

Universal Child Benefit and Child Poverty Policy

Children, Families, and a Universal Child Benefit

The Alliance believes that every child should have the opportunity to grow up healthy, secure, and free from poverty.

Children should not be disadvantaged because of the income, employment status, or circumstances of their parents or carers. Raising children is both a private responsibility and a contribution to the future wellbeing of the whole society.

The Alliance therefore regards **the elimination of child poverty as a primary goal of government.**

Our approach combines universal social provision with targeted assistance where additional needs exist. We believe that a universal payment to families with children provides a strong foundation for a fair and effective system of family support.

1. A Universal Child Benefit

The Alliance will establish a **Universal Child Benefit**, paid for every child in Aotearoa.

The benefit will be:

- **universal**, so that every child qualifies regardless of family income;
- **paid in respect of each child**, recognising the costs associated with raising children;
- **paid directly to the child's primary carer**, recognising the unpaid work involved in caring for children;
- **separate from the general welfare benefit system**; and
- **regularly adjusted to maintain its value over time.**

The Universal Child Benefit will provide a guaranteed contribution towards the cost of raising every child.

Universality is important because children should have an equal social entitlement regardless of the circumstances into which they are born.

It also ensures that families are not faced with sudden losses of support as their income changes.

2. Recognising the Value of Caring Work

The Alliance recognises that raising children involves substantial unpaid work.

Much of this work has historically been performed within families without financial recognition, despite its enormous contribution to society and the economy.

The Universal Child Benefit will therefore be paid directly to the child's carer.

This recognises that caring for children is socially valuable work, and that families should receive support for the costs of providing that care.

The policy also reflects the principle that the wellbeing and development of children is a collective social responsibility.

3. Adequate and Indexed Support

The original NewLabour policy established an important principle: family support should not simply be introduced and then allowed to lose value through inflation.

The Alliance will therefore ensure that the Universal Child Benefit is **regularly indexed**, with the objective of maintaining and improving its real value.

Indexation will be linked to whichever is greater of the **Consumer Price Index** or **movements in average weekly earnings**, ensuring that support for families keeps pace with broader improvements in living standards, rather than progressively falling behind.

The benefit should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains adequate to meet the costs of raising children.

4. Universal Provision and the Welfare System

The Universal Child Benefit will remain distinct from general income-support benefits.

The Alliance supports a strong and comprehensive welfare state in which people who are unemployed, sick, disabled, caring for others, or otherwise unable to secure an adequate income receive appropriate support.

The Universal Child Benefit is not intended to replace these forms of assistance.

Rather, it recognises the additional costs associated with raising children and provides a universal foundation upon which other forms of social security can be built.

Families with greater needs will continue to be eligible for additional assistance through the wider social welfare system.

5. Ending Child Poverty

Universal Child Benefit will form part of a broader Alliance strategy to eliminate child poverty.

The Alliance will ensure that families have access to:

- adequate incomes;
- affordable and secure housing;
- quality health care;
- accessible early childhood education;
- free and high-quality public education;
- affordable childcare;
- adequate nutrition;
- secure employment and decent wages; and
- comprehensive social security.

The objective is not simply to reduce the number of children below an arbitrary poverty line. It is to ensure that every child has the material security and opportunities necessary to participate fully in society.

6. Supporting Working and Non-Working Families

The Universal Child Benefit will be available regardless of whether a child's parents or carers are in paid employment.

Families should not have to choose between employment and receiving adequate support for their children.

The policy recognises that families contribute to society in many different ways: — through paid employment, unpaid caring work, community participation, and the raising of children.

A universal benefit avoids creating unnecessary divisions between working families and families receiving other forms of social assistance.

7. Children as Citizens

The Alliance believes that children are not simply dependants of adults. They are members of our society with their own rights and interests.

Government policy should therefore be assessed according to its impact on children.

The Universal Child Benefit represents a practical expression of this principle: every child has a claim upon the collective resources of society.

The state has a responsibility to ensure that no child is denied a decent standard of living due to circumstances beyond their control.

8. A Foundation for Social Justice

The Universal Child Benefit reflects a broader Alliance principle: **social security should be based on solidarity rather than stigma.**

Universal provision creates a shared social entitlement and recognises that everyone benefits from raising healthy, educated, and secure children.

It also helps redistribute resources towards families at the stage of life when the costs of supporting children are greatest.

The Alliance will therefore maintain the Universal Child Benefit as a central element of a comprehensive system of social security.

9. Our Commitment

The Alliance will establish a **Universal Child Benefit for every child**, paid directly to their primary carer and regularly indexed to average weekly earnings.

It will remain separate from general welfare benefits and will form the foundation of a wider programme to eliminate child poverty and improve the wellbeing of children and families.

We believe that:

- **Every child deserves security.**
- **Every family deserves support.**
- **Caring for children is valuable work.**
- **No child should grow up in poverty.**

The Universal Child Benefit is a practical expression of our commitment to building a society in which the wellbeing of children is recognised as a responsibility shared by us all.