



House of Commons
Women and Equalities
Committee

**Unequal impact?
Coronavirus and the
gendered economic
impact: Government
response to the
Committee's fifth report
of Session 2019–21**

**First Special Report of
Session 2021–22**

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Women and Equalities Committee

The Women and Equalities Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Government Equalities Office (GEO).

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Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Hannah Barlow (Committee Operations Manager), James Clarke (Committee Specialist), Holly Dustin (Committee Specialist), Chloe Freeman (Committee Specialist), Mariam Keating (Committee Specialist, Sean Kinsey (Clerk), Anwen Rees (Second Clerk) and Saffron Stewart (Committee Support Apprentice).

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First Special Report

The Committee published its Fifth Report of Session 2019–21, [*Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact*](#) (HC 385), on 9 February 2021. The Government response was received on 29 April 2021 and is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

Introduction

The Government welcomes the publication of the report, ‘Unequal Impact? Coronavirus and the Gendered Economic Impact’ by the Women and Equalities Select Committee on 9 February 2021. We are grateful for their work and have carefully considered their recommendations.

As the Committee rightly recognises, covid-19 is the biggest challenge the UK has faced in decades, and everyone across the country has been hit by its impact. The Government has taken extensive measures to support and protect the people most affected by the extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances caused by the pandemic. The economic impact of the pandemic is complex and still emerging, making it vital that any action we take in response is based on robust evidence.

While the UK employment rate has fallen overall since the start of covid-19 and redundancies have increased significantly, there are significant differences in how individuals and sectors have been affected. Redundancy rates for men are higher than for women, while women are more likely to be on furlough than men. Since January-March 2020, the number of women working full-time has increased, and the gap between the number of men and women working full-time has fallen by 12.8%. Female representation in most industries has remained largely similar to pre covid-19 levels.

The initial closure of nurseries and the introduction of home schooling had a significant impact on mothers, who still provide a much greater share of unpaid care in our society. Mothers were 23% more likely than fathers to have lost their jobs (temporarily or permanently) during the crisis in May 2020. During this time mothers in paid work were 47% more likely than fathers to have permanently lost their job or quit, and they were 14% more likely to have been furloughed.

This complicated picture is why the Government has responded to the crisis with extensive and flexible employment support, retaining opportunities and job creation schemes, such as the £33bn ‘A Plan for Jobs’, and the Restart and Kickstart schemes. It is also why the Government introduced the £170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme, aimed at supporting the most vulnerable families with children.

We continue to support women through the unprecedented crisis of covid-19, and with these measures in place women can take advantage of the opportunities available, ensuring they are at the heart of our country’s recovery. We must not lose the progress women have made in the workplace in recent years.

A response to each recommendation is set out in table A.

Equality Hub – working for fairness

- The new Equality Hub, in the Cabinet Office, brings together the Disability Unit, Government Equalities Office, Race Disparity Unit and, from 1 April, the sponsorship of the Social Mobility Commission. The Government Equalities Office's remit relates to gender equality, LGBT rights and the overall framework of equality legislation for Great Britain and the other units' focus on cross-government disability policy, ethnic disparities and social mobility respectively. The units that make up the Equality Hub work closely together, under a single Director, reporting to Ministers who have other portfolios outside of the Cabinet Office, led by the Minister for Women and Equalities.
- The Equality Hub has a key role in driving government priorities on equality and opportunity. The Hub has a particular focus on improving the quality of evidence and data about disparities and the types of barriers different people face, ensuring that fairness is at the heart of everything the Government does. This includes statutory protected characteristics but also other aspects of inequality, including in particular socio-economic and geographic inequality. The Equality Hub is key to driving progress on the Government's commitment to levelling up opportunity and ensuring fairness for all.
- The creation of the Equality Hub means that the Government can deliver a coordinated response to cross-cutting equality issues. The Equality Hub is working with other Government departments to identify where those real inequalities exist, not just those related to Covid, but also long-standing inequalities that may have previously been overlooked.

Labour Market and Unemployment

- The Committee's report rightly highlights the sectors where women's employment has been disproportionately affected by the lockdowns, such as hospitality and retail, but it doesn't acknowledge that women are also overrepresented in sectors that have been less exposed to job losses, such as education and health services, where women have played a crucial role in helping the nation through the pandemic. More than 2.5 times as many women work in education as men (c. 2.6m women compared to c. 952,000 men) and three times as many women work in health and social work (c. 3.3m women compared to c. 1m men). This affects the impact of the pandemic on employment rates overall and reduces the difference of the impact between men and women. Our response must consider the economy as a whole.
- We must take account of all the available evidence, focusing on support for everyone that needs it. That is why at the 2020 Spending Review, the Chancellor announced 'A Plan for Jobs', which provides over £33bn of support as we navigate the pandemic and move into economic recovery. This includes 2 shorter programmes of employment support for all newly unemployed people in the Intensive Worksearch Group of Universal Credit (Job Finding Support and Job Entry Targeted Support).

