

Challenge Poverty Week begins

The Scottish Government's national mission to tackle poverty and end child poverty is to be highlighted by Scottish Ministers during Challenge Poverty Week.

Social Justice Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville will speak at a joint Poverty Alliance and Joseph Rowntree Foundation launch event for the week on Monday 7th October, where she will point to the breadth of activity and commitment across all Scottish Government portfolios to eradicate child poverty.

Speaking ahead of the event, Ms Somerville said: "Ending child poverty is the top priority of this Government and we are determined to do all we can to deliver action at the pace and scale required to meet our targets.

"We have allocated £3 billion a year since 2022-23 to policies which tackle poverty and the ongoing cost of living crisis. This includes providing free bus travel for around two million people, free school meals for all children in primaries one to five, and social security benefits and payments which are only available in Scotland.

"Modelling published in February estimated Scottish Government policies will keep 100,000 children out of relative poverty this year, with the Scottish Child Payment alone keeping 60,000 children out of poverty.

"The Scottish Government stands ready to work with the UK government however this must be matched with action in the budget this month. That includes immediately abolishing the

two-child limit, and following this government's lead by matching the Scottish Child Payment."

But Scottish Labour says that the government is not living up to its own rhetoric and has cited a number of cuts which the government has made which will affect people in Scotland:

Scottish Labour says that the SNP government has:

- Scrapped plans to introduce free school meals for P6s and P7s
- Allowed the poverty-related attainment gap in exam results to widen to its highest point on record
- Cut the affordable housing budget by almost £200 million
- Delayed plans to provide digital devices to young people to tackle digital exclusion
- Cut the employability budget by £21 million, scrapped its Fair Workplaces Fund and its Parent Transition Fund
- Cut the Scottish Welfare Fund by £5 million in real terms
- Hiked ScotRail fares by 8.7 per cent and re-introduced expensive peak time fares.

Scottish Labour Social Justice spokesperson Paul O'Kane said "The SNP says eradicating child poverty is its priority, but its record tells another story. The SNP's warm words won't cut it when children are suffering as a result of its raids on the affordable housing budget, its broken its promises on free school meals, and its cuts vital support schemes designed to help families.

"Behind the SNP spin and dodgy data is a record of broken promises. Labour is already at work to tackle poverty at its root by dealing with the scourge of low pay and insecure work. The SNP must use its many devolved powers to lift Scots out of poverty and drive down the cost of things like housing and transport."

The Scottish Government debate on Tuesday 8 October will focus on [Challenge Poverty Week](#) which was first set up in 2013 by the Poverty Alliance. Click on the link to find out how you can take part.