

## Twelve Months of Boris

**In an interview with Save the Children during his election campaign, Boris Johnson placed tackling child poverty as his second policy priority.**

He claimed to be 'absolutely committed to the government target' but has he taken the necessary action to address the high levels of child poverty in the capital? 4in10 takes a look.

Boris Johnson has taken a number of significant steps in tackling child poverty in London since coming to power in May 2008. Firstly, under his control, the Greater London Authority (GLA) has shown a highly encouraging response to the Government's **London Child Poverty Pledge**, designed to raise awareness of the contribution that organisations themselves can make to reduce the capital's high level of child poverty. Boris Johnson has also helped shape the GLA's employment practices to support parents to enter and progress in work, and applied the recently increased **London Living Wage** to all its employees and contractors.

Similarly, the recent launch of **Mayor's Fund for London**, where donors across the city are being invited to give money for community projects to support London's most disadvantaged children, demonstrates that the issue of child poverty is high on the Mayor's agenda. This exciting

initiative works on similar ideals to 4in10, recognising and rewarding good practice in London and supporting organisations within a square mile of Shoreditch to adopt practices that have been evidenced to have a direct positive impact on the lives of London children living in poverty. **As patron of the fund, Boris Johnson is using his political influence to encourage donors across the city to support this worthwhile project.** However the charity receives no direct funding from the GLA and Mr Johnson has been criticised for relying too much on the good will of the rich which may not be forthcoming in the current economic climate.



Since retracting former mayor Ken Livingstone's target to make 50 per cent of all new London homes affordable, **Mr Johnson has pledged to build 50,000 new affordable homes based on negotiations with individual boroughs on local targets.** This recognition of the vast need for social homes and affordable housing is encouraging. However, councils have expressed concern over the seemingly uneven distribution of affordable housing targets now set, whereby boroughs with existing high proportions of social housing are facing some of the highest affordable housing targets in the capital. If social housing expands in boroughs already tackling significant deprivation, it could lead to the ghettoisation of deprived communities across the capital.

It is impossible to downplay the need to take fast and effective action to equip children in poverty and their families with the necessary resources and support to break out of the poverty cycle. Although it is evident that Mr Johnson is taking the challenge of tackling child poverty in London seriously, we hope to see bolder, more widespread interventions during his second year in office.

# Darling's Budget

**The 2009 budget will not improve the lives of 3.9 million UK children living in poverty.** We can only express disappointment that more has not been done for children.



Increased benefit and tax credits to help struggling families buy food and basic items would provide much needed help to the UK's 3.9 million children living in poverty, and also provide fiscal stimulus. The budget, announced on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, shows the Government is not committed to children and lacks the will to put back on track the historic promise it made in 1999 to halve child poverty by 2010 and eradicate it by 2020.

Hilary Fisher, Director of the Campaign, reacted against the budget saying, "While we recognise that it is vital to get the unemployed back into work, we are disappointed the government has not prioritised the urgent needs of the 3.9 million children living in poverty. Without the £3 billion invested in family incomes that we called for in this budget, children across the UK will continue to face the costs of social disadvantage, exclusion and poor health and nutrition."

While we recognise that some families in poverty will be helped by the support for Job Centre Plus and for those under 25 unemployed for over a year, End Child Poverty believes that putting money into the hands of parents is the key way to lift children out of poverty and the shamefully small increase in child tax credit will not be enough. Kate Green, End Child Poverty Trustee and Chief Executive of Child Poverty Action Group lambasted the chancellor, saying; "The money targeted on the children struggling most during the recession amounts to less each week than the cost of a pint of milk. It is disgraceful to give such a pittance."

**Indeed, the Households Below Average Income statistics, released on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009, demonstrated the government is falling even further from their target of halving child poverty by 2010.** On the Government's preferred measure, Before Housing Costs, and the measure used for the targets there has been no change. However, on the measure preferred by the sector, After Housing Costs, there has been an increase of 0.1million children living in poverty. Moreover, the number of children lifted out of poverty since 1998/99 has fallen from 600,000 to 500,000. In London, there has been no significant change; 4 in 10 London children are still living in poverty.

