

The Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty: Priority 1 – Child Support Payments

We recommend that the government pass-on child support payments from non-custodial parents to eligible sole-parents who are on state-provided benefits. The Child Support Amendment Bill is currently before Parliament, but does not include the pass-on of payments as an amendment, even after this was strongly recommended to the Select Committee considering the Bill. The Bill represents a rare opportunity to make this important policy change, and we urge the Government to include it.

The feedback we received strongly supported this recommendation. A pragmatic way of implementing this policy change is to begin with a capped per child pass-on of \$10 per week. This will get some much needed income to many children living in poverty, and will encourage higher compliance for the non-custodial parent to make payments (which will also reduce Inland Revenue collections costs). The net fiscal cost of this level of pass-on would likely be about a third of the total amount currently being withheld.

Actions Statement from Workshop focus group:

1. Re-engage parliament in the debate by having a Supplementary Order Paper on the current Bill, or a Private Member's Bill in the ballot to: change the pass-on/government withholding clause, or more the withholding clause to a regulation, not legislation.
 - Will require political advocacy to identify a sponsoring Member of Parliament to take this forward. CPAG, ECC and beneficiary action groups may be best placed.
2. Raise public awareness of the inequality of the current system, and use evidence, data and public pressure to influence action 1.
 - Will require public advocacy to illustrate the social benefits and fairness issue. Everyone can play a role by helping the "animation" go viral and raising through networks.
 - Further research and modelling of options could strengthen the case. Best managed through universities and possibly CPAG.