- Two websites, Job Help and Employer Help, were also launched in response to the covid-19 pandemic, offering job search advice, showcasing recruiting sectors and signposting to job vacancies to help women successfully find work. DWP work coaches also have access to the Flexible Support Fund which can be used to reduce barriers to gaining employment.
- DWP expects to launch 'Restart' in the summer of 2021, which will support customers who have been in the Universal Credit Intensive Worksearch regime for 12 to 18 months, offering intensive and tailored help to break down any barriers to employment they are facing. Early access will be considered on a case by case basis where conversations with a Work Coach suggest this is the most appropriate route. Through regular contact with all participants, providers will develop a strong understanding of individuals' employment history, skills, aspirations and support needs to develop the right package of support to help each participant succeed. Providers will be required to deliver a quality, personalised service to all participants. The Payment by Results model incentivises providers to help as many people as possible into sustained employment, as the more people they help, the more outcome payments they will receive. This will be the first DWP employment programme procured with a customer satisfaction measure built in as an integral part of performance management.
- Building Back Better is not about providing support for entire sectors because they provide what are traditionally considered 'women's jobs' but ensuring everyone is able to benefit from the new opportunities opening up in growth areas such as STEM.
- This is the approach the Government has taken with the Kickstart scheme, which has already helped approximately 16,600 young people take their first step on the jobs ladder. Jobcentre Plus work coaches refer those who would most benefit from Kickstart to the scheme, regardless of their characteristics. Promotional work is underway to boost applications from employers in sectors identified as growth sectors or those not as well represented. Employer engagement teams locally and nationally promote Kickstart take up in these sectors. There is ongoing evaluation to monitor any gaps, including any relating to gender, and put in place measures to even the balance, which include asking work coaches to increase the numbers of female candidates they work with for example.
- Supporting women to retrain allows women to make the most of new opportunities in existing sectors with growing labour demand, as well as in emerging sectors and occupations. Where a claimant's skill set does not match the needs in the local labour market, they are encouraged to access a comprehensive range of skills support, which includes: Apprenticeships, vocational and basic skills training, careers advice and the Sector-based Work Academy Programme.
- It's not just getting into work that's important, we must make sure that people are able to progress once there. The In-Work Progression Commission, led by Baroness McGregor-Smith, has been exploring the barriers that individuals and groups face to progressing and moving into higher paid work. We look forward to hearing their recommendations on what more we can do to support individuals to overcome those barriers.

- How and where we work is changing. Growing numbers of employers saw the benefits of flexible working as more of us worked from home or changed our working patterns to fit with our caring responsibilities, including in workplaces where it was previously unthinkable.
- To make the most of these opportunities the Flexible Working Taskforce was formally restarted on 9 February 2021. The Taskforce will work with business and other groups to consider how to remove obstacles to more flexible working and deepen the Government's understanding of what is happening 'on the ground' within businesses.
- There is a lot of high-quality evidence about what works. The Equality Hub's Behavioural Insights research with jobs board Indeed has demonstrated that offering flexible working increases job applications by 20–30% and women's applications to top jobs by 20%. And the Equality Hub's study with the insurance company Zurich revealed that offering flexible working in job adverts increased the number of female applicants by 16%—making more talent available to the company and giving more opportunities to women.
- We need to reflect on how covid-19 has presented opportunities to think differently about ways of working, and the Employment Bill, which we will bring forward in due course, can build on these cultural changes.

Benefits and Social Security

- It is vital that we get support to those who need it most, whenever and wherever they are, and the Government's approach has been to ensure that any support reflects the specific circumstances of each family or individual in need, rather than making assumptions based on gender.
- The Government introduced significant measures to support those who may otherwise go hungry through a package of support, including the £170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme. This fund builds on the £63 million already distributed last year and carries conditions and reporting requirements to ensure that the scheme is focused on providing support with food and utility costs to vulnerable families with children who are affected by the pandemic. We have also provided a second round of £16 million funding to local charities through well-established networks to provide immediate support to frontline food aid charities, getting meals to those in need. In couple claims, DWP research shows 60% of payments are made to the woman.
- Universal Credit has been designed to be flexible and tailored to the individual and the existing easements continue to support claimants with childcare responsibilities and ensure that these are considered. Many claimants will have altered childcare as a result of the pandemic, which will be taken into account using existing flexibilities, both when setting reasonable expectations of availability for work, and work search requirements. Existing easements to switch off availability and work-related requirements for additional childcare or other caring responsibilities will continue where appropriate.

