

Universal Periodic Review: United Kingdom – Child Poverty

Question:	<i>Can the UK government set out the steps it will take at both UK and devolved government levels to ensure the target for eradicating child poverty by 2020 is met?</i>
Recommendation:	<i>We recommend the UK and devolved governments should set a clear pathway and investment programme to meet their commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020. In particular, we recommend:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Invest in Child Tax Credits and benefits so that levels of child poverty do not increase</i>• <i>Set a target to eradicate severe child poverty by the end of the Parliament</i>• <i>Reduce in-work poverty and ensure employment is an effective route out of poverty by allocating the resources needed to create clear work incentives for parents so that they keep more of their earnings.</i>

Background: Child poverty was the focus of recommendations in 2008's UPR and the 2008 Concluding Observations by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child which recommended that – in line with article 4 of the CRC – the UK should 'allocate the maximum extent of available resources for the implementation of children's rights, with a special focus on eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities across all jurisdictions'.

900,000 children were lifted out of poverty between 1999 and 2010 but this fell far short of government's commitment to halve child poverty by 2010.

Child poverty is expected to begin rising after 2013, and is projected to reach 3.3million (before housing costs) and 4.2 million (after housing costs) by 2020.

The UK Government's Child Poverty Strategy, published in April 2011, failed to set out a clear pathway towards reaching the 2020 target. The Scottish Government's child poverty strategy, published in March 2011, lacked specific actions and timescales and has no robust monitoring process in place to assess its success. In Wales, the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, placed a duty on Welsh Ministers to publish a strategy to reduce child poverty. We await publication of the promised single Anti-Poverty Action plan, incorporating work on child poverty, but are concerned by apparent delays in implementation.

Meeting the 2010 target required an extra annual investment of £4.2 billion in tax credits. It is likely that a similar level of investment will be required to meet the 2020 target. This investment would help low income families at a time of welfare retrenchment, wage stagnations, public service cuts and increasing unemployment.