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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday 4th December

**NEW DATA REVEALS THE WEST MIDLANDS IS THE REGION HARDEST HIT BY UNFAIR TWO-CHILD LIMIT**

* **1 in 7 children in the West Midlands live in families impacted by the two-child limit**
* **In Birmingham, the worst hit area, this rises to 1 in 5**
* **The national average is 1 in 10 children**
* **There is a strong correlation between the areas with high proportions of children impacted by the two-child limit, and high levels of child poverty.**
* **In the West Midlands 38% of children are living in poverty**
* **Children living in the North of England are more likely than children in the south to be hit by this ‘sibling tax’**

Children in the West Midlands are more likely to be hit by the two-child limit to benefit payments than in any other region. New data reveals that 14% of all children living here are from families impacted by this unfair ‘sibling tax’. This is 1 in 7 children.

Across the UK, 11% of all children are living in families which have benefit payments deducted as a result of the two-child limit. That is 1 in 10 children.

The new data also reveals a strong correlation between the two-child limit and areas with high rates of child poverty. In the West Midlands a shocking 38% of children are living in poverty.

This data also reveals that children living in the North of England are more likely to be living in families impacted by this unfair ‘sibling tax’. After the West Midlands, the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber are the joint second hardest hit regions with 13% of children impacted by this policy. This is followed by the North East at 12%. In contrast, the South of England sees the lowest figures with 8% of children impacted in the South East and 9% in the South West.

In the West Midlands Birmingham is the hardest hit area with a shocking 20% of children living in families impacted by the policy. This equals one in every 5 children. Then Stoke on Trent, Walsall and Sandwell all have 17% of children impacted, which equals 1 in 6 children.

Full breakdowns for the region are available in the notes below.

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 up to £3,235 per year[[1]](#footnote-1) per child compared with families who have a third or subsequent child born before that date. The majority (58%) of families affected by the policy are already in work[[2]](#footnote-2).

Across the UK, larger families are much more likely to experience poverty. The poverty rate for children in families with three or more children is 42%, compared with 23% and 22% among children in families with one or two children[[3]](#footnote-3).

Many families could have planned to support more than two children, but for many reasons including; a family break up, death of a partner, losing a job and the cost-of-living crisis – are no longer able to meet the financial requirements of providing for their family.

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[[4]](#footnote-4).

The End Child Poverty Coalition is calling on West Midlands MPs to highlight the shocking numbers of children impacted by this policy, in parliament – and is calling for all political parties to commit to scrapping this unfair ‘sibling tax’.

**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 in Birmingham or Stoke on Trent, or any other part of the West Midlands– sorry you can’t gain access, we won’t fund your education – only your two older siblings qualify. 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.”*

**Lynn Perry MBE, Barnardo’s Chief Executive, a member of the End Child Poverty Coalition 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.”*

**Data for the West Midlands**

**The 20 Westminster Constituencies in the West Midlands with the highest proportion of children impacted by the two-child limit**

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|  | **Two-child limit figures** |   | **Local child poverty data 2021/22** |
| **Gov name** | **Total number of households affected** | **Total number of Children n these families** | **% of all children in area living in a family affected by the 2 child limit** | **Number of children living in poverty** | **% of children living in poverty** |
| Birmingham, Hodge Hill | 3030 | 11490 | 26% | 23630 | 54.0% |
| Birmingham, Ladywood | 2550 | 9590 | 25% | 20723 | 54.6% |
| Birmingham, Yardley | 2010 | 7440 | 23% | 16227 | 50.4% |
| Birmingham, Erdington | 1590 | 5880 | 22% | 12043 | 44.4% |
| Walsall North | 1440 | 5210 | 21% | 11443 | 45.3% |
| Birmingham, Hall Green | 1790 | 6670 | 20% | 18090 | 53.7% |
| Birmingham, Perry Barr | 1620 | 5930 | 20% | 14947 | 49.6% |
| Stoke-on-Trent North | 1210 | 4400 | 19% | 10923 | 47.8% |
| Walsall South | 1490 | 5430 | 18% | 13762 | 46.6% |
| Warley | 1370 | 5030 | 18% | 13892 | 50.5% |
| Wolverhampton North East | 1160 | 4190 | 18% | 10828 | 45.9% |
| Stoke-on-Trent Central | 920 | 3380 | 18% | 9291 | 48.6% |
| West Bromwich West | 1180 | 4290 | 17% | 11936 | 48.0% |
| Wolverhampton South East | 1150 | 4160 | 17% | 11578 | 47.5% |
| Birmingham, Northfield | 1250 | 4540 | 17% | 10468 | 39.2% |
| Telford | 1130 | 4160 | 17% | 9375 | 38.2% |
| Coventry North East | 1510 | 5530 | 16% | 14291 | 41.5% |
| Dudley North | 840 | 3050 | 15% | 8798 | 43.8% |
| West Bromwich East | 1000 | 3580 | 15% | 11072 | 46.6% |
| Stoke-on-Trent South | 840 | 3010 | 15% | 8937 | 44.1% |