- Throughout the current pandemic DWP has responded at pace, relaxing claimant commitment requirements and compliance conditions where necessary, and work coaches have received additional training in this area. However, these additional procedural flexibilities will not be published publicly through the normal process. Work coaches are briefed regularly on the Government's decisions around covid-19 so they should be fully aware of local and national restrictions to enable them to best support their claimants.
- In addition, DWP has developed a more rigorous approach to monitoring the application of discretion, and designed a new framework which is available to all work coaches. This will be added to the current guidance available in the House of Commons library in April 2021.

Young People

- The Committee is right to highlight that occupational segregation by gender remains an issue in the wider labour market and, as an employer-led programme, apprenticeships reflect this. The Government is committed to improving parity for men and women in apprenticeships as part of our wider work to ensure everyone is able to take advantage of the opportunities available.
- The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education is responsible for overseeing the design development of apprenticeship standards and equality is already considered in the design of apprenticeships standards.
- Apprenticeships can support employers in creating more diverse workforces and we want to make sure that we address the under-representation of women in the highest-paying sectors, such as STEM. Although female representation in STEM apprenticeships is increasing, women remain under-represented. In 2019/20 women accounted for 11.4% of STEM apprenticeship starts, up from 10.1% in 2018/19 and 8.8% in 2017/18.
- If we are to increase the number of women working in the STEM sector then we must ensure that anyone, regardless of who they are or their background, has the opportunity to pursue the education pathways that lead to STEM occupations.
- DfE operates several programmes and funding streams that encourage school-aged girls to select STEM-based subjects at GCSE and beyond. These include funding programmes to increase the take-up of maths (such as the Advanced Maths Premium), computing and physics to support better teaching of these subjects in schools. This includes an £84m programme to support the teaching of GCSE computer science and provide online support for A level computer science students and teachers, to increase participation.
- As a partner signatory to the Tomorrow's Engineers Code, DfE, alongside many other government departments has pledged to work with the engineering community to improve the quality, targeting, inclusivity and reach of engineering inspiration activities.

- DfE has also published the results of their Behavioural Insights trials of 11,000 pupils to gain a better understanding of low participation of girls in STEM subjects.
- Government continues to prioritise engagement work with employers, and in schools to encourage more young women into STEM careers. DfE is focussing on engaging with STEM employers to better understand what barriers they face in reaching out to women, as well as seeking examples of where women are effectively being brought onto STEM apprenticeships and retained successfully.
- The Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) project is giving teachers the knowledge and support to promote apprenticeships to students in schools. This also includes visiting girls' schools and promoting STEM-related apprenticeships to young women and girls.
- DfE's Apprenticeships Diversity Champions Network is championing gender representation in apprenticeships amongst employers in industries where improvement is needed. Siemens Plc, for example, aimed to achieve 20% female representation in its STEM role intake by 2020 and is on course to exceed that with 26%. Transport for London has achieved 50% female representation in its signalling engineer roles.
- The Network has a new chair, Lia Nici MP, who is keen to ensure that more apprentice stories are told. The Network will be running a project focussing on how employers can encourage and retain women into STEM roles. Results will be published through case studies, and an annual report published during National Apprenticeship Week in February 2022. DfE will continue to publish data on gender representation by sector.
- The Government has also been engaging with key sectors including construction, manufacturing, digital, health and social care, and the public sector, to address barriers to the growth of apprenticeships. As part of this, a number of opportunities to work with these sectors to address female under-representation have been identified.
- No one should be held back by their gender or where they come from, and we want apprenticeships to draw from the full range of talent from across the country.
- It is vital that all eligible adults have equal opportunities to benefit from the Skills Bootcamps. These Bootcamps will address the needs of adults 19+, whatever their gender, providing them with opportunities to retrain, update or formalise their skills or acquire specialist skills. DfE report seeing a demand for digital and technical Skills Bootcamps across many sectors and industries, including healthcare, where take up is higher amongst women than men.
- The Government has also introduced bootcamps that specifically support women to access training in a range of digital and technical qualifications, including subjects that are male- dominated. For example, the Software Engineering Academy for women in the West Midlands is preparing women for careers in software engineering.

- In addition to bootcamps targeting specific cohorts relating to age, ethnicity or gender, DfE expects them overall to represent the diversity of the local population, aiming for a 50/50 gender split, and to encourage people from under-represented groups to take advantage of these opportunities.

