

Statement in response to announcement of Households Below Average Income Statistics by Department of Work and Pensions, 10 June 2008

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Oxfam says latest rise in UK poverty figures is “unacceptable”

Oxfam is dismayed that the latest Department of Work and Pension statistics (Households Below Average Income) show there has been a rise of 100,000 in the number of children living in poverty and that 300,000 more pensioners are now living in poverty. “Britain is a rich nation and it is utterly unacceptable that millions of people still live in poverty,” said Kate Wareing, Oxfam’s UK Poverty Director.

“The number of households living in poverty fell during the early years of the Labour government because of the money put into tax credits and other policies to help those on low incomes,” continued Ms Wareing. “But the rise in the poverty figures over the last two years shows that this government has failed to take dramatic enough measures to stop the drift off target.”

Ms Wareing added, “In the current economic downturn, which is likely to see a further rise in those struggling to get by, it’s vital that the government strengthens the safety-net to protect vulnerable people. Oxfam is calling for benefits to be set at a level that provides enough money for people to live on; for more support for low-paid workers; and a more flexible welfare system to make it easier to move into work.”

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For further information

Contact Louie Fooks, UK Poverty Communications Co-ordinator
Mob: 07789946562

OR

Rachel Cooper, UK Poverty Policy Assistant:
Tel: 01865 473278

Notes for editors

Oxfam’s work in the UK

Nearly eleven and a half million people live in poverty in the UK. Oxfam develops projects with people living in poverty in the UK, which improve their lives and show others how things can change. We also raise public awareness of poverty to create pressure for change and encourage policymakers to tackle the causes of poverty.