Short changed — children hit hard by limits to key support

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Over two million children are in families that are cutting back on food or heating their homes as a result of the decision not to raise children's benefits in line with the cost of living, new research from the coalition End Child Poverty reveals.

According to the coalition's new analysis, 'Short Changed: The true cost of cuts to children's benefits', failure to increase Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit in line with the cost of living over the past three years, has caused one in five families across the country to struggle to provide their children with the basics. The majority of these children are in low-income working families.

The coalition is calling for urgent action to make sure that families – working and non-working – who are struggling to make ends meet can give their children the basics and help put the Government's commitment to end child poverty by 2020 back on track.

By guaranteeing that children's benefits and tax credits are given the same 'triple lock' protection that is provided for the basic state pension, so they at least rise in line with inflation, the new Government could significantly reduce child poverty.

Under a 'triple lock' – which would make sure that these key benefits either rise in line with prices, earnings, or by 2.5%, or whichever is the highest – 310,000 fewer children will be living in absolute poverty by 2020 than under the Government's current policy.

End Child Poverty is calling on the Government to phase in this protection during the course of this Parliament. As a first step, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit should rise in line with inflation for at least the next two years. They should then rise in line with average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher. And, by 2020, children's benefits should then also be guaranteed a minimum yearly increase of 2.5% in the same way as the state pension.

David Holmes CBE, Chair of End Child Poverty said: "It is deeply worrying that parents are having to cut back on food, heating and other essentials that their children need in order to develop and thrive. The new Government needs to seize the opportunity in the Queen's Speech to stop the rise in child poverty. During the election campaign David Cameron promised not to cut Child Benefit, now is the time for him to keep that pledge.

"We think it is vital that child benefits keep pace with the cost of living and that the Government gives them the same protection as the state pension. This is an opportunity to be bold and to invest in our children's future."

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Media enquiries

For more information, please call Beth Herzfeld in The Children's Society media team on 020 7841 4422, 07775 812 357, (out-of-hours enquiries please call 07810 796 508) or email beth.herzfeld@childrenssociety.org.uk. Or contact the National Children's Bureau media office on 020 7843 6441 or email media@ncb.org.uk

Notes to editors

· 'Short Changed: The true cost of cuts to children's benefits' (full paper and summary available via links)

· 3.7 million children in the UK are living in poverty today: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/households-below-average-income-hbai-199495-to-201213

· Six in 10 children living in poverty are in low-income working families: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/households-below-average-income-hbai-199495-to-201213

· By 2020, an estimated three quarters of a million more children will be living in poverty than today according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies:http://www.ifs.org.uk/comms/r78.pdf

· The Campaign to End Child Poverty (www.endchildpoverty.org.uk) is made up of more than 150

organisations from civic society including children's charities, child welfare organisations, social justice groups, faith groups, trade unions and others, united in our vision of a UK free of child poverty. These include Child Poverty Action Group, The Children's Society, Family Action and the National Children's Bureau. Its call for a 'triple lock' is also being supported by Children England, the leading membership organisation and collective voice for the children, young people and families voluntary sector. End Child Poverty campaigns to achieve our vision by: Ensuring the voices of families facing economic disadvantage are heard; Increasing understanding of the causes and impacts of child poverty and mobilising public support and action; Promoting to politicians and government the case for ending child poverty by 2020, the actions that will achieve it and holding them to account on the requirements of the Child Poverty Act.

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