Pregnancy and Maternity Discrimination

- It is unacceptable that women still face pregnancy and maternity discrimination and in 2019, the Government announced its intention to extend the redundancy protection period afforded to mothers on maternity leave. This will extend to pregnant women and for six months after a mother has returned to work. This will also apply to those taking adoption leave and shared parental leave. We will bring these measures forward as Parliamentary time allows.
- Alongside these legislative proposals BEIS is finalising plans to bring together a broad set of key stakeholders to consider how best to address pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace and to look in more detail at wider issues. The first meeting of this group will take place shortly.

Childcare

- The Government recognises the extra pressures faced by those balancing work with childcare and home-schooling. We know that much of this falls on women, with ONS figures highlighting that in households with a child aged under 5 years, women did on average 78% more childcare than men. While this gender gap narrowed to just 20% with children aged 5 to 10-years, it highlights just how significant it was that in the most recent national lockdown, England and Wales chose to keep early years settings open for all children, whilst vulnerable children and children of key workers could also continue to attend school and college, and access out-of-school and wraparound childcare.
- We have spent over £3.5 billion in each of the last three years on our early education entitlements and the Government continues to support families with their childcare costs. The Chancellor announced on 25 November a £44 million investment for 2021–22, for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers for the government’s free childcare offers. We have pledged a new £1 billion fund to help create more high quality, affordable childcare, including before and after school and during the school holidays. And we are already delivering on that pledge with a £220 million Holiday Activities and Food Programme to provide enriching summer activities and a healthy meal for disadvantaged children in the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays in 2021.
- We have also taken action to align key Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare entitlements with Coronavirus Government job support schemes.
- The Government is continuing to work with the early years sector to understand how they can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe and affordable childcare is available for those who need it now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

Embedding equalities and improving equality data

- One of the key goals of the Equality Hub is to ensure the measures the Government takes to ensure fairness are based on evidence. The Hub will consider issues like geography and social background, alongside the protected characteristics, within an Equality Data Programme that will enable a better understanding of where individuals are being held back across the UK. This programme sits alongside ONS's Inclusive Data Taskforce, which aims to close existing data gaps with timely, comprehensive and disaggregated data so that everyone counts, and is counted, and no one is forgotten. Together these programmes will support the development of policy across Government to make the UK a fairer place to live and do business, ensuring no one is left behind.
- Equality is every department's business, not just the work of the Equality Hub, and the Hub will continue to work closely across government to share evidence and data to help identify barriers. All departments ensure that equality considerations are at the heart of their decision-making; this is key to the Government's commitment to delivering equality of opportunity for all as well as complying with legal requirements under the public sector equality duty. While Equality Impact Assessments are part of that process, the Government believes they should not routinely be made public as Ministers need to be able to have full and frank discussions about the potential impacts of their decisions as they make decisions to ensure no one is left behind. When designing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme policies and subsequent reforms, advice to Ministers included an analysis of how the policies were likely to affect individuals with different protected characteristics.
- The Equality Hub also works with other departments to ensure they publish substantive equality objectives as part of their departmental plans. The new Outcome Delivery Plans (ODPs) aim to improve and build on previous Single Departmental Plans (SDPs). Departments have been asked to include several specific and measurable equality objectives relating to policy and service delivery in their ODPs. Publishing equality objectives as part of core departmental planning processes means that performance against these objectives is measured and transparent.
- It is important that data and evidence is used to drive change. Evidence suggests that techniques like unconscious bias training, quotas and diversity statements often do too little to make the workplace fundamentally fairer, but changing systems can be effective—for example when companies publish their wage ranges it leads to more equal starting points for men and women.
- Due to the unprecedented circumstances currently facing employers, the EHRC announced that employers will have until 5 October 2021 to report their gender pay gap information. The changes for the 2020/21 reporting year gives those required to meet the regulations an additional six months to report their data before legal action begins. The Government is fully committed to women's economic empowerment but, given the impact of the pandemic on businesses, extending the deadline by six months is the right and sensible thing to do.

- Lots of positive work has been done by employers to encourage equality in the workplace. ONS have continued to measure the national gender pay gap, and figures show that the gender pay gap stands at a record low. The Equality Hub will continue to provide the necessary support to employers reporting their gender pay gap data throughout this additional time period.
- The Government will continue to increase competition, boost transparency and improve choice, opening up opportunities, and by placing the Equality Hub at the heart of Government we can ensure those opportunities are available for everyone.

