

Rishi Sunak
Sir Keir Starmer
Sir Ed Davey
Carla Denyer & Adrian Ramsay
Gavin Robinson
Liz Saville Roberts
Stephen Flynn

22 June 2024

Make austerity unlawful a priority in your election campaigns and future Governments

Dear Westminster Party leaders

We are writing to you today on the 14th anniversary of the 2010 budget, which announced £40 billion worth of cuts, the beginning of the 'austerity' policy which has dominated Government policy ever since.

During this election, we are directly calling on all your parties to make a clear commitment to make the section 1 of the Equality Act 2010, (the socio-economic duty) law, helping reduce poverty and making austerity unlawful.

Ending austerity and making equality real is integral to ensuring that everyone in Britain can live secure and fulfilling lives. The mainstream economic opinion is that austerity policies are hugely damaging, and that government spending and disposable incomes are vital to a healthy economy as they allow for the creation of jobs, good public services and the circulation of capital.

The [Progressive Economy Forum](#) estimates this 'Austerity' has cost the United Kingdom half a trillion pounds of public spending.

Aside from the devastating impact it has had on our economy, 'Austerity' has meant a:

- Increase of those living in poor conditions of housing: Social Workers Union [found](#) that two-thirds (61%) of children's social workers witnessed young people living in conditions with excessive levels of mould.
- Destruction of our public services: In [2022](#) the waiting list in England for non-urgent care in hospital had reached a new record high of 7.2 million people
- Rise in fuel poverty: Child Poverty Action group has [said](#) by January 2023, over half of households in the UK (15 million) will be in fuel poverty – spending over 10 per cent of net income on fuel.

- Increase in child poverty: the No Child Left Behind campaign has [said](#) 3.9 million children – 8 pupils in every class of 30 – living in poverty. And it's only getting worse.
- Growth of inequality in the UK: the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has [said](#) the gap between the richest in society and the rest of the population has widened over the 10-year period (from 2010); the income share of the richest 1% increased from 7% to 8.2% between FYE 2011 and FYE 2020.

That is why our coalition of trade unions, campaign groups and wider society are calling for the introduction of the socio-economic duty by central Government. As the result of actions taken by the Scottish Government, including the use of the socio-economic duty, Scotland has the lowest levels of child poverty it has seen in 30 years, with 60,000 fewer children living in poverty in 2023 compared with 2017. Reducing inequality and reducing the impacts of inequality should be a dedicated and primary focus of all governments. The United Kingdom is the fifth richest country in the world, so we know money is available.

Alongside your party support centrally, we have also created a candidates [campaign pledge](#) to support our work to 'Make Equality Real', which we hope you will promote with your parliamentary candidates.

In this election, we want to see a clear commitment to an end of austerity, and hope you will prioritise this during the campaign and in the work of the next Government.

Yours sincerely

Zita Holbourne, Artists' Union England (AUE)

Dr. Cath Lowther, Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP)

Sarah Woolley, Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU)

Zita Holbourne, Black Activists Rising Against Cuts (BARACUK)

Roy Rickhuss CBE, Community

Paul Fleming, Equity

Gawain Little, General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU)

Naomi Pohl, Musicians' Union

Paul Whiteman, National Association of Headteachers (NAHT)

Ian Lawrence, National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO)

Dr. Patrick Roache, National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)

John McGowan, Social Workers Union (SWU)

Priya Sahni-Nicholas, The Equality Trust

Jo Wittams, The Equality Trust