

Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer

**Sent by email**

Tuesday, 30 July 2024

Dear Chancellor,

## Two-child cap

The British Association of Social Workers, the UK's largest professional membership organisation for social workers with over 21,000 members asks that you reconsider the Labour Party's position and scrap the two-child limit and benefit cap in the Autumn Budget.

Our members work with many of the most vulnerable people in this country. They see first-hand the devastating impact of poverty on people's lives and the shackles it places on a person's ability to thrive and lead a happy, healthy, contributing and fulfilling life. Poverty is both a scourge on our society and a key driver of social work intervention, making it a major contributor to over-stretched and under-pressure social work services.

We are aware that your new government has set out its intention to develop and implement a UK-wide child poverty strategy, which is very welcome. We are pleased to hear it will address low pay and poor terms and conditions, while supporting other anti-poverty measures such as banning no-fault evictions and setting up free breakfast clubs. However, it is imperative that abolishing the two-child limit and benefit cap are central to this strategy for it to be truly transformational.

We understand that you face tough choices, but the consequences of retaining this punitive policy are stark and far-ranging. To do so accepts pushing and trapping more children and families into poverty. It accepts children going hungry, undermining educational attainment, resulting in stigma, exclusion and health problems, and storing up huge social and economic problems for the future.

From speaking to families directly affected by the two-child limit, Child Poverty Action Group found that:

- 45% struggled to pay rent or mortgage
- 46% struggled to manage childcare costs
- 82% struggled to pay gas and electricity bills
- 93% struggled to afford food

Nobody has children just to access a relatively small amount of extra money and children should never be punished for the decisions of their parents. The amount withheld through the two-child cap can make a significant difference to the welfare of children and to household wellbeing. It can prevent a family from being evicted from their home if they cannot afford increasing amounts of rent. It can ensure that nobody has to skip a meal. It can mean the difference between getting by and not coping. It can prevent much more expensive health, welfare and housing interventions.

The financial inequalities that the two-child limit places primarily fall on women. It can also lead to emotional devastation for women and children when women feel they must use the “rape clause” to get child benefit for third or subsequent children. It is cruel and inhumane.

Based on 2023 estimations by the End Child Poverty Coalition, ending the two-child limit would support 850,000 children out of ‘less deep poverty’ and lift a further 250,000 out of poverty altogether. It is the single-most effective decision your government can take now to begin significantly alleviating the shameful and harmful levels of poverty that plague our communities.

We therefore call on you to use the upcoming Autumn Budget to begin restoring our social security system to one that provides lifeline support at a fairer, more just level for all. One that does not discriminate against the needs of children, whatever their birth position in their family.

We urge you to take a kind, compassionate stand on this matter, to ensure that every child can get the best start in life.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Allen', followed by a horizontal line.

**Dr Ruth Allen**  
Chief Executive  
British Association of Social Workers

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