

Rt Hon Liz Truss MP
Prime Minister

Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

5th October 2022

Via email

Dear Prime Minister and Chancellor,

Investing in children and families in the North East

We write as a cross-sector coalition of organisations committed to advocating for the people, public services, voluntary organisations and businesses of the North East.

We have come together to urge you to commit to increase social security support such as Universal Credit in line with inflation, as we know that failure to do so would have a devastating and disproportionate impact on children and families across our region.

More than half – 52% – of all babies, children and young people growing up in the North East are in families relying on Universal Credit or equivalent legacy benefits. Most of these families are in low paid work, or recognised by Government as being unable to work due to disability or caring responsibilities.

They have already faced a significant real terms cut to their income this year, as social security has failed to keep pace with inflation – on top of several years of freezes to this support, which had already left our safety net inadequate and threadbare.

Failing to ensure social security support keeps pace with the cost of household essentials will push low income families across the North East – a region with the UK's highest rate of child poverty – into even greater levels of hardship. This is both cruel and completely avoidable.

It will also put even greater pressure on our overstretched public services and voluntary sector organisations, currently facing unsustainable growth in demand for support and massive budgetary pressures. It will damage our regional economy at a critical juncture, as families have even less money to spend with local businesses. And it will completely undermine the Government's 'levelling up' commitments to improve the living standards and opportunities of children and young people in regions like ours.

We all want a North East in which **every** baby, child and young person can thrive, can fulfil their potential, and can take advantage of everything our beautiful region has to offer. Achieving that ambition requires Government to invest in children, young people, families, and the services which support them – not make life even harder for those already struggling to keep their heads above water.

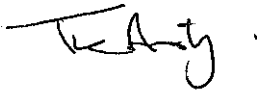
Yours sincerely,



Anna Turley
Chair, North East Child Poverty Commission



Mark Almond
CEO, Citizens Advice North Tyneside



Tracy Armstrong
Chief Officer, Citizens Advice Newcastle



Ian Bartlett
Manager, Citizens Advice Stockton



Liz Blackshaw
Regional Secretary, Northern TUC



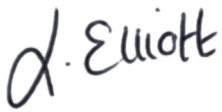
Carol Botten
Chief Executive, VONNE
(Voluntary Organisations' Network North East)



Abi Conway
CEO, Citizens Advice Northumberland

Alison Dunn

Alison Dunn
CEO, Citizens Advice Gateshead



Leigh Elliott
Chief Executive, Children North East



Kevin Franks
Chief Executive, Youth Focus: North East

Helen Howson

Helen Howson
CEO, Citizens Advice Darlington,
Redcar & Cleveland



Denise Irving
Chief Officer, Citizens Advice Sunderland



John McCabe
Chief Executive, North East England
Chamber of Commerce



Dr Mike McKean
Clinical Lead, North East and North Cumbria
Child Health & Wellbeing Network

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jon Niblo' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jon Niblo
Chief Executive, NE Youth

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Edward Pickering'.

Edward Pickering
CEO, Citizens Advice County Durham

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Chris Zarraga'.

Chris Zarraga
Director, Schools North East