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Universal Credit to Halve Support for Disabled Children, Family Action Warns

Charity Family Action which works with vulnerable and disadvantaged families is today warning that the Government's new Universal Credit, which is currently being discussed at Committee Stage in Parliament, will halve support for disabled children compared to that currently available through the disability element of Child Tax Credit.

The move, which is being condemned by Family Action could see disabled children lose up to £1366 per year compared to current support - in some cases amounting to substantially more than £20,000 over the course of their childhood. Families could lose £16 per week, sufficient to pay for the additional costs that many disabled children have such as clothing, fees to attend special needs pre-school and after school clubs, heating or other bills. The disability element of child tax credit is available per disabled child and so a family caring for more than one disabled child could be hit even harder by these changes.

Whilst the most severely disabled children will receive a very slight increase in the disability additions for their child under Universal Credit, compared to the disability element of child tax credit, an estimated 100,000 families could see their support cut in half from a maximum of £52 per week, down to £25.95.

Some families with severely visually impaired children will be protected from the change, since they will be moved onto the higher rate of support.

The changes will not affect the amount of Disability Living Allowance which families receive, since these will be left outside of the Universal Credit.

Family Action Chief Executive Helen Dent said: "We're due a Child Poverty Strategy but with this callous cut the Government are making sure that some of the most vulnerable children will be poorer from the start. The Government's slash and burn approach to support for disabled children will hit some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families who rely on this extra support to help them cope with the added responsibility of caring for a disabled child. We know that parents we work with are already struggling financially. This added pressure will make life even more difficult for those families caring for disabled children, will mean many disabled children will lose out and will push families further into poverty as they struggle to make ends meet to provide for their children. The Government should reconsider this proposal."

Ends

For more information about changes to support for disabled children please see the attached policy briefing.

For more information please contact Anthony McCaul on 0207 241 7632 or 0781 309 2040 or by emailing anthony-mccaul@family-action.org.uk

Charity Citizen's Advice are also concerned about this issue. For more information and comment from Citizen's Advice please contact Catherine Torazzo, Media Relations Manager, Citizens Advice, Tel: 0207 833 7178 or Mob: 07792 295083.