

END CHILD POVERTY

once and for all



Press Release

Thursday 9 March 2006
For immediate release

Child poverty target: campaigners disappointed but Ministers urged to make faster progress

Campaign groups have called on Ministers to make much more progress in tackling child poverty after figures published today showed the Government fell short of its target to cut child poverty by a quarter between 1998/99 and 2004/05.

Reacting to latest figures in the annual Households Below Average Income report, the Child Poverty Action Group and the End Child Poverty campaign said they were “disappointed” that Ministers had missed the first milestone on the road to halving child poverty by 2010 and ending it by 2020.

Child poverty is measured as the number of children living in households with less than 60 per cent of median income and the Government’s first target is judged on two measures, one before housing costs are taken into account and the other after housing costs. Today’s figures show that in 2004/05:

- 2.4 million GB children lived in poverty on a ‘before housing costs’ basis— a fall of 700,000 or 23 per cent since 1998/99 (100,000 short of the 25 per cent target).
- 3.4 million GB children lived in poverty on an ‘after housing costs’ basis — a fall of 700,000 or 17 per cent since 1998/99 (300,000 short of the 25 per cent target).

Kate Green, Chief Executive of the Child Poverty Action Group, said:

“We’re disappointed that the Government has fallen short of its target, but we should not forget that in the last six years 700,000 children have been lifted out of relative poverty. It’s not enough, but without this ambitious target and the extra resources the Government has committed to tackling child poverty, it’s unlikely that such progress would ever have been made.

“If Ministers are to meet the goal of halving child poverty by 2010, they must redouble their efforts and make much faster progress. The Government must now use the upcoming Budget and next year’s spending review to outline what more will be done to meet their child poverty pledge. We also call on the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats to sign up to the child poverty target and adopt policies that would help to meet it.”

Caroline Abrahams, chair of the End Child Poverty campaign, said:

“In a country as rich as ours, it’s a scandal that millions of children still grow up below the poverty line. Having missed this first target the Government must urgently get back on track towards its ultimate goal of ending child poverty once and for all by 2020.”

ends

Notes to Editors

1. Further briefing on the figures will be available from CPAG later today. For more information or requests for broadcast interviews please contact CPAG Press Officer Alex Belardinelli on 020 7812 5216 or 07816 909302 or abelardinelli@cpag.org.uk
2. The Child Poverty Action Group 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.
3. End Child Poverty is a coalition of organisations campaigning to ensure that the goal of eradicating child poverty becomes a reality. The comments in this release represent the views of End Child Poverty and do not necessarily reflect the views of member organisations.
4. Figures from the Households Below Average Income report can be downloaded from <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai.asp>
5. In March 1999 Tony Blair promised to eradicate child poverty ‘within a generation’. This has been defined as by 2020, with targets towards this of reducing child income poverty by a quarter between 1998/99 and 2004/05, and by half by 2010/11.
6. CPAG’s manifesto suggests what is needed to make further progress in eradicating child poverty. Our ‘ten steps to a society free of child poverty’ can be read here: <http://www.cpag.org.uk/publications/extracts/CPAG-Manifesto-2005-Summary.pdf>
7. For more information about End Child Poverty please visit www.ecpc.org.uk