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THE PRIME MINISTER AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

2 December 2010

Dear Frank

Thank you for your work on the Independent Review of Poverty and Life Chances. Your report will be of service not only to the Government, but to the nation. It marks a vital moment in the history of our efforts to tackle poverty and disadvantage.

We welcome your focus on the early years, or 'Foundation Years'. These pre-school years are the critical ones in terms of promoting a fairer and more mobile society. We also agree with you that inter-generational poverty needs to be given as much weight as static, income-based measures. The problem of poverty - and particularly child poverty - has to be situated in a framework based on life chances.

It is clear that we need to broaden and lengthen our concept of poverty: to look at poverty in the round, and over time.

Income is one of a wide range of factors that define and describe poverty. We need to look at people's experience of poverty in all its dimensions, and in real life, not merely in narrow statistical terms. We therefore welcome your recommendation that we should adopt a new set of Life Chances Indicators.

As your report makes clear, we also need to focus on people trapped in poverty, sometimes over generations. Poor children are at a high risk of becoming poor adults. This violates any notion of fairness. Nobody should be condemned to poverty or constricted life chances because of the circumstances of their birth. That is why the Coalition Government has already made the promotion of inter-generational mobility the principal goal of our social policy.

The Coalition Government is keen to stimulate a national debate about the nature of poverty in the UK today and the Government's role in tackling it. Your report represents a hugely valuable contribution to that debate. We are enormously grateful to you and your team.

David Cameron

Nick Clegg

The Right Honourable Frank Field MP