

Anas Sarwar MSP, Scottish Labour Party Leader
Paul O’Kane MSP, Scottish Labour Party Spokesperson on Equalities, Social Justice
& Social Security
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
26 July 23

Dear Mr Sawar and Mr O’Kane

Re: Two-child cap on benefits

SASW is part of the British Association of Social Workers, a professional membership organisation for social workers, and we have over 22,000 members across the UK. SASW members work with many of the most vulnerable people in Scotland.

We are aware of UK 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 urge the Scottish Labour Party to take a principled stance and oppose this position.

We ask you to treat all children as equal citizens, whatever their birth position in the family. Please recognise the financial inequalities that the two-child cap places primarily on women in addition to the emotional devastation for women and children when women feel they must use the “rape clause” to get child benefit for third or subsequent children.

Poverty is a key driver of social work intervention. 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. Whilst Scotland has attempted to mitigate the harm caused by this position through the Scottish Child payment for families already in receipt of certain social security payments, it cannot replace the universal support that child benefit has provided since 1975.

Nobody has children in order to access a small amount of extra money. However, a 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 UK Government due to the financial picture, but the two-child cap pushes people with children into poverty. It was only a few weeks ago that Keir Starmer gave a speech about



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breaking down barriers to opportunity. Poverty is a major barrier to opportunity. Poverty puts limitations on a person's ability to thrive and live a happy and healthy life.

Financial assistance for additional children is for the needs of children, who do not decide what family they are born into. The two-child cap policy aims to punish or disincentivise parents from having children with no reference to the citizen rights of children. This policy accepts forcing children and their parents into poverty. It accepts children going hungry which in turn undermines educational attainment, causes stigma, exclusion and health problems and stores up huge social and economic problems for the future.

We understand that UK Labour has committed to reviewing Universal Credit and the benefit system. Alleviating poverty for the most vulnerable in society is a primary responsibility of government and must be tackled at source through economic and fiscal policies that reduce inequalities as well as mitigating poverty through our social security systems.

Please oppose the two-child cap. We urge you to use your influence in your leadership positions in Scottish Labour to ask the UK party leadership to commit to scrapping this unjust policy.

Don't hesitate to contact me for further discussion on this or other issues of common interest.

Yours sincerely

Alison Bavidge
National Director, Scottish Association of Social Work