

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

16 March 2022

Dear Chancellor,

As part of a coalition of organisations from across the UK, we are writing to urge you to use your Spring Statement on 23rd March to commit to supporting families living in the grip of poverty by ending the benefit cap.

Right now, people across this country are facing a cost-of-living crisis. Energy hikes, stagnating wages, and the rising cost of food are putting enormous pressure on low-income households. For those affected by the benefit cap, whose social security payments already fall well below a sufficient level, this crisis is even more acutely felt.

Since its introduction, the benefit cap has trapped families across the UK in poverty's grip. By severing the link between need and entitlement, many of those affected by the cap have been forced to rely on food banks and pay-day loans just to get by and, for many, it has also caused poor mental health and led to homelessness.

These harmful impacts of the benefit cap disproportionately affect families with children, since eighty-three percent of capped households contain at least one child. According to the Supreme Court, the benefit cap breaches the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by depriving families with children from the income they need to stay afloat, at a time when they need it most. This is morally outrageous.

The benefit cap also discriminates against women and single-parent families. Sixty-two percent of households affected are single parents, nine out of ten of whom are women. A policy that so blatantly targets this group, who are already disproportionately at-risk of experiencing poverty, has no place in a just society.

Families from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are also more likely to be affected by the benefit cap because they are more likely to have larger families. Racial inequalities in the UK, such as income or health inequality, are caused and exacerbated in part due to social and economic policy, including the benefit cap. Lifting the cap would help redress some of these inequalities.

Not only does the benefit cap represent a moral failing in our society, but it also fails on its own terms. The cap was introduced, in part, to encourage those on benefits to move into employment. The reality, however, is that the majority of people affected by the cap are not

required to look for work due to ill-health or childcare responsibilities. Subjecting these families and individuals to the benefit cap knowingly and purposefully locks them into poverty when they cannot turn to employment to boost their income.

We urge you to use your Spring Statement on 23rd March to commit to giving families what they need to lead healthy, dignified lives, by scrapping the benefit cap.

Your sincerely,

Peter Kelly, Director, The Poverty Alliance
Professor Mike Danson, Chair, Basic Income Network Scotland
Jill Kent, Chair, Justice & Peace Scotland
Jane Streather, Chair, North East Child Poverty Commission
Kate Wimpers, Chair, SURF - Scotland's Regeneration Forum
Agnes Tolmie, Chair, The Scottish Women's Convention
Tracy Hill, Chair, Unison housing & care Scotland branch
Terry McTernan, Chairperson, Ferguslie Community Council
Matt Downie, Chief Executive, Crisis
Neil Mathers, Chief Executive, Curiosity Collective
Danielle Campbell, Chief Executive, Dr Bell's Family Centre
Professor Nancy Loucks OBE, Chief Executive, Families Outside
Ian Bruce, Chief Executive, GCVS
Glenn Liddall, Chief Executive, People Know How
Elaine Cameron, Chief Executive, Refugee Survival Trust
Sally Thomas, Chief Executive, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
Sabir Zazai, Chief Executive, Scottish Refugee Council
Sharon McAulay, Chief Executive, Star Project
Carolyn Currie, Chief Executive, Women's Enterprise Scotland
Alison Garnham, Chief Executive, Child Poverty Action Group
Gillian Frayling-Kelly, Chief Executive, Positive Help
Anela Anwar, Chief Executive, Z2K
Mariam Ahmen, Chief Executive Officer, AMINA
Ruth MacLennan, Chief Executive Officer, Care for Carers
Paula Stringer, Chief Executive Officer, Christians Against Poverty
Hilda Campbell, Chief Executive Officer, COPE Scotland
Marie Ward, Chief Executive Officer, Cranhill Development Trust
Ewan Aitken, Chief Executive Officer, Cyrenians
Frazer Scott, Chief Executive Officer, Energy Action Scotland
Jimmy Wilson, Chief Executive Officer, FARE
Jonny Kinross, Chief Executive Officer, Grassmarket Community Project
Graham Whitham, Chief Executive Officer, Greater Manchester Poverty Action
Mariam Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer, Muslim Women's Resource Centre
Satwat Rehman, Chief Executive Officer, One Parent Families Scotland
Marsha Scott, Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Women's Aid
Andy Peline, Chief Executive Officer, SWAMP Community Development Trust
Sally Ann Kelly, Chief Executive Officer, Aberlour
Suzanne Slavin, Chief Executive Officer, Ayr Housing Aid Centre SCIO
Mark Kennedy, Chief Executive Officer, Circle
John Halliday, Chief Executive Officer, Community Renewal Trust
Brenda Black, Chief Executive Officer, Edinburgh Community Food
Bridie Ashrowan, Chief Executive Officer, EVOC
Aaliya Seyal, Chief Executive Officer, Legal Services Agency
Dave Liddell, Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Drugs Forum
Gerry Baldwin, Chief Executive Officer, The Pavillion and Fuse Youth Café

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The Poverty Alliance is a network of community, voluntary, statutory and other organisations working together to combat poverty

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The Poverty Alliance is recognised as a charity by the Inland Revenue - Reference No. ED872/91 SCO19926

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 Viv Sawers, Chief Officer, Govan Home and Education Link Project (Govan HELP)
 Sara Redmond, Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)
 Moira Tasker, Chief Officer, Inclusion Scotland
 Ailsa MacKenzie, Chief Officer, The Pyramid at Anderston
 Sean Douglas, Acting Director, Provanhall Housing Association
 Henry Tyrrell, Campaigns Officer, Gingerbread
 Chris Miezeitis, Co-director, Fathers Network Scotland
 Professor Stephen Sinclair, Co-director, Scottish Poverty & Inequality Research Unit
 Betty Stone, Convenor, Edinburgh Tenants Federation
 Sabine Goodwin, Coordinator, Independent Food Aid Network
 Sara Cowan, Coordinator, Scottish Women's Budget Group
 Rachel Walters, Co-ordinator, End Child Poverty Coalition
 Elaine Downie, Co-ordinator, The Poverty Truth Community
 Claire Burns, Director, CELCIS
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 Bethany Biggar, Director, Edinburgh Food Project
 Jacky Close, Director, Faith in Community Dundee
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 Shona Blakeley, Executive Director, Women's Fund for Scotland
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 Siobhan Taylor-Ward, Housing Solicitor, Vauxhall Community Law and Information Centre
 Teresa Sutherland, Interim CEO, Community Help & Advice Initiative
 Frank Mosson, Manager, Bridgeton Citizens Advice Bureau
 Margaret McDougall, Manager, Clackmannanshire Women's Aid
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 Jennifer Milby, Manager, Stewartry Council of Voluntary Service
 Biddy Kelly, Managing Director, Fresh Start
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 Sally Clough, Manger, Belville Community Garden Trust
 Innes Isobel McMinn, Manger, Independent Living Support
 The Rt Hon Lord Wallace of Tankerness, Moderator of the General Assembly, The Church of Scotland
 Beth Cadger, National Co-Coordinator, Article 12 in Scotland
 Callum Chomczuk, National Director, CIH Scotland
 Alison Bavidge, National Director, Scottish Association of Social Work
 Danny Collins, National President, Society of St Vincent de Paul Scotland
 Liane Coia, Operations Manager, Maryhill Integration Network
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