

Written evidence submitted by GM4WOMEN2028 (MRS0181)

Conditions placed on the Job Retention Scheme places women at greater risk of unemployment

GM4WOMEN2028 is submitting the following evidence of the gendered impact of the Government's conditions applied to the Job Retention Scheme. Led by Dr Helen Pankhurst, GM4WOMEN2028 is a consortium of change-makers committed to seeing a better future for women in Greater Manchester. Our areas of focus are *Education, Safety, Participation, Employment* and *Culture* with a goal to achieve equality across all five areas by 2028.

After assuring childcare providers that the Job Retention Scheme (JRS) could be applied to all staff, the government made an unexpected U-turn a month later. Updated [guidance](#) now states providers may only claim JRS for the proportion of staff not funded through the Early Entitlement Funding (EEF), if received. The update was made in April, after some providers had already furloughed their staff believing the JRS would cover 80% of the full workforce's salary. Providers were relying on this support, as the EEF & businesses' own limited finances would continue to cover additional expenses (rent, utilities etc.). Working parents rely on the availability and the choice in childcare providers, in fact the demand has never been greater. 583 nurseries are registered in Greater Manchester alone¹, with a mainly women workforce; a collapse in the Early Years sector would be a setback for our region's future.

We and others are concerned about the future of an industry which holds women in the majority of their workforce. We also anticipate a consequence on employees across the country unable to return to their employment if day-care providers collapse. Families finding themselves without childcare will likely respond by reducing/terminating the employment of the primary caregiver – also more likely to be women.

The EEF only provides a minority income for the childcare providers which receive it. The majority of profits and daily costs are supplied through private fees. During Covid-19-related full or partial closure, providers can only furlough a proportion of their staff equal to the proportion of their income gain through private fees. Providers are then expected to continue to pay remaining staff through EEF and private fees – assuming both these are still being received. To add to the decrease in income, the local education authority have the capacity to remove EEF from providers and redistribute to other providers in the local area. This would leave childcare providers operating at a deficit as a day-care provider's outgoings are not restricted to salary, relying on the generosity of parents continuing to pay in the absence of a service. Parents are reporting continuing to pay 5% - 60% or greater as 'retention' fees from with no standardisation or guarantee of reimbursement. This is unsustainable and leaves providers at real risk of permanent closure.

Providers have closed to all but children of key-workers on the instruction of the Government, indeed there is difficulty maintaining social distance from young children whilst simultaneously providing care. Studies have shown how young children can be mild or asymptomatic carriers of Covid-19, increasing the risk of transmission between families². Members of the childcare sector have been vital in ensuring the country's key workers are able to continue in their roles, however, without adequate Government support, the childcare industry is at risk – an industry which has a 98% women workforce³.

1. https://www.daynurseries.co.uk/day_nursery_search_results.cfm/searchcounty/Greater-Manchester
2. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(20\)30236-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(20)30236-X/fulltext)
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-43386250>

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