

P23 Childcare

Conference recognises that the responsibility of caring for children and other dependent family members falls disproportionately on women within our society.

Further, conference asserts that the existing framework of statutory family/carer pay and leave rights does not adequately support most working parents and carers with this responsibility. Women who are engaged in insecure, temporary, or self-employment are among those who suffer from employment rights that do not properly support caregiving. Working irregular hours means their requirements for care do not fit within the standard 'nine to five' working-day, often forcing them to consider cost alternatives which many struggle to afford.

Conference asserts that we need a modern, high quality, affordable childcare system that supports a flexible approach to both parenting and work.

Therefore, conference commits to lobby the government to:

- i. Raise maternity payments and expand eligibility - including extending the 8-week qualifying period for statutory maternity pay to cover 12 weeks' earnings for those with variable hours, so women on casual contracts are not disadvantaged.
- ii. Strengthen rights and protections at work - including a right to flexible working and family friendly working arrangements that supports women to return and remain in the workplace.

Community

P24 The cost of childcare

Women tend to have the main responsibility for caring for children but the increase in the cost of childcare is impacting negatively on women in work. Childcare costs take up nearly half of women's average earnings and has become unaffordable for many women due to the additional pressure of the cost-of-living crisis. The lack of affordable childcare is forcing many women to either reduce their working hours or leave the workforce altogether; which might lead to the widening of the gender pay and pension gap.

This lack of affordable childcare does not just impact on the capacity of women to work but it also impacts on their career progression. Caring responsibilities is a significant factor in limiting women's career progression. A survey of 4000 working women found that 67 percent felt that childcare duties in the past decade has prevented them from receiving pay rises, promotions, or career progression.

It is high time for the government to boost spending on childcare to help women, particularly those on low incomes stay in work.

Conference calls on the TUC Women's Committee and affiliates to continue to campaign for free, safe, flexible, and affordable childcare for all parents from employers, governments, and political parties.

Unison

P37 Carers and parental leave

Conference, the current cost of living crisis is pushing families into poverty, and it is widely known that this disproportionately affects women, BAEM, disabled and migrant workers, and other groups who already face inequality in our society.

Traditionally, women are also more likely to be carers, juggling paid work with caring responsibilities. Employers should work with trade union to ensure that caring is not a barrier to equal pay, promotion, and career development.

Good quality childcare is often too expensive and/or not accessible to many working parents therefore, pushing women into part-time work against their choice.

Despite forthcoming improvements to flexible working rights, too many employers will still be able to refuse reasonable requests due to “business needs.”

Fundamental reform is needed and conference calls on the TUC Women’s committee to:

Launch a campaign with our union representatives to significantly improve enhanced maternity and paternity leave and pay provided by the employer

Encourage union representatives to collectively negotiate increased rates for all aspects of parental leave above statutory levels

Lobby the government for improvements in all aspects of statutory maternity leave and pay

Continue campaigning for legislation to ensure employers advertise all roles as flexible at the recruitment stage

Unite

Childcare

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Further, conference asserts that the existing framework of statutory family/carer pay and leave rights does not adequately support most working parents and carers with this responsibility. Women who are engaged in insecure, temporary, or self-employment are among those who suffer from employment rights that do not properly support caregiving. Working irregular hours means their requirements for care do not fit within the standard ‘nine to five’ working-day, often forcing them to consider cost alternatives which many struggle to afford.

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