

60 Anglican Bishops have joined with senior representatives from other Christian, Jewish, and Muslim organisations to urge the Government to re-think its two-child limit policy, which came into effect a year ago today.

The government's welfare reforms have commanded headlines over the past few years. But this one, which restricts the level of financial support given to families with more than two children regardless of need, has been largely overlooked.

Christian tradition has always recognised children as a blessing and not a burden. Anything which sends the implicit message that a third or fourth child is any less valued than the first should be strongly resisted.

When this policy was considered in the House of Lords, I worked closely with other Bishops and peers to outline our concerns. One year on, my fears have only grown as we see the real impact on families and children.

At least 200,000 more children will be pushed into poverty by the time the two-child limit is fully implemented, whilst many more will be trapped even deeper. A senior researcher at a respected independent think tank put it to me very starkly: if you set out to design a policy to increase child poverty, then it would be hard to do much better than the two-child limit.

Some communities will be hit especially hard, particularly those whose faith includes a devout desire to avoid contraception or abortion.

The two-child limit wrongly assumes that all children can be planned, and that all families can accurately predict their financial circumstances eighteen years into the future at the time when they decide to have a child. We know life is far more complicated: contraception can fail; families may separate and re-form; jobs can be gained and lost; and none of us can guarantee that we will not face ill-health or bereavement.

As a society, we believe in justice and compassion. It is simply not right that some children get support and others don't. The UK is unique in having a two-child limit; in fact, the majority of developed countries provide extra, rather than less, support for larger families.

We share a moral responsibility to make sure that every child has a decent standard of living, no matter who they are or where they come from.

The Government has an opportunity to right this wrong by removing its two-child limit policy. We urge the Prime Minister to address this burning injustice.

Rt Revd Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham

[Bishops call for rethink on two-child limit](https://www.churchofengland.org/blessing-not-burden-why-every-child-should-be-valued-equally)