

justfair

# Submission to UN Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights

**CESCR 7<sup>th</sup> Review of UK**

Pre-sessional Working Group submission  
on behalf of civil society in England and Wales

# Introduction

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1. This submission is made on behalf of civil society groups and individuals in both England and Wales who submitted written and oral evidence and /or participated in capacity building webinars in response to a [call for evidence](#) organised by [Just Fair](#). Just Fair is a UK-based charity with specific expertise in economic, social, and cultural rights (ESC rights). The aim of Just Fair is to increase awareness and understanding of these rights; encourage UK governments and public authorities to respect, protect and fulfil these rights; and support individuals and groups to advocate for their rights. Just Fair participated in the sixth periodic review of the UK in 2016, coordinating a [parallel report](#) based on the contributions of and endorsed by a large number of civil society organisations. The production of this group submission for the seventh periodic review of the UK has been funded by the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#), the A-rated National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) for England and Wales, and Britain's National Equality Body. The Commission works to empower civil society to hold government to account for its human rights obligations by supporting engagement with treaty review processes. The co-signatories to this submission are set out at Annex 1. These include the individuals and groups who submitted evidence, Just Fair and organisations who have provided endorsement of the submission.
2. The submission is evidence-led. There were over 70 participants in the evidence gathering process which took place between August and September 2022. They work on a wide range of issues relating to the ESC rights of people living in England and Wales. Participants include small grassroots organisations as well as larger charities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), working with those with lived experience of rights violations. Evidence was also provided by individuals with lived experience of the issues they raised. A list of participants is available at Annex 2 with hyperlinks to evidence submitted, where this was provided in writing and has been published publicly. Participants who provided oral submissions are also listed in Annex 2 with extracts from some of these oral submissions set out in Annex 3 where permission was granted to do so by the individual. References to the evidence submitted is indicated throughout by reference to the document submission number in Annex 2 and a hyperlink to the relevant written submission where applicable. The Committee is strongly encouraged to read the evidence submissions in full.
3. The purpose of this submission is to assist the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights (the Committee) in identifying the areas which merit in-depth examination and further explanation from the State Party as part of the substantive review of the United Kingdom's International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) compliance. The submission is organised thematically according to rights in the Covenant and in accordance with the CESCR General Reporting Guidelines for NGOs submitting written information to the pre-sessional working group. Terms used in the report in respect of protected characteristics reflect the terms used in the evidence submitted. This necessarily means that a variety of terms are used. The submission is not intended to be an exhaustive account of all potential rights violations, or concerns in England and Wales since the last review. The absence of an issue should thus not be interpreted as the issue being necessarily resolved or otherwise in England and Wales.

## Access to rights and equality (art. 2)

4. The context for ESC rights in the UK is underpinned by a period of fiscal austerity, followed by the Covid-19 pandemic and a subsequent ongoing cost-of-living crisis. This has also coincided with the UK's withdrawal from the European Union (EU) and the associated political and economic uncertainty. These events or crises present discrete and cumulative challenges for the protection of ESC rights, whilst specific groups highlighted in this submission have been at the sharpest end of each of them. Macroeconomic policy, including on taxation, impacts the enjoyment of ESC rights in England and Wales and raises issues about whether the State Party ensures that maximum available resources are used to progressively ensure the full realisation of rights. Specifically, there are a number of reforms that could have been made to the tax system (and still could be made) in order to tax wealth more effectively. The Committee has previously identified the regressive nature of various reforms to the UK tax system and recommended that the State Party take steps to ensure that its policies are 'adequate, progressive and socially equitable' (Concluding Observations, UK 6th Periodic Review, para. 16). Similarly, the Committee also recommended that the State Party 'improves tax collection so as to increase resources available for implementing economic, social and cultural rights', 'take[s] strict measures to tackle tax abuse, in particular by corporations and high - net-worth individuals' and 'intensif[ies] its efforts, in coordination with its Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, to address global tax abuse' (Concluding Observations, UK 6th Periodic Review, para. 17). Questions are raised about the extent to which the State Party has acted on these Committee recommendations ([SUB 43](#), p. 2-3).
5. Despite being urged to incorporate Covenant rights into the domestic legal order with access to remedies, the UK has not done so, although the Scottish Government is proposing to incorporate ICESCR in its devolved jurisdiction. Despite encouragement from the Committee to ratify the Optional Protocol, the State Party considers that the benefits of the Protocol are unclear. The State Party states that it believes that 'effective domestic laws already exist where individuals can seek enforceable remedies if their rights have been breached. It is possible for an individual to challenge any government decision in the domestic courts if their rights have been breached' (State Party Report (SPR), para. 179). This is contradicted by the 2021 Supreme Court ruling in [R \(SC and Ors\) v Secretary of State for Work & Pensions \[2021\] UKSC 26](#) that expressly states that unincorporated international obligations are not enforceable in the domestic courts ([SUB 32](#), p. 1).
6. The UK Government has not brought the [Socio-economic Duty](#) in section 1 of the [Equality Act 2010](#) into force. An [enforceable Socio-economic Duty](#) across the UK would be an important step forward in ensuring the ICESCR rights of people in the UK. It would provide a powerful foundation for a fairer society ([SUB 22](#), p. 2) beyond a mere tick box exercise as claimed by the State Party (SPR, para 38). Notably, both Wales and Scotland's devolved governments have brought section 1 into force, meaning that some Welsh and Scottish public bodies must consider how their strategic decisions, such as setting policy objectives and developing public services, can improve equality of outcomes for people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
7. In Wales, since devolution took effect in 1999, the Welsh Government and Senedd have control over many areas of policy and legislation which effect how people experience their rights under the ICESCR and despite positive progress, areas of concern persist. Furthermore, even in areas where, under devolution, fulfilling ESC rights remains largely under the control of Welsh Government institutions, this does not divest the UK Government of its responsibility to ensure compliance with the ICESCR. The Committee is thus encouraged to ensure that where recommendations are made that it is clear that in relation to ESC rights that the Welsh and UK Governments should treat those recommendations as directed at both the Welsh Government and Welsh ministers as well as the UK Government and UK ministers.

8. The broad rights landscape in the UK is relevant for understanding the context in which ESC rights protection is to operate. The current Justice Secretary, Dominic Raab, has in the past [stated](#) that he does not believe in ESC rights and the current Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, has publicly [stated](#) that it is her desire that the UK withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights. In relation to the [Human Rights Act 1998](#) (HRA) questions have been raised about the adequacy of the consultation process on proposals to replace the HRA, the absence of respect for the [findings](#) of the independent [Human Rights Act Review panel](#) and lack of engagement with devolved administrations ([SUB 10](#), p. 2-3). A proposed Bill of Rights, intended to replace the HRA, removes rights in practice ([SUB 36](#)). At the time of writing, it is understood that the Bill of Rights Bill will return Parliament in the coming weeks. As such there is a fear of substantial rights regression in the UK and the wider context of these fears necessarily includes concerns about ESC rights protection.

### Proposed Questions:

- a. Please explain what steps, if any, have been taken to reform the tax system so as to make it more adequate, progressive, and socially equitable, in particular in relation to taxing wealth more effectively.
- b. Please explain why steps have not been taken to commence the Socio-economic Duty under section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 so that it is enforceable by individuals in Wales, and why no action has been taken to bring the duty into effect across the State Party.
- c. In light of concerns raised about rights regression, please address in detail how economic, social, and cultural rights will be preserved and enhanced by the proposed Bill of Rights Bill.

## Work (art. 6, 7, 8)

9. Unemployment continues to disproportionately affect disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups as a consequence of both UK Government policy and inaction. This leaves the right to work inadequately protected. For instance:
  - a. People seeking asylum are effectively prohibited from working while their claim is being processed which places them under acute financial pressure and may increase risk of exploitation, ([SUB 41](#)) including, modern slavery ([SUB 17](#), p. 2).
  - b. People seeking asylum encounter specific barriers in accessing the right to work. For instance, in England, English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) classes, which would aid integration and ability to work (if/when permitted), are subject to fees which prevent people enrolling in classes for over six months after which they are part subsidised. By contrast, in Scotland and Wales there is free provision from arrival ([SUB 39](#), p. 1).
  - c. Black communities experience racial and social class barriers in employment ([SUB 38](#), p. 2 and 7). The proportion of the Black population unemployed is double the national average at 8% and this has been exacerbated by factors such the Covid-19 pandemic. Unemployment of Black young people was 41.6%, three times that of unemployment of white young people at the peak of the pandemic ([SUB 38](#), p. 7). The importance of disaggregated data ought to be noted as it reveals variable rates of employment/unemployment for different groups and intersectional discrimination may be masked in the absence of breakdowns of data ([SUB 37](#), p. 2).
  - d. Access to work also includes access to successful self-employment. Black (and even more Black female) entrepreneurs are reported to experience racism in establishing businesses ([SUB 38](#), p. 2 and 8) and are disproportionately less likely to receive financial and non-financial support ([SUB 37](#), p. 2 and [SUB 38](#), p. 2 and 8).

