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Dr Ruth Allen
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Our ref: MC2024/59716

13 August 2024

Dear Dr Allen,

Thank you for your letter of 30 July to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which has been passed to this Department for a response. You wrote about Universal Credit and the two child policy and I am replying as the Minister of State for Social Security and Disability.

This Government has inherited a number of policies, leaving us with difficult choices. In rebuilding the economy we need to focus our support on those who need it most.

The previous Government limited the number of children a household could receive benefit for a child element for to two, unless they were born before 6 April 2017 or an exception applies. In April 2024, 370,000 Universal Credit households did not receive child element for at least one child due to this policy, and 21,000 had an exemption from the policy.

In April 2024, there were 450,000 Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit households affected by the two child policy (i.e. they had a third or subsequent child born on or after 6 April 2017). 440,000 households were not receiving the child element for at least one child because of the policy and 1.6m children lived in those households. 24,000 households were in receipt of an exception.

An exception to the policy applies for:

Any child in a household who is:

- adopted from local authority care.
- living long-term with friends or family, who would otherwise be at risk of entering the care system, or where a child is born to a young person for whom the customer is also responsible (that young person will make a separate claim when they turn 16).

Third and subsequent children who are:

- additional children in a multiple birth
- likely to have been conceived through non-consensual conception.

Child Benefit continues to be paid for all children in eligible families. An additional amount of Universal Credit for any qualifying disabled child or disabled qualifying young person is payable regardless of the number of children in the household.

Whilst the Government cannot commit to ending the two child limit today, the Prime Minister has recently announced the creation of a new ministerial taskforce to begin work on the Child Poverty Strategy.

We will be creating an ambitious plan to reduce child poverty, working with a broad range of stakeholders to deliver for every child and break down barriers to opportunity.

The UK Government is also committed to working with the devolved governments and key stakeholders on the Child Poverty Strategy.

With all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Timms', with a horizontal line above the name.

Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
Minister of State for Social Security and Disability