



**GET FAIR** is a coalition of over 60 children's and older people's organisations, refugee and disability groups, housing organisations, faith and community groups. Get Fair campaigns for a just and fair society, free from poverty in all its forms. There is no single issue that will bring an end to poverty in the UK. However, there is strength in our collective voice, taking a stand 'together against poverty'. With the economy in recession and rapidly rising unemployment, we must:

- **Protect the poorest in our society**, who did not get a fair share during the more prosperous years and who are badly hit by the impact of the recession
- **Correct the weaknesses in the economy** that mean even during the previous boom years 1 in 5 in the UK population still lived in poverty

The UK is the fifth richest country on the planet yet the gap between rich and poor continues to grow. 12.8 million are living in poverty. It's time to **GET FAIR**.

**What can you do?** Join with others to meet your Member of Parliament locally to support Get Fair and raise those issues that concern you most. These might include local issues, such as:

- Large scale job losses and the impact on neighbourhoods and town centres
- Increases in the cost of living, including fuel and energy bills
- The lack of affordable housing and rising numbers of home repossessions
- Threats to local public services, reducing the quality and access to services in many areas

**Make a difference.** By getting together locally, you can put forward your own concerns and, at the same time, show your support for others. There are national and community groups campaigning on those issues, including those supported by the Get Fair coalition.

- We continue to press the government to increase levels of funding and invest £3bn to halve child poverty by 2010. Without the money 700,000 children will remain in poverty.
- Millions of pensioners do not claim the benefits to which they are entitled. Up to £5 billion remains unclaimed every year. Automatic payment of Pension Credit and Council Tax benefit for older people would take over 500,000 pensioners out of poverty.
- People seeking asylum are prevented from working and live in poverty, only getting the equivalent of 70% from income support. Those seeking asylum should be able to work after 6 months while they remain in the UK, so they can contribute to the economy.
- Around 3 million people are denied access to basic financial services, including in remote rural areas. Setting up a Post Bank would provide services from 11,500 post office branches, almost twice the number of the major high street banks combined.
- 30% of disabled adults live in poverty. Changes in welfare reform could make that worse. Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance go some way to meeting the extra costs of disability. It is important keep them as extra-income benefits.

**Ask your Member of Parliament what they will do to take action now and protect the poorest in our society who are hit hardest by the recession.**

**WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR.** Get Fair is calling on politicians to commit to concrete measures that will help bring about an end to poverty in all its forms. The major reduction of poverty must be a shared objective of all the UK political parties and included in their manifestos. As well as the local issues and national campaigns you want to raise as part of this lobby, supported by the Get Fair coalition, there are three policy areas we are asking for MPs' support.

## **1. AN INCOME THAT MEETS MINIMUM LIVING STANDARDS**

In the fifth largest economy in the world all people should have sufficient money to live on. No one should live in poverty in the UK. The current level of job seekers allowance in the UK is £60.50 per week. This is not enough money to keep people who lose their jobs out of poverty. Many vulnerable groups including asylum seekers have to survive on much less. We need to increase out of work benefit levels to ensure that those losing their jobs are not plunged into poverty, and provide more support for vulnerable groups including a right of for asylum seekers to work after 6 months. Yet Government plans to reform benefits to make more conditional on people actively seeking work will result in severe financial hardship for many families who fail to meet the requirements of the system. Get Fair is calling on politicians to:

- **Put reform of welfare benefits on hold and introduce an emergency increase in out-of-work benefits and tax credits**

## **2. AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND DECENT NEIGHBOURHOODS**

The impact of this recession has been to make even more acute the UK housing crisis. There are 1.77 million households registered with local authorities seeking to rent social housing in the UK and only 158 thousand social housing vacancies filled last year. If no one else joined the waiting list, the average wait for a tenancy would be twelve years. Repossession rates are rising as people lose their jobs and are unable to pay their mortgages, increasing the need for affordable rented accommodation in the UK. The impact of the credit crunch is making this picture worse. Building companies and housing associations are finding it far harder to access the credit they need to enable them to produce the homes that we need in the UK. House building has almost stopped. Get Fair is calling on politicians to:

- **Invest an additional £6.35 billion over the next two years to build 100,000 new social rented homes, protecting the jobs of 150,000 construction workers**

## **3. FAIR ACCESS TO SERVICES, WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION**

All public services should aim to narrow gaps in outcomes between the richest and poorest. Fair access to quality public services is key to ending poverty, in education, job support, health and social care. In addition, local amenities such as access to shops selling good food, reputable financial services and access to leisure activities are important if we are to enable people to live healthy lives within flourishing communities. No one should have to travel long distances or difficult and expensive journeys to the nearest NHS dentist or doctor, or pay more for essential services because they are on a low income. There should be no 'desert areas' or excluded groups. We need investment in new local services such as Post Bank, for post offices to provide banking services. Get Fair is calling on politicians to:

- **Protect local services in the recession, with additional funding to ensure quality public services reach out to those most in need**

**Ask your Member of Parliament to pledge their support and undertake to use, or support the use of, all the powers available to government to meet poverty targets and include concrete measures in their party manifestos to achieve a lasting reduction in poverty in the UK.**