



CPAG calls on policy makers to take the steps needed to end child poverty and to tackle the injustice and disadvantage that is the lot of children who grow up poor. With political will each of these steps is achievable, each would bring us closer to eradicating child poverty. These may be challenging reforms, but this is something as a society we cannot afford not to do.

## CPAG challenges the politicians to make that pledge a reality



**“** In 1999 the Prime Minister said: **“** Our historic aim, that ours is the first generation to end child poverty forever ... **”** It's a 20-year mission, but I believe it can be done **”**

Tony Blair, Toybee Hall 18 March 1999

# 10 steps to a society free of child poverty

**Today 3.6 million children are growing up in poverty – more than one in four. With political will this can be changed and poverty eradicated.**

**CPAG**  
**MANIFESTO**  
*to eradicate child poverty*



Ensure all children have full access to the requirements – meals, uniforms and activities – of their education. Provide benefit entitlements to all UK residents equally, irrespective of immigration status. Work towards better jobs, not just more jobs. Introduce free at the point of delivery, good quality universal childcare. Reduce the disproportionate burden of taxation on poorer families.

For a full version of the manifesto and details of CPAG, see [www.cpag.org.uk](http://www.cpag.org.uk)



### About us

CPAG is the leading charity campaigning for the abolition of poverty among children and young people in the UK and for the improvement of the lives of low-income families. CPAG aims to: raise awareness of the extent, nature and impact of poverty; bring about positive income policy changes for families with children in poverty; and enable those eligible for benefits and tax credits to have access to their full entitlement. If you are not already supporting us, please consider making a donation or ask for details of our membership schemes and publications.

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**All political parties to commit to eradicate child poverty**

The importance of eradicating child poverty should not be in doubt – the evidence is strong, showing the negative impact poverty can have on childhood and on later life opportunities. The challenge must be to push harder – further and faster – in the eradication of childhood poverty. To this end CPAG calls on all political parties to commit to eradicating child poverty: the debate should be over policy and performance – not about the aim.

**Poverty proof policies – make each consistent with eradicating child poverty**

Poverty is a complex, multifaceted problem. So too are its solutions. Many policies have the potential to impact on child poverty – amongst others in education, housing, health and transport. CPAG calls for a poverty impact assessment to be made for every new policy, mainstreaming the issue throughout government. Policies not working with the grain of fighting poverty must be altered to ensure they do.

**Uprate the combined value of child tax credit and child benefit at least in line with the fastest growing of either prices or earnings. The element of this that is child benefit ought to be maximised**

Uprating benefits and tax credits is vital to maintain their relative value. To make real progress over time the value of benefits to children ought to rise above the rate of the fastest growing of prices or earnings. Child benefit, a near universal benefit, provides a well functioning mechanism that does not suffer the administrative or technical difficulties of child tax credit: it has a vital role in tackling child poverty. The element that is child benefit ought to be maximised and provides a key way to build a national consensus towards increasing the value of benefits to children.

**Increase the adult payments within income support in line with those for children**

Recent focus on benefits for children has been welcome but children's benefits do not act in isolation. It is the family income that must be considered and so adult benefits cannot be ignored. The continued uprating of income support payments only with prices has restricted real value. The gains to the family are much smaller than they appear when simply looking at the benefits for children. The position of childless adults must also be considered. A failure to alleviate poverty in this group is short-sighted, at minimum ignoring the position of those women who become pregnant while on benefits – with implications for lower average birth-weight for their children and the long-term consequences this may have.



**Reform the administration of tax credits and benefits – ensure they provide the right amount to the right people at the right time**  
Tax credits have brought about much improvement and reduction of child poverty. But effective administration of these new policies is essential. Non-take up of tax credits and benefits and the often unreasonable recovery of overpaid tax credits have actually created rather than prevented hardship. Government must get the administration of tax credits right to achieve its anti-poverty targets.

**Ensure all children have full access to the requirements – meals, uniforms and activities – of their education**  
Child-focused policy ought to aim at the point where poorer children are particularly vulnerable to many of the most direct and stigmatising effects of poverty: the school. Although school offers an effective point for policy makers to intervene to protect poorer children, too often the hidden costs of education (eg, trips, activities and meals) separate out poorer children from their peers. This highlights children's poverty and denies them the same opportunities available to the majority. Government – central and local – must intervene to make school a positive and protective environment for poorer children, reducing the impact of poverty and easing the budgets of the poorest families.

**Provide benefit entitlements to all UK residents equally irrespective of immigration status**

Too many of the children of immigrants to the UK do not receive equal treatment with those born here. This is short-sighted and wrong. The position of those with children who are seeking asylum is the most extreme, but benefit rules and conditions disadvantage other immigrant groups too. Those seeking asylum, who often have experienced the most harrowing and threatening conditions before fleeing to the UK, are met by lower benefit rates than UK nationals are entitled to, and are barred from paid work. Dealing with those denied asylum ought to be separate from the financial support families receive while claims are processed. Not to separate these issues is both morally wrong and counter-productive, and starts many who will end up staying off on the wrong foot. Government must address this injustice and disadvantage by equalising employment and welfare rights for immigrants with those of the majority.

**Work towards better jobs, not just more jobs**  
Today our employment rate is at an all time high and demand for labour is strong yet half the income poor children in Britain live in households with one or more parent in paid work. Work, on its own, is no guarantee of an adequate income. Moves to increase employment must go hand in hand with sustained above earnings inflation rises to the minimum wage, reducing massive wage inequality. Policy must also focus on improving employment. Greater effort is needed to raise skills and support people into employment: work should be made fit for people, not just people fit for work.



**Introduce free at the point of delivery, good quality universal childcare**

Extending the availability of good quality childcare is vital for the anti-poverty strategy: good childcare not only has the potential to improve educational and developmental outcomes, protecting children from some of the impacts of poverty, but it also allows parents to enter employment or to raise their hours of paid work to increase earnings. But childcare is expensive, the costs are mostly borne by parents, and provision is both patchy and, worse, least provided in the poorest areas. The long-term solution is universal, free at the point of delivery childcare; a start is needed now.

**Reduce the disproportionate burden of taxation on poorer families**

The poorest pay proportionately more tax than the rich. Regressive taxes include council tax and indirect consumption taxes such as Value Added Tax. This flies in the face of anti-poverty policy as well as strong popular support for a progressive tax system. Government must ensure the burden of taxation is proportional to the ability to pay.

**Recent reductions in child poverty rates are welcome, but poverty remains high by both historical and European comparison. No reduction has occurred to income inequality. Tackling child poverty must be a cornerstone of building a progressive, modern society, both decent and successful. High inequality and rates of poverty threaten not only the upbringing of children but our social and economic wellbeing and development. Here CPAG proposes ten key policy reforms, each of which would bring us much closer to eradicating child poverty.**

**10**

**steps to society free of child poverty**