

Dear _____ MP,

With the budget just over a month away, we ask you as our representative in Parliament to press the Chancellor on making the Child Benefit fair and proportionate.

Child Benefit was introduced in the 1970s to replace family allowances and child tax allowances recognising the cost of raising children. Moreover, it was specifically designed to be given to the mother or main carer so that she could have an income independent of her spouse in recognition of her caring responsibilities.

The Higher Income Child Benefit Tax Charge introduced in 2013 was meant to affect only the top 15% of households yet it did not take into account that a household income is NOT the same as individual income. It immediately and disproportionately adversely affected single parents and single-earner families who saw this tax charge applied at household incomes of £50k whilst dual-earner families could earn up to £100k and keep their benefit (not pay any tax charge). How well off a family is, is based on the number of people dependent on an income and housing costs. This is how the benefit system works.

It has meant that some mothers with no income and who may be in the poorer half of the population lose the benefit whilst other mothers with an income and in households in the top 15% population keep it. The situation has been made worse with inflation and the freezing of tax thresholds.

The Chancellor, if he has any headroom to decrease taxes, should target support at families and remedy this injustice.

Child Benefit could return to being a universal benefit. Otherwise, a clause could be added to reduce the discrepancy between households with a single income and those with dual incomes such as proposals set out by 'Tax & the Family' & 'MAHM' at mothersathomematter.com/child-benefit-charge: *'(2A) In any year in which P does not have a partner or any partner P has does not have an income exceeding the personal allowance, P's adjusted net income shall be halved.'*

The current effect of this charge is to make the marginal tax rate so high that it is hardly worth earning more. It destroys aspiration, makes it very difficult to survive on one income, and separates babies from their mothers before they are ready as mothers are forced to plug the income gap. There is no evidence that nurseries are better for all children at nine months but plenty of evidence to show children thrive with consistent, loving care in a home environment.

In addition, the charge is complicated, and it is easy to make mistakes. Many families have been unfairly fined and have to pay interest on what they owe and many mothers have lost out on their pension credits due to not being aware that credits are linked to claiming child benefit.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope that making Child Benefit fair can be the first step to removing the penalties stay-at-home parents face so that families have more of a choice in how they care for their children.

Yours sincerely,