

BENEFIT CAP = SOCIAL CLEANSING CAP RENTS NOT BENEFITS

The government's newly introduced 'benefit cap' puts a limit on the total benefit that households can get. If affected, your Housing Benefit will be cut so that your total household benefits are less than the 'capped' maximum.

The cap makes no allowances for the size of a family or where in the country you live. It will hit larger families in urban areas, particularly London, the hardest. If landlords don't lower their rents significantly or there are no changes to the cap, thousands of families could be forced out of their homes, breaking up communities.

CHALLENGING THE MYTHS

Why should people claiming benefit get more than people in work? The £500 cap is meant to reflect average weekly earnings of a family in work, to send a message that benefit claimants should be no better off than the average working family. But government sums ignore the reality that many working families will also be entitled to claim housing benefit if they have to pay high rents, and can claim child benefit or tax credits too.

We've got to cut the deficit. It's landlords demanding high rents that push up the housing benefit bill. So why not cut rents instead of benefits? The cap is also likely to cost as much as it saves. The calculated savings do not include extra costs to local authorities for dealing with the homelessness created, or the impact on child development and health. The government uses the deficit as an excuse to make cuts to suit its own agenda.

They scapegoat benefit claimants, but soon find money to cut taxes for the rich.

To stop this mass social cleansing, we have to disrupt the cap and force a government U-turn. Landlords also need to lower their rents.

What can you do if you are affected by the cap?

People living with three or more dependent children will be most likely to be affected, facing cuts in benefit of up to £400 a week. But it will affect many others too.

When you find out what your assessment is, request a detailed calculation. You may be able to appeal it. This will slow the system down.

If you stand to lose some of your housing benefit or are threatened with eviction because of rent arrears, don't panic or suffer alone. Get in touch (see below) for advice, support and to meet others in a similar situation.

In addition, you should:

- Apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) from the council to cover the shortfall.
- Check if you can claim Working Tax Credit - WTC claimants are exempt from the cap. You may also be able to claim WTC if you are self-employed.
- If you are a private tenant, consider asking your landlord to reduce your rent.

Whatever your situation, get in touch and get organised!

For support and advice

[NAME OF LOCAL GROUP]

[CONTACT DETAILS, INCLUDING PHONE NUMBER]

Benefit Cap Basics

- £500 per week for couples or people with dependent children
- £350 per week for single people

It may affect you if you claim: JSA, Income Support, ESA, HB, Child Tax Credit, Child Benefit

It won't affect you if you claim: DLA, Working Tax Credit, Pension Credit