Table A

Recommendation	Response
Labour Market and Unemployment	
<p>1. We recommend that schemes to support employees and the self-employed should be informed by an Equality Impact Assessment, drawing on evidence of existing inequalities. The Government must conduct and publish Equality Impact Assessments of the CJRS and the SEISS alongside its response to this Report. We believe this approach would better protect those already at disadvantage in the labour market, including women, and could inform more effective responses to future crises. (para 17)</p>	<p>Partially accept. The Government agrees that evidence on inequalities is important when developing any scheme or policy. Which is why, when designing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme policies and subsequent reforms, advice to Ministers included an analysis of how the policies were likely to affect individuals sharing protected characteristics. This is in line with legal requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010, and the internal procedural requirements and support in place for ensuring that such requirements are met in decisions taken and, subsequently, publicly announced by Ministers. There needs to be adequate space for officials and Ministers to share and discuss in confidence all aspects of policy advice so the Government rejects the call to publish this information.</p>
<p>2. The Treasury must provide Equality Impact Assessments for the Industrial Strategy and 'New Deal'. These should include a Gender Beneficiary Assessment of investments from the industrial strategy to date, including receipts of grants, gender occupational composition of companies operating infrastructure contracts, innovation grants and training participants and outcomes. The Treasury should also undertake an economic growth assessment of the Women's Budget Group's care-led recovery proposals. We recommend the Government publish these assessments within six months. (para 23)</p>	<p>Reject. Advice to Ministers included an analysis of how the policies were likely to affect individuals with different protected characteristics. This is in line with legal requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010 and the internal procedural requirements and support in place for ensuring that such requirements are met in decisions taken and, subsequently, publicly announced by Ministers. There needs to be adequate space for officials and Ministers to share and discuss in confidence all aspects of policy advice.</p> <p>It is not for Government to undertake economic growth assessments of an independent organisation's proposals.</p>

<p>3. We recommend the Government fund training schemes specifically aimed at women in the Digital, AI, and the Green Economy through its Kickstart, New Training Fund and Restart programmes. (para 25)</p>	<p>Reject. Restart will support people regardless of their characteristics and has been designed as an open-specification provision with providers required to give a personalised offer for all participants, tailored to individual and local need. The programme is designed to maximise providers' expertise and ability to find the best ways of supporting people into sustained work. Specifying in detail what is required can stifle these positive behaviours.</p> <p>Kickstart is a job creation scheme rather than a training scheme. It aims to help young people facing the greatest risk of long-term unemployment. This support is aimed at any young person facing particular disadvantage. DWP does not consider that targeting the scheme in this way would be suitable.</p>
<p>4. We recommend the Government amend the Flexible Working Regulations 2014, to remove the 26-weeks' service threshold for employees to request flexible working arrangements. The pandemic has clearly demonstrated that it is unhelpful and unnecessary. (para 29)</p>	<p>Considering. Access to flexible working can be key to ensuring increased participation of some groups who are under-represented in the labour market. The Government wants to make it easier for people to work flexibly and in our manifesto, we committed to further encouraging flexible working by consulting on making it the default unless employers have good reasons not to.</p> <p>We will issue that consultation in due course.</p>
<p>5. The Government should publish the draft Employment Bill by the end of June 2021. The draft Bill must take into account the recommendations made throughout this report. (para 31)</p>	<p>Partially Accept. The Government is committed to bringing forward an Employment Bill when parliamentary time allows that will help us build back better. We are clear that any reforms require us to consider the needs of the labour market today, taking into account the impact of the pandemic, including that on women. As part of this we will consider the recommendations in this report.</p>
<p>Benefits and Social Security</p>	
<p>6. The Department for Work and Pensions must urgently conduct or commission research to develop its understanding of the gendered impact of Universal Credit design, including the wait for the first payment; the single household payment structure; joint eligibility assessment; and the single earnings disregard. We recommend this research be commenced within two months of publication of this Report (para 43)</p>	<p>Reject. DWP reallocated resources to prioritise its response to the covid-19 pandemic and will not be conducting nor commissioning any additional research as major projects run by DWP are already subject to ongoing evaluation. Any issues identified by those evaluations will be carefully considered.</p>

