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**New data reveals south-east hotspots of children hit by two-child limit on benefits**

**Children in Hastings, Crawley, Southampton and Slough are more likely to be hit by the two-child limit on benefits, new data reveals.**

New local data obtained by the End Child Poverty Coalition, of which children’s charity Barnardo’s is a member, shows that although south-east England as a region has comparatively low rates of child poverty, this hides stark inequalities within the region, and hotspots where the issue is acute.

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

Towns in south-east England with the highest percentage of children living in households affected by the limit are Hastings (14%), Crawley (13%), Southampton (13%) and Slough (13%).

In contrast, the areas with the lowest rates include Wokingham (4%), Epsom (4%) and Windsor and Maidenhead (5%).

Across south-east England as a whole, 8% of children are affected by the cap. That amounts to 160,000 children whose life chances could be blighted by the policy.

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 by the two-child limit 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

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.

**Emma Bowman, Barnardo’s Director of Children’s Services in South-East England,** 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 households 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, penalising 250,000 children. 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.”

**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.”

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**Notes to editors**

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| **Local authority** | **Number of children affected by 2CL** | **% of total children affected by 2CL** | **Local child poverty rates 21/22** |
| Hastings | 2600 | 14% | 34.9% |
| Crawley | 3840 | 13% | 33.9% |
| Southampton | 6730 | 13% | 35.8% |
| Slough | 5940 | 13% | 35.4% |
| Swale | 4400 | 13% | 29.8% |
| Thanet | 3680 | 13% | 35.8% |
| Havant | 3010 | 12% | 33.1% |
| Portsmouth | 5210 | 12% | 34.6% |
| Gravesham | 3060 | 12% | 31.6% |
| Gosport | 2010 | 12% | 31.7% |

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| **UK nations** | **Children affected by 2CL** | **% of children affected by 2CL** | **Local child poverty rates 21/21** |
| England | 1335080 | 11% | 31% |
| Wales | 69520 | 11% | 28% |
| Northern Ireland | 44950 | 10% | 22% |
| Scotland | 87160 | 9% | 24% |

**English regions ranked by percentage of children affected by two child limit.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **English region** | **Number of children affected by 2CL** | **% of children affected by 2CL** | **Local child poverty rates 21/22** |
| West Midlands | 183030 | 14% | 38% |
| North West | 208680 | 13% | 34% |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 150920 | 13% | 31% |
| North East | 65460 | 12% | 35% |
| London | 231470 | 11% | 33% |
| East Midlands | 109630 | 11% | 33% |
| East of England | 125810 | 9% | 24% |
| South West | 97530 | 9% | 27% |
| South East | 162550 | 8% | 25% |

**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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