

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**14<sup>th</sup> March 2006**

### **New fuel initiatives leave Scotland's poorest families out in the cold**

A group of organisations working together to eradicate fuel poverty among children in Scotland have expressed disappointment that the new Central Heating and Warm Deal Programmes contain few measures to help low income families with children. They are calling the programmes – announced in the Scottish Parliament today – a missed opportunity.

The organisations – Barnardos Scotland, Capability Scotland, Child Poverty Action Group Scotland and Children in Scotland – are also concerned that no account has been taken of the impact of rising fuel prices in tailoring the programmes. The Scottish Executive's own statistics appear to show that over 10% of children under the age of five could end up living in fuel poverty because of recent price rises.

Eddie Follan, Head of Policy Development at Children in Scotland, said:

“The Scottish Executive has missed a golden opportunity to tackle fuel poverty among low income families with dependent children. There are at least 46,000 children in Scotland living in fuel poverty. Worst of all, there are 5000 households with children without any central heating at all. Our priority was for these households to be included in the new programmes so that all children in Scotland have at least a source of heating. We are disappointed that the poorest of children will not now benefit from a programme that would enhance their health and well being, prevent illness and contribute to a better education and a better childhood.”

Kate Higgins, Head of Campaigns and Communications at Capability Scotland added:

“We are disappointed that the Executive appears not to have accepted the case for families with disabled children, even though they face many of the same issues as older people when it comes to heating their homes and keeping warm. While we are pleased that families with disabled children will now be eligible for the Warm Deal, much more still needs to be done. Capability Scotland’s own research shows that there has been no improvement since 2001 – over 40% of families with disabled children still experience fuel poverty and 5% of disabled children live in homes without an adequate source of heating. To allow this situation to continue is unacceptable.”

John Dickie, Head of CPAG Scotland, commented:

“Fuel poverty has far reaching consequences for Scotland’s poorest children. Their health and wellbeing can suffer: children are vulnerable to respiratory conditions like asthma that are linked to living in cold and damp homes. Research also indicates that the poorest families are most at risk of experiencing fuel poverty – lone parent and larger families in particular. And with recent rapid rises in energy prices, more and more children will become affected. The Scottish Executive estimates that a 20% price hike will drag another 9,000 children under five years old into fuel poverty. That’s 20,000 children under five living in fuel poverty – 20,000 too many.”

John Watson, Parliamentary and Policy Officer for Barnardos Scotland, added:

“Our partnership will continue until we have succeeded in persuading the Scottish Executive to remove the blight of fuel poverty from the lives of Scotland’s children. We know that the Central Heating and Warm Deal Programmes have made a huge difference to the lives of older people and we are pleased that

this will continue. But the case for tackling fuel poverty among low income families with dependent children is also strong. We fail to see how the Executive can continue to ignore it. Indeed, we fail to see how they will meet their target of eradicating fuel poverty by 2016 without beginning to address the issues affecting children.”

(ends)

**For more information, contact:**

Eddie Follan	0131 222 2437 / 07793 588 671
Kate Higgins	0131 347 1014 / 07725 069 538
John Dickie	0141 552 3303
John Watson	0131 314 6665

**Editor's Notes:**

- Barnardos Scotland, Capability Scotland, Child Poverty Action Group Scotland and Children in Scotland have been working together since January 2005 in an informal network to campaign for measures to eradicate fuel poverty among children living in Scotland
- The charities submitted a joint response to the Scottish Executive's consultation on its future fuel poverty programme – a copy of the full response is available
- The figures – 5000 households with children living in homes without central heating and 46000 children living in fuel poverty – are from the Scottish House Condition Survey, made publicly available in responses to Parliamentary Questions S2W-19432 and S2W19430 in the name of Scott Barrie MSP
- The figures on how many children under the age of 5 could become affected by fuel poverty due to rising energy prices were made publicly available in a

response to S2W-23012 in the name of Christine  
Grahame MSP

- Unpublished research from Capability Scotland's 1 in 4 poll found that 5% of disabled children live in homes with no central heating and that over 40% of families with a disabled child are fuel poor; the same number were found to be fuel poor in *Living on the Edge*, research conducted in 2001
- In Child Poverty Action Group's *Poverty: the facts*, half of low income families blame the "cold, damp and draughty" nature of their homes for their children's ill health; the same report also found that nearly 1 in 5 of single parent families live in fuel poverty