



# Tackling child poverty

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# Tackling child poverty

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- Scale, extent and nature of child poverty in Scotland
- Impact of that poverty – why it matters
- What needs to be done?
  - at UK level
  - at Scotland and local level

# Scale and nature of child poverty

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- 250 000 (25%) children living in poverty  
(2009/10)
- some children at particular risk
  - families affected by disability
  - one parent families
  - families without paid work
- affects families across Scotland, but concentration and nature varies

# Impact of child poverty

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- poverty damages health – poverty kills
  - health compromised from birth – average birth weight 200g lower
  - 2 ½ times more likely to have chronic illness as toddlers
  - 3 times more likely to suffer mental disorders
- poverty undermines learning
  - nine months behind by age three
  - gap widens as go through school
- poverty undermines life chances
  - More likely to be unemployed as adult
  - More likely to be the parents facing poverty in the future
- poverty damages childhoods
- poverty in Scotland may be “relative” but its impact on children is absolute
- Child poverty costs us all – est. £1.5billion a year

# What needs to be done?

## Context:

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Nothing inevitable about this poverty

Not starting from scratch.....

- Real progress: since 1997 100 000 fewer children in poverty
- Policy worked: at UK and Scotland level
- Political consensus: UK Child Poverty Act 2010
- Scottish government: Solidarity target, poverty framework and new Child Poverty strategy

# What needs to be done?

## Context cont.

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.....but huge challenges

- progress had stalled even before recession/cuts
- £18billion welfare cuts, hitting poorest hardest
- IFS predict massive rise in child poverty
- Scotland: little evidence that spending decisions being proofed for impact on child poverty despite national anti-poverty frameworks.
- Explicit commitments on free school meals, nursery education and school clothing grants already scaled back.

# What needs to be done?

## At UK level:

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- Hold to account on 2010 Child Poverty Act
- Challenge cuts to benefits and tax credits
  - Including legal challenges
- Work together to:
  - challenge the myths that drive welfare policy
  - seek practical amendments to UK Welfare Reform Bill
  - present an alternative positive vision for welfare

# What needs to be done? In Scotland:

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- Hold to account and build on Solidarity target
- Build on Child Poverty strategy
- Ensure Scottish budget and local spending decisions prioritise child poverty – **preventative spend** (and tax?)
- Use new welfare powers to protect poorest families
- Prioritise spending on advice and information
- Build on commitments to Living Wage
- Build on extension of free school meals, and tackle other cost barriers in education
- Deliver on universal nursery provision commitments
- Prioritise childcare – quality and affordability
- Ensure housing affordable, energy efficient and suitable

# Conclusion

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- Faltering economy and cuts must not be excuse for inaction.
- Fundamental choices to be made about kind of society we want
- Whatever level of growth and public spending need a fairer distribution
- Scotland and UK extraordinarily wealthy
- Need to ensure that wealth is used to end child poverty

**CHILD  
POVERTY  
ACTION  
GROUP**  
**in SCOTLAND**

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