

## Key themes Workcare

Key question are we considering what enables reconciliation of work and care for the individual or the household? Is our starting point how can parents as individuals be supported to combine work and care or is it how can families be supported to have adequate income and care? Are we assuming that mothers should work or that they should have the choice? If the latter we then need to think about if mothers have the capability set to make choices?

1. Equal opportunities, capabilities, choice, household strategies – equal opportunities in employment and in the domestic sphere. Are choices ‘free’ or constrained – what mothers and fathers would do in an ideal world or what they see as possible. Care-gap.
2. Parents see family as more important than employment but women tend to be responsible for and do the bulk of caring and men to work longer hours in paid employment. Some evidence of cultural differences in time fathers spend helping.
3. Household strategies for combining work and care. No agreed strategies. However, where mothers have a choice they tend not to want to take long leave or switch to part time (especially well educated). Other research suggests mothers prefer PT employment when it is available. Our research suggests that MC mothers in ft employment tend however, to put progressing their careers on hold.
4. Childcare, professional, public/private, quality, informal, grandparents – school aged as well as pre-school children. Quality of care and cost of care. Flexibility of care. Importance of affordable formal childcare.
5. Valuing of care work in public and private spheres.
6. Flexi-security = good and bad (from perspective of employees/working parents) – working/middle class, public/private sector employment. Poor flexi-security especially detrimental to women who are more likely to be
7. Workers lack awareness of rights and employers reluctant to allow entitlements. Role of TUs?  
Gendered attitudes
8. Parental leave – maternity, paternity, parental. Amount, compensation (income replacement)
9. Role of state – public concern or private matter. EU state support but varies. Do governments want to support what parents are going or induce change. Support choice?
10. Different perspectives of state, employers and parents.
11. Individualised worker, activation, lifecycle perspective.
12. Paradoxically policies that support mothers having paid employment are also likely to increase fertility.

Most reports highlight Scandinavia as having moved the furthest in supporting working parents but equality has certainly not been achieved. France is also frequently referred to re childcare provision. Importance of paternal leave in encouraging fathers to become more involved.

The fixed hours of work in France said to benefit working mothers.

The Netherlands is highlighted as having policies for security in part time employment. It not only has a relatively high proportion of women working full-time but also more men than in other European countries.

Key points re UK policy:

Use above to consider what parents want, what works (depends on perspective) and how UK policies measure up. What can be learnt from other countries?