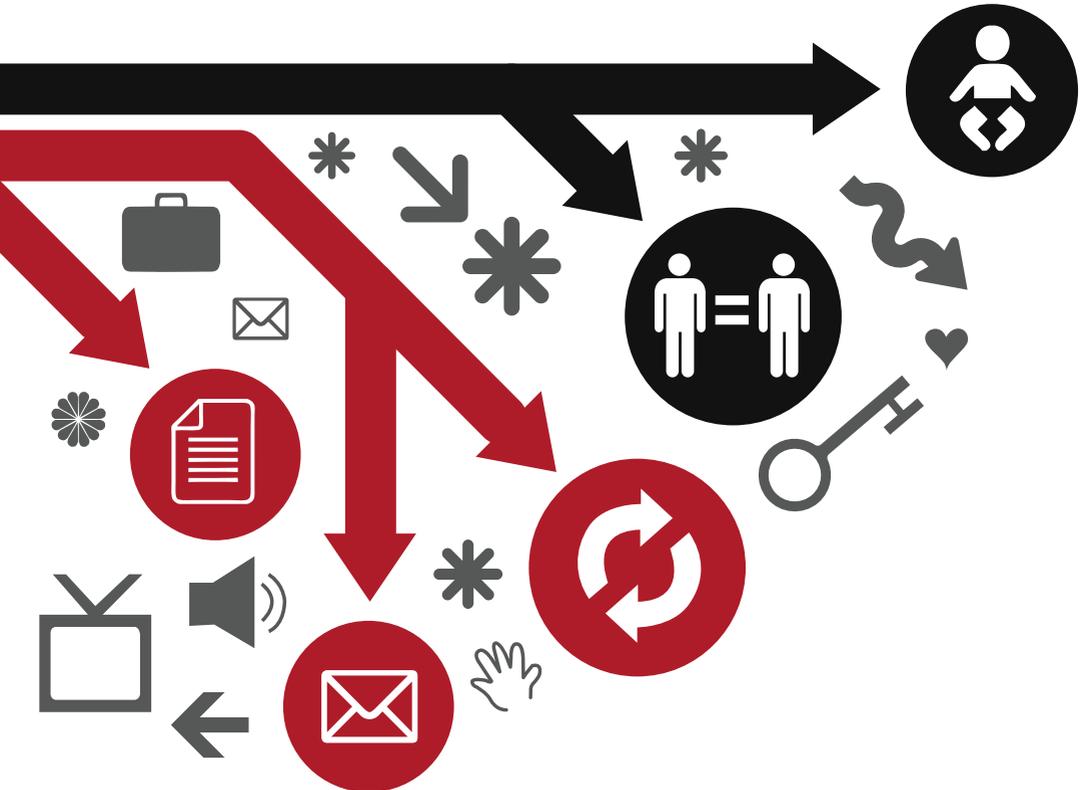




# CARE-CONNECT POLICY ALERT 1

## Work, Care, Welfare and Women



# Work, Care, Welfare and Women

This Policy Alert on Work, Care, Welfare and Women is based on discussion at a November 2013 Care-Connect Round Table with local policymakers, representatives from the voluntary, education, training and skills sectors and commissioners of care services.

Participants discussed new research findings, including a survey of 800 women of working age in Leeds set out in a Work, Care, Welfare and Women Policy Brief. They considered the challenges women often face in their working and family lives and the implications of the new research. Based on this, on the views of women in focus groups in Leeds, and on their own knowledge and experience, they put forward new policy options to address women's common and often shared concerns.

The issues involved are of great importance to the lives of women in Leeds and their families, and are relevant throughout the country. They were raised by a diverse group of women in Leeds who are mothers, grandmothers and carers and debated by experts, professionals and others with knowledge about women's circumstances and the policies which frame their experiences.

We believe these issues should be debated widely

**IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS IN 2014  
AT THE GENERAL ELECTION 2015**

Politicians should be clear with the electorate about where they stand on these important issues.

Join the debate – ask your MP, councillor or candidate!

## KEY ISSUES FOR MOTHERS, PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS

There are 148,000 parents of dependent children in Leeds. Our FLOWS survey found 18% of women aged 25-64 were grandmothers.

### ■ **What paid leave rights do parents need?**

Most children are ill from time to time, but parents have very limited rights to time off to care for them. Some claim to be ill themselves to get the time they need, others take leave without pay or risk losing their jobs. How could a paid parental leave scheme for times when children are ill work? How would parents, children and employers be affected?

### ■ **How should government focus public investment in childcare?**

What value does this generate, and in allocating taxpayers' money, is the balance right – between expenditure on regulation and inspection and on supplying sufficient childcare and subsidising the costs parents currently face?

### ■ **What policies are needed to support good relationships between generations?**

Grandparents and other family members often play a part in caring for children while their parents are at work, but are ineligible for the subsidies applicable to other forms of childcare. How can fair policies be developed to help families share children's care?

