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----------------------	------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------	--------------------------	------------------------

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- [World news](#)
- [Young people](#)
- [Arts](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Justice & peace](#)
- [Catechists' Page](#)
- [Films](#)
- [Books](#)
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London: Charities call for commitments from candidates ahead of Mayoral Election

Posted: Wednesday, March 21, 2012 11:03 am

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Fifteen of London's largest Catholic Charities have called on the mayoral candidates to reaffirm their support for poor and vulnerable in the city.

In a letter to the Evening Standard, charity leaders called upon the candidates to develop strategies to protect families and communities affected by welfare changes, and to prioritise disabled Londoners' right to access public transport.

One year into the mayoral term, the coalition government's household benefit cap is set to significantly affect benefit-dependent families in London where rent is 45% higher in London than in England and Wales as a whole. 50% of three-child families and 80% of four-child families will be unable to afford their rent, as a result of the changes.

Alison Gelder, Director of Housing Justice said: "It is vital that the next Mayor uses their housing powers to ensure an increased supply of truly affordable housing for Londoners so that our communities retain the current lively mix of rich and poor, young and old, single and extended families, all living cheek by jowl."

This echoes concerns expressed by the Archbishop of Westminster, Vincent Nichols last year that one in six children within his Diocese will be forced to move home and in many cases move school as a result of new restrictions on benefits.

Dr Rosemary Keenan, CEO of the Catholic Children's Society said: "The in-work poor, and other benefit dependent families with whom we work, need to know what the Mayoral candidates will do to lessen the devastating impact of changes to the social security system, not least the introduction of Local Housing Allowance and Universal Credit caps. The impact of government policy on London's 610,000 children living in low income households will be severe. There is now an urgent need for the Mayoral candidates to state how they will work to discharge a duty of care to protect these already vulnerable and poor children."

The letter also highlights the danger of disabled people being excluded from the London transport system as austerity undermines targets for accessible stations and bus stops.

Chief Executive of Caritas Social Action Network, Helen O'Brien said: "Transport provision for disabled people should not be treated as a luxury, only to be provided in times of economic strength. Improved accessibility, together with frontline station staff who provide the advice and assistance to older and disabled people, are essential to giving independence to disabled Londoners, allowing them to integrate fully in all aspects of life."

Signatories: Helen O'Brien, Chief Executive, Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN), Rosie Bairwal, National Coordinator, Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ), Davina Bolt, Director of Social Justice, Diocese of Brentwood, Mick Clarke, Chief Executive, The Passage, John Coleby, Director, St Joseph's Pastoral Centre, Cathy Corcoran, Chief Executive, Cardinal Hume Centre, Sr Lynda Dearlove, Director, Women@thewell, Keith Fernett, Director, Anchor House, Alison Gelder, Director, Housing Justice, Dr Rosemary Keenan, Chief Executive, Catholic Children's Society (Westminster), Vincent Manning, Chairperson, Catholics for AIDS Prevention and Support, Christine Newman, President, National Board of Catholic Women, Fr Michael Scanlon, Chair, Diocese of Southwark Justice and Peace Commission, Sr Maureen Tinkler, Director, Vincentians in Partnership, Mike Worthington, President, St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVP)



London City Hall

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