- e. 63% of respondents to the [Trans Lives Survey](#) reported experiencing transphobia while seeking employment and this rose to 73% of Black people and People of Colour (BPOC) respondents and 69% of disabled people for whom the question was relevant ([SUB 6](#), p. 2).
- f. 50% of respondents to the Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel Big Disability Survey 2022 were not in employment ([SUB 23](#), Headline Findings). Further, the measures the State Party claims it has adopted to support disabled people 'start, stay and succeed in employment' (SPR, para. 51) are not adequate for people with severe learning disabilities according to evidence submitted ([SUB 34](#), p. 2). In 2017 only 5.8% of people with a learning disability in England were in paid employment (this statistic does not disaggregate between mild, moderate and severe or profound learning disabilities meaning that greater inequality may be masked by this generalised figure) ([SUB 34](#), p. 2).
- g. Associated factors can negatively impact on enjoyment of the right to work. For instance, in relation to personal safety, research found that 16% of young women had been unable to apply for a job, turned down a job or left a job because the journey to and from work was not safe. This increased to 24% for young women who are disabled or have a long-term health condition ([SUB 16](#)).
10. Insufficient progress has been made on taking all appropriate measures to fully guarantee labour rights of workers in law and practice in respect of just and favourable conditions of work. Low pay and insufficient number of hours are highlighted as key drivers of in-work poverty ([SUB 22](#), p. 9). Issues relating to decent work and safe working conditions include:
- a. Although the State Party states that individuals on zero hours contracts (ZHC) represent just 3% of the workforce (SPR, para. 60), precarious employment arrangements persist, including the use of ZHC, the extent of their use varying by sector. For instance recent figures show that 26.4% of people working in the accommodation and food industry and 20.2% of people working in health and social care do so under a ZHC ([ONS](#)), highlighting again the relevance of examining disaggregated data so that a more accurate picture of inequalities can be understood. The use of ZHC and an absence of fixed or guaranteed hours can mean that it is not possible for workers to prove regular income which impacts the ability to secure rental agreements and mobile phone contracts for instance ([SUB 40](#), p.2). Further inequalities are highlighted with, for example, Black workers disproportionately more likely to work under ZHC than any other ethnic group ([SUB 38](#), p. 7).
- b. A prevalence of low-paying work ([SUB 22](#), p. 1) with long hours and multiple jobs are said to be commonplace ([SUB 40](#), p. 2). The [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) note that 1 in 5 low paid workers report that they want to work more hours than they can find which is three times the rate of higher-paid workers (also [SUB 22](#), p. 10).
- c. A lack of compliance with health and safety protections. For example, minimum break times not being provided ([SUB 40](#), p. 1) and, during the pandemic, claims that Covid-19 policies and procedures were not being adhered to, placing workers' health and finances at risk ([SUB 26](#), p.2 & [SUB 40](#), p. 1). This is compounded by concerns outlined at paragraph 11.a.iv below regarding under-funding of the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).
- d. There is increasingly widespread use of 'fire and rehire' practices where employers require workers to reapply for their jobs on worse terms and conditions ([SUB 5](#), p. 6) or 'fire and replace' practices in which workers are dismissed and replaced by workers on lower terms and conditions, the most high-profile example being a case involving P&O Ferries ([SUB 20.b](#), p. 2-8). Young workers were disproportionately impacted by fire and rehire during the pandemic and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers are almost twice as likely to be affected. Statutory guidance on the practice, promised by the UK Government, remains outstanding ([SUB 5](#), p. 6).



11. Low wages are prevalent and do not ensure a decent standard of living resulting in in-work poverty:

- a. Issues relating to the minimum wage include:
  - i. The hourly rate is not high enough to achieve a minimum acceptable standard of living (SUB 22, p. 6). Despite its name, the National Living Wage (NLW) is not a real living wage as it does not reflect the real cost of living (SUB 22, p. 6 and SUB 40, p. 2). The NLW is the legal minimum for over 23s, the National Minimum Wage (NMW) is paid to under 23s. The 2022 increase to the NLW of 6.6% and to the NMW of 10% represent wage losses in real terms given that inflation in September 2022 was 10.1% and food inflation 14.8% (Office of National Statistics (ONS)). The policy of applying a lower minimum wage to younger workers is considered unfair because their living costs – for instance rent, utilities and food costs – are not discounted due to their age (SUB 40, p. 2).
  - ii. A lack of minimum wage compliance and difficulties enforcing the minimum wage for workers (SUB 5, p. 1-5 and SUB 40, p. 1).
  - iii. Workers are not always paid for all the hours they work, for instance, workers in the social care sector not being paid for their travel time persists as an issue. The measure adopted by the State Party to provide workers with payslips is not sufficient to provide the necessary information required to understand if their pay has been calculated correctly and as such represents a barrier for workers to enforce their rights when they have been underpaid. The lack of adequate pay transparency also places a barrier for enforcement bodies, with the statutory enforcement body HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) stating that a lack of clarity and inadequate minimum wage record keeping prevents action on their part (SUB 5, p. 1-5).
  - iv. Workers are reported to be afraid to raise issues about their working conditions and rights. Funding cuts to bodies such as the HSE and HMRC who are responsible for enforcing minimum

standard labour rights relating to health and safety and the minimum wage undermine rights protection in practice (SUB 40, p. 1).

- b. Wage inequality persists, in particular in relation to gender and ethnicity pay gaps and for LGBTQ and disabled workers. The gender pay gap among all employees for 2022 is 14.9% (ONS). Despite a 17% wage gap between Black male graduates and White male graduates there is no mandatory publishing of ethnicity pay data (SUB 38, p. 7). The State Party response to a consultation in January 2019 on ethnicity pay gap reporting remains outstanding (SUB 38, p. 10). The LGBTQ pay gap is around 16% which equates to LGBTQ workers earning on average £6,700 a year less than non-LGBTQ workers (YouGov, 2019). Disabled workers earn £2.05 less per hour than non-disabled workers and the gap is widening. This pay gap of 17.2% in 2021/22 equates to disabled workers earning on average £3,731 per year less than non-disabled workers (TUC).
12. Discrimination at work and the vulnerability of some workers to rights violations persists, including, specifically:
- a. In relation to migrant workers, including domestic migrant workers, the State Party has been urged to ensure that all such workers enjoy the same conditions and protections as other workers, are protected from all forms of exploitation and abuse, to improve complaints and inspection mechanisms as well as legal assistance (Concluding Observations, UK 6th Periodic Review, para. 35). While the State Party's comments (SPR, para. 68 and 69) that the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service is available for advice and that the UK Government is committed to creating a single enforcement body to better protect 'vulnerable workers' are welcome, it ought to be observed that neither advice nor a 'commitment' secure enforced rights in practice.
  - b. The misuse of repayment clauses by employers in respect of migrant workers who are required to repay the costs of training and education if they leave their role: this can leave workers facing threats and exploitation in the absence of

- enforceable rights relating to international recruitment ([SUB 5](#), p. 6).
- c. A lack of representation of Black people in senior roles ([SUB 38](#), p. 7).
  - d. High levels of reported transphobia from colleagues, with 80% of non-binary respondents to the Trans Lives Survey reporting transphobia at work and 73% of Trans men and 73% of Trans women experiencing transphobia. This increased to 88% for BPOC ([SUB 6](#), p. 2).
13. The State Party's claim (SPR, para. 75) that the treatment of trade unions is compliant with international conventions and that trade union rights are sufficiently protected to ensure that workers enjoy trade union rights without undue restrictions or interference is not correct:
- a. The Committee's attention is drawn to the numerous concerns raised by the ILO Committee of Experts regarding violations by the UK, including outstanding violations of ILO Convention 87 dating back to 1989 ([SUB 20a](#), p. 3-5). The State Party has reaffirmed its commitment to comply with ILO Conventions ratified by the UK under the terms of EU-UK Trade and Co-operation Agreement (article 399(2) and (5)) without addressing outstanding violations ([SUB 20a](#), p. 3). The UK has also been found to be in breach of 10 out of 13 obligations relating to labour rights in the European Social Charter as examined by the European Committee of Social Rights when last assessed in 2019 ([SUB 20a](#), p. 6-7). Given the apparent non-compliance by the State Party with a number of international law obligations, questions arise as to how the UK can be compliant with ICESCR obligations in the circumstances.
  - b. The State Party's claim (SPR, para. 75) that all workers have the right to join a trade union and be represented by that union in collective bargaining with employers is also challenged on the basis that there is no legal right to be represented by a trade union in collective bargaining except by way of a flawed statutory recognition procedure ([SUB 20a](#), p. 7-11).
  - c. The Committee recommended in their Concluding Observations of the 6th Review of the State Party (para. 39) that a thorough review should take place of the Trade Union Act 2016. Experts in the area are not aware of any review taking place ([SUB 20a](#), p. 11). Furthermore, new legal restrictions on trade unions have been adopted since the 6th Review:
    - i. Legislation has been introduced to remove the ban on the use of agency workers to replace striking workers in breach of international legal obligations. This is subject to legal challenges by UK trade unions and a complaint to the ILO Committee of Experts by the Trades Union Congress ([SUB 5](#), p. 8 and [SUB 20a](#), p. 13).
    - ii. A quadrupling of the liability of trade unions for unlawful industrial action which was introduced without consultation and little UK Parliamentary scrutiny ([SUB 20a](#), p. 14).
    - iii. There are also proposed restrictions on the right to strike relating to minimum service requirements ([SUB 20a](#), p. 16). In October 2022 the UK Government introduced the [Transport Strikes \(Minimum Service Levels\) Bill](#) which has been [described](#) by the General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress as undermining the right to strike and as being incompatible with the UK's international obligations.
  - d. There is inadequate protection against discipline and unfair treatment short of dismissal for striking workers, interfering with their right to strike ([SUB 20a](#), p. 15 and [SUB 5](#), p. 7).
  - e. The approach of the Welsh Government to trade unions is said to be different to that of the UK Government, in particular partnership working is identified as an example of a positive response adopted in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic ([UNISON](#), p. 5). Attempts by the Welsh Government to recognise the importance of worker and trade union voices in policy making by disapplying parts of the UK Trade Union Act 2016 through the Wales Trade Union Act 2017 is highlighted as being at risk of being undermined by UK Government approaches such as those identified above relating to the use of agency workers to replace striking workers ([UNISON](#), p. 9).