### ■ **How can men be supported to play a more equal part in bringing up young children?**

Government has proposed changes to parental leave, but what other measures are needed to encourage fathers to take up their paternal rights? The proposed changes would enable mothers to use the 52 weeks of maternity leave more flexibly and make it easier for two parents to share the leave. But no improvements to maternity/parental pay are planned, even though many fathers say its low level is why they don't take up the existing additional paternity leave option.

### ■ **Should new job applicants be entitled to request flexible working?**

Parents already have the right to request flexible working if they have held their jobs for 6 months. The existing right will soon be extended to all established employees. Extending it to new applicants too would enable parents changing jobs or returning to paid work to start with the flexibility they need.

## KEY ISSUES WHICH AFFECT CARERS

Carers support relatives or friends who need help when ill, living with mental or physical disability, or frail in old age. There are 71,000 carers in Leeds.

### ■ Should carers who apply for a new job be entitled to request flexible working?

Would this be an effective way of giving them fairer access to work when caring ends? And when caring needs change, would this help carers put suitable arrangements in place for those they support from the moment they start a new job? Employers often welcome open discussion and practical planning among their staff.

### ■ Can a paid carers' leave scheme be introduced to assist carers?

Such schemes exist in some countries and can help people stay in work. Combining work and care is now widespread, especially for employees in their 40s and older. What should carers' leave look like? Which carers should be eligible? For how long, and how often, should paid leave be available? What kind of care needs should be covered? Should the state or employers cover the scheme's costs? Could cost-sharing by employers, workers and taxpayers work?

### ■ Would it be helpful to place a duty on employers to promote arrangements which make working and caring compatible?

Caring roles and responsibilities affect people of working age most of all. The Employers for Carers group recommends all organisations take this issue seriously in their own business interest, as employers benefit by retaining a motivated and supported workforce.

### ■ What local services are needed to help employees combine work and care?

How could good quality services for older and disabled people be stimulated and made affordable for ordinary families whose members need support to care and wish to retain their jobs?

### ■ How should Carer's Allowance be reformed?

Modern families need help to manage the costs of caring, and to offset the income and pensions they often forego when providing care for others. Successive reports have shown Carer's Allowance provides very limited support in addressing these – how should it be reformed?



## KEY ISSUES WHICH AFFECT WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JOBS AND CAREERS

An estimated 17,000 women in Leeds were unemployed in June 2013, and 25,000 other women outside the labour force want to work again in the future.

- **What can be done to make it easier for those with caring responsibilities, as parents or carers, to study?**

In higher and further education, part-time study has been crucial for many women's career progress. New actions are needed to halt its rapid decline in recent years, which has had a disproportionate effect on women.

- **In welfare to work programmes, what is being done to address women's special interests?**

Research in many parts of England has shown women's needs often go unrecognised and that services to help them enter or progress at work are often poorly resourced or simply short-term schemes. How can support be made a dependable resource, enabling all women to achieve their potential?

- **What steps should be taken to eradicate gender inequalities in access to apprenticeships?**

Too few women are getting apprenticeships which lead to higher paid jobs or to careers in construction, engineering or other male-dominated employment sectors.

- **How can we build support for disadvantaged young women into our vocational education and training system?**

Young women in some communities and from disadvantaged backgrounds often feel disconnected from the labour market or become 'economically inactive' at an early age, yet many would like to develop or use their skills and help support their families economically.

This Policy Alert was prepared by Dr Erika Kispeter and Professor Sue Yeandle at CIRCLE, University of Leeds ([circle.leeds.ac.uk](http://circle.leeds.ac.uk)) Grateful thanks to all Care-Connect Round Table participants for their input to this debate.



Care-Connect is challenging all political parties to respond to these questions through our social media. We would like to invite you to engage with this debate.

Join us on:

Twitter **@socialcarehub** #womenwork

Facebook **Care-Connect: The Social Care Innovation Hub**  
or

LinkedIn: **Care-Connect: The Social Care Innovation Hub**

to challenge politicians and policy-makers to respond to these questions and explain how they would tackle these issues of real importance to women in Leeds and throughout the UK. Help shape the debate leading up to the next election.

Care-Connect is hosting a number of Policy Round Tables leading up to the General Election in 2014. These include:

- Carers and Social Inclusion Round Table – May 2014
- Migration and Inequalities in the Labour Market Round Table – June 2014
- Young People, Education and the Labour Market Round Table – November 2014

More events will be confirmed through the year. If you are interested in taking part please email **care-connect@leeds.ac.uk** or visit our website **care-connect.leeds.ac.uk**



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

University of Leeds  
Leeds, United Kingdom  
LS2 9JT

Tel. 0113 243 1751

[www.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.leeds.ac.uk)