<p>7. We recommend the Department for Work and Pensions commit to maintaining the increases in support that have been provided during the pandemic until the end of the pandemic, including the £20 increase in standard allowance for Universal Credit. (para 46)</p>	<p>Accept. Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, the Government has stepped up to support the poorest, most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our country. The Government will continue to do so by maintaining the £20 per week increase to Universal Credit for a further six months. DWP expect over 4 million claimants across our country to gain from this extension.</p> <p>Temporarily introduced in March 2020, this will keep a boost to payments in place throughout the summer as we progress through our roadmap to reopen the economy and get more people back in to work via our £220bn Plan for Jobs.</p> <p>Those on Working Tax Credits will also benefit from a one-off payment of five hundred pounds, equivalent to six months' worth of the £20 uplift.</p>
<p>8. We recommend the Government immediately increase legacy benefit rates by the equivalent amount (Para 47)</p>	<p>Reject. The temporary £20 uplift in UC credit was designed to help people who, as a result of the economic consequences of the pandemic, had seen a fall in their income. Legacy benefit claimants' income has not been affected by the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>The Government has no plans to extend the temporary £20 uplift to legacy benefits.</p> <p>Claimants on legacy benefits can make a claim for Universal Credit (UC) if they think they will be better off and should check carefully their eligibility and entitlements under UC before applying, as legacy benefits will end when claimants submit their UC claim and they will not be able to return to them in the future. Prospective claimants are signposted to independent benefits calculators on GOV.UK. Neither DWP nor HMRC can advise individual claimants whether they would be better off moving to UC or remaining on legacy benefits.</p>

<p>9. We were unable to find specific guidance to work coaches on emergency childcare easements, beyond the very general guidance in the entirely inadequate Equality Impact Assessment of the decision to reinstate conditionality. We recommend the DWP provide such guidance to us in response to this Report and to work coaches as a matter of urgency. (Paragraph 56)</p>	<p>Reject. DWP has specific easements in place to deal with emergency childcare situations and this information is available to all Work Coaches in the Universal Learning intranet site which provides guidance to all staff. Work coaches receive extensive training and support to help them identify and apply these easements where they are needed. This is supported by resources such as the District Provision Tool and Complex Needs Toolkits, both of which are resources that allow work coaches (and other frontline staff) to identify and signpost to local services offering the type of support required by an individual claimant. There are, in addition, a suite of Bite Size learning products to consolidate their learning which they can access at any time through Universal Learning. The DWP publishes its UC guidance library into the House of Commons' Library each year—most recently in October 2020. https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2282591/files</p>
<p>10. DWP must expand and tailor its offer for mothers seeking employment, so that it encompasses retraining and re-skilling for jobs in the most viable sectors. This should be maintained for the duration of the pandemic as a minimum. (Paragraph 57)</p>	<p>Accept. DWP Work coaches, including the additional 13,500 currently being recruited by the Department, are already actively engaged in helping everyone, including mothers, access the range of support on offer.</p> <p>Through the measures in A Plan for Jobs the Government has already significantly expanded the employment support offer for all newly unemployed people, including women. This includes job creation through the Kickstart scheme which can be accessed by young women at risk of becoming long-term unemployed aged 16–24 on Universal Credit and the expansion of the Sector-based Work Academy Programme which provides training and a work placement in a range of sectors and can be accessed by women of all ages.</p> <p>There is cross-government collaboration to identify and promote opportunities in sectors with immediate or growing demand for jobs and identify how UC claimants, especially those who may face additional barriers such as childcare, can best be supported to gain the skills needed to work in priority sectors, as well as increasing opportunities for workplace progression.</p>