14. In respect of Business & Human Rights the Committee has previously recommended that the State Party establish a clear regulatory framework for companies to ensure that their activities do not negatively affect ESC rights enjoyment and adopt legislative and administrative measures to ensure legal liability for violations rights (Concluding Observations, UK 6th Periodic Review, para. 12 (a) and (b)). Despite the State Party assertion (SPR, para. 9) that the UK was first UN member state to develop a National Action Plan to implement UN Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights, updated in 2016, they are not mandatory. Nor did they prove sufficient to address issues which arose in the high-profile P&O Ferries case, which raises questions regarding a lack of remedy and accountability in place (SUB 20.b, p. 2-8). A legal requirement that directors must consider the interests of their employees and the impact on the community of the company's operations did not prevent P&O Ferries flouting the law (as they publicly accepted doing before the [House of Commons Transport Committee & Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee](#)) in summarily dismissing 786 employees, breaking collective agreements and statutory duties to inform and consult workers' representatives (SUB 20.b, p. 3 and 8).

### Proposed Questions:

- a. Please explain how the State Party is addressing the issue of 'fire and rehire' or 'fire and replace', including any steps taken to: (a) monitor the practice, (b) prevent the practice, (c) with specific reference to the 'P&O Case', to prevent a similar recurrence?
- b. Please update the Committee on progress in creating a single enforcement body to better protect 'vulnerable workers.' Specifically, detail the steps taken to bring this into force and prioritise the accessible protection of so-called 'vulnerable' workers' rights.
- c. Is the State Party aware of the issue of the misuse of repayment clauses by employers in respect of migrant workers and if so, what steps have been or are being taken to address the issue and ensure that these workers ESC rights are protected?
- d. What steps are being taken by the State Party to promote equality of opportunity and to ensure freedom from discrimination for all minoritised groups and representation at senior level and in self-employment?
- e. Please set out what steps have been taken to:
  - i. Promote and secure a real living wage for all workers across the State Party, including efforts to protect collective bargaining rights of workers in line with international obligations.
  - ii. Enforce existing minimum wage protection in practice, including removing the barriers to enforcement outlined above.
- f. Please explain the apparent inconsistency between the State Party claim that it is compliant with international conventions in respect of trade union rights and the findings of State Party non-compliance with ILO and European Social Charter standards.
- g. What measures are being taken to ensure companies should be required to undertake human rights due diligence across their operations and value chains to prevent violations of ESC rights?

## Social security (art. 9)

15. Social security provision is not adequate: both in terms of the underlying level not being enough to meet essential needs (SUB 4, p. 1 and SUB 26, p. 2) and the failure to uprate provision to keep parity with inflation and rises in cost-of-living (SUB 2, p.3 and SUB 22, p. 8). The current system fails to meet people's needs and is driving rising poverty (SUB 22, p. 7). Evidence suggests

that poverty is disproportionately impacting disabled people, women and children, and older people (see for instance, SUBS 1, 2, 14, 22, 23, 26, 28, 32, 40 and 42). Furthermore, poverty rates from Bangladeshi (53%), Pakistani (48%) and Black (40%) minoritised groups are significantly higher when compared to White people (19%) (SUB 2, p. 2) giving rise to further questions



about potential discriminatory impacts of social security policy and provision. Evidence also suggests that this may be further exacerbated by intersectional characteristics, for instance, 40% of disabled ethnic minority adults are in poverty compared with 23% of disabled White British adults (SUB 38, p. 3). Older people from Black and Asian communities are around twice as likely to be living in poverty as white pensioners (SUB 42, p. 3).

16. It is noted that there were some limited positive changes during the Covid-19 pandemic such as a £20 uplift per week to Universal Credit payments, but this has not been continued (SUB 29, p. 3). A decrease in child poverty due to this support during the pandemic, which illustrates that social security is effective in tackling child poverty, is expected to reverse with the cuts to provision and the cost-of-living crisis impacts (SUB 32, p. 1). In addition, approximately 2,000,000 mostly disabled claimants on the previous legacy benefits scheme did not receive this money. This was upheld by the courts as justified discrimination. It could not be challenged as a breach of ICESCR given the failure to incorporate the Covenant into domestic law (*R (T) v. Secretary of State for Work and Pensions* [2022] EWHC 351 (note that this decision is under appeal)).
17. Concerns about the level of social security support are further compounded by the application of a [benefit cap](#) that has been frozen since 2016, despite rising living costs and rents (SUB 29, p. 3). By way of example, rents have risen on average 12% but housing benefits have remained at a level set according to 2018-19 data. One in four renters at the start of 2022 was dependent on housing benefit, with only one in eight private properties listed in the last year affordable within housing benefit levels (SUB 29, p. 3). The lack of affordable housing leaves people risking debt and being left in situations where they do not have enough to meet essential needs in terms of basic food, hygiene, fuel and energy, and transport costs. It is leading to significant levels of poverty and in some cases destitution with people reliant on charity to survive. Two successive UN Special Rapporteurs on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights have highlighted the inadequacy of charity as a substitute for the [UK]Government fulfilling its rights obligations (SUB 7b, p. 2).
18. The UK Government views work as the route out of poverty (SPR, para. 105). This policy approach fails to take into account issues identified at paragraphs 10 and 11 above relating to low wages, precarious work arrangements and insufficient hours for workers as well as some groups of workers being either unable or not permitted to work (SUB 4, p. 2). Further, evidence indicates that in-work poverty has increased, rising from 13% of in-work households being in poverty in 1996-97 to 17% in 2019-20 (SUB 22, p. 9). Additionally, the majority of children in poverty in the North East of England are from working households and the number of children in in-work poverty has risen by 91% since 2014/15. Two in five of children in 'key worker' (essential worker) families in the North East of England are living in poverty, an increase of 34% in two years (SUB 14, p. 2). Furthermore, a lack of growth in earnings has meant there has been no mitigation of cuts to in-work social security benefits undertaken by the State Party over the last ten years (SUB 14, p. 2).
19. Issues are identified relating to the operation of the social security system failing to adequately uphold the right to social security, specifically:
- a. There is insufficient capacity to minimise administrative delays which creates cycles of debt and hardship (SUB 4, p. 1).
  - b. The five-week delay for the first Universal Credit payment is highlighted as a particular issue which pushes people into debt (SUB 26, p. 3).
  - c. There is need for access to adequate advice and an adequate emergency response scheme as existing arrangements for one-off payments to help with essential living costs serve as no more than a sticking plaster (SUB 4, p. 2).
  - d. Disability benefits appear to be effectively subsidising basic benefits (which are insufficient) to meet subsistence costs rather than meeting the additional costs of living with an impairment (SUB 4, p. 1).
  - e. Benefit claimants find the experience of interacting with the social security system to be stigmatising and undignified. Claimants report feeling degraded, dehumanised and that the process of applying for benefits is 'grim' (SUB 22, p. 7 and SUB 26, p. 3).

- f. Despite the State Party's view (SPR, para. 84 and 85) that sanctions are used where a claimant has not met one or more of the requirements of their claim and that those requirements have been agreed and are realistic and achievable, the use of sanctions continues to be a cause for concern. Sanctions are considered to be cruel (SUB 40, p. 3) and intensify experiences of poverty (SUB 22, p. 7). This raises questions about the ability of people to realise their ESC rights and live their lives with dignity.
- g. Work Coaches having insufficient training and being overstretched is identified as leading to 'vulnerable claimants' in particular being under-supported. Further, the target driven nature of the service is viewed as leading to unrealistic and inappropriate demands being put on claimants which they cannot achieve, risking sanctions (SUB 22, p.4).
20. People are excluded and/or experience discriminatory impacts in accessing support:
- a. [No recourse to public funds](#) (NRPF) is an immigration condition imposed on a person who is 'subject to immigration control', as defined at section 115 of the [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#). It means they cannot access the social security system, must pay in order to access public healthcare, and have no safety-net should problems such as unemployment or long-term ill-health arise. This can lead to destitution and exploitation. Immigration status can be lost through errors on applications or an inability to pay renewal fees, leading to people becoming undocumented. The discriminatory impact of the policy is highlighted - 85% of applicants to have the NRPF condition removed due to destitution were women, mostly single mothers and 90% of people affected by the NRPF condition are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities (SUB 18a, p. 5).
- b. Undocumented people are also effectively prevented from accessing public funds. These may include children born in the UK but to parents who are undocumented. In addition to being prevented from accessing social security, undocumented people are prevented from working which can lead to destitution and high risk of exploitation (SUB 18a, p. 2).
- c. People seeking asylum are not required to pay for their healthcare unless [subject to the NRPF condition](#). They are not however entitled to claim full social security support. The income support they do receive is inadequate. Support was originally set at 70% of Income Support on the basis that accommodation and utilities would be paid separately. In 2015 a flat rate was introduced and since then only very small increases have been made which have not been index linked. The current rate is 53% of Universal Credit for over 25s. This equates to £5.84 per day for all essentials (not including housing or utilities). This leaves people receiving 27% less in real terms than in 2000 (SUB 41, p. 1).
- d. Although intended as temporary provision, evidence suggests that over 70% of people are waiting over 6 months for their asylum claims to be dealt with and thus in receipt of this inadequate level of income support which is compounded by significant restrictions on the right to work (SUB 41, p. 2).
- e. The sufficiency of support for older people is also a concern. Issues such as people missing out on support such as Pension Credit entitlement, Warm Home Discount and not being entitled to a Council Tax rebate are causing hardship. Pensions have not kept up with inflation (SUB 42, p. 4).
- f. Disabled people report that dealing with the social security system is very difficult, with 13% reporting it to be 'impossible'. The inaccessibility and sense of unfairness of the system and lack of appropriate advice for disabled people negatively impacts on mental and physical health and realisation of rights (SUB 23, Headline Findings).
- g. Low paid workers, particularly those in precarious work arrangements, face hardship when unwell. Statutory Sick Pay is only payable from day four of illness (meaning the first three days are unpaid), is not 100% of pay and is the lowest in Europe (SUB 40, p. 3).
- h. Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance are set at levels which are too low to achieve an adequate standard of living (SUB 12, p. 1).

