

A diverse group of faith leaders has written to the Prime Minister calling for the urgent establishment of a cross-party commission with the mandate and resources to tackle child poverty in England.

The leaders, including the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, highlight the growing concern among many communities over poverty and hunger affecting children.

They praise footballer Marcus Rashford's campaign to extend free school meals, as well as welcoming government efforts to support those on low incomes.

Signatories include the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, and groups representing other faiths include Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh.

The leaders address short, medium and long-term goals needed to tackle child poverty.

The letter says:

"In the short-term, we believe that temporary measures are needed to ensure that children in low income families do not go hungry during the pandemic, especially over school holidays. Research by the Church of England, Child Poverty Action Group and others has shown how much parents needed and valued the offer of free school meal vouchers during the lockdown and this additional support will remain vital as many areas come under tighter restrictions again.

"In the medium-term, we applaud the Government's efforts to sustain employment and to bolster the social security system to provide extra support for those on the lowest incomes. These have been a lifeline for millions of families and children, who would otherwise be in a much worse financial situation. Looking ahead, the temporary increase in Universal Credit should be made permanent and extended to cover those on legacy benefits, and Governments should commit to increasing working age benefits at least in line with inflation (as is already the case for pensioners), in order to maintain an adequate safety net for those falling on hard times.

"In the long-term, we need a coherent, cross-government and cross-party strategy to tackle the underlying causes of child poverty, including low pay, educational disadvantage, and the shortage of affordable housing and childcare, as well as measures to promote social mobility and racial justice. Simultaneously, we need a comprehensive social security system that protects people against the vagaries of life, alongside a dynamic voluntary sector to help those who fall through the cracks."

Notes

- [Read the full letter.](#)

