

Paul O’Kane MSP  
Scottish Parliament  
(via email)

25 June 2024

Dear Mr O’Kane,

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about statements made by both the current and previous Scottish First Minister that Scottish National Party (SNP) policies are “lifting” an estimated 100,000 children out of poverty.

Under the principles of intelligent transparency, it is always advisable to think how an average person would interpret a high-profile quantitative claim of this sort so as to minimise the danger of them being misled and thereby trust in similar statements being undermined.

In this instance, the First Ministers were referring to a modelled estimate of the difference between the level of relative child poverty expected in 2024/25 and the level that we would have seen in the absence of a number of policy measures (as set out in [footnote 4](#) of the updated [Cumulative Impact Assessment](#)). The Scottish Government set out the methodology behind this comparison in an [annex to its Cumulative Impact Assessment in 2022](#) and the 100,000 estimate comes from the update published in 2024.

This kind of analysis is a reasonable way to estimate the impact of Scottish Government policies on child poverty, even though, just like alternative estimates, the calculations are bound to be uncertain and dependent to some degree on methodological choices. But the average person hearing such a statement might well assume that the First Ministers were claiming that child poverty is 100,000 lower than when the SNP took office. And, as you point out, the Scottish Government’s official statistics on [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland](#) conclude that the proportion of [children in Scotland living in relative and absolute poverty](#) remains broadly stable. Comparing the number of children living in relative poverty from 2004-07 (pre-SNP) to the latest datapoint of 2020-23 shows a decrease of 10,000 children (250,000 to 240,000). For children living in absolute poverty the decrease is 40,000 children (250,000 to 210,000).

Given this potential confusion, Ministers would be well advised from time to time to accompany this type of claim with a reminder of the methodology underpinning it so that they are not suspected of making an unduly flattering comparison.

Yours sincerely,



**Sir Robert Chote**  
Chair