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**More needed to tackle poverty**

Deputy First Minister comments ahead of Poverty and Social Exclusion Conference.

Speaking ahead of today’s Poverty and Social Exclusion in Scotland and the UK conference, Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said more needed to be done to address poverty, in particular poverty amongst children.

During the conference, organised jointly by Poverty and Social Exclusion UK (PSE UK) and the Scottish Government, findings of the biggest every UK survey of poverty and deprivation will be outlined.

Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said:

“Scotland is one of the richest countries in the world and there is no reason for us to live in a society where there is such a difference in living standards between the richest and poorest.

“Our own figures suggest that one million people, including 220,000 children, are living in relative poverty after housing costs. The results of the PSE UK survey today only serves to reinforce the scale of the problem.

“The PSE UK study suggests that a quarter of a million children and adults in Scotland are not properly fed, with 30,000 children living in families who cannot afford to feed them properly.

“This is simply not acceptable. Worryingly the Trussell Trust has seen a 400 per cent increase in people using food banks between April 2013 and March 2014 which includes more than 22,000 children using these services. Most organisations working on the front line recognise that this increase is due to Westminster’s welfare cuts.

“Fuel poverty is another major concern, with thousands of households suffering. It is a scandal that there should be any fuel poverty in an energy-rich nation like Scotland. Since 2008, 600,000 Scottish homes have received energy efficiency measures to tackle fuel poverty.

“However, more is needed to mitigate UK Government cuts, especially as 70 per cent of welfare cuts are only now beginning to come in.

“It is vital that we gain the full powers of independence to enable us to create a different approach – one that protects people from poverty and helps them fulfil their potential in work and life.”

**Contact:** Suzanne Hart 0131 244 2797