**The 20 Local Authorities in the West Midlands with the highest proportion of children impacted by the two-child limit**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **CTC and UC** |  | **Local child Poverty rates 2021/22** |
| **Gov name** | **Total number of households affected** | **Total number of Children n these families** | **% of all children in area living in a family affected by the 2 child limit** | **Number of children living in poverty** | **% of children living in poverty** |
| Birmingham | 15860 | 58930 | 20% | 139704 | 46.4% |
| Stoke-on-Trent | 2810 | 10280 | 17% | 25812 | 43.5% |
| Walsall | 3330 | 12090 | 17% | 30539 | 43.3% |
| Sandwell | 4000 | 14500 | 17% | 39217 | 44.6% |
| Wolverhampton | 2890 | 10380 | 16% | 27568 | 43.3% |
| Telford and Wrekin | 1750 | 6460 | 15% | 15430 | 36.4% |
| Coventry | 3230 | 11750 | 15% | 31458 | 39.6% |
| Dudley | 2510 | 9060 | 13% | 27864 | 39.4% |
| Nuneaton and Bedworth | 1000 | 3530 | 12% | 9643 | 32.5% |
| East Staffordshire | 870 | 3210 | 12% | 10090 | 37.0% |
| Wyre Forest | 650 | 2310 | 12% | 6999 | 35.2% |
| Cannock Chase | 660 | 2310 | 11% | 7129 | 35.0% |
| Tamworth | 540 | 1940 | 11% | 5743 | 33.4% |
| Redditch | 580 | 2060 | 11% | 6530 | 33.7% |
| Newcastle-under-Lyme | 670 | 2360 | 10% | 7829 | 33.1% |
| Worcester | 590 | 2110 | 10% | 7288 | 34.3% |
| North Warwickshire | 350 | 1200 | 9% | 3981 | 30.6% |
| Herefordshire, County of | 910 | 3210 | 9% | 10884 | 30.7% |
| Solihull | 1210 | 4270 | 9% | 12851 | 26.1% |
| Shropshire | 1430 | 5090 | 8% | 18306 | 30.4% |

**NOTES**

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, members campaign for a UK free of child poverty.

The two-child limit policy came into force on 6 April 2017. Under the policy, parents are not entitled to any extra support through universal credit or child tax credit to help with raising a third or subsequent child born after 6 April 2017.

The data provided was obtained by the End Child Poverty Coalition under the Freedom of Information Act and covers the period up until April 2023. This is presented alongside research from the Coalition on the number of children living in poverty. More information on this research can be found here: <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty/>.

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1. DWP, Benefit and pension rates 2023 to 2024, [Benefit and pension rates 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-and-pension-rates-2023-to-2024/benefit-and-pension-rates-2023-to-2024#universal-credit) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. From <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> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Stone, J. 2023. *Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2021/22.* Available here: <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Local-indicators-of-child-poverty-after-housing-costs_Final-Report-3.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Child Poverty Action Group, Budget submission 2023, [Budget submission 2023 | CPAG](https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/briefing/budget-submission-2023) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)