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29th July 2024

Dear Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Secretary of State for Education,

We write on behalf of the [Disability Poverty Campaign Group](#) (DPCG) convened by Disability Rights UK and Inclusion London, which is a coalition led by Disabled people's organisations. Our members include disability and anti-poverty organisations and allies from wider civil society and academia.

We are aware of the establishment of a **Child Poverty Taskforce** to investigate and combat unacceptable levels of destitution for children across the country.

The DPCG, along with countless charities and anti-poverty groups, has long been calling for understanding, acceptance and resolution of this issue which is shaming the country, and which has grown over the last fourteen years. Childhood poverty in a first world country is unacceptable, and we know from the work we do that Disabled children feel the effects more than anyone else.

We understand that as the leads for this Taskforce, you have already met several children's charities and campaigners. As a UK anti-poverty coalition led by Disabled people's organisations, we would like to offer our lived experience and policy expertise in the fight against child poverty.

Disabled children have specific needs that increase the likelihood of poverty affecting their lives, examining the challenges they face and identifying the support and solutions required, MUST be part of the Taskforce's work. Combating poverty experienced by Disabled children will require additional measures and cannot be addressed through a "one size fits all" approach. DPCG can offer experience, research, ideas and solutions that can assist the Taskforce.

Disabled children, like Disabled adults are being hit the hardest by the continuing cost of living crisis. The work we have collectively and individually done, as DPCG and individual members, can support the Taskforce .

Disabled children experience greater levels of poverty due to their additional specific needs. For example energy costs will often be higher than those of non-disabled children, as there is the need for more heating (to cope with lower mobility or prevent severe illness due to weakened immune systems) and the necessity of charging essential medical and mobility equipment, such as oxygen machines, ceiling track hoists, through floor lifts, suction machines for tracheostomy blockages to prevent choking, and feeding pumps, not to mention multiple daily uses of washing machines and showers.



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A report called [Cost of Caring](#) that last year polled 4,264 families with a Disabled child or seriously ill child, found that nine in 10 families were struggling, or falling behind on their regular household bills and many were forced to forego living essentials such as food, heating, basic furniture like beds, flooring, washing machines and fridges, to try to make ends meet. Over half of parents and carers (54%) reported skipping or cutting the size of their meals because there wasn't enough money for food and more than one in ten (13%) said they had to cut back on essential items for their Disabled children, essential items that were necessary for a healthy existence.

Earlier this year it emerged that the proportion of families with Disabled children living in poverty had risen by nearly a third in two years, even before the cost-of-living crisis, according to a poverty measurement developed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The facts are disturbing, yet the situation of families with Disabled children are often never addressed or discussed when talking about either poverty, the reasons behind it or the solutions to it. Disability often remains invisible and misunderstood. There are numerous reasons behind this, but the main cause is a lack of Government engagement with the disability community and the experts within it, "nothing about us without us".

The DPCG offers the Taskforce the experience and expertise of Disabled people's organisations and our allies. Collaboration is key and our expertise is essential to the Taskforce mission.

We urge you to engage with DPCG in shaping your understanding and developing your recommendations and look forward to your early response.

Yours Faithfully,

On behalf of The Disability Poverty Campaign Group:

Dan White (Co-lead for Disability Rights UK)

Helen Rowlands (Co-lead for Inclusion London)