

Pregnant Then Screwed Response To The Call For Evidence By Just Fair On How Well The Rights Within The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Are Being Realised In England & Wales.

Where the UK Government needs to improve its work to realise the rights in the ICESER.

A lack of accessible, affordable, good quality childcare in the UK is a significant barrier to women's participation in the labour market. We believe that this is in direct contradiction to the aims of Article 3, Article 6, Article 10 and Article 11.

Analysis (1. *The Centre for Progressive Policy*) estimates that if women had access to adequate childcare services, and were able to work the hours they wanted, they would increase their earnings by between £7.6bn and £10.9bn per annum. Which would definitely help with the yawning wealth gap (2. *Tax Justice UK*) we have in the UK between men and women, whilst also contributing to the economy. Research by Pregnant Then Screwed (3. *Pregnant Then Screwed*) with over 26,000 parents in March 2022 found that almost half are considering leaving their job due to childcare costs and Government data from 2018 (4. *Save The Children*) found that there were 870,000 stay at home mums who want to work but can't due to childcare costs and availability. That is half of all out of work mums.

In June 2022, data obtained by The Early Years Alliance via Freedom of Information requests showed that the funding rates paid to local authorities for the so-called 'free childcare' offer are just two-thirds of what the government itself estimated would be needed to fully fund the scheme (5. *The Early Years Alliance*). The documents obtained also reveal that ministers were aware that the inadequate levels of investment proposed would result in higher prices for parents of younger children as providers would be forced to cross-subsidise those on the 30-hours scheme. This acceptance of inevitable price increases for families comes despite the fact that the document goes on to state that "a 10% reduction in the cost of childcare might lead to a 1.4% increase in the employment rate for married mothers with pre-school age children".

What's more, the March 2022 survey of 26,962 parents by Pregnant Then Screwed found that 1 in 4 parents were having to cut down on essentials such as heat, food & clothing to pay for childcare (3. *Pregnant Then Screwed*).

It is also our belief that the Government are failing UK mothers and children with their response to the commitments in Article 10, Article 11 and Article 12 by providing woefully insufficient Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance during the cost of living crisis. Under the new energy price cap, gas and electric bills for an average user would account for 31% of the total income of someone on Statutory Maternity Pay and a whopping 41% of the total income of someone on Maternity Allowance. This means that hundreds of thousands of children will be born into fuel poverty.

Before the cost of living crisis, the Child Poverty Action Group estimated that it costs £295.72 a week to raise a child under one to a socially acceptable standard of living (6. *Child Poverty*

Action Group). But after the first 6 weeks of maternity leave, SMP is just £155.66 (or 90% of your average weekly earnings, whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks and then unpaid for the remainder of the 52 weeks. Clearly this is a significant gap and not in keeping with the commitments to the right to a good standard of living for all.

Works Cited

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