- i. The default policy of paying Universal Credit as a single payment to the whole household is highlighted as problematic, with specific impact on women in cases of domestic abuse (SUB 56 and SUB 64, Quotes 4 and 8 Annex 3).
- c. What evidence is there that the sanctions regime is effective in terms of decreasing unemployment?
- d. Please explain what measures are in place to ensure accessibility to the social security system for claimants, including specifically disabled and older people and those at risk of digital exclusion. How is accessibility monitored and reviewed, and how often?
- e. Does the State Party monitor the impact of in work poverty on children? If so, please provide information setting out how the impact is monitored and what is done in response to the information obtained through that process.

### Proposed Questions:

- a. Why do some groups experience exclusion or discriminatory impacts in accessing social security support?
- b. Why does the sanctions regime continue to be used despite the evidence it increases poverty?

## Family life (art.10)

- 21. The widest possible protection and assistance is not being accorded to the family by the State Party. Specific issues include:
  - a. The absence of a formal standalone procedure for determining nationality or statelessness and barriers to accessing nationality such as high fees and limited access to legal aid means that some children born in the UK are at increased risk of statelessness. There are concerns that the [Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#) restricts existing safeguards aimed at preventing statelessness and risks leaving children in limbo, restricting their access to register as British citizens. In the absence of nationality, the ability to access and realise ESC rights is significantly negatively impacted ([SUB 25](#), p. 2-3).
  - b. Families subject to the NRPF condition and experiencing destitution have few sources of support. The support which does exist is not sufficiently funded to meet their needs and is difficult to access - 60% of families applying were wrongly refused support ([SUB 18a](#), p.13). The destitution experienced by some families can lead to social service intervention, including threats to take children into local authority care even when no safeguarding concerns are present other than destitution ([SUB 18a](#), p.13).
  - c. Levels of child poverty. One in four children are growing up in poverty in the UK ([SUB 32](#), p. 1). In Wales this figure is 34% of children (Children in Wales). Support for families is not linked to household size meaning large families have proportionately less support. This is reflected in evidence that poverty for families with three or more children has risen in recent years ([SUB 32](#), p. 1). There are also notable geographical differences in poverty rates. For example, the North East of England has the highest proportion of children living in families in receipt of Universal Credit or equivalent benefits - 52% of families compared to a national average of 41%. In terms of application of the benefits cap in the region, 99% of North East of England households subject to the cap are families with children ([SUB 14](#), p. 2).
  - d. The two-child limit on Universal Credit introduced in 2017 and the benefit cap frozen since 2016 break the link between social security entitlement and need ([SUB 32](#), p. 1).
  - e. The benefit cap restricts the amount of social security payments a family with no or low earnings can receive. Children whose parents are unable to work are disproportionately affected ([SUB 32](#), p. 2). This is compounded by the lack of

affordable childcare which poses a barrier to mothers working, in particular (SUB 26, p. 3). The freeze on the benefit cap also means that even where there are increases in social security support in times of crises, these are not received by families subject to the cap.

- f. The impact of the two-child limit and the benefit cap is also to reduce support for larger families which falls most heavily on children from some minority ethnic groups and exacerbates existing inequalities by ethnicity (SUB 32, p. 1).
- g. A lack of affordable childcare, particularly for those subject to NRPF, people who are undocumented, and those in receipt of Universal Credit, where a condition of upfront payment of childcare is applied before support can be received in arrears (SUB 14, p. 3). Families where one or both parents are out of work or on very low incomes are excluded from the State Party 'flagship' policies for free early years education (SUB 14, p. 3).
- h. Issues around affordable childcare are underpinned by evidence that funding rates paid to local authorities to fund the early years 'free childcare' provision by the State Party fall short of what the UK Government itself estimates is required (SUB 12, p. 1). It is estimated that childcare costs for under two-year olds absorb nearly half of women's average earnings which has a disproportionate impact on women's financial security (SUB 2, p. 1).
- i. Interference with right to family life by placement of people with severe learning disability in inpatient settings which can be far away from family and community support. This impacts both individual and their family as family members must travel long distances which can interrupt the maintenance of their relationship and care giving (SUB 34, p. 4).
- j. Concerns are raised in written evidence about the protection of Trans people following amendments made to then proposed legislation on Ministerial maternity leave (now enacted) which made the provision less inclusive. Further issues are identified in relation to the family rights of

Trans individuals due to legal provisions which require applicants for a gender recognition certificate who are married or in civil partnership to obtain the explicit consent of their partner (SUB 6, p. 2).

- k. There is divergence between England and Wales in relation to the protection of children and young people's interests. In Wales, devolved legislation requires Welsh Ministers to have due regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including ESC rights that it contains, when exercising any of their functions. Welsh Ministers have introduced a Children's Rights Impact Assessment as part of an Integrated Impact Assessment to meet the due regard duty ([Rights of Children and Young Persons \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#)). The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) creates duties on Welsh Ministers and public authorities in relation to social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being (SUB 32, p. 2).

### Proposed Questions:

- a. Please set out details of what assessment has been conducted on the impact of the policy of NRPF on children, including a breakdown of the numbers of children in the UK impacted by this condition?
- b. What steps are being taken to address the levels of child poverty in England and Wales including specific support for groups at particular risk of poverty, for instance, children in large families who have proportionately less support?
- c. How does the State Party ensure the ESC rights, particularly in relation to protection of the family, for learning disabled people who are placed in inpatient settings?
- d. Please explain what steps will be taken to ensure affordable, funded childcare options exist so that women are not disproportionately disadvantaged in access to work and their financial security is not negatively impacted.



## Adequate standard of living (art. 11)

22. The right to an adequate standard of living is not satisfied in the UK. Further, rather than *continuous improvement* (art.11.1), a decline in living conditions is being experienced. It is estimated that one in five or 14.5 million people are in poverty (SUB 22, p. 8). Repeated concerns are raised in the submitted evidence about significant hardship, poverty, and destitution being experienced in the UK relating in particular to adequate housing, food, and clothing as well as fuel poverty and digital exclusion. The State Party has not adopted all necessary measures to address the housing deficit, nor has it taken specific measures to address issues of affordability and effective regulation in the Private Rental Sector (PRS). England were deemed non-decent in 2020, an increase of 3.6% since 2010 (SUB 14, p. 3).
23. The incorporation of the right to adequate housing into domestic law would be an important step which can be taken by the UK and Welsh Governments. Campaigning groups have highlighted how introducing a right to adequate housing into domestic law in Wales would generate significant savings worth £11.5bn against overall costs of £5bn over a 30-year period. It is projected that those benefits could start to outweigh costs after just six years from improved well-being, local council budgets, health savings for the NHS, the criminal justice system, and in generated additional economic activity (SUB 45 and Tai Pawb).
24. The Committee is invited to note that the use of the private rental sector (PRS) to meet public housing needs and address homelessness is inadequate in terms of securing the right to adequate housing and leads to increasing numbers of individuals unable to secure adequate housing and improve their living conditions. The number of households accommodated in England in the PRS in the last 30 years has increased due to the lack of genuinely affordable housing and a diminished stock of social housing (SUB 35, p. 2). In particular:
- a. There is a lack of adequate controls on landlords meaning that there is a lack of repairs to properties (SUB 40, p. 2). For example, evidence suggests that 28.2% of properties in the PRS in the North East of England were deemed non-decent in 2020, an increase of 3.6% since 2010 (SUB 14, p. 3).
  - b. The lack of adequate controls also leads to unfair and unrestrained use of evictions. There are calls for no-fault evictions to be banned as their increased use is forcing people into homelessness. Despite pledging to end no fault evictions there is no formal timeline (SUB 29, p. 4).
  - c. There is a need for a system which seeks to rapidly rehouse people who are homeless and prevent homelessness in the first place (SUB 29, p.2).
25. There is a lack of adequate affordable housing and inadequate support to meet unregulated rental costs in the PRS. The operation of housing benefit freezes and caps contributes to problems identified, specifically:
- a. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is the rate used to calculate how much support low-income private renters are entitled to as part of their benefits. LHA severely compromises the extent to which the PRS can meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness because LHA has been frozen for a number of years and has not risen in line with PRS rents or inflation. There is a significant disconnect between LHA levels and affordable PRS accommodation that can meet the actual housing needs of those requiring accommodation. For people who are destitute or of low-income, the consequences of this disconnect can be significant as unaffordable accommodation raises the risk of further poverty (SUB 35, p. 2).
  - b. Other consequences include overcrowding and accommodation in a poor state of repair (SUB 40, p. 2) which impacts other rights such as health and education.
26. Families experiencing homelessness are left in temporary accommodation for long periods of time and this can be further aggravated by the impact of NRPF policy:
- a. The shortage of genuinely affordable housing or social housing leaves people in temporary accommodation for long



periods of time. This accommodation comes in a variety of forms, such as houses, flats, hotels, hostels, converted offices, warehouses, or shipping containers, and is often in poor condition, with habitability concerns. Evidence indicates that according to the State Party's own statistics, the most common length of time for households with children to be in temporary accommodation was two to five years and over a fifth of households with children in temporary accommodation remained there for over 5 years (SUB 29, p.5).

