



Cash **Now** Families **Always**

A manifesto for the Scottish
Parliamentary Elections 2021

For the upcoming Scottish Elections in May 2021 we are asking all political parties to **commit** to:

Cash Now

Use devolved social security powers further to target low-income families by, as a start, doubling the Scottish Child Payment to £20 per child per week

Introduce a national approach using local government powers to target support, including discretionary financial assistance, to prevent families with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' from falling into poverty and destitution

Develop and implement a pilot guaranteed income scheme for care leavers, which provides a regular, unconditional income at a level that ensures a reasonable standard of living for young people leaving care



Families Always

Keep 'The Promise' and prioritise the resourcing, development and delivery of universally accessible holistic family support, including practical, emotional and financial support, for all families in Scotland who need extra help

Prevent children and families from being pushed into poverty or becoming homeless due to housing costs by bridging the gap between before and after housing costs for families, reducing the financial burden of unaffordable rents and providing safe and secure social housing

Introduce a national digital inclusion scheme for all low-income families across Scotland, to provide devices, data and broadband for families and their children to ensure connectivity and promote access to education, services and support and to help maintain social and community connections





Get money into the pockets of low-income families

Evidence

Before Covid-19 around 1 in 4 children in Scotland were living in poverty.¹ As a result of the pandemic many more families risk falling, or being pushed deeper, into poverty. Increasing numbers of families across Scotland are struggling to make ends meet as child poverty rises.²

Without significant intervention child poverty is projected to rise further. Failure to act will result in Scotland missing our statutory child poverty targets by 2030.³ The first step towards lifting children and families out of poverty must be ensuring families have the money they need to provide for themselves. This must be done in a way that promotes dignity and choice for families.

Aberlour's Urgent Assistance Fund provides cash grants to struggling families experiencing extreme financial hardship who have nowhere else to turn to for help. We have seen a 1400% rise in applications to this fund since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Families are struggling to afford the basics, such as food, utility bills, white goods, beds and children's clothing.⁴

Article 26 of the UNCRC ensures that children and their families have a right to benefit from social security and to be supported financially.⁵ It is vital that struggling families get the financial help they need that provides them with an adequate household income. We believe this must be done by applying a 'cash first' approach to all forms of financial assistance for families.

The Scottish Child Payment (SCP) will help thousands of families living in poverty.⁶ But the real terms value of the SCP has decreased since it was first announced in 2018 due to the rising cost of living. Increasing the SCP to £20 per child per week would provide an income that better meets families' needs.

Experience

“We were managing with food because we were getting some food parcels in... We didn't have the spare actual cash to go and buy anything. Like I say, we did get help with food and things like that... the food banks are great, but I do like to try and put some fresh food in my kids' diets.”
(Parent)

“My son also needed a new mattress. The springs were hanging out. Again, I was like, I've got nothing in the bank account, how am I going to get him a mattress?”
(Parent)

Ask...

Use devolved social security powers further to target low-income families by, as a start, doubling the Scottish Child Payment to £20 per child per week.

Ensure families with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' don't fall into poverty and destitution

Evidence

Families who have 'No Recourse to Public Funds' currently are not entitled to social security support. However, these families are some of those at greatest risk of living in destitution and experiencing extreme financial hardship.⁷

Immigration is a policy area reserved to the UK Government. There have been many calls for the Scottish Government to provide support to these families using devolved social security powers or other discretionary measures.⁸ The Poverty and Inequality Commission has called on the Scottish Government to work with CoSLA “to develop a national policy on the provision of support to those with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' through local authorities”.⁹

A 'cash first' approach should apply to any measures intended to provide financial assistance and support to all children and families experiencing extreme financial hardship or living in poverty.

Local authority powers which allow for the discretionary use of cash assistance to 'promote social welfare' should be used to target financial and practical support for families with 'No Recourse to Public Funds'.¹⁰ Provisions included under s.12 of the Social Security (Scotland) Act and s.22 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995¹¹ should be used to develop a national approach to provide support to families, promote children's wellbeing and to prevent poverty and destitution.

Pilot a guaranteed income for care leavers

Evidence

In May 2020 Basic Income Scotland published its feasibility report into the potential for a Scottish Citizens' Income pilot scheme.¹² The Scottish Government has been positive about such a scheme but has so far chosen not to progress the report's recommendations. This is due to both policy and political challenges which result from social security powers continuing to be, mostly, reserved to the UK Government, which does not support such a policy.¹³

In 2019 Aberlour proposed that a pilot basic income scheme targeted at care leavers should be developed.¹⁴ Most recent figures show there are more than 6000 care leavers in Scotland who are eligible for throughcare and aftercare support.¹⁵

Care leavers are one of the groups most at risk of experiencing financial insecurity. They are vulnerable to the worst effects of poverty and more likely to be unemployed or to become homeless.¹⁶ Those who choose to move on from their care placements into independent living should be able to depend on a certain level of financial security.

'The Promise' is clear about how Scotland must continue to support care leavers once they have moved on from care: “Scotland should behave and act like a good parent that supports young people as they enter adulthood. Scotland must be a parent that encourages young people toward a life of independence, self-reliance and stability...”.¹⁷ Therefore, it is the responsibility of corporate parents to be the 'bank of mum and dad' for young people who have been in care.

Care leavers have been working with Aberlour, Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (Staf) and the RSA in Scotland to help develop a pilot scheme proposal for a guaranteed or basic income for care leavers. Such a pilot has the potential to provide valuable insight and evidence for the introduction of a national guaranteed or basic income scheme.

Experience

“Our financial support is so small that complicated things for us... and that is insufficient to get food stuff, toiletries and some basic needs for the house.”
(Asylum Seeking Young Person)

“...[we had] another family where the mother has 'No Recourse to Public Funds' and the father is [ill]... he had been a taxi driver but couldn't cope. They had a little bit of extra money but with COVID, that all stopped, and really, they had really no money. We were getting them food parcels from the local mosque and stuff like that, but we got them £100 from Aberlour.”
(Family Support Worker)

Ask...

Introduce a national approach using local government powers to target support, including discretionary financial assistance, to prevent families with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' from falling into poverty and destitution.

Experience

“It's shocking that as a young person who has went through the state care system that's meant to help, love and support you I'm not getting the support what I need, or I'm entitled to? There's too many, too many. You asked for a £20 emergency payment and you get told no, you've got to have bank statements, this evidence, that evidence - it's a joke.”
(Care Leaver)

“I think that this [guaranteed income] would solve an issue. During the summer I wanted to get a job but I was discouraged to do this as it may have affected my income and other benefits and this was a worry for me... It would be better as it would not affect any of my other income. I always try to save, I don't buy certain things in case I run out of money.”
(Care Leaver)

Ask...

Develop and implement a pilot guaranteed income scheme for care leavers, which provides a regular, unconditional income at a level that ensures a reasonable standard of living for young people leaving care.

Families Always



Keep 'The Promise' and deliver holistic family support for all families who need extra help

Evidence

'The Promise' received cross party support for its recommendations to be implemented in full.¹⁸ Improving how Scotland cares for its most vulnerable children and young people requires transformational change. That begins with making sure families get the help they need to prevent children being taken into care.

'The Promise' outlined how Scotland must support families to help them stay together: "Scotland already has a clear commitment to early intervention and prevention. That commitment is best realised through proper, holistic support for families. There must be a significant upscale in universal family support services".¹⁹

Scotland's commitment to incorporation of the UNCRC will see children's rights embedded in law. Article 18 of the UNCRC insists that children and their families should get the help and support they need to grow up at home.²⁰ Scotland will have a legal duty to make sure families get the help they need. For some families this will mean targeted and intensive support.

Holistic, whole family support which provides practical, emotional and financial help and assistance to families who are struggling can: prevent challenges becoming entrenched; help to strengthen family relationships; and begin to address material deprivation.

Ensuring families have an adequate household income is a central element of holistic family support.

Scotland's commitment to 'The Promise' and obligations contained within the UNCRC insist that all families across Scotland must get the extra help and support they need to keep families together and allow them to thrive.

Experience

"I think that there should be better services available to all families to support them to give them a chance that we had...I know that I could have done better for my older children and I feel like I've let them down and they're stuck in the system but I wish we had better support then, from people who treated us like human beings."

(Parent)

"It's not just about what Aberlour have done for me. It's actually my whole family rather than just myself...Without them, we would struggle - emotionally, financially, and even if it is just to say, 'Look, we're here. Even if you don't want to talk to us.' Sometimes you don't want to pick up the phone but just getting that text message to say, 'We hope you're okay. You know where we are if you need to phone.' If they don't hear from you, they pick up the phone to make sure you're okay."

(Parent)

Ask...

Keep 'The Promise' and prioritise the resourcing, development and delivery of universally accessible holistic family support, including practical, emotional and financial support, for all families in Scotland who need extra help.

Prevent children and families from falling into poverty or becoming homeless due to housing costs

Evidence

Nearly 16,000 children and their families in Scotland are currently homeless and more than 7000 children are living in temporary accommodation.²¹ On average families with children living in temporary accommodation remain there for 7 months.²² Article 27 of the UNCRC places an obligation on governments to make sure children and their families have an adequate standard of living, including a house.²³

Safe and secure permanent accommodation is crucial to the wellbeing of families. However, even before the Covid-19 pandemic homelessness was rising among families with children. Ensuring affordable housing for those families being pushed into poverty, due to the cost of housing is essential if Scotland is to meet its child poverty targets.

Affordable rents and increasing the amount of social housing and improving access to it are key to reducing homelessness. For families in persistent debt to social and private landlords, assistance to pay off rent arrears can also loosen the grip of crippling and spiralling debt.

It is estimated that providing financial assistance with the costs of rented accommodation to bridge the gap between before and after housing costs for families who find themselves in financial hardship due to the costs of housing, would be at least equal to the impact of the Scottish Child Payment in helping to lift families out of poverty. This would mean a further 30,000 children could be lifted out of poverty by reducing the financial burden of housing costs on struggling families.²⁵

Introduce a digital inclusion scheme for all low-income families

Evidence

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the extent of digital exclusion and the inequality of digital connectivity in Scotland. Lack of access to digital technology has excluded many disadvantaged children, young people and families from being able to access vital services, from being fully active members of their communities and from connecting with friends and family.²⁶

The use of digital technology must be recognised as essential to allow children, young people and families to engage in education, access services and support, register for benefits and maintain important social and community connections. The pandemic has shown that for vulnerable families it can be critical to support work that promotes children's wellbeing and ensure services can maintain connections with families.²⁷

Access to digital technology is no longer a luxury but a necessity for people to live, work and connect.

The Scottish Government's Connecting Scotland initiative has provided devices and data to ensure access to systems and services for those without digital access.²⁸ Additional government investment provided laptops to 25,000 disadvantaged pupils returning to school after lockdown.²⁹

There must be further commitment to getting and keeping disadvantaged families across Scotland digitally connected by providing devices and data packages to families who are at risk of digital exclusion.

Experience

"We pay the full rent by ourselves, but now if we need to go on to make a claim for Housing Benefit, you need to swap over to Universal Credit and we're trying to avoid that as long as we can because we can't go the six weeks without having money."

(Parent)

"It takes ages to get on the list, and then ages waiting once you're on the list... The councils should be working faster to make sure that all families have got a house, it's a really basic right."

(Young Person)

Ask...

Prevent children and families from being pushed into poverty or becoming homeless due to the cost of housing by bridging the gap between before and after housing costs for families, reducing the financial burden of unaffordable rents and providing safe and secure social housing.

Experience

"It [digital inclusion] should be a basic human right like any other."

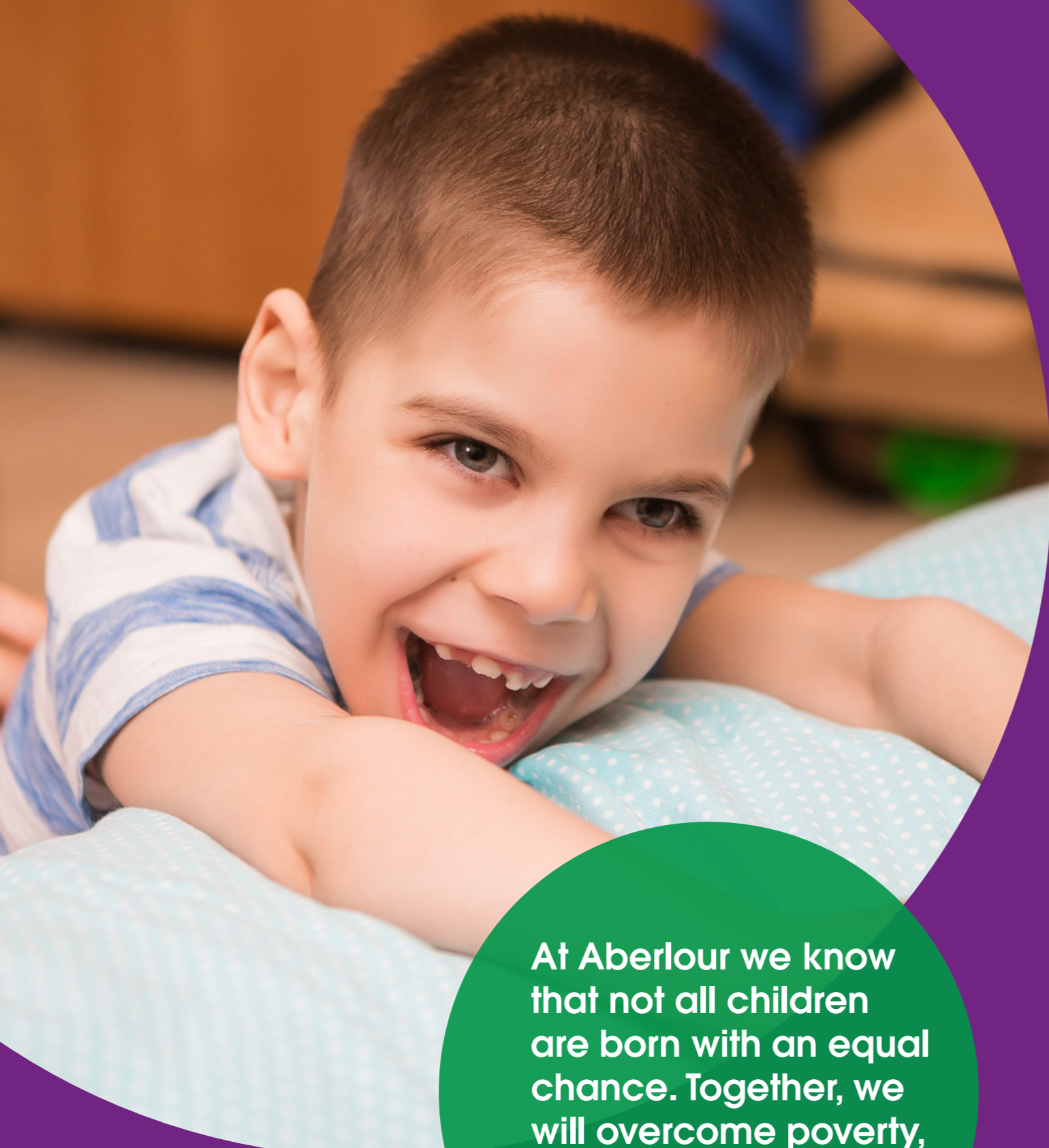
(Young Person)

"At the start of lockdown I was trying to do my school work on my Mum's phone, and it was pretty much impossible to do any work. The school have actually told me that I've managed to do more work during lockdown than I have during 3 years at school. I couldn't have done that if I hadn't got the laptop from Aberlour."

(Young Person)

Ask...

Introduce a national digital inclusion scheme for all low-income families across Scotland, to provide devices, data and broadband for families and their children to ensure connectivity and promote access to education, services and support and to help maintain social and community connections.



At Aberlour we know that not all children are born with an equal chance. Together, we will overcome poverty, disadvantage and discrimination.

.....
We **help** children, young people and families across Scotland to overcome significant challenges in their lives, like growing up in and leaving care, the impact of trauma, living with a disability, poor mental health, parental addiction or living in poverty.

.....
We **believe** in making sure children, young people and families get help and support at the earliest opportunity to prevent problems spiralling out of control.

.....
We **campaign** to end child poverty and our work aims to address the impact of poverty and inequality on children, young people, families and communities across Scotland.

.....
We **maintain** that the first and best way to reduce child poverty is through a 'cash first' approach of getting money directly into the pockets of families who need it most.

.....
We are committed to **supporting, promoting and protecting** the rights of children and young people and realising the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

.....
And we are committed to **Keeping 'The Promise'**.

.....
We think the best way we can do this is by making sure families have the means to provide for themselves – **Cash Now** – and that families who need extra help get the support they need, when they need it and how they want it – **Families Always**.

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Cash **Now**
Families **Always**



Aberlour Child Care Trust

Scottish Charity no: SC007991 | Company Reg no: SC312912

Aberlour Child Care Trust, Kintail House, Forthside Way, Stirling FK8 1QZ

T: 01786 450 335 | E: enquiries@aberlour.org.uk

 /AberlourCC  @AberlourCCT

 /company/Aberlour-child-care-trust

www.aberlour.org.uk