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Tyne & Wear  
DH4 4AJ

Sir David Norgrove  
UK Statistics Authority  
1 Drummond Gate  
London  
SW1V 2QQ

16 July 2021

Dear Sir David,

I am writing to raise concerns over comments made in an interview with BBC Breakfast by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak MP, on 6 July 2021.

The remark in question is as follows: "The number of people in poverty has fallen as a result of the actions the government has taken over the last several years".

A similar statement was made by Department for Work and Pensions Minister Will Quince MP in the most recent Oral Question session for the department.

The Minister stated that "recent statistics show that before the Covid-19 pandemic, we were in a strong position, with rising incomes and 1.3 million fewer people, including 300,000 fewer children, in absolute poverty, after housing costs, compared with 2010."<sup>1</sup>

The Chancellor failed to clarify which poverty measure he was using, while the Minister's use of the 'absolute poverty' measure masks the true reality of poverty in the UK and risks misleading the public on this issue. Internationally the accepted way to measure poverty is by using the 'relative poverty' measure.

Since the Conservatives came to power in 2010, we have seen an increase of 1.5 million people who live in relative poverty, after housing costs, across the country.

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<sup>1</sup> *HC Debates*, vol. 698, 28 June 2021 (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-06-28/debates/BD44FFBB-20AB-4DFB-919F-C556D7DD953C/ChildPoverty>)

And according to the established 'relative poverty' measure, the number of children living in relative poverty has been steadily rising over recent years, with the figure standing at 4.2 million in the latest data.

These figures paint a very different picture of the Government's record on poverty than claimed by the Chancellor on the BBC.

I also note that the Chancellor claimed that inequality was falling, whereas in the period leading up to financial year from April 2019 to March 2020, just before the pandemic, income inequality steadily increased to 36.3%, according to estimates from the Household Finances Survey.

I would welcome your view on the Conservatives' use of absolute poverty as an accurate measure of poverty and child poverty in the UK, and the claim around inequality falling.

With the planned cut to Universal Credit, taking £1000 a year from millions of families, upcoming it is vital that the public are not being misled by Government claims on their record with regards to poverty.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bridget Phillipson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bridget Phillipson MP  
Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury  
Member of Parliament for Houghton & Sunderland South