



Two-child limit on universal credit

Sir, Today the "two-child limit" policy, which restricts tax credit and universal credit to the first two children in a family, has been in place for a year. The policy is making it harder for parents to achieve a stable and resilient family life. By 2021, 640,000 families will have been affected. Most are low-earning working families, most have three children and some will have made decisions about family size when they were able to support children through earnings alone, but later claimed tax credits or universal credit after bereavement, redundancy, separation, disability, illness or simply low pay.

The policy is expected to tip an estimated extra 200,000 children into poverty. It also conveys the regrettable message that some children matter less than others, depending on their place in the sibling birth order.

It is a grave concern that there are likely to be mothers who will face an invidious choice between poverty and terminating an unplanned pregnancy.

Children are a private joy and a public good. They are surely all equally deserving of subsistence support.

THE RT REV SARAH MULLALLY, Bishop of London; THE RT REV PAUL BUTLER, Bishop of Durham; HARUN KHAN, secretary general, Muslim Council of Britain; GILLIAN MERRON, chief executive, Board of Deputies of British Jews. *Plus a further 65 names at thetimes.co.uk/letters*

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