



Universal Periodic Review: UK 3rd Cycle Child Poverty and Homelessness

Suggested Questions for the UK:

- Can the UK and devolved governments outline their plans to reduce and eradicate child poverty and inequality within the current spending programme and plans to establish statutory targets for the eradication of child poverty in England and Wales?
- Can the UK and devolved governments outline what steps are being taken to assess and mitigate the effects of welfare reform on children, particularly disabled children?
- What steps are being taken by the UK and devolved governments to reduce the number of children living in temporary accommodation, including those who are in bed and breakfast provision?

Recommendations:

- The UK and devolved governments should develop, fund and implement a plan for the eradication of child poverty for the next 5 years, including re-establishing statutory targets and ambitious measurable indicators.
- The UK should urgently undertake a comprehensive assessment of the cumulative impact of the welfare reform changes since 2010, and revise current reform where there is evidence of a negative impact on children and families.
- The UK and devolved governments should make a significant investment to build new social housing to reduce the numbers of homeless households in temporary accommodation and the length of time they stay there.
- The UK and Scottish Government should end the use of inappropriate temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast, for homeless families, with action taken against those that continue to house families with children in B&Bs beyond the 6 week legal limit.

Background

The Government's continued austerity drive and wide ranging cuts to social security means they have regressed in relation to recommendations 110.101 and 110.41 as these continue to have a disproportionate and detrimental impact on disadvantaged families.

Increase in child poverty (recommendations 110.101)

The situation has deteriorated in relation to recommendations 110.41 and 101.101. Despite strong UPR and UN Committee recommendations and the Government stating that 'Tackling child poverty and disadvantage, and delivering real social justice, is a priority for UKG' in its 2017 UPR Report¹, four million children were living in poverty in the UK in 2015-16. Figures are at their highest level since 2010 with nearly a third of children living in poverty.² Two thirds of children in poverty live in a family where at least once member is working despite the UK Government stating that this is 'the best route out of poverty and this approach is working' in its UPR Report.³ Far-ranging welfare

changes and cuts to benefits have undermined both in-work and out-of-work support for families with children and rates are expected to worsen with further cuts.⁴

Lack of child poverty targets and strategies to eradicate poverty (recommendations 110.41)

Recommendation 110.41 has not been met as UK Government has removed the Child Poverty Act 2010 statutory duty to report on four key targets for ending child poverty by 2020. The previous Welsh Government explicitly retained its commitment to this target⁵ although this commitment has now been rescinded. Scottish Government has recently consulted on retaining the four key targets and to end child poverty by 2030.

The UK Government's continued drive to reform welfare and push for austerity has been labelled as having '*disproportionate [effect on] children in disadvantaged situations*'. Ignoring recommendations from the UNCRC, the UK and devolved governments haven't adequately impact assessed their budgets on the effect on children for at least two years, despite a duty to do this in Wales.

Scottish and Welsh Child Poverty Strategies⁶ can only focus on devolved matters and cannot tackle some root causes of poverty, notably income. The Welsh Child Poverty Strategy has a strong focus on children's rights, yet there is no specific delivery plan. The Scottish Government has recently consulted on a Child Poverty Bill which will place a duty on Ministers to publish a Delivery Plan every five years and report on it annually.⁷

Homelessness (recommendation 101.103)

Rising numbers of homeless children in England means that the Government has partly failed to meet recommendation 110.103. The rise has been mainly attributed to the impact of cuts to social security.⁸ However, in Wales, legal duties placed on local government to prevent homelessness have resulted in decreases in formal homelessness.

Children illegally accommodated in B&Bs

Progress is needed to take forward recommendation 101.103. In England, there's been a sharp rise in families in Bed & Breakfasts (B&Bs) beyond the six-week legal limit. At the end of June 2016, 3,390 families with dependent or expected children were living in B & B accommodation in England, more than double the number at the end of 2013 (1,560), with well over a third (1,140) living there for more than six weeks.⁹ In Scotland, the number of children living in temporary accommodation has increased by over 25% since 2014 and children are spending longer periods of time there.¹⁰

Recommendations referenced from the UK's UPR 2012 (2nd Cycle)

110.101	Provide more resources for reforming the welfare system in order to make it better able to tackle poverty and worklessness, and reduce negative impact on social vulnerable groups.	Viet Nam:	Supported
		A/HRC/21/9 - Para. 110 & A/HRC/21/9/Add. 1 - Para. 12	
110.41	Set out a clear pathway to meet the goal of ending child poverty in the UK by 2020 as stated in the Coalition's programme for government	Norway:	Supported
		A/HRC/21/9 - Para. 110 & A/HRC/21/9/Add. 1 - Para. 19	

110.103	Guarantee the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, particularly health, education and adequate housing	Cuba:	Supported
		A/HRC/21/9 - Para. 110 & A/HRC/21/9/Add. 1 - Para. 19	

About us

Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE)

CRAE works with over 150 organisational and individual members to promote and campaign to protect children's rights and the UNCRC in England. See: www.crae.org.uk

Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)

Together is an alliance of over 340 NGO and individual members that works to improve the awareness, understanding and implementation of the UNCRC in Scotland. See: www.togetherscotland.org.uk

Wales UNCRC Monitoring Group

The Wales UNCRC Monitoring Group is a national alliance of non-governmental and academic agencies tasked with monitoring and promoting the UNCRC in Wales. It is currently facilitated by Children in Wales, the national umbrella organisation. See: www.childreninwales.org.uk

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¹ Ministry of Justice (2017) *UPR: UK, British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies National Report* para 51.

² Department for Work and Pensions (March 2017) *Households below average income: an analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 to 2015/16*

³ Ministry of Justice (2017) *UPR: UK, British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies National Report* para 51.

⁴ Report of the UK Children's Commissioners (2015) *UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Examination of the 5th Periodic Report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*

⁵ Welsh Government (2015) *Written Statement - Welsh Government's Response to the UK Statement on Child Poverty* 13/07/2016

⁶ Scottish Government (2014) *Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland* Welsh Government (2015) *Child Poverty Strategy for Wales*

⁷ Scottish Government (2016) *Consultation on a Child Poverty Bill for Scotland*

⁸ Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S., and Watts, B. (2016) *Homeless Monitor 2016* Heriot-Watt University, University of York, University of New South Wales; House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee (2016) *Homelessness. Third Report of Session 2016–17*

⁹ Q2 End of June 2016, Department for Communities and Local Government (September 2016) *Statutory homelessness and prevention and relief live tables: Table 775 England*

¹⁰ Together (2016) *NGO alternative report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Scotland* (UK)