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NEW DATA REVEALS 1 IN 8 NORTH EAST CHILDREN NOW HIT BY 'CRUEL' TWO-CHILD LIMIT

One in eight – 12% – of all children growing up across the North East are now living in families affected by the Government's 'two-child limit', new data published today has revealed.

Research by the End Child Poverty Coalition has found that, by April 2023, **65,450 babies, children and young people across the region were directly impacted by the policy.**

Since its introduction in April 2017, the two-child limit has meant that almost all families having a third or subsequent child are no longer entitled to receive support for those children through Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit. This means younger children missing out on £62 per week in support that their older siblings receive.

The Government's rationale for the policy is that parents who receive support from our social security system should make the 'same financial choices' about having children as those supporting themselves solely through work.

However, the majority of families caught by the two-child limit across the country – 58% – are in work, with the policy creating a hole in their budgets that simply cannot be plugged by working additional hours. Many others will have their children at a time when they *are* able to support themselves solely through work, but may need to turn to the social security system at some point in the future – for example, as a result of redundancy, bereavement, ill health or the breakdown of a relationship.

[35% of all babies, children and young people](#) across the North East are living below the poverty line – with our region having experienced the steepest increases in child poverty of anywhere in the UK over most of the last decade. [Research](#) has shown that abolishing the two-child limit would be the most cost-effective way of reducing child poverty. If implemented, this would immediately lift 250,000 children out of poverty across the country – and a further 850,000 children would be raised out of deep poverty.

Indeed, the data published today reveals a strong correlation between the two-child limit and areas with high rates of child poverty in the North East – **with the worst affected area being Middlesbrough, where almost one in five (18%) of all children across the borough are now impacted by this policy, followed by Newcastle (14% of all children), Hartlepool (14%), Gateshead (13%), and Redcar and Cleveland (13%).**

The Rt Revd Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham and Patron of the North East Child Poverty Commission, introduced a Bill into Parliament which would have ended the two-child limit if passed. **He said:**

'Every single child growing up in our region is valuable, and deserves to receive the support they need to thrive – but the two-child limit is making life increasingly hard for thousands of families across the North East, with one in eight of all children in our area now affected by this policy.'

'None of us would contemplate turning a child away from school, their family doctor or local library because of the number of siblings they have, or the order in which they happened to be born – but that is exactly what is happening with our social security safety net. This is cruel, totally unfair and has to change.'

Bishop Paul's Bill passed its final stages in the House of Lords on 24 March, but did not receive a date for debate in the Commons before the end of the last Parliamentary session which means it will progress no further.

Michele Deans, Interim Chair of the North East Child Poverty Commission – and Operations Director at the charity Children North East – added:

'The link between the two-child limit and those areas with the highest rates of child poverty in our region is absolutely clear – and we know that this policy, and the hardship it creates, are now impacting both the childhoods and longer-term life chances and opportunities of tens of thousands of kids growing up across the North East.'

'Any Government serious about tackling child poverty, both here in the North East and across the country, would commit to ending the two-child limit as an immediate priority – and we strongly urge all political parties to do so.'

Steph Capewell is the Founder and Chief Executive of Love, Amelia – a baby bank established in 2018 to serve families in the Sunderland and South Tyneside areas, which has since expanded to cover the whole of Tyne and Wear and County Durham, due to high and rising levels of need. **Steph said:**

'Along with many other charities across the region, we see the damaging impact of the two-child limit day in and day out at Love, Amelia – with low income families, many in work, turning to us for support as a direct result of this policy.'

'As parents and carers across the North East are preparing for Christmas and what should be a magical time with their children, we know that thousands are filled with dread at how they will even provide their kids with the absolute essentials this winter. Children across the North East deserve better than this, and we know that ending the two-child limit would have a major impact on reducing hardship for so many of the families that we support.'

Rosie Gilchrist is a mum of three children – aged 13, 10 and six. She founded the charity **Rosie's Corner in Hexham**, which collects donations of new and pre-loved clothes and equipment to help families in need. Rosie's third child was born in May 2017 – the month after the two-child limit was introduced. **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.'

ENDS

Notes

1. The North East Child Poverty Commission, Church of England, Love, Amelia and Rosie’s Corner are all members of the national [End Child Poverty Coalition](#), which 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 – and we ask that this and future Governments commit to end child poverty.
2. The data on the number of children affected by the two-child limit by region, local authority and Parliamentary constituency was obtained by the End Child Poverty Coalition under the Freedom of Information Act and relates to April 2023 (the latest month for which figures on this policy are available). The full spreadsheet of data can be downloaded here: <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/>
3. The following tables show the number and percentage of **all** children affected by the two-child limit in each local authority and Parliamentary constituency in the North East, alongside the (after housing costs) child poverty rate for each area (based on [End Child Poverty data published in June 2023](#))

The number of children affected by the two-child limit in these tables includes all children in a family subject to the limit, rather than only the third or subsequent child ineligible for support as a result of the policy, as families do not restrict their spending on only that child.

Local authority	Number of children in the area affected by the two-child limit	% of all children in the area affected by the two-child limit	Child poverty rate in the area
Middlesbrough	6,280	18%	40.6%
Newcastle	8,170	14%	37.9%
Hartlepool	2,980	14%	35.3%
Gateshead	5,330	13%	33.4%
Redcar & Cleveland	3,720	13%	35.4%
Durham	11,990	12%	34.0%
Sunderland	6,750	12%	35.4%
South Tyneside	3,790	12%	35.6%
Stockton-on-Tees	4,940	11%	32.6%
Darlington	2,510	11%	34.0%
Northumberland	5,520	9%	30.5%
North Tyneside	3,470	8%	29.4%
NORTH EAST	65,450	12%	35.2%

Parliamentary constituency	Number of children in the constituency affected by the two-child limit	% of <u>all</u> children in the constituency affected by the two-child limit	Child poverty rate in the constituency
Middlesbrough	4,880	21%	48.7%
Gateshead	3,530	18%	38.9%
Newcastle Central	4,090	17%	43.0%
Hartlepool	2,980	14%	35.3%
Stockton North	2,940	14%	33.9%
Redcar	2,690	14%	38.4%
Sedgefield	2,280	13%	35.9%
South Shields	2,200	13%	39.7%
Bishop Auckland	2,310	13%	36.9%
Easington	2,250	13%	36.6%
Newcastle East	1,920	13%	33.3%
Middlesbrough South & East Cleveland	2,430	12%	35.6%
Sunderland Central	2,330	12%	34.2%
Washington & Sunderland West	2,310	12%	33.4%
Darlington	2,360	12%	37.3%
North Durham	2,050	12%	35.3%
Wansbeck	1,950	12%	35.3%
Houghton & Sunderland South	2,090	11%	31.9%
Jarrow	1,930	11%	34.3%
Blyth Valley	1,850	11%	35.2%
Newcastle North	2,160	10%	27.3%
North Tyneside	2,100	10%	31.3%
North West Durham	1,870	10%	33.4%
Blaydon	1,460	9%	29.5%
Berwick-upon-Tweed	1,050	9%	33.6%
Stockton South	2,000	8%	27.3%
City of Durham	1,390	8%	30.4%
Tynemouth	1,380	6%	24.2%
Hexham	680	5%	22.3%