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**New data reveals number of South West children affected by Government’s limit on benefits**

More than 97,500 children living in the South West are impacted by the two-child limit on benefits, new data reveals.

Figures also reveal a strong correlation between the nine per cent of children affected across the region and high rates of child poverty, even though the majority of parents are working.

Bristol has the highest rate of children affected in the South West at 12%, and Torbay, Gloucester and Plymouth 11%, while Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole have just 2% affected, the lowest percentage in the UK.

The data has been obtained by the End Child Poverty Coalition, of which children’s charity Barnardo’s is a member. Lynn Perry, MBE, Barnardo’s Chief Executive, said the two-child limit was not only unfair but one of the biggest policy drivers of poverty.

One parent from Swindon said: “It makes things hard when a child asks to do things like dance or football as there isn't enough to support them. My oldest two stopped cadets and the other stopped football due to the cost.”

There are around 1.5 million children in the UK living in households subject to the two-child limit to benefit payments – equivalent to one in 102. Areas most affected are those with the highest child poverty rates3.

Research has shown that the two-child limit has limited impact4 on increasing the number of parents who enter employment. In fact, the majority (58%) of families affected by the policy are already in work.5

Lynn Perry said: “It’s simply not right that children growing up with two or more siblings are so much more likely to be living in poverty. The majority of families receiving Universal Credit are in work, and many are struggling for reasons beyond their control - such as a family break-up, the death of a partner, or someone losing a job amid the cost-of-living crisis.

“The unfair two-child limit on benefits is one of the biggest policy drivers of child poverty. If political parties are serious about levelling-up they need to urgently commit to ending the policy. This needs to be included in the manifestos of all political parties ahead of the forthcoming election to help tackle child poverty in the UK.”

The two-child limit affects families entitled to benefits who have had a third or subsequent child after 6 April 2017. These parents are denied £3,235 per year per child compared with families who have a third or subsequent child born before that date.

Research suggests that scrapping the two-child limit is one of the most cost-effective ways of addressing child poverty. Ending the policy would lift 250,000 children out of poverty at a cost of £1.3bn.1

In September, Barnardo’s released figures from YouGov suggesting more than one in 20 children (6%) are sleeping on the floor because their families cannot afford for them to have a bed of their own. In its [No Crib For a Bed](https://www.barnardos.org.uk/research/no-crib-impact-cost-living-crisis-bed-poverty) report, the charity called for the two-child limit to be scrapped.

Joseph Howes, Chair of the End Child Poverty Coalition and CEO of Buttle UK,said: “Imagine saying to a child who turned up at school – sorry you can’t gain access, we won’t fund your education – only your two older siblings qualify. Or turning a child away from hospital when they need treatment, as they are the third child in a family. Yet this is exactly what the unfair two-child limit to benefit payments does, it denies families the support they need, at a time when they need it the most.

“As a parent I want to be able to provide for my children, especially at a magical time like Christmas. But we know from speaking with families impacted by the two-child limit that this time of year is anything but joyful. Instead, they worry about heating their homes, and providing even basic food over the Christmas period.

“If political parties seriously want to tackle child poverty, they need to start by scrapping the two-child limit to benefit payments.”

Across the nations, the percentage of children affected is 11% for both England and Wales. In Northern Ireland it is 10%, and in Scotland, 9%. The highest percentage of children affected live in the West Midlands of England.

**Case study:**

**Rosie Gilchrist** is a mum of three children – aged 13, 10 and six. She founded the charity Rosie’s Corner, which collects donations of new and preloved clothes and equipment to help families in need.

Rosie’s third child was born in May 2017 - the month after the two-child limit on benefits came in, meaning she is around £270 a month worse off.

She said: “Since the cost-of-living crisis hit I’ve been struggling to pay for gas, electricity and food. The money I do get goes in one hand and out the other just so I can make ends meet.

“The two-child limit doesn’t just penalise the third child – it penalises them all. When they have a growth spurt I can’t afford a full set of clothes for all three- I have to do it bit by bit and on a buy now pay later basis. So I have to put myself in debt.

“This Christmas is a massive worry. I’ll be taking out loans to pay for Christmas presents for the children.

“If the two-child limit was scrapped I’d be able to pay for things like extra-curricular activities for the children, so they could develop and have more positive, educational experiences. I currently can barely afford the tech and Wi-Fi that all children rely on for their education.”

**Notes to editors**

**South West percentages of children affected by two child limit.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Local authority area | **Number of children affected by 2CL** | **% of children affected by 2CL** | **Local child poverty rates 21/22** |
| Bristol | 11100 | 12% | 33.3% |
| Torbay | 2860 | 11% | 30.9% |
| Gloucester | 3190 | 11% | 31% |
| Plymouth | 5770 | 11% | 31% |
| Sedgemoor | 2660 | 10% | 28.7% |
| Torridge | 1230 | 10% | 32.4% |
| Cornwall | 10840 | 10% | 31.4% |
| South Somerset | 3230 | 10% | 27% |
| Somerset West and Taunton | 2810 | 9% | 26.6% |
| North Devon | 1770 | 9% | 30.2% |
| Forest of Dean | 1470 | 9% | 28.3% |
| Swindon | 4740 | 9% | 25.6% |
| West Devon | 930 | 9% | 26.9% |
| Tewkesbury | 1730 | 9% | 22% |
| Exeter | 1910 | 8% | 25.8% |
| Dorset | 5510 | 8% | 25% |
| East Devon | 2150 | 8% | 24.7% |
| Teignbridge | 1880 | 7% | 26.8% |
| Wiltshire | 7760 | 7% | 20.9% |
| Cheltenham | 1680 | 7% | 24.3% |
| Mendip | 1650 | 7% | 25.1% |
| South Glos | 4070 | 7% | 20.8% |
| North Somerset | 2950 | 6% | 22.3% |
| Bath and NE Somerset | 2400 | 6% | 19% |
| Cotswold | 1090 | 6% | 18.6% |
| Stroud | 1550 | 6% | 22.7% |
| South Hams | 980 | 6% | 23.9% |
| Mid Devon | 1410 | 5% | 20.2% |
| Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole | 1520 | 2% | 24.7% |

**Bottom five UK local authorities ranked by percentage of children affected by two child limit:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Elmbridge | South East | 1330 | 4% | 12.9% |
| Waverley | South East | 1080 | 4% | 14.5% |
| East Dunbartonshire | Scotland | 820 | 4% | 14.9% |
| Richmond upon Thames | London | 1510 | 3% | 12.4% |
| Bournemouth, Christchurch and Pool | South West | 1520 | 2% | 24.7% |

**About the data**

The data on the two-child limit was obtained via Freedom of Information requests to the Department of Work and Pensions, HMRC and the Department for Communities Northern Ireland. You can download the full spreadsheet of data here: <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/>

The Local Child Poverty data is calculated each year by Loughborough University, for the End Child Poverty Coalition, and can be found here: <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty/>.

**References:**

1 - Child Poverty Action Group, [Budget submission 2023](https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/budget-submission-2023), 2023

2 -  From Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit claimants: statistics related to the policy to provide support for a maximum of 2 children, April 2022:  <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-and-child-tax-credit-claimants-statistics-related-to-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-2-children-april-2022/universal-credit-and-child-tax-credit-claimants-statistics-related-to-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-2-children-april-2022#main-stories>

3 - The Local Child Poverty data is calculated each year by Loughborough University, for the End Child Poverty Coalition, and can be found here: <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty/>.

4 – From Benefit Changes & Larger families, 2022:  <https://largerfamilies.study/publications/the-two-child-limit-and-choices-over-family-size/>

5 – From Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit claimants: statistics related to the policy to provide support for a maximum of 2 children, April 2022: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-and-child-tax-credit-claimants-statistics-related-to-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-2-children-april-2022/universal-credit-and-child-tax-credit-claimants-statistics-related-to-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-2-children-april-2022#overall-numbers-of-households-affected-by-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-two-children>

**About the End Child Poverty Coalition**

The End Child Poverty Coalition is made up of over 100 organisations including child welfare groups, social justice groups, faith groups, trade unions and others. Together with a group of Youth Ambassadors we all believe that no child growing up in the UK should live in poverty.

Together we ask that this and future governments commit to end child poverty.

**About Barnardo’s**

Last year Barnardo’s provided essential support to over 357,000 children, young people, parents and carers through more than 790 services and partnerships across the UK.

We provide vital support to the children and families who need us most, to help with a range of issues including mental health, child sexual abuse and children in care.

We listen to children and young people and work to bring about positive change so that they can have a brighter future.

Visit [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/) to find out more.

**Call the 24 hour press office number on 020 8498 7555.**

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