

# UK: SEP candidate condemns rising child poverty in Peterborough

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The *Evening Telegraph* recently reported that Peterborough has some of the worst rates of child poverty in the country.

In England, one in five children live in poverty. But in the Bretton North ward where I am standing as candidate for the Socialist Equality Party an unbelievable one in three children lives in poverty. Similar levels are found in eight of the city's 24 wards. In only four wards is the poverty rate less than 10 percent.

The same article quoted Sian Peer, the child poverty lead for Peterborough City Council, who said, "We know that almost everyone is just three months away from poverty".

All it takes, Sian explained, is for the main breadwinner to lose his or her job for disaster to strike. This is the precarious situation facing many families in Peterborough and across the country, as more companies close and the few jobs that are available are advertised at the minimum wage.

The trend in rising child poverty has been underway for more than 30 years, since the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives in 1979. Nothing changed under the Labour government. Tony Blair's personal pledge to end child poverty within "a generation" was entirely cynical, as the gap between the rich and poor reached record levels under Labour's rule.

Child poverty is now climbing and set to go beyond its previous high as the government's austerity measures begin to bite.

With all the callousness of this country's ruling elite, Peterborough Conservative MP Stewart Jackson recently declared that the passage of the coalition's Welfare Reform Bill was a "victory". It is one that

comes at the expense of the livelihoods of tens of thousands of families.

A leaked government memo suggests that just one of its measures—capping housing benefit—will push 100,000 children below the poverty line. After rent, council tax and utilities, a family of four will be left with just 62 pence per person per day to live on.

One needs no imagination to see that many others will suffer the same fate as a result of all the other cuts in the pipeline. Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies predicts that by 2020 the number of children in poverty will rise by 800,000.

What is happening in Peterborough is a microcosm of the situation developing across Europe, and indeed the world.

Countless studies point to the causes of increasing child poverty, regardless of which definition of poverty is used—economic recession, tax exemptions for the wealthy, non-stop attacks on wages and the privatisation of public services. These deliberately inflicted conditions of super-exploitation are the means through which the financial oligarchy drives up their wealth, and the major corporations their profits, pitting workers around the world into a "beggar thy neighbour" competition based on declining wages and conditions.

The eradication of child poverty—and poverty in general—requires that it is fought at its source in the capitalist profit system. An international socialist programme is required to transform society based on the needs of the vast majority of mankind.

It requires the implementation of socialist policies to reorganise economic life on the basis of social need, not private profit, so that everyone can enjoy a secure job, decent living standards, education, health care and an income in retirement or ill-health.

That is what I am campaigning for in this election and will be discussing at a public meeting on May 1 at 7 p.m. at the Pyramid Community Centre. I hope to see you there.



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