poor families' will take place in the Midland Hotel, Manchester, at 12.45pm on Tuesday 23 September.



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.
- 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 – fill out a Gift Aid declaration form.

For more information visit www.cpag.org.uk/support email staff@cpag.org.uk or write to:
CPAG
94 White Lion Street
London N1 9PF

Child poverty toolkit launched

Tackling child poverty is now one of the national performance indicators adopted by higher-tier local authorities in England.

The child poverty toolkit, launched by CPAG and Inclusion, is a resource for those authorities that have chosen child poverty as a strategic priority, as well as those that have adopted indicators (such as on educational attainment) closely related to child poverty. Of 150 areas, 45 have chosen child poverty as an indicator.

The toolkit has policy briefings on the key issues that authorities must address, strategy documents to help develop local priorities and data on child poverty at a local authority level. It will also be useful to campaigners highlighting issues that need to be addressed locally.

The toolkit is available at www.childpovertytoolkit.org.uk. We shall add more information and best practice in due course. Please contact us via the website if you have information you think should be shared.

Find out if your authority has adopted tackling child poverty as an indicator by visiting <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=8399555>.



Deputy First Minister addresses CPAG in Scotland conference

Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Well-being, highlighted the importance of welfare rights work in tackling child poverty and expressed her support for Child Poverty Action Group's work at CPAG in Scotland's Annual Welfare Rights Conference in June.

Over 150 delegates from across Scotland heard the Deputy First Minister stress the Scottish Government's commitment to doing all in its power to eradicate child poverty, and recognise the vital role advice and information must play in strategies for meeting that commitment. Delegates welcomed the commitments, but also took the opportunity to raise concerns about the funding of local welfare rights services in the context of the freeze on council tax and competing pressures on local authority budgets.



Deputy First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, addresses CPAG in Scotland conference

Rights service receives thumbs up

CPAG in Scotland's second-tier welfare rights service has received a thumbs up by independent consultants FMR Research Ltd.

Based on a survey of service users, focus groups and analysis of ongoing evaluation and monitoring returns, the researchers concluded that 'as well as meeting or exceeding its targets, CPAG in Scotland's tax credits training, information and advice services were rated very highly' with 'some of the highest satisfaction findings FMR has evaluated.'

The evaluation team also highlighted feedback suggesting that CPAG in Scotland should be 'feeding back more information on progress with their lobby-

ing as well as negotiation with HMRC on policy work.' CPAG's lobbying and policy work was seen as integral to the support organisations receive on tax credits advice and, ultimately, in helping to reduce the number of families living in poverty. CPAG in Scotland will draw on the findings to explore ways of ensuring our welfare rights work feeds into our campaigns work to even greater effect.

Head of CPAG in Scotland, John Dickie, said: 'We would like to thank all those who responded to the surveys. The report is a welcome endorsement, but also provides really useful pointers on how we can build our activity in the future.'

Child poverty on education agenda

Speaking at a conference on the Scottish Government's 'Curriculum for Excellence' approach to transforming Scotland's education system, CPAG's John Dickie reinforced key 2Skint4School messages. Welcoming ministers' vision of 'reform which will ensure that Scotland's education system delivers the most it can for every one of our young people', he stressed the need to tackle inadequate family incomes and the additional school costs that undermine children's education. He called on the Government to build on free school meal pilots, and to identify and share good practice on minimising charges for school-related activity.