May 2, 2017

Dear Members of the Social Security Committee,

Last week, we had the pleasure of appearing before the Social Security Committee to give evidence on the draft Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill, and we are both grateful for the opportunity to present evidence on this important piece of legislation.

In addition to the testimony given last week, we wish to add a further comment, specifically concerning the detrimental impact of the cuts to social security on child poverty in Scotland. Though we briefly touched on the relationship between social security and child poverty, namely the importance of income maximisation, we feel compelled to highlight a reform which could better the lives of families in Scotland.

The two child limit to the child element of Child Tax Credit and Universal credit, colloquially referred to as the 'family cap', will push 200,000 more children into poverty and will result in a loss of up to £2,800 every year for families. To mitigate the impact of these policies, the social security powers devolved to Scotland should be used to invest an extra £5 a week in child benefit. This top-up could reduce child poverty in Scotland by a substantial 14 percent, lifting 30,000 children out of poverty. We understand that Scottish Government may be resistant to this proposal. However, if the targets are to be achieved, and if there is serious commitment to alleviate child poverty in Scotland, there must be a plan put in place to achieve the same end via targeted spending. To date, we are not aware of such a plan.

Though several themes emerge when reading the submissions to the Committee on the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill, one is social security. Highlighted in several submissions is the ineffectiveness of the existing social security system, and the opportunities that exist to maximise individual and family incomes. Social security reforms, coupled with gendered employment strategies and flexible, affordable and high-quality childcare, are steps which Engender believe could contribute to alleviating women and children’s poverty in Scotland, whilst Inclusion Scotland would like to see investment in young disabled people’s futures, particularly in Additional Support for Learning and during the “transition” period after leaving school.
Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Bill Scotland,
Director of Policy, Inclusion Scotland

[Signature]

Emma Trottier
Policy Manager, Engender