

## Statement from the Lived Experience Leadership Group on the right to social security

18<sup>th</sup> December 2020

We're a group of people with lived experience of poverty who have been working to understand what human rights say about poverty for more than 5 years.

It's really important that everyone understands that social security is not just a nice thing to have, it's a human right. It's set out in UN human rights law.

The right has important standards built into it, including the idea of the 'adequacy' of benefits. Payments must provide enough money over a long enough time to make sure people have enough to meet other rights like food, rent and heating. What's more, the level of benefits should be monitored carefully to ensure that people can afford the essentials.

We think the very small increases to social security payments announced by the DWP last week will leave many people in Scotland struggling to stay afloat. They're lower than inflation over the year; and we don't know how prices will change in January. We'd also like to remind people that higher inflation on essentials such as food and housing affects people in poverty much worse. They have to spend a much larger proportion of any income they do have on simply staying alive, while the better off may notice only a slight impact on their budgets.

We think the minimal increases to the level of benefits will affect some groups much worse than others. We're particularly worried about disabled people, families, people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities and people who do not have support networks to fall back on. Many of these groups have already been hit hard by the impact of COVID-19.

Being able to get adequate social security quickly can make a huge difference to people experiencing poverty. It can be the difference

between being able to eat and going hungry, between keeping warm and getting cold, between being well and being ill or experiencing mental health issues. It can be the difference between life and death.

The level of benefits needs to be reviewed so that people have enough without having to really struggle. We'd like the Scottish Government to consider how they can act to mitigate these minimal increases.

Additionally we add our voice of support to others' calls to lock in the £20 increase to Universal Credit and put this in place for people on older types of benefits (legacy benefits). We welcome the introduction of Scottish Child Payment to boost the income of families in poverty in Scotland and add our voice to calls to increase levels of Child Benefit.