



THE LONDON SCHOOL
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Contact: Dr Kate Summers (k.summers@lse.ac.uk)

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Her Majesty's Treasury
1 Horse Guard's Road
London SW1A 2HQ

30th March 2020

Dear Chancellor,

Raising Child Benefit to £50 to Help Families through the COVID-19 Pandemic

As part of your ongoing response to the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, we propose a simple, efficient and cost-effective way to help the Government provide urgently-needed support to families – that is, immediately increasing Child Benefit to £50 per child, per week. Crucially, it requires no changes to systems and will offer instant impact.

As you will be aware, Child Benefit is currently paid at £20.70 a week for your first child, and £13.70 for subsequent children. A number of charities have rightly advocated an increase in Child Benefit, suggesting a £10 rise. Evidence shows Child Benefit now covers at best a fifth of the cost of raising a child – from food to clothing and basic utilities - meaning £10 is in truth a modest sum, with a far higher figure justifiable. Child Benefit of £50 per child per week would be a reasonable and appropriate step.

Any concern about payments being made to those who may not need them will be assuaged by the High Income Child Benefit Charge for people earning over £50,000. This cut-off is already in place, so again no new arrangements are required. However, given the current extraordinary circumstances, the Government could achieve further simplification by abolishing that charge.

We also suggest it would be prudent to abolish the 2-child limit to Universal Credit and Tax Credits, which while not directly relevant to Child Benefit, impacts severely on other support. This would ease the pressing burdens families are experiencing in these unprecedented times.

Understandably, there continues to be significant debate about what income support measures are most urgently needed over the next few months, in addition to those already put in place. Our advice to Government, as social security experts who have analysed in detail the relevant data and urgent needs of families, is not to fail to see the wood for the trees. A rise in Child Benefit offers an immediate way forward.

We would be delighted to discuss this further, and arrangements can be coordinated via Dr Kate Summers at LSE, who is at k.summers@lse.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Jonathan Bradshaw (University of York)
Professor Sir John Hills (London School of Economics)
Professor Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Loughborough University)
Dr Michael Orton (University of Warwick)
Dr Kate Summers (London School of Economics)
Professor Sharon Wright (University of Glasgow)

Plus 79 further signatories:

Professor David Abbott (University of Bristol)
Dr Lindsey Appleyard (Coventry University)
Dr Dave Beck (University of Salford)
Julia Brannen (Emerita Professor, Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education)
Dr Gideon Calder (Swansea University)
Professor Claire Callender (University College London and Birkbeck)
Mick Carpenter (Emeritus Professor of Social Policy, University of Warwick)
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Dr Harriet Churchill (Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield)
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Dr Kerris Cooper (CASE, London School of Economics)
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cc. Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions