Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
Her Majesty’s Treasury  
1 Horse Guard’s Road  
London SW1A 2HQ

cc. Northern Ireland Secretary of State for NI, Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP  
Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions  
Deirdre Hargey MLA, Minister for Communities  
Conor Murphy MLA, Minister for Finance

22 April 2020

Dear Chancellor

Raise Child Benefit to £50 per child per week
We wish to add our voices to calls to immediately increase Child Benefit to £50 per child per week.

As community and grassroots organisations we are seeing at first hand the extreme financial consequences Covid-19 is having across the country.

We are also seeing at first-hand how the Universal Credit system is struggling to cope, how emergency measures are still missing many people out, and how the complexity of the welfare system is creating unnecessary stress and anxiety. At the same time, children being at home is adding costs to already over-stretched family budgets.

An immediate increase in Child Benefit is a simple, efficient and cost-effective way to provide urgently-needed support to families. Crucially, it requires no changes to systems and will offer instant impact.

We are aware of research that shows Child Benefit now covers only around 20% of what it takes to bring up a child. A far higher rise in Child Benefit can certainly be justified. Increasing it to £50 per child per week would be entirely reasonable, while making a significant difference for families.

The impact of increasing Child Benefit to £50 per child per week would be enhanced even further if accompanied by a number of other steps including

- Abolishing the 2-child limit to Universal Credit and Tax Credits
- Removing the benefit cap
- Ending the five week wait for Universal Credit.
With jobs and livelihoods being lost and businesses closing all of our grassroots organisations are seeing the very real and immediate impact coronavirus is having on family incomes. Increasing Child Benefit to £50 per child per week, plus our other proposals, are straightforward ways to support people facing immense financial strain. We urge you in the strongest possible terms to adopt these measures without delay.

Yours sincerely,

Martina Cranny (Housing & Operations Manager Rural Housing Association)
Stephen Fisher (Chief Executive Rural Housing Association)
Lucille O’Hagan (Secretary Ballymena & Antrim Trades Council)
Marion Ritchie (Joint Secretary Unison Down Lisburn Comm Branch)
Rachel Powell (Women’s Sector Lobbyist, Women’s Resource and Development Agency)
Anne McVicker (Director, Women’s Resource and Development Agency)
Jackie Pollock (Regional Secretary, Unite the Union Ireland)
Joanne Farrell (Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre)
Amanda Kelly (Chairperson Dundonald Ladies Community Group)
Helen Crickard (Reclaim the Agenda)
Ellen Finlay (Policy Officer at Children in Northern Ireland)
Siobhan McGeown (Western Health & Social Care Trust)
Lesley Johnston (On behalf of Carers Northern Ireland)
Kerry Melville (Coordinator, Belfast Food Network)
Ricky Wright (Chief Executive, Vineyard Compassion)
Jonna Monaghan (Project Coordinator, Northern Ireland Women's European Platform)
Ursula O’Hare (Director, Law Centre NI)
Northern Ireland Women’s Budget Group (Lynn Carvill, Convenor)
Atlas Women’s Centre (Gay Sherry-Bingham)
Employers For Childcare (Marie Marin, Chief Executive)
Extern NI (Gavin Adams)
Kilcooley Women’s Centre (Tracy Harrison, Head of Childcare Services)
NIPSA (Alison Millar, General Secretary)
Resource Centre Derry (Jude McKinney, Advice Manager)
Shankill Women’s Centre (Lesley-Anne Kinnon, Funding & Development Manager)
Strathfoyle Women's Activity Group (Lesley Bamford, Centre Manager)
Women’s Centre Derry (Margaret Logue, Centre Director)
Women's Support Network (Siobhán Harding; Karen Sweeney, Director)