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Sent: 28 May 2021 17:48
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: FAO Minister for Social Security and Local Government

AO – [redacted]

Ben Macpherson MSP
Minister for Social Security and Local Government

21st May 2021

Dear Ben,

Firstly can I congratulate again on your recent re-election, and your appointment as Minister for Social Security and Local Government in the new government.

As you know we at the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) have been hugely supportive of Scottish Government action to tackle child poverty, and have helped to inform and shape that action. The use of Scotland's new social security powers to expand best start grants and introduce the Scottish child payment, and the recognition of the role of local government in tackling child poverty enshrined in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act are particularly positive developments. These are already making a big difference to struggling families on the ground. They also provide a solid foundation on which the new government and Parliament can build. We are now looking forward to working with you and your officials to help you ensure that social security and local government play their fullest possible role in meeting the interim 2023/24 child poverty targets. By meeting those targets we believe the new government can set a course to achieve the 2030 child poverty target and a minimum income standard for all. We understand the extent to which current UK policy, particularly on social security, makes these targets even more challenging, but we believe that by making choices that prioritise children and family wellbeing Scotland's child poverty targets can still be met. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss what now needs to be done within social security and local government to achieve these ambitions.

Investing more in the Scottish child payment is the number one priority if we are to create the foundation on which to build the policies that will ensure Scotland reduces child poverty to below 10% by 2030. We are therefore delighted that the new government has committed to doubling the Scottish child payment. All the evidence now suggests that to meet the 2023/24 targets action will need to be taken to double the Scottish child payment within the next year. We would be keen to discuss with you how this can be made a priority within the next Scottish budget. We believe the Scottish child payment needs to be increased to a level such that, whatever the impact of other policies, the interim target is met and less than 18% of children are living in poverty by 2023/24. The Scottish Government will then be in a good position to ensure that wider policy changes in housing, employment and childcare will bring child poverty to below the target of 10% by 2030.

It might also be helpful to share with you how our wider work is supporting Scottish Government ambitions on social security and child poverty more broadly, at local government and national level.

Our [second tier welfare rights service](#), with grant support from the Scottish Government, is helping ensure individuals and families across Scotland access the social security support they are entitled to. We have decades of experience providing expert legal advice on all aspects of social security. Members of our expert welfare rights team sit on many of the Scottish government's social security

stakeholder, reference and expert advisory groups. We have worked closely, and iteratively, with your officials over the past five years providing advice and support. We look forward to continuing to work together in this coming parliament to ensure the creation of a world class, rights based, social security system. Our [Early Warning System](#) ensure we draw on our case evidence to identify emerging problems with the delivery of benefits and informs our work at UK, Scottish and local level.

Our [Cost of the School Day](#) project is providing practical support to local authorities and schools across Scotland to help reduce cost barriers to participation, ensure parents are receiving all the support that is available and boosting take up of benefits. We are delighted by the new governments commitments on free school meals, school clothing grant, school trip costs and curriculum charges and look forward to working with local and national government to ensure these are delivered.

Our Glasgow child poverty co-ordinator is also supporting local partners contribute to national child poverty ambitions. We have been active in supporting local government to develop step-change approaches to tackling child poverty, and worked closely with Scottish Government and other stakeholders to develop the national guidance for producing Local Child Poverty Action Reports and to support the National Child Poverty Coordinators at the Improvement Service.

Please let us know if you would like any more detail on these activities and how they can support you in your new role. I do hope we can meet with you in the near future.

We are optimistic that, despite the challenges families struggling on low incomes are facing, with the right action over the next five years Scotland can meet its interim child poverty targets and demonstrate that ending child poverty is possible.

Best regards

[redacted]

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