



The Bishop of St Albans, Alan Smith, convenor of the Bishops in the House of Lords, and the Bishop of Durham Paul Butler, who speaks on poverty issues in the Lords, have responded to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn statement.

They said: "It is heartening to hear the Chancellor single out the needs of the most vulnerable as a principle behind his Autumn Statement. We recognise that he has had to make some very difficult choices and will continue to pray for him and for the Government as they carry these weighty responsibilities on behalf of everyone.

"Ahead of today's statement one of our key concerns was to see benefits keep pace with inflation. So we welcome the Chancellor's commitment in this regard but continue to call for the end to the two-child limit on Universal Credit, which hits some of the poorest families hardest.

"This is going to be a very hard winter for many. Our churches, in communities across the country, are already reporting alarming rises in demand for foodbanks and other services which have become a lifeline.

"It is heartbreaking to hear of people who just a year ago were donating to foodbanks but are now using them themselves.

"Many of our churches are among the more than 3,700 public spaces which are opening up this winter as a Warm Space for people amid surging energy bills.

"While we recognise the intense economic pressures on this country, as the Chancellor acknowledges, it is a global situation and we will continue to hold the Government to its commitment to return to giving 0.7 per cent of national income on international development."

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