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Rt Hon G Brown MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

11 December 2009

Dear Prime Minister

Poverty impact of public policy and expenditure

As you know, the Get Fair coalition represents over sixty national organisations campaigning against poverty in the United Kingdom. We recognise the significant range of initiatives and support you have introduced to help deal with the economic recession. We also support your belief that fair access to quality public services is key to ending poverty for all. Our collective concern is to ensure decent incomes and living standards, for a fairer society for all.

The government has signalled spending priorities in the Pre-Budget Report. The immediate support for the unemployed, for example, is welcome at a time of economic recession. However, in building a new economy out of the old, it remains imperative that structural weaknesses are addressed that led to one in five living in poverty during the last decade of relative prosperity. Indeed, the recent report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion, 3 December) shows levels of poverty, unemployment and repossessions in the UK started rising as early as 2004, before the recession began. This means that in order to reduce the number of people living in poverty by any serious margin, the UK needs to recover not just from the recession, but from deep-seated problems that were re-emerging before the downturn and banking crisis of last year.

The commitment to end child poverty goes some way towards addressing those issues, although we are concerned that this will not be achieved without greater levels of investment to deliver that target. The depth and breadth of the Get Fair coalition provides particular insight and experience to help better understand the causes of poverty and what it means to be poor across from the children and older people's organisations, refugee, disability, housing, faith and community groups

It is vital that next year's Budget and longer term spending plans include a rigorous assessment of the impact on poverty, how public policy measures are used to reduce poverty and inequality. In particular at a time of heightened political debate in the run up to the next general election and in the face of public expenditure cuts.

We would welcome an opportunity to inform that debate and work with you to develop measures for poverty-proofing public policy and expenditure, to help achieve a lasting reduction in poverty in the UK.

Yours sincerely

Vanessa Stanislas
Chair, Get Fair

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