<p>11.While changes to the availability for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) have benefited many, it has also thrown into sharp relief the demographics of those who are not eligible, and for whom the level of SSP provides an inadequate safety net. Women are overrepresented in this demographic, and we are concerned that the Treasury seems both unaware and uninterested in the evidence showing this. (para 64)</p> <p>We urge the Government to conduct a study to examine the adequacy of, and eligibility for, Statutory Sick Pay. Such a study should be published within three months, alongside an equality impact analysis. This should be done alongside our recommendation for all workers on zero-hour contracts to be able to claim SSP, as set out in our Report on Unequal impact? Coronavirus and BAME people. (para 65)</p>	<p>Reject. Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) eligibility is based, in part, on the amount an individual earns per week rather than the amount of hours they are contracted to work. Those on zero-hour contracts may therefore be entitled to sick pay if they meet all eligibility criteria, which includes being classed as an employee and having average earnings of at least £120 per week.</p> <p>SSP is just one part of the welfare safety net and the Government’s wider offer to support people in times of need. Where an individual requires further financial support while off work sick, for example where their income is reduced while on SSP or they are not eligible for SSP, they may be eligible for support through the welfare system, which the Government has strengthened to help people through these unprecedented times. Many of those earning below the LEL are already in receipt of welfare benefits.</p> <p>The Health Is Everyone’s Business consultation, published July 2019, set out a number of proposals to reduce ill-health related job loss, including reforming SSP. As part of this consultation the Government sought views on the rate of SSP and the role that employers can and should play in supporting employees who are disabled or have long-term health conditions to stay in and thrive in work. This included setting out that the Government is minded to extend SSP to those earning below the lower earnings limit, who are not currently eligible for financial support from their employer during a period of sickness absence. There was a good response to the consultation from a range of stakeholders and a response will be issued shortly.</p>
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<p>12. We recommend that the Government mainstream equality into the design of apprenticeships and worked-based learning and actively challenge occupational segregation by gender. It must publish a gender equality plan for its apprenticeship programme and an action plan to increase the number of women in STEM apprenticeships. (para 78)</p>	<p>Reject. The Government agree with the Committee that we should mainstream equality into the design of apprenticeships but are confident that this is already happening.</p> <p>Apprenticeships can support employers in creating more diverse workforces and we want to make sure that we address the under-representation of women in the highest-paying sectors, such as STEM. Female representation in STEM apprenticeships is increasing, but women remain under-represented. In 2019/20 women accounted for 11.4% of STEM starts, up from 10.1% in 2018/19 and 8.8% in 2017/18, while women make up 24% of the core-STEM workforce, a slight rise from 2019.</p> <p>Occupational standards are designed by employers, with support from the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education. The Institute uses a gender-neutral language approach to ensure that standards are appealing to both women and men. It encourages Trailblazers to think about the implications of language choice in other areas. It is continually alert to the risks of creating additional barriers to learning or attainment in what it publishes, and this is under constant review and scrutiny in its approvals process.</p>
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<p>13. We recommend that the Government establish quotas for women in its Kickstart scheme. (para 79)</p>	<p>Reject. DWP will monitor the uptake of Kickstart jobs across a range of criteria to ensure the scheme is accessible to all groups including those at a disadvantage in the labour market.</p>
<p>14. We recommend that DWP introduce training for Jobcentre Plus work coaches on supporting applicants into gender 'atypical' jobs. (para 80)</p>	<p>Reject. DWP already provides a training programme for work coaches coupled with several guidance documents detailing how to support customers applying for jobs depending on their circumstances and the specifics of the job applications.</p> <p>These guidance documents can be found here: https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2282591/files?page=1</p> <p>DWP Train and Progress is an internal campaign designed to reinforce the importance of Work Coach engagement to identify and help address claimants' skills needs as part of the overall support offered to help claimants meet their work and career goals.</p> <p>The initial phase of this campaign to better align the DWP employment and skills offer was launched on 8 February 2021.</p>
<p>Pregnancy and Maternity Discrimination</p>	
<p>15. We urge the Government to introduce legislation in this Parliamentary session to extend redundancy protection to pregnant women and new mothers. The Government must also publish a cross-departmental strategy, following consultation with stakeholders, for dealing with pregnancy and maternity discrimination. We recommend this strategy be published within the next six months (para 93).</p>	<p>Partially accept. The Government will extend the redundancy protection period afforded to mothers on maternity leave. This will extend to pregnant women and for six months after a mother has returned to work. This will also apply to those taking adoption leave and shared parental leave. We will bring these measures forward as soon as Parliamentary time allows.</p>

Childcare

16. We recommend the Government publish, by June 2021, an early years strategy which sets out how childcare provision can best support not only working parents, but also those who are job-seeking and re-training. The review must also consider the feasibility of extending eligibility for free childcare provision for children under the age of three years. (para 116)

Reject. DfE already offers a range of childcare support to working parents and those in education, and this sits alongside support available from other government departments, including DWP and HMRC, in helping parents with the costs of childcare. The full range of support that parents can access is set out on the [Childcare Choices website](#) and on [GOV.UK](#). The Government actively promotes these entitlements on a regular basis on social media and elsewhere, ensuring parents are aware of the support available to help with childcare costs.

The [2018 Office for National Statistics report on families and the labour market](#) in England shows that many mothers return to work and need childcare when their youngest dependent child turns three. For this reason, the 30 hours free childcare entitlement scheme aims to support working families with the cost of childcare after their child reaches their third birthday, by reducing the impact of childcare as a barrier to entering the workplace. Responses to the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents show that in 2019, parents who applied for the 30 hours did so to maintain (39%) or increase (21%) their working hours, and 78% of parents felt that 30 hours had improved their family finances.

30 hours free childcare is available to working parents who earn at least the equivalent of 16 hours per week at National Minimum/Living Wage (the equivalent of just over £142 per week/£7,413 per year in 2021–22), and is also open to parents who are self-employed or on zero-hour contracts.