- b. There is a lack of adequate standards for temporary accommodation to define habitability so that people are able to live with dignity and in safety (SUB 33, p. 5).
  - c. Individuals subject to NRPF are excluded from statutory homelessness assistance and local authority social housing allocation. This leaves families destitute and at high risk of exploitation, for instance, 24% of families surveyed by Project 17 were left street homeless by a local authority (SUB 11, p. 3).
  - d. NRPF policy also results in families living in poor housing conditions, without enough space or privacy often far from schools, friends and support networks (SUB 11, p. 3).
  - e. Temporary accommodation placements are increasing in Wales, with a reported rise of 24% between 2016 and 2020 (SUB 29, p.5). There are less reported difficulties in Wales in relation to securing social tenancies for homeless households, difficulties which exist are linked to the availability of housing supply rather than provider reluctance to assist which is not always the case in England (SUB 29, p.6). It is noted that in response to the lack of social housing, the Welsh Government has made increasing supply of social housing a greater priority and has set an annual target of 3,500 affordable homes for each of 5 years from 2019/20 (SUB 29, p.4).
27. Access to the right to adequate housing is further compounded by additional inequality factors including:
- a. Gentrification disproportionately impacts racially minoritised individuals and families (SUB 37, p. 1) and those experiencing economic disadvantage (SUB 13, p. 1). Overcrowding is an issue which disproportionately affects racially minoritised people who are four time more likely to experience overcrowding with knock on effects for health. Racially minoritised people face barriers regarding security of housing including experiences of eviction (actual, threatened, or feared) (SUB 37, p. 2-3).
  - b. People with severe learning disabilities experience difficulties accessing information and support regarding suitable housing and there is a shortage of such housing to meet their needs. This impacts on people's independence and delays discharge from inpatient units (SUB 34, p. 5-6).
  - c. A right to rent policy which requires proof of documented immigration status permitting residence in the UK means that those with insecure immigration status face barriers to accessing housing and some ethnic minorities, including those with settled status experience discrimination from landlords seeking to avoid fines (SUB 18.a, p. 10).
  - d. Young people in the social care system receive inadequate support and there is a failure to take into account the additional risks of rights violations that they encounter. Young people aged 16 and 17 years who are homeless are not accommodated by default under the more supportive provisions of s20 of the [Children's Act 1989](#) and instead, are increasingly accommodated under the [Housing Act 1996](#) or s17 of the Children's Act 1989 which is a lower-cost alternative for local authorities. This leaves them at risk of further homelessness once they turn 18. Care leavers who leave accommodation where they feel unsafe, it is unsuitable, are in arrears or evicted, or become homeless as a result of being in prison are deemed intentionally homeless (and thus not owed a duty by the local authority) despite guidance that this should be avoided (SUB 19, p. 1-3).
  - e. LGBT+ people are experiencing a homelessness crisis -24% of young people experiencing homelessness identify as LGBT+ (AKT).

28. Evidence indicates that the accessibility of culturally appropriate housing for Gypsy and Traveller people persists as an inadequately addressed issue. In particular:

- a. The figure provided by the State Party (SPR, para. 118) regarding increased provision of accommodation fails to provide information on permanent socially-rented pitch provision. This fell by 11.1% between January 2010 and January 2020 leading to an overall reduction in provision of 8.4%. Although there was an increase in transit pitches of 40%, this in real terms translates to an increase of 101 transit pitches over 10 years. In the same period there was a decrease of 516 permanent pitches. The January 2022 Caravan Count recorded 2,893 caravans with no place to stop, and therefore defining these households as statutorily homeless (SUB 24, p. 3-4).
- b. Similar concerns regarding the selective nature of data use and gathering relates to the planning definition of Gypsies and Travellers in 2015. People who ceased to travel for any reason (including being disabled, having an illness, or, caring responsibilities, old age) are no longer counted as needing a Traveller pitch in the assessment of accommodation need. This revised definition reduced the requirement for 1,584 further pitches to 345 leaving people without access to appropriate accommodation (SUB 24, p. 4-5). This definition was recently held to be unlawful by the Court of Appeal on the basis it is discriminatory and could not be justified (Friends, Families & Travellers & Smith v Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities & Ors [2022] EWCA Civ 1391).
- c. A direct threat to the nomadic way of life and the cultural practices of Gypsy and Traveller people is posed by legislation which criminalises Gypsy and Traveller families with no place to stop (SUB 24, p. 5).
- d. In Wales the issue of adequate and appropriate provision is also of concern and specifically for 146 caravans (there maybe seven or eight people living in a caravan) living on patches of land across Wales that are not official sites and with little or no access to mains electricity, sanitation, washing facilities, refuse and recycling

or running drinking water. Sites are often located on the periphery with little to no access to public services and amenities. This is despite a Gypsy [and] Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment survey carried out by local authorities in 2021 revealing a need for 160 pitches in Wales (SUB 21, p. 1-2).

- e. Provision which does exist for Gypsies and Travellers in Wales is overcrowded, in unpleasant locations and has often been designed without the involvement of the Gypsy and Traveller communities and so is not culturally appropriate. Nor does it take into account the diversity of culture and needs within Gypsy and Traveller communities (SUB 21, p. 3).
  - f. The lack of transit pitches or negotiated stopping places provided by local authorities in Wales negatively impacts on people's rights as the ability to travel, particularly seasonally, is an important expression of culture and heritage which cannot be realised. (SUB 21, p. 2).
  - g. A lack of suitable provision can lead to people living in bricks and mortar accommodation despite a desire not to. Evidence received highlights that this can be a source of isolation, social anxiety and a disconnection from community and heritage with people also experiencing identity based discrimination (SUB 21, p. 3-4).
29. There has been a lack of adequate measures to address the right to adequate food with increasing levels of food insecurity and a reliance on food banks (SUB 4, p. 1). The picture painted by the State Party report (para. 128) contrasts starkly with the experiences reported in evidence of a sharp increase in food insecurity, food bank use, and other food donation initiatives (SUB 1, p. 31-32 and SUB 8, p.1). According to the Trussell Trust, 2.1 million emergency food parcels were provided to people in crisis by food banks in the Trussell Trust network alone in the financial year 2021/22. This represented an increase of 14% from 2019 (SUB 8, p.1). Food banks are not a substitute for legally protected rights. The measures adopted by the State Party are not adequate for addressing the scale of the problem which is set to worsen in the current

cost-of-living crisis. It is noted that the Scottish Government has set out proposals in its Human Rights Bill to incorporate the ICESCR right to adequate food into Scots Law which will be directly justiciable in the Scottish courts (SPR, para. 131). A legally protected right to food should be extended across the State Party.

30. The impact of food insecurity and food poverty is being experienced by a wide range of groups of people:

- a. The ability of older people to cover essential day-to-day costs, including food, is impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. It is estimated that two million older households will not have enough income to cover essential spending in 2022/23 (SUB 42, p.3).
- b. People seeking asylum are unable to afford food (amongst other essential items such as shoes, clothes, medicines, cleaning products, public transport fares) due to the poverty they experience as result of inadequate support (SUB 41, p. 2)
- c. Those subject to NRPf restrictions and undocumented migrants face high levels of food poverty and destitution which can lead to children living on less than £2 a day. Concerns are expressed that this is linked to the absence of assistance provided to families as a whole and assistance which is not based on their actual needs (SUB 18.a, p. 15).
- d. The Greater Manchester Big Disability Survey 2022 (GMBD Survey 2022) found a quarter of respondents have had to use a food bank, 68% have changed the food they eat to save money and 54% reported they were eating less (SUB 23, Headline Findings). Research has estimated that more than 600,000 disabled people have less than £10 or less per week to pay for food and other costs (SUB 28, p.2).
- e. In-work poverty leaves workers on low pay struggling to pay their bills and with little left over for essentials, including food. Work on the right to food by a trade union representing food workers notes that food workers are struggling to earn enough to purchase the food they produce and observes that there are more foodbanks in the UK than outlets of a major fast-food chain (SUB 40, p. 2-3).

f. The ability of people to access food which is appropriate for their dietary, cultural, and religious requirements is a matter of dignity and respect for their rights. The cost-of-living crisis has seen rises in the price of food including religiously, culturally and dietary (due to health restrictions for those with allergies at risk of anaphylaxis or celiac disease and accommodations required for some disabled children) appropriate items (SUB 8, p. 3 and SUB 28, p. 1). In some cases, by more than the inflation of other types of food (SUB 8, p.3).

g. State Party policy does not take into account the relationship between means-tested benefits and food insecurity or continuing inadequacies in the social security system which pre-date the recent crises. In 2019/20 25% of those in receipt of means-tested benefits reported food insecurity compared to 8% of the general population (SUB 4, p. 2).

