

Stay at home mums revolt: Mothers unite with Tory MPs to demand family-friendly tax policy

- **Stay at home mothers attack the Government's 'misguided' Budget**
- **Claim new policies are forcing them to abandon their children to work**
- **Pressure group warn ministers the Budget risk 'cohesion of society'**

By Tim Shipman



Anti-mums: The new Budget is 'undermining the family,' according to Laura Perrins (pictured with her son Matthew)

Stay at home mothers have accused the Government of forcing them to abandon their children and return to work. The attack comes as David Cameron faces a fresh headache with his own MPs threatening to derail Budget legislation unless he introduces a tax break for married couples.

Pressure group Mothers at Home Matter warned ministers that their policies on childcare and tax are 'misguided' and risk the 'cohesion of society' by undermining the family.

Spokesman Laura Perrins, who recently confronted Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg on his radio phone-in, said: 'This Budget is a misguided attempt to force mothers to leave their children and return to work. Survey after survey reveals that many women who work full-time would prefer to reduce their hours. Nothing in this Budget helps women to do this.

'Many children, infants in particular, need the loving care and attention a mother provides.

'Not only does this Budget ignore this but it is actively putting barriers between a mother and her child. The Coalition are willing to support all care given to a child, other than that given by its mother.' Former children's minister Tim Loughton plans to table amendments to the Finance Bill – which puts Budget changes into law – to force Chancellor George Osborne to introduce a tax break for married couples. Dozens of Tory MPs are set to back the move, piling pressure on the Prime Minister to act.

Last month's Budget confirmed the Government's plans to slash child benefit from families with a single earner on £50,000 and axe it altogether for those with one on £60,000. Those plans discriminate against couples where the mother stays at home with the children – since two earner couples who each earn a little under those thresholds keep on claiming.

Family groups are also angry that the Government is offering childcare subsidies to parents who both work but no equivalent allowance to households with a stay-at-home mother or father.



Under fire: Prime Minister David Cameron and Chancellor George Osborne and are under pressure from their own MPs who threaten to derail Budget legislation unless a tax break for married couples is introduced

There are 2.2million households where one member is in full-time work and the other is not earning. 1.2million or 53 per cent of these households contain children.

Mr Cameron has repeatedly promised to introduce transferable tax allowances for married couples by 2015, which would save them around £150 a year.

But Mr Osborne, who is privately cool about the idea, has ignored demands by Tory MPs to bring in the measure now, sparking speculation that couples will have to wait until a few months before the general election before it is introduced.



Accusation: Stay at home mothers claim the Budget is an attempt by the Government to force them to leave their children and return to work

Seeking to turn the screws, Mrs Perrins last night urged MPs to amend the Finance Bill to force the Government's hand – a move that is usually frowned upon in Parliament since the Finance Bill contains all the measures outlined in the Budget.

She also took aim at the other measures in the Budget. 'Universal child benefit was a fair way of recognising the contribution mothers made when they choose to care for their children themselves.

'The removal of this provision from some families and its replacement with a child-care allowance which only applies to those with external child-care costs is clearly discriminatory. 'If the Coalition want to be remembered as family-friendly and wish to make Britain a more cohesive society they should start treating the family as a co-dependent team and do away with the legal and economic fiction that parents of children work in an individual and isolated way.' Mr Loughton said: 'It is essential we don't create a two-tier system between stay-at-home mothers and mothers who go out to work.

'Both are valuable but we must make sure we don't discriminate between them in the tax system. Mothers at Home Matter have a strong point and the Chancellor needs to sit up and take notice.' While the Finance Bill cannot be amended when it has its second reading today, Mr Loughton is set to put down amendments demanding a marriage tax allowance at the report stage of the Bill. The Institute of Fiscal Studies has shown that 70 per cent of the benefit of a marriage tax allowance will go to those in the lower half of the income distribution.

A Treasury spokesman said: 'The Government remains committed to recognising marriage in the tax and benefit system. We want to show we value commitment and will consider a range of options and make proposals at the appropriate time.'