The evidence is clear; to reach the target and keep the promise of halving child poverty, the government must invest in struggling families now.

## Key Publications and Launches for London Child Poverty this Quarter

- London Councils and the Government Office for London launched the **London Child Poverty Network** on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2009, aimed at helping local authorities and their partners to share good practice, discuss local issues and to support pan-London approaches to tackling child poverty. For more information, visit <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/children/childpoverty/network>.
- In March 2009, the London Child Poverty Commission published a progress report on the Commission's recommendations for tackling child poverty in London, '**Capital Gains – One Year On**'. The publication identifies areas in which agencies have made, or are beginning to make progress, and areas where more work needs to be done. For more information and to access the latest report, visit <http://213.86.122.139/publications/capital-gains-progress-090409.jsp>
- Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, launched Mayors Fund for London on 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2009. For more information, visit [www.mayorsfundforlondon.org.uk](http://www.mayorsfundforlondon.org.uk).

## Members' Spotlight

A very warm welcome to all of our new members, four of whom are:



Those of you who haven't yet completed your registration questionnaires please do so and email them to either [liz@ecpc.org.uk](mailto:liz@ecpc.org.uk) or [natasha@ecpc.org.uk](mailto:natasha@ecpc.org.uk). If you have any questions please do contact us.

## 4in10 Campaigns Update

### Newham Campaign

The 4in10 Newham campaign has changed direction and is now set to launch as an awareness raising campaign in the borough. It will unite third sector organisations working with low income children and families on its steering group. **We intend that this will give organisations a platform on which to gain media attention, providing the opportunity to let their and their service users' voices be heard by decision makers and the Newham public.** We will be holding a free campaign training workshop for any organisations interested in getting involved. The campaign is still in its exciting early stages and we would welcome participation from any third sector organisations in the borough.

### Campaigners Toolkit

Do you want to get involved in a campaign on child poverty in London outside of Newham and Westminster? Do you feel passionately about child poverty in your area, and want to take action? If the answer is yes to either of these questions we have good news for you; our comprehensive campaign toolkit is on its way. **From tips on lobbying to organising an event or even developing detailed campaign strategy, the toolkit has it covered, meaning it has never been easier to take action on the shamefully high level of child poverty in London.** The toolkit caters for all levels of involvement, from those who can only commit to taking a small action to those who want to launch a full-scale campaign of their own. This will soon be available online ([www.4in10.org.uk](http://www.4in10.org.uk))

### Westminster Campaign

4in10 would like to offer many thanks to all those organisations who have shown so much enthusiasm for getting this off the ground. Regrettably the workshop due to launch this campaign is currently on hold, due to conflicting work priorities. We will be re-scheduling this as soon as we possibly can so please watch this space.

If you work for a community or voluntary organisation and are interested in getting involved with campaigns in Newham or Westminster, or would like to find out more about the toolkit and starting a campaign yourself, please get in touch with London Campaigns Officer Natasha Adams;

e [natasha@ecpc.org.uk](mailto:natasha@ecpc.org.uk) or t 020 7278 6676.

## 4in10 Good Practice



London Development Manager Liz Thorne at the 4in10 Good Practice Workshop held on April 21<sup>st</sup> 2009.

Representatives from over 30 organisations came together at the second in the series of 4in10 good practice workshops, which focussed on supporting London children to achieve their full potential.

Practitioners from across London took part in the workshop, on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2009, welcoming the opportunity to share ideas about improving the primary to secondary transition, supporting children in temporary accommodation, involving parents in their children's education and supporting young carers.

***"I really like the roundtable discussions that take place at these End Child Poverty meetings. It's a great opportunity to talk and express views in a non-threatening and welcoming environment."*** A participant

The day proved to be a great success; 100% of attendees said they would recommend future events to colleagues.

To find out about future good practice workshop events please contact Liz Thorne;

e: [liz@ecpc.org.uk](mailto:liz@ecpc.org.uk) or t: 020 7278 3404.