

The Rt Hon Jonathan Ashworth MP
Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

Sent by email

Thursday, 20 July 2023

Dear Jonathan,

Re: Two-child cap on benefits

We are writing to you to voice our concern on Labour's position to not scrap the two-child cap on benefits should Labour win the next General Election and form a UK government.

We are the British Association of Social Workers, a professional membership organisation for social workers, and we have over 22,000 members across the UK. Our members work with many of the most vulnerable people in this country.

Poverty is a key driver of social work intervention. We see this especially in child protection. Being a parent is hard – but being a parent in poverty is harder. Over the past 12 years, there have been multiple changes to welfare benefits that have had a detrimental impact on those on lower incomes. One of these is the introduction of the two-child cap on benefits. Nobody has children simply to be able to access a small amount of extra money. But that small amount of money can make a significant difference to a household. 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.

We understand that there will be tough decisions ahead for the next Government due to the financial picture, but the two-child cap pushes people into poverty. Poverty puts limitations on a person's ability to thrive and live a happy and healthy life. Financial welfare assistance for additional children is for the needs of children, who cannot decide what family they are born into. Legal rights of children should be upheld, and they should not be forced into additional risk of poverty by a policy aimed at punishing or disincentivising parents from having children.

It was only a few weeks ago when Keir Starmer gave a speech about breaking down barriers to opportunity. Poverty is a barrier to opportunity. Tackling poverty must be a priority for the next Government, and scrapping the two-child cap is an excellent first step. We understand that Labour has committed to reviewing Universal Credit and the benefit system. We welcome a review, but there must also be urgent action to ensure that people are not being left behind on low incomes and that generational poverty is not a given.

Alleviating poverty for the most vulnerable in society is a primary responsibility of government and children going hungry is unacceptable, it undermines educational attainment, causes stigma, exclusion and health problems and stores up huge social and economic problems for the future.

Yours sincerely,



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