

The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

Childcare costs

Childcare costs on top of rising household bills are putting working parents, but particularly women, in a very difficult position



The increasing pressures of raising a family

UNISON has renewed its commitment to campaign for fully-funded childcare in the wake of a new report showing the extent to which working parents are struggling.

[2023 Working Families Index](#), published last week, found that significantly more parents are reporting it is 'financially harder to raise a family'.

60% of respondents reported that making ends meet and raising a family has become more difficult 'over the last three years'. This represents a significant increase from just 45% in 2019.

Childcare costs in the UK, which are some of the highest in the world, are a significant factor. Over half of parents surveyed said availability of childcare impacts

their capacity to work, with mothers twice as likely to report availability of childcare having a 'big impact' on their ability to work than fathers.

Availability of childcare impacts not just capacity to work but also career progression, particularly for mothers.

UNISON national officer Josie Irwin said: "Childcare costs on top of rising household bills are putting working parents, but particularly women, in a very difficult position. It's women who end up leaving their jobs because

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childcare is so expensive.”

Earlier this year, UNISON provided evidence to an inquiry into support for childcare and the early years. The union called for:

- fully funded childcare from the point of need;
- affordable and flexible so women can work if they want;
- good pay, terms and conditions for the staff that deliver it;
- high quality education for all children, including adequate provision for disabled children and those with special educational needs.

Ms Irwin continued: “What’s needed is fully-funded childcare, which is affordable and flexible, with properly paid staff and universal access.”

A [report](#) published in March revealed that the UK is losing a minimum of £27bn per year - equivalent to 1% of GDP - because a lack of suitable childcare is preventing mothers from working the hours they would like.

The government has pledged to improve childcare by extending the 30 hours of free childcare currently available to working parents for children aged between three and five to all children, from nine months old up to five years. These changes - a direct result of the campaigning work UNISON has done alongside groups like Pregnant Then Screwed and the Women’s Budget Group - will begin gradually in April 2024.

UNISON general secretary Christina McAnea said: “I remember the stress and exhaustion of working full-time while raising a young family, but years on, I’m shocked to see how bad our childcare sector is. Costs are through the roof and staff are underpaid and undervalued.

“While the government presides over a childcare system that’s pricing people out of having children and limiting women’s careers, UNISON is leading the campaign for affordable childcare and better pay and conditions for staff.

“Our whole economy and society relies on a functioning childcare sector. So we will do everything we can to give women, parents and

frontline staff a voice, and to deliver urgent change.”