All parents are eligible for the universal 15 hours of free childcare a week for all three and four year-olds, helping them develop social skills and preparing them for school. Parents could also use this time to support them to look for work.

Disadvantaged two-year-olds are also able to access up to 15 hours of free childcare each week, with around 143,000 children benefitting in January 2020. Those who benefit include children with education, health and care plans, looked after or previously looked after children, or whose parents are in receipt of certain income support benefits who earn less than the maximum income threshold of £15,400. The 2019 Department for Education Parents Survey shows that parents who had not used any childcare in the past year (neither formal nor informal) tended not to use childcare out of choice, rather than due to constraints. Around seven in ten (69%) parents who were not using childcare said they would rather look after their child(ren) themselves, while only 16% said it was because they could not afford childcare.

<p>19. We recommend that gender pay gap reporting be urgently reinstated, with reporting for the financial years 2019/20 and 2020/21 required in April 2021. (Paragraph 136)</p>	<p>Partially accept. The legal requirement for relevant organisations to publish gender pay gap data each year is set out in The Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017. This requirement has never changed, however given the unprecedented circumstances employers faced enforcement action was suspended.</p> <p>The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) announced on 23 February 2021 that due to the continued effects of the covid-19 pandemic, employers will have until 5 October 2021 to report their gender pay gap information for 2020/21. Extending the deadline by six months is the correct decision.</p>
<p>20. We recommend the GEO and EHRC explore the feasibility of reporting on parental leave policies in addition to gender gaps in furlough and redundancies for 2020/21 to supplement the information on pay and bonuses. We also urge the Government to support The Equal Pay (Implementation and Claims) Bill. (Paragraph 137)</p>	<p>Considering. In July 2019 the Government consulted on proposals to require large employers to publish their parental leave and pay policies. The consultation received over 3,500 responses and we will publish the formal response to that consultation in due course.</p>
<p>21. The Government should publish proposals for introducing ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting within the next six months. (Paragraph 142)</p>	<p>Reject disability pay reporting. The Government is committed to reducing the disability employment gap and seeing a million more disabled people in work between 2017 and 2027. Disabled people are supported to enter employment and stay in work through a range of programmes such as the Work and Health Programme, Access to Work and the Intensive Personalised Employment Support Programme.</p> <p>In November 2018 the Government published a Voluntary Reporting Framework (VRF) to support employers to report and publish on disability employment and mental health. This is aimed at large employers (with over 250 employees) encouraging them to have open and transparent conversations in the workplace with their staff. The framework can also be used to support smaller employers who wish to drive greater transparency within their organisations.</p> <p>Disability Employment Advisers support DWP colleagues by developing their skills to understand the interaction between individuals, their health and disability and employment, to help them to provide more personalised support, tailored to each claimant's individual needs. They proactively share knowledge and information with work coaches about health and disability, national and local provision, services, training and employment opportunities.</p>

	<p>Considering ethnicity pay reporting. In 2018/2019 the Government consulted on options for employer-level ethnicity pay reporting. Following this, the Government met with businesses and representative organisations to understand the barriers to reporting and to explore what information could be published to allow for meaningful action to be taken.</p> <p>Following the consultation, we ran a methodology testing exercise with a broad range of businesses to better understand the complexities outlined in the consultation. This highlighted the genuine difficulties in designing a methodology that will produce accurate figures that facilitate analysis, interpretation and meaningful action.</p> <p>The Government is continuing to analyse this data. We will respond to the Ethnicity Pay Reporting consultation in due course.</p>
<p>22. We recommend the Government amend the HR1 form to require information about the sex, race, and if possible other protected characteristics of staff. (Paragraph 146)</p>	<p>Reject. The Government does not believe this form is an appropriate way to collect this information.</p> <p>The Insolvency Service’s Redundancy Payments Service collect HR1 data and share it with Government Departments and Agencies which provide support for redundant employees and the unemployed. HR1s are submitted by employers where there is a proposal to make 20 or more redundancies at a single establishment. However, data on fewer than 20 proposed redundancies is not collected and neither is the total confirmed redundancies. HR1s include proposed dismissals which may not necessarily result in any actual redundancies.</p> <p>However, the ONS currently publish data on redundancies by sex and age, available here –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By sex breakdown - https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/redundancies/datasets/redundancieslevelsandratessessionallyadjustedred01sa

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By age breakdown - https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/redundancies/datasets/redundanciesbyindustryagesexandemploymentratesred02. <p>Additionally, the ONS recently published an article showing redundancies by qualification status, ethnicity and disability. However, due to low sample sizes the information could not be presented at a detailed level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/labourmarketeconomicanalysisquarterly/december2020
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