

## [The cost of the benefit cap](#) [1]

Written by [Sam Bowman](#) [2] | Wednesday 1 February 2012

The BBC has an [article](#) [3] today that shows the harm that the benefit cap would do to an average family on benefits. The graph, above, summarizes their income and expenditures.

It's distressing enough that Ray, the father of the family, can say "The market for my skills dried up 10 years ago - there's a total lack of work in my area of expertise [educational software writing]". In that ten years, has he tried doing something else? He also says, "I see eight people here having to choose between eating or heating." Grim stuff, but is this true?

£82.40 a week is no small sum, but look closely at what those expenditures include: Sky TV, 24 cans of lager, 200 cigarettes and a large pouch of tobacco. Frankly, I find it unbelievable that a family of eight could spend £240 a week on groceries without being able to cut down, but let's leave food expenditures aside, along with the nebulous categories like "entertainment" and "shows". Here are the weekly costs of just this family's luxuries:

Sky TV - £15

24 cans of lager - £20

200 cigarettes - £70

Large pouch of tobacco - £12

Total - £117

If they're choosing between "eating or heating" without thinking about cutting the above expenses, well, OK. Some people have unusual priorities, and good luck to them. I'm in favour of as many people as possible who want to smoke doing so, if only to annoy the health fascists at ASH and the BMA. But that's not something taxpayers should be paying for.

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