



2024

Impact Report

On the path to progress



Our Vision

We want to achieve a society in which everyone can fully meet their work and caring responsibilities, where all parents and carers have an equal opportunity to find and progress in secure, paid work.

To help us get there we will:

1. Empower parents and carers to understand and use their workplace rights.
2. Support employers to create and sustain flexible and family-friendly workplaces.
3. Drive meaningful policy and legal changes to engender secure and flexible jobs as the norm, and advocate for a baseline of protection that delivers equality in the workplace.

The start of a new

5 year strategy

Reflecting on the end of our three-year strategy, we can see how far we've come and the distance we have yet to travel, but we're on the right path.

This past year has seen Working Families go through a transformation, with a brand refinement that has crystallised our visual identity.

As we enter a new five-year strategy, we can build on our successes, heartened that our campaigning, our work with employers and our advice and guidance is making inroads to achieve a society where there are no longer barriers that stand in the way of parents and carers in the workplace.

Looking back on our

3 year strategy

- ♥ We have empowered parents and carers.
- ♥ We have supported employers.
- ♥ We have driven meaningful change.

How have we done this and what impact has this had on working families?





Objective 1

We promised to...

Empower more parents and carers to understand and use their workplace rights.



The Working Families Index Spotlight Report

Our Index Report brought into reality the experiences of families on lower incomes, who are managing a daily battle with a lack of quality childcare provision and insurmountable costs, as well as less access to flexible working than their higher-income counterparts. **It revealed...**

The Working Families Index Spotlight Report

Continued...

- ♥ Those on lower incomes were twice as likely to have an informal flexible working request rejected.
- ♥ Those whose flexible working request was successful were facing better outcomes in terms of debt, job retention and mental health.
- ♥ Over 50% of working parents on lower incomes have had to reduce their working hours in order to manage childcare needs.
- ♥ 4 in 10 working parents on lower incomes have gone into debt to pay for childcare.
- ♥ Working mothers on lower incomes take 4 months' less maternity leave than the UK average.

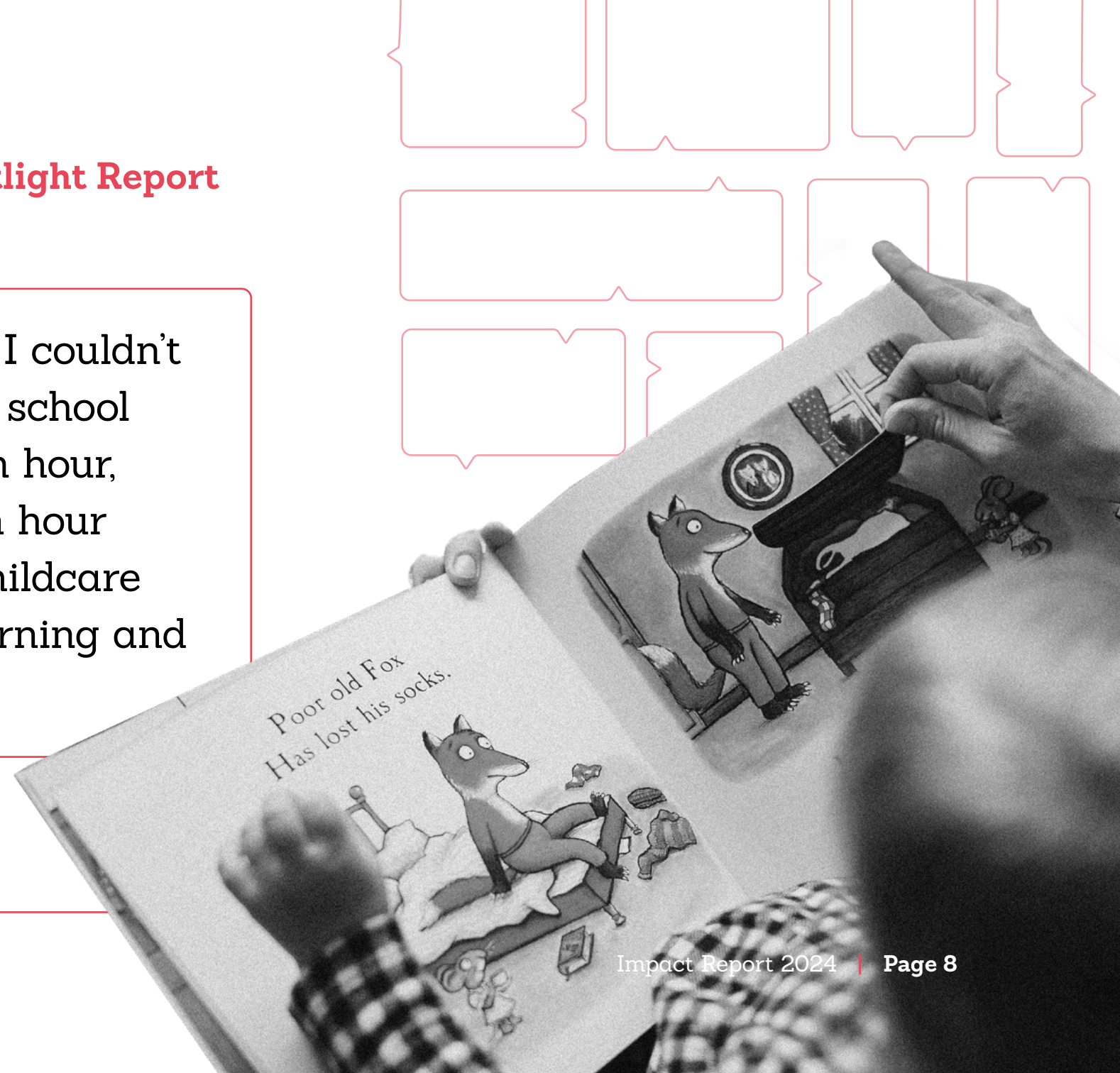


The Working Families Index Spotlight Report

Continued...

“I was let go from my job as I couldn’t afford childcare throughout school holidays. I work for £9.50 an hour, and childcare here is £11 an hour – how am I meant to pay childcare that costs more than I’m earning and pay for a household too?”

Survey respondent



Legal Advice Service

As the Legal Advice Service marks a quarter of a century, demand is sadly as high as ever.

The evolution of our Legal Advice Service, including our solicitor-reviewed and up-to-date information and guidance pages, and our helpline, has meant that parents and carers up and down the country can access what they need, when they need it. Our website filters those who need us most to our award-winning helpline; thanks to improved outcomes monitoring, we know just how effective our advice is.

"I feel less stressed as I was able to resolve my issue based on the advice given. All communication was very helpful."

♥ **1 million** unique visitors to our advice pages.

♥ **Advised nearly 1,500** parents and carers via phone and email.

“I feel less anxiety regarding work. I was able to have an honest and open conversation with my boss and felt empowered by the advice you gave me.”



Working Families

♥ **1 in 2 outcomes** survey respondents who had contacted us for benefits advice **increased** their household income.

♥ **Our advisers** supported our helpline users to access **over £150,000** in unclaimed benefits.

“I no longer have to try and find overnight childcare due to being pressured into overnight work.”

Long-term helpline outcomes have long been difficult to capture. In early 2023, after working with another advice agency to understand their long-term outcomes monitoring process, we developed our own new long-term outcomes survey, working with parents. We have received 90 responses so far and have a richer understanding of the difference our advice makes to parents and carers' lives.



♥ **A third of helpline clients**

were living in relative poverty despite being from a working household.

♥ **Around 60%** were from households earning below the Minimum Income Standard—double the proportion in the UK population.

♥ **Nearly 80%** of the single parents who contacted us were living close to or in relative poverty.

- ♥ Of those who completed our short-term outcomes survey (91 people) **98% better understood their rights, options and entitlements after accessing our advice.**
- ♥ **96% intended to act on our advice** and **88% did act** (long-term outcomes survey, also 91 completers).
- ♥ Of the 88% who acted on our advice, **80% resolved their issue and/or increased their household income.**



Pro Bono Support

Our team of pro bono volunteers provide support for the Legal Advice Service team every year by drafting responses to queries which enables us to increase our reach, respond to more service users and spend more time enriching the web pages.

- ♥ **70 volunteer lawyers**
- ♥ **From 14 law firms (plus independent lawyers)**
- ♥ **Helped to draft 500 query responses.**



The Hackathon

Our website of over 200 information and guidance articles is a valuable resource which was visited over a million times in the past year.

Maintaining the articles to deliver up-to-date, high quality legