

Single Parent Rights

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Secretary of State for Education

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Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

secretaryofstate@dwp.gov.uk

27th September 2024

Dear Minister,

Re: Single Parent Engagement in the Child Poverty Strategy Development Process

We welcome the news that the Child Poverty Taskforce you co-Chair is developing a child poverty strategy. As single parent led organisations we see first-hand the devastating impact of child poverty on single parent families across the UK. We are writing to request that single parent families are at the heart of the Child Poverty strategy development process.

We would encourage single parents to be considered in each of the thematic meetings the Taskforce plan to hold. We would also suggest holding a specific meeting to discuss single parent poverty to ensure the strategy addresses the specific needs and realities of single parent families.

The Taskforce Terms of Reference outlines three key objectives, all of which are significant to single parent families:

- 1) **Increase income including via social security reforms:** single parents face significant barriers to work - the single parent employment rate has dipped to 66%. 73% of families with children in receipt of Universal Credit are single parents meaning they are disproportionately impacted by social security policies, for example, despite being less likely to have a larger family, 52% of those impacted by the two-child benefit limit are single parent families. Meanwhile 63% of those having their benefits capped are single parent families.

"It's hideous and we need a better and more fair welfare system. It is not a welfare system if it leaves people perpetually teetering on the brink of a breakdown." Single mother.

- 2) **Address costs, savings, and debt:** 76% of single parents are in debt caused by the cost-of-living crisis as well as structural issues around employment barriers and social security policies, specifically DWP debt and savings limits alongside low rates of social security payments.

"Everything is geared up for two adults together so having to pay increased amounts for two adults when it's actually only one adult and a child... the single parent has to effectively pay a single supplement." Single mother.

- 3) **Alleviate negative impacts of poverty:** 39% of single parent families are living in poverty, almost double the number of two-parent families and almost half of all children in single parent homes are now being raised in poverty. This has a negative impact on children's wellbeing and development and further impacts long term poverty rates.

“Looking for a place to rent (private) so many landlords and agents wouldn’t rent to a single parent. Especially a single parent on benefits.” Single mother.

Single parents must often balance the role of sole breadwinner alongside sole carer, giving them unique needs. Yet despite this, we see policies designed time and again in a way which disregards single parent realities. For example:

- Disabled single parents and single parent carers are unable to access the childcare support available to couples where one parent is out of work due to disability/ caring responsibilities.
- Single parents in receipt of UC face a higher AET than couples and meeting it is solely reliant on one individual.
- The earnings level required to avoid the benefit cap for single parents is essentially double that of individuals in two-parent families.

Engaging with single parent led organisations and single parents directly is essential if the Strategy is to tackle the underlying causes of single parent poverty and make sure that all family types can thrive in the UK.

We look forward to discussing this in more detail.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Talbot, Founder, **Single Parent Rights**

Julie Hawkins, Director, **Single Mums Business Network CIC**

Satwat Rehman, Chief Executive Officer, **One Parent Families Scotland**

Rachel Cule, Co-founder and Director, **Single Parents Wellbeing CIC**

Nicola Booth, Director and Chair of Trustees, **Single Parents Support and Advice Services**

Aruna Bansal, Founder, **Asian Single Parents Network**

Noreen Khan, Director, **Neesie**

Osatohanmwun Amayanvbo, Founder, **BAME Lone Parents**

Joanna Gurr, Director, **Single Parent Information Network**

Zoe Desmond, Founder, **Frolo**