

Dear candidates

We believe the impact of the cost-of living crisis on low-income households is the gravest issue our country faces.

So far this year, nearly three quarters of low-income households¹ receiving Universal Credit or other means-tested benefits, many of them working families, have been forced to go without at least one essential. This means people having to skip meals or not being able to heat their homes properly.

Many of our organisations work directly with these families and are becoming overwhelmed, too often unable to provide the support so desperately needed.

This situation cannot be allowed to continue. As the prospective leaders of this country, we urge you to act now to demonstrate the compassion and leadership needed to tackle this issue head on.

We ask you both to pledge that, under your premiership, everyone who needs it will be properly supported when they hit hard times. This means ensuring that, at a minimum, **the social security system always provides people with enough to be able to afford the essentials.**

Low-income households need *urgent reassurance now* that they will receive sufficient support to weather the cost-of-living storm as it intensifies further this winter. This means committing to:

- Ensuring that low-income households are provided with sufficient support to cope with the average £2,800 rise in the cost of living they face to April 2023. Given the £1,200 in core support committed so far to households on means tested benefits, this means this **support should be at least doubled**. It should also vary by need, with higher payments for households with higher needs, for instance families with children. The most efficient way to provide this support would be through further payments through the social security system.
- **Making debt deduction rates from benefits more affordable.** Those subject to debt deductions face particularly high levels of hardship. This simple, low-cost action would enable people to keep more of their money and immediately relieve some of the financial pain they are enduring.

You were both senior members of a government that pledged to ensure that the most vulnerable and least well off get the support they need. It is only right that this be your top priority should you take office.

¹ Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation (June 2022) Not heating, eating or meeting bills: managing a cost of living crisis on a low income. This surveyed 'low-income' households in the bottom 40% of incomes, including the approximately 5.6 million of these that claim means-tested benefits.

Yours Sincerely,

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Save the Children UK

The Trussell Trust

The Children's Society

The Trade Unions Congress

StepChange Debt Charity

Scope

Age UK

Shelter

Rethink Mental Illness

Macmillan Cancer Support

Mind

Oxfam GB

Action for Children

Centrepoin

Turn2Us

Young Women's Trust

Royal National Institute of Blind People

Christians Against Poverty UK

FareShare UK

MS Society

Money Advice Trust

Trust for London

Motor Neurone Disease Association

Carers UK

Parkinsons UK

The Money and Mental Health Policy Institute

British Association of Social Workers

The Independent Food Aid Network

Policy in Practice

Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales

Gingerbread

Generation Rent

Nacro

The Food Foundation

Disability Benefits Consortium

End Furniture Poverty UK

PlaceShapers

North East Child Poverty Commission

Children North East

The Bevan Foundation

The Poverty Alliance

The Association of Charitable Organisations

Sustain

One Parent Families Scotland

The Equality Trust

4in10 London's Child Poverty Network

Communities that Work

The Mighty Creatives

Karbon Homes

Chartered Institute of Housing

National Federation of ALMOs

Poverty Truth Community

Home-Start UK

Family Fund

We Care Campaign

The Hygiene Bank

Glass Door Homeless Charity

Citizens Advice Scotland

Mencap

National Education Union

Transforming Lives for Good

Leonard Cheshire

Charity Finance Group

Women's Regional Consortium Northern
Ireland

Feeding Britain

UK Community Foundations

APPLE Collective

Debt Justice

Greater Manchester Poverty Action