31. The right to adequate clothing is an area which has received insufficient attention according to those working in the field despite widespread barriers to accessing clothing in the UK (SUB 7a and SUB 7b). Barriers identified relate to insufficient income relating to both wages and inadequate social security assistance which mean that basic needs, including the right to food, clothing, and shelter cannot be met (SUB 7b, p. 1-2). Additionally, certain groups are disproportionately impacted by the barriers to accessing adequate clothing, for example, those in receipt of Universal Credit, people seeking asylum, older people, those fleeing domestic violence (predominantly women) and adult males. The rise in the number of children requiring clothing from the organisation Sharewear has risen from 22% historically each year since 2014 to 40% since January 2022. Rising clothing costs and the current cost-of-living crisis raise concerns that this situation will only worsen (SUB 7b, p. 2-4).

a. Poverty and the cost-of-living crisis are having impacts in relation to the ability of people to afford to heat their homes during the winter. For instance, the Greater Manchester Poverty Monitor 2022 found that 15% of all households in Greater Manchester were experiencing fuel poverty. This compares with an England average

- of 13.4% (SUB 22, p. 9). This leaves people choosing between 'eating or heating' in the context of rising fuel bills (SUB 2, p.1). The percentage of income spent on essentials such as energy and fuel is increasing for older people. There is also a correlation with lower income and higher percentage expenditure meaning less well-off older people are disproportionately impacted (SUB 42, p. 3-4).
- b. Cost of living increases have a significant impact on families and disabled people because of additional living costs they may incur in relation to equipment, heating of water, fuel and energy needs (SUB 28, p. 1). 75% of respondents to the GMBD Survey 2022 report spending more on gas and electricity because they are disabled and 70% said they were using heat and light less (SUB 23, Headline Findings). The UK Government one off payment of £150 to those who qualify as disability benefits recipients is insufficient in a context where fuel bills were anticipated to increase by 65% by October 2022 (SUB 2, p.1).
  - c. Addressing fuel poverty in different ways could be beneficial for multiple reasons, yet this is not being pursued. For example, investment in a council led home insulation scheme would be a way to both support families reduce bills and reduce carbon emissions. This would also contribute to State Party actions to address the climate emergency, an important aspect of ensuring the right to an adequate standard of living (Friends of the Earth).
32. The impact of digital exclusion places some people and groups at a disproportionate disadvantage in accessing and enjoying key rights and affects their right to an adequate standard of living. For example:
- a. People experiencing homelessness encounter digital exclusion which can place additional barriers to accessing health and dental care (SUB 29, p. 8).
  - b. 23% of respondents to the GMBD Survey 2022 reported that they were not using digital services due to a lack of money (SUB 23, Headline Findings).
  - c. Poverty and destitution experience by those seeking asylum as a result of the lack of adequate support means that they are unable to purchase mobile phone and data credit (SUB 41, p. 2).
  - d. Low paid workers in insecure work arrangements are unable to enter into mobile phone contracts (SUB 40, p. 2)
  - e. Those in receipt of welfare benefits who do not have digital skills or easy access to a reliable internet connection encounter barriers because the social security system is now administered almost exclusively online (SUB 26, p. 3).
  - f. Concerns also extend to digital exclusion in relation to access to public transport, where there has been a move from physical to digital ticketing and closures of physical ticket offices. People without bank accounts, those on low incomes, older people, disabled people, people experiencing homelessness and those experiencing digital poverty are all disproportionately affected (SUB 16, p. 1-2)

### Proposed Questions:

- a. Please explain the steps being taken to address the housing crisis including:
  - i. The steps being taken to increase the stock of social housing or genuinely affordable housing.
  - ii. Steps to address affordability including the introduction of rent controls and the uprating of LHA rates.
  - iii. Measures to address habitability concerns, particularly in temporary accommodation with the introduction of a framework of standards.
  - iv. A timeline for the ending of no-fault evictions.
  - v. The specific impacts faced by racially minoritised individuals and families in relation to housing; and
  - vi. The accessibility of culturally appropriate housing for Gypsy and Traveller people.

- b. Please explain the steps being taken to address issues with food insecurity and in particular how it impacts older people, people seeking asylum, those subject to NRPF, disabled people and children and families.
- c. What further measures are planned to assist people experiencing fuel poverty as a result of the cost-of-living crisis?
- d. What steps are being taken to address the widespread barriers to accessing adequate clothing in the UK?
- e. What steps can be taken to reduce the impact of digital exclusion on some people and groups which affects the enjoyment of key rights and affects their right to an adequate standard of living?

## Health (art. 12)

33. The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health are being undermined by the effects of fiscal austerity cuts to public health care services and the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Issues identified relating to access to healthcare include:
- a. Everyone living in the UK is entitled to register and consult with a General Practitioner (GP), free of charge, including temporary and undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and travellers. Guidance states that people do not need a fixed address or ID to register or access treatment. However, this is not what is always experienced in practice (SUBS. [24](#), [27](#), [29](#) and [41](#)). In Wales, guidance issued by the Welsh Government in 2021 states that refugees, people seeking asylum and people refused asylum living in Wales are considered ordinarily resident and should therefore be registered and provided with free primary care. However, there is a permitted discretion to treat undocumented migrants as 'overseas visitors' and thus only requiring that they are provided with emergency care. This can result in confusion and those seeking asylum and refugees at risk of being refused GP registration (which they should not be) as a result of the uncertainty created by and misapplication of the discretion ([SUB 27](#), p.1).
  - b. People without a safe and secure home experience extreme health inequalities – both poor health and significant barriers accessing healthcare ([SUB 29](#), p. 2).
  - c. Access to healthcare for Gypsy and Traveller people. Attempts to address problems registering for access to healthcare have not been effective and the problem remains widespread ([SUB 24](#), p. 6). Although initiatives have been developed in Wales such as '[Travelling to better health](#)' and '[Enabling Gypsies, Roma and Travellers](#)' these need to be implemented and health care professionals need to be both aware of the guidance and act on it in order to remove barriers to healthcare ([SUB 10](#), p. 9-10).
  - d. Trans people also experience discrimination in accessing care. 14% of Trans respondents to the Trans Lives Survey reported being refused care on at least one occasion because they were Trans ([SUB 6](#), p. 2-3).
  - e. Inequality in access to physical and mental health care was compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic and concerns exist about the length of treatment delays. Concerns about lack of privacy due to gatekeeping by receptionists and accessibility relating to digital exclusion – particularly for older people and people experiencing homelessness ([SUB 29](#), p. 8).
34. With regards quality of care:
- a. People with learning disabilities have significantly lower life expectancy, six out of ten die before the age of 65. It is claimed that almost half are avoidable deaths, but insufficient preventative health work is done, and pain and ill health are mistakenly attributed to learning disability. There is inadequate training of healthcare professionals and insufficient resources



to address health issues of people with serious learning disability. The use of Do Not Administer Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation orders (DNACPR orders) is a source of significant inequality. Concerns are raised that people who ought to be resuscitated were subject to DNACPR orders and the imposition of such orders on entire care homes on a blanket basis took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. Families were not informed. This also led to inadequate care where staff did not understand orders and thought it extended to any care or medical treatment. Evidence also raises concerns that people with serious learning disabilities are being subject to physical and mental harm and neglect which impacts on health such as unnecessary or incorrect restraint, restriction, medical intervention and sedation ([SUB 34](#), p. 6-8).

- b. Gypsy and Traveller people have a life expectancy of 10-25 years less than the general population and experience higher rates of health problems. Gypsy and Traveller people experience disproportionately higher rates of suicide yet are significantly underrepresented in local suicide prevention plans. Whole population approaches to mental health do not address the needs of Gypsy and Traveller people and as a result they do not enjoy the highest attainable standard of mental and physical health in accordance with the Covenant ([SUB 24](#), p. 6-7).
- c. Discrimination faced by those experiencing homelessness leaves them with significant unmet health needs. According to the Office of National Statistics the average age of death for men experiencing homelessness is 46 years and for women it is 42 years ([SUB 29](#), p. 8).
- d. LGBT+ people face widespread discrimination in health settings, and over 14% (1 in 7) LGBT+ people report avoiding seeking healthcare for fear of discrimination ([Stonewall](#)).
- e. Trans people experience long waiting times for access to appropriate treatment and report being denied treatment despite recommendations from the British Medical Association. 70% of respondents to the Trans Lives Survey reported being impacted

by transphobia and 57% of Trans people reported avoiding going to the doctor when unwell ([SUB 6](#), p. 2-3).

35. A component of full enjoyment of the right to health is adequate social care support. Respondents to the GMBD Survey 2022 stated that social care did not fully meet their needs for a social life or wellbeing, with 25% reporting that it did not meet their needs 'at all'. The quality and accessibility of social care is declining with 29% reporting social care was worse than two years ago, 11% reporting that social care they wanted having been refused and the majority of people employing Personal Assistants finding it harder to recruit and retain good quality staff ([SUB 23](#), [Headline Findings](#)).
36. The impact on health of government policies:
  - a. Charging regimes based on migration status for those without indefinite leave to remain or who are not ordinarily resident in the UK impact on the right to health as the link between the National Health Service and the Home Office is detrimental in building confidence and people feeling able to seek support and creates confusion as to what they are entitled to. Outstanding debts being a basis to refuse permission to leave or enter the UK is problematic. This has particular impact on pregnant patients. Fear of deportation leads to delays in accessing treatment ([SUB 27](#), p. 4-5) and a barrier to health ([SUB 9](#), p. 3). There are also concerns that the charging regime is applied in a discriminatory manner based on race and English as an Additional Language (EAL) profiling ([SUB 27](#), p. 4-5).
  - b. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis and poverty is leading to significant pressures with mental health impacts on people. According to Age UK, extreme budgeting and making daily decisions between essentials is taking its toll on older people's mental health ([SUB 42](#), p. 4).
  - c. Restrictions on the right to work and limited financial support for people seeking asylum leads to isolation and forced inactivity, and have a negative impact on psychological wellbeing. A lack of adequate financial support impacts access to medicines required ([SUB 41](#), p. 2).

- d. Vaccine inequality has been raised in relation to Covid-19 vaccine protection particularly for Black and minority ethnic people, women, children, people experiencing homelessness, disabled people, migrants and low-income employed people (SUB 18b, p. 2-6).

### Proposed Questions:

- a. Please explain what impact assessments have been undertaken in relation to the charging regimes for those without indefinite leave to remain. In particular, please explain what measures are being adopted to ensure timely and appropriate antenatal and medical care is being received.
- b. Please comment on the concerns relating to treatment delays for those requiring both physical and mental health care. What steps are being taken to address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on waiting times? What lessons have been learned from the Covid-19 vaccine prioritisation undertaken? How were
- factors such as race, age, gender, ethnicity accounted for to ensure vaccine access equity?
- c. Please explain the State Party's position in relation to the use of DNACPR orders. Does the State Party accept that they were misused in the Covid-19 pandemic? If so, what steps have been taken to learn lessons and ensure this does not happen again?
- d. What is being done to address the disproportionately high suicide rates for Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller people and to guarantee enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including specific training for healthcare professionals?
- e. What steps are being taken to address waiting times for Trans people to receive medical treatment?
- f. What support is the State Party providing for people, particularly older people, and people in situations of extreme financial hardship to ensure that this does not adversely impact upon their health and interfere with their enjoyment of the right to health?

## Education (art.13)

37. The State Party's stated commitment (SPR, para 162) to ensuring high level qualifications for as many students as possible while positive, is undermined by evidence submitted of persisting inequalities. The State Party is not guaranteeing the right of everyone to education and is not taking all necessary measures as recommended (Concluding Observations, UK 6th Periodic Review, para. 64)
38. Discrimination in access to education and equality in compulsory schooling age includes:
- a. High levels of structural race discrimination against Black children and young people, for example:
- A lack of diverse representation in the curriculum and sector (SUB 38, p. 5-6).
  - Issues around low expectations of Black students (SUB 38, p. 5).
  - Discriminatory treatment with disproportionate searches, including strip searches of young Black people in school such as the case of [Child Q](#). Evidence indicates that 75% of children subject to strip searches in 2019-2021 were from ethnically diverse backgrounds (SUB 38, p. 5). In 2022 the Children's Commissioner for England reported that 58% boys subject to a strip search by the Metropolitan Police (at various locations) were identified as Black by the searching officer, undermining dignity, human rights and fundamental protections (SUB 38, p. 5).
- iv. Discriminatory levels of permanent exclusions relating to race and ethnicity which can increase risk of criminalisation of young people and make them vulnerable to trafficking. Additionally, such treatment has an impact of inducing negativity and disengagement with education. This has a knock-on impact for employability and economic empowerment (SUB 38, p. 5).

- b. Discrimination in education for disabled students with serious learning disabilities:
- i. Those with serious learning disability are not receiving education they are entitled to and enjoyed by non-disabled peers, their learning is interrupted and subject to curriculum exclusions ([SUB 34](#), p. 9)
  - ii. Young people with serious learning disability are subject to restrictive interventions (restraint, seclusion) which cause physical and psychological harm and interrupt learning and violates their dignity ([SUB 34](#), p. 9).
  - iii. Young people with serious learning disability are at risk of inappropriately being excluded from educational settings where there is a lack of support or staff training ([SUB 34](#), p. 9).
  - iv. Young people in inpatient units do not receive adequate education in terms of hours or choice of subjects/vocational training ([SUB 34](#), p. 9).
- c. EAL funding in place in schools is insufficient to support learner needs and attainment – in terms of level and duration meaning not everyone is able to participate effectively in their right to education. The discriminatory impact highlights the importance of disaggregating data and how heterogeneity masks attainment gaps – for instance, the role EAL plays in education outcomes in conjunction with ethnicity in identifying groups at risk of low attainment and poor progress ([SUB 39](#), p. 2-3).
- d. Inadequate protection of the rights of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people, specifically:
- i. The impact of loss of ring-fenced funding for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children translates into a loss of expertise and no requirement to focus on supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children’s needs leaving them vulnerable to rights violations ([SUB 24](#), p. 8-10)
  - ii. Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller children have the lowest education attainment at all stages of compulsory education. Further inequalities of attainment are revealed when the data is disaggregated between Gypsy/Roma children and Irish Traveller children ([SUB 24](#), p. 8-10).
  - iii. Disaggregated data on EAL also highlights a further compounding impact of inequality ([SUB 39](#), p. 2-3).
  - iv. Gypsy/Roma children experience the highest permanent exclusion rates and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children have amongst the highest rates of exclusion ([SUB 24](#), p. 8-10).
- e. The need for proper implementation of equality laws and adequate protection of Trans pupils in school ([SUB 6](#), p. 3).
- f. The issue of Relationships and Sexuality Education is the subject of different views particularly in relation to religious exemptions and the right of parents to withdraw their children from classes or request teaching which is consistent with their religious convictions. The Committee is invited to provide guidance to the State Party on where the balance is to be struck in order to fully guarantee rights under the Covenant ([SUB 15](#), p. 1 and [SUB 60](#), Quote 6 Annex 3).
39. Discrimination in access to education in Higher Education including:
- a. Educational attainment and access to higher education is masked by data which is not disaggregated. For instance, the percentage of young ethnic minority people going to university may be statistically higher compared to young white British people according to the State Party (SPR, para. 166) but when the data is broken down it reveals universities accessed by minoritised groups are disproportionately lower tariff institutions ([SUB 39](#), p. 2).
  - b. The high cost of university tuition remains an issue. The State Party may not have increased fees, but changes have been made to the loan-based system of student support which are anticipated to have a disproportionately negative impact on low to medium earners. The action taken by the State Party does not appear consistent with realisation of the full right to education and to do so free from discrimination ([Save the Student](#)).
  - c. Access for young people seeking asylum is particularly affected by the cost of higher education and restrictions on the right to work coupled with a need for greater scholarship support ([SUB 3](#), p. 2).

40. Issues are identified relating to adult education such as:

- a. The loss of the Trade Union Learn Fund in England in 2021 has an impact on workers, including low paid and migrant workers, access to education – key literacy, numeracy and ESOL and other skills related to work which were previously supported are no longer available. The fund was considered to provide an accessible and dignified route to education with support from workplace peers ([SUB 40](#), p. 1).
- b. A fall in investment in adult education (excluding apprenticeships) of 47% between 2009/10 and 2018/19. The inability to access supportive learning opportunities free from stigma and feelings of inadequacy is said to be linked to employment opportunities ([SUB 22](#), 8).

41. Evidence identifies equality impacts on the right to education in Wales, while the issues identified may also apply to England specific evidence highlights issues in Wales in relation to:

- a. The implementation of positive curriculum developments in Wales to support children and young people to realise their right to education as ‘ethical and informed citizens of Wales and the world’ being undermined by the cost-of-living crisis ([SUB 3](#), p. 2).
- b. The ability of families on low incomes to enhance the learning opportunities of their children both during the school day and after school ([SUB 3](#), p. 2).
- c. Although positive measures have been adopted such as learning about the cultural heritage and ethnic diversity of Wales and the wider world as a mandatory element of the national curriculum in Wales, concerns persist about race inequality in the education system. Research carried out in Wales highlights the extent to which ethnic minority pupils experience race/identity-based bullying (in workshops facilitated by Show Racism the Red Card 85% of pupils reported experiencing racism in school or the community), their lack of confidence in teachers to address the issue and appropriate training and support for teachers to ensure racism and islamophobia are effectively and robustly dealt with ([SUB 10](#), p. 6).

- d. The absence of systems of recording of discriminatory based bullying and behaviour at school with the education inspectorate for Wales, Estyn, finding that only a minority of schools in Wales keep useful records about bullying meaning there is a risk of a reporting gap and racist incidents being unrecorded ([SUB 10](#), p. 7).

### Proposed Questions:

- a. Regarding discrimination and structural racism in the education system, please explain steps taken to:
  - i. Address representation and diversity in the curriculum and in the sector.
  - ii. Ensure equality of opportunity and expectations, including monitoring the impact of the absence of ring-fenced funding and access to educational activities by low-income families in the context of the cost-of-living crisis.
  - iii. Minimise the use of strip searches of children in the educational environment.
  - iv. Guarantee the right of education for learning disabled children and young people including equal opportunity of access to the curriculum.
  - v. Address discriminatory bullying in schools? What training are teachers provided? What systems exist to record incidents of discriminatory bullying in schools?
- b. In relation to school exclusions please explain:
  - i. Steps to address the disproportionate impact of exclusions on certain groups of children.
  - ii. Measures adopted to provide support for children disproportionately at risk of exclusion.
  - iii. Proactive steps taken to support schools in avoiding exclusions and detail sanctions applied for the misuse of exclusions by schools.
  - iv. Mechanisms in place to ensure that children’s right to education is protected with a fair, independent, and accessible process for challenging unfair exclusions.

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- c. Does the State Party collect data on English as an Additional Language educational attainment? If so, is this data also collected by reference to protected characteristics? If so, please provide this information to the Committee. If not, please explain why this information is not collected.
  - d. Please set out details of support measures in practice which ensure the right of young people to access higher education particularly ensuring the removal of barriers for low-income young people and young people seeking asylum
  - e. Was an impact assessment carried out prior to the removal of the Trade Union Learn Fund in England? Please explain how the State Party has ensured that the right to education for adults who benefited from the fund, including equality of opportunity, has been ensured since its removal.
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# Annex 1: Co-signatories to the submission

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This submission focuses on the rights outlined by ICESCR and their realisation in England and Wales. It has been countersigned by 48 civil society organisations across the UK and additionally endorsed by 12 more civil society organisations. ICESCR covers a vast array of topics and issues and not all of these organisations work in every area or necessarily support all the specific content, but they are broadly supportive of the report.

Amnesty International UK	Fairer Future
Asylum Matters	Friends, Families and Travellers
ATD Fourth World	Gypsies and Travellers Wales
Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union	Institute for Employment Rights
Black Equity Organisation	Jackie Jones, Cardiff University & Bristol University
Bevan Foundation	Just for Kids Law
Black South West Network	Lawyers Against Poverty
British Association of Social Workers, Cymru	North East Child Poverty Commission
CEDAW People's Tribunal	Observatory on Human Rights of Children
Central England Law Centre and Warwick University - Strategic Social Justice Clinic	Project 17
Child Poverty Action Group	Race Council Cymru
Children in Wales	Race Equality First
Children's Legal Centre Wales	Rachel Parker, University of Leeds
Children's Rights Alliance for England	Refugee Action
Citizens Advice Newcastle	Refugee Council
Community Led Action and Savings Support (CLASS)	Sheppey is Ours!
Compass	Tai Pawb
Crisis	The Challenging Behaviour Foundation
Cytun - Churches together in Wales	The Equality Trust
Diverse Cymru	TransActual UK
Doctors of the World UK	UNISON
Dr Luke D. Graham, University of Manchester Law School	Prof Monica Lakhanpaul, University College London
European Network on Statelessness	Wales Assembly of Women
	Women's Equality Network Wales
	York Human Rights City Network

## Additional endorsers of the submission

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4in10 London's Child Poverty Network	LGBT+ Consortium
Asylum Support and Immigration Resource Team	Mermaids
Difference North East	Northern Ireland Council for Racial Equality
Disability Rights UK	The Aldingbourne Trust
Disabled People Against Cuts	The Food Foundation
Hull Sisters	
Independent Food Aid Network	

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# Annex 2: Organisations and individuals who submitted evidence

## Written submissions

SUB 1.	<a href="#">York Human Rights City Network</a>	b.	<a href="#">Business &amp; Human Rights</a>
SUB 2.	<a href="#">Women's Budget Group</a>	SUB 21.	<a href="#">Gypsies &amp; Travellers Wales</a>
SUB 3.	<a href="#">Welsh Centre for International Affairs</a>	SUB 22.	<a href="#">Greater Manchester Poverty Action</a>
SUB 4.	<a href="#">Warwick University – Strategic Social Justice Clinic</a>	SUB 23.	<a href="#">Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel</a>
SUB 5.	<a href="#">UNISON</a>	SUB 24.	<a href="#">Friends, Families &amp; Travellers</a>
SUB 6.	<a href="#">TransActual UK</a>	SUB 25.	<a href="#">European Network on Statelessness</a>
SUB 7.	<a href="#">The Right to Clothing Campaign</a>	SUB 26.	<a href="#">The Equality Trust</a>
a.	<a href="#">First Submission</a>	SUB 27.	<a href="#">Doctors of the World UK</a>
b.	<a href="#">Second Submission</a>	SUB 28.	<a href="#">Disability Rights UK</a>
SUB 8.	<a href="#">René Cassin, the Jewish voice for human rights</a>	SUB 29.	<a href="#">Crisis</a>
SUB 9.	<a href="#">The Refugee Council</a>	SUB 30.	CLASS
SUB 10.	<a href="#">Race Equality First</a>	a.	<a href="#">Document A</a>
SUB 11.	<a href="#">Project 17</a>	b.	<a href="#">Document B</a>
SUB 12.	<a href="#">Pregnant Then Screwed</a>	c.	<a href="#">Document C</a>
SUB 13.	<a href="#">Rachel Parker, PhD Researcher, University of Leeds</a>	SUB 31.	<a href="#">Andrew Chubb, Lancaster University</a>
SUB 14.	<a href="#">North East Child Poverty Commission</a>	SUB 32.	<a href="#">Child Poverty Action Group</a>
SUB 15.	<a href="#">National Secular Society</a>	SUB 33.	<a href="#">The Champions Project</a>
SUB 16.	<a href="#">London TravelWatch</a>	SUB 34.	<a href="#">The Challenging Behaviour Foundation</a>
SUB 17.	<a href="#">Lift the Ban Campaign</a>	SUB 35.	<a href="#">Central England Law Centre</a>
SUB 18.	<a href="#">Lawyers Against Poverty</a>	SUB 36.	<a href="#">The British Institute of Human Rights</a>
a.	<a href="#">No Recourse to Public Funds</a>	SUB 37.	<a href="#">Black South West Network</a>
b.	<a href="#">Vaccine Equity</a>	SUB 38.	<a href="#">Black Equity Organisation</a>
SUB 19.	<a href="#">Just for Kids Law/ Children's Rights Alliance for England</a>	SUB 39.	<a href="#">The Bell Foundation</a>
SUB 20.	<a href="#">The Institute of Employment Rights</a>	SUB 40.	<a href="#">Bakers, Food and Allied Food Workers Union</a>
a.	<a href="#">Trade Union Rights</a>	SUB 41.	<a href="#">Asylum Matters</a>
		SUB 42.	<a href="#">Age UK</a>
		SUB 43.	<a href="#">Tax Justice UK</a>

## Participants who made oral submissions

SUB 44.	Wales Assembly for Women	SUB 55.	Food Sense Wales
SUB 45.	Tai Pawb	SUB 56.	Fairer Future
SUB 46.	Shelter Cymru	SUB 57.	Diverse Cymru
SUB 47.	Save the Children	SUB 58.	City of Sanctuary of Wales
SUB 48.	Race Equality First	SUB 59.	Citizen's Advice Newcastle
SUB 49.	Oxfam	SUB 60.	Churches Together in Wales
SUB 50.	The Kids Network	SUB 61.	Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union
SUB 51.	Hull Sisters	SUB 62.	ATD Fourth World
SUB 52.	Prof. Simon Hoffman, Swansea University	SUB 63.	The Association of Panel Members
SUB 53.	Gypsies and Travellers Wales	SUB 64.	Amnesty International UK
SUB 54.	Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel	SUB 65.	Amnesty International UK

Submissions were also made by individuals in their personal capacity.

## Acknowledgements

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This submission was drafted by Kate Ewing who wishes to acknowledge and sincerely thank the members of the project Steering Group and the Just Fair team for their many helpful contributions and comments on earlier drafts.

**Steering Group:** Kudsia Batool, Head of Equalities and Strategy, Trades Union Congress; Ele Hicks, Engagement, Research, Policy, and Influencing Manager, Diverse Cymru; Allan Hogarth, Head of Advocacy and Programmes, Amnesty International UK; Professor Simon Hoffman, Swansea University; Tansy Hutchinson, Head of Policy, Equally Ours; and Professor Aoife Nolan, Human Rights Law Centre, University of Nottingham.

**Just Fair:** Jamie Burton KC, Co-founder and Chair of Just Fair Board of Directors and barrister at Doughty Street Chambers; Alex Firth, Research and Communications Officer; Helen Flynn, Head of Policy, Research and Campaigns; and Jess McQuail, Director.

## Annex 3: Extracts from oral evidence

1. Many families technically don't fall under the poverty line therefore don't get financial support but are living in conditions in which it's difficult to flourish. They are systematically kept in poverty.

### ***The Kids Network***

2. The situation people are in is overwhelming. Hygiene poverty, menstrual health needs, these all need to be supported. We rely heavily on donations, but of course donations are going to go down because people can't afford to donate.

You've got people living on less than £40 a week. How do you cope with rising inflation and the cost of living if you get under £40 a week?

### ***Hull Sisters***

3. There is a perfect storm for disabled people, especially those experiencing other forms of discrimination as well. We are trying to raise the point that the cost-of-living crisis affects everyone, but it is acutely felt by disabled people.

### ***Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel***

4. It would be good to be able to split payments between two claimants, important for women and particularly where there may be domestic abuse.

### ***Fairer Future***

5. Our biggest concern is that people don't have enough money to live. There was one example of a local mother of two who couldn't afford to pay for both the bus fare to her local job centre as well as feeding her kids, she chose to feed her children and missed her job centre appointment. As a result, she was sanctioned, which means that she has even less money per month to get by or put food on the table. She was put in an impossible situation.

### ***Citizens Advice Newcastle***

6. One of the things the [Welsh] Government has recently done is remove the right of withdrawal from parents, who previously were able to choose whether or not they wanted their children to partake of Religious Education or of Relationships and Sexuality Education - which is the term used in Wales.

The Welsh Government currently claims the right is not being breached as parents have the right to teach their children whatever they like in their own home, but the conventions do not specify that the right to bring up children according to one's own religious or philosophical convictions is confined to the home, the conventions are in more general terms.

### ***Churches Together in Wales***

7. We have been doing work on the right to food. We surveyed our members on access to decent, nutritious food last year during the pandemic. These are all the people delivering, serving, and making food, and 40 percent of them reported they were running out of food between pay cheques. 1 in 5 were having to rely on friends and family for food. 35% were eating less as a parent or a carer. Around 7 percent were fully reliant on food banks.

[Since then] prices have gone up, but our members pay has not.

### ***Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union***

8. The default for Universal Credit is a single payment to the whole household which is problematic in cases of domestic violence and could lead to limitations of women's economic autonomy.

### ***Amnesty International UK***



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