

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

29 April 2020

Dear Chancellor,

We are writing to you, as a broad coalition of anti-poverty charities, to ask you to put in place a temporary Coronavirus Emergency Income Support Scheme to protect people already experiencing or at high risk of serious financial hardship. We stand ready to work with you to shape this support package, and we are copying this letter to the Secretaries of State for Work and Pensions, for Housing, Communities and Local Government and for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in recognition of the cross-Government approach required.

We welcome the unprecedented steps the Government has taken so far to help keep people in work and to strengthen the anchor that our social security system provides to help us all weather the storm of this pandemic, through the jobs retention scheme, the self-employed income support scheme, and increases in the standard allowance of Universal Credit and the Local Housing Allowance. We also commend the Government's commitment to do "whatever it takes" to see the UK through this crisis.

However, across all our organisations we are seeing increasing numbers of people who are now experiencing hardship or are hugely concerned that they are on the brink of serious financial difficulty. On Friday, the Trussell Trust will publish figures on the use of food banks in the second half of March, showing an 81% increase in the number of people supported compared with the same time last year. Figures from the Independent Food Aid Network, which represents food banks operating independently of the Trussell Trust network, show similar increases in the support provided.

We believe that this increase highlights how threadbare the existing lifeline is for people who are desperately holding on, and how rapidly their situation can change from just managing to needing to turn to a food bank. The appropriate response must be to protect people's incomes and address the root causes of financial hardship.

While the measures you announced in March will provide some additional support to people, we believe that the social security system must be proactively strengthened as much as possible during this immediate crisis period. Now is the time for the Government to build on the measures to date and introduce a time-limited Coronavirus Emergency Income Support Scheme. This scheme would provide a temporary set of measures to protect people already experiencing, or at high risk of, financial hardship. We have attached a briefing which includes some of the principles and interventions we believe could underpin the approach.

Just as the Government has commendably stepped up to support the employed and self-employed in this time of crisis, we believe it is now essential to build on the measures it has started to put in place to support those at risk of being swept further or deeper into real financial hardship. We would welcome the chance to meet you as a group and to collaborate with you in identifying the specific interventions needed to prevent people across the UK from being pulled under into poverty and destitution.

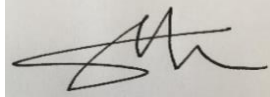
Yours sincerely,



Alison Garnham
Chief Executive
Child Poverty
Action Group



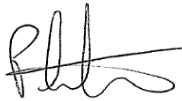
Mark Russell
Chief Executive
The Children's
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Sabine Goodwin
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Independent Food
Aid Network



Helen Barnard
Acting Director
Joseph Rowntree
Foundation



Phil Andrew
Chief Executive
StepChange Debt
Charity



Emma Revie
Chief Executive
Trussell Trust



Thomas Lawson
Chief Executive
Turn2Us