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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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CSJ calls for bold new measure of poverty

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) has called for a far-reaching overhaul of the existing poverty measures.

The think tank is urging the Government to take into account the five main drivers of poverty – family breakdown, worklessness, drug and alcohol addiction, personal debt and educational failure – in its new reforms.

The CSJ has devised a ‘life chance risk’ assessment that classifies children as at risk of poverty if they live in families where parents have an addiction, are in serious personal debt, have no skills or only one parent is able to work.

The life chance risk assessment would be combined with certain measures of income, such as if a parent is on an out of work benefit, including job seekers allowance.

A child would be deemed to be in poverty if they were found to have one or two life chance risks and their family to fall below one of the income measures. Where a child had three or more life chance risks, the child would be considered to be in entrenched poverty.

Philippa Stroud, Executive Director of the CSJ, commented: “We strongly support the direction of the Government’s reforms and welcome the inclusion of educational attainment and parents’ worklessness measures in assessing a child’s life chances.

“However, to truly measure poverty, all five root causes– worklessness, family breakdown, educational failure, addiction and debt – must be taken into account.

“If a family is in serious personal debt or is experiencing drug or alcohol addiction, we need to look beyond the household income to work out the condition the children are growing up in.”

The Government is in the process of reforming the previous income measures put in place by the last Labour administration in the 2010 Child Poverty Act as part of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill. The legislation will be renamed the Life Chances Act.

In the draft legislation, income measures were replaced with statutory reporting on household worklessness and children’s educational attainment. On Monday (25th January) the Government suffered a setback in the Lords when peers submitted an amendment to reinsert income measures into the bill.

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The Centre for Social Justice

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is an independent think tank established in 2004 to put social justice at the heart of British politics. In June 2013, the CSJ was awarded UK Social Policy Think Tank of the Year at Prospect magazine's Think Tank Awards.

Last year the CSJ published *Breakthrough Britain 2015*, which set out almost 200 evidence-based policy recommendations to tackle poverty in the UK. This included solutions to worklessness, educational failure, addiction, family breakdown and problem debt.

The CSJ has published dozens of seminal papers which have shaped government policies, including *Dynamic Benefits*, which has led the Coalition's welfare reforms. Further to this, the CSJ manages an Alliance of over 300 of the most effective grass roots, poverty-fighting organisations. The CSJ is able to draw upon the expertise and experience of Alliance charities for research work and media inquiries. Journalists wishing to conduct grass-roots research into social problems can be put in touch with front-line charity directors and staff.

Baroness Stroud

Baroness Stroud of Fulham (Philippa Stroud), was an original founder of the CSJ in 2004. Philippa Stroud served as Director from 2004-2010, before leaving to become Special Advisor to Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP (Secretary of State for Work and Pensions) in Government from 2010-2015. Philippa Stroud was ennobled by the Prime Minister after the 2015 General Election and became Baroness Stroud of Fulham and a Conservative Peer in the House of Lords. Baroness Stroud re-joined the CSJ in October 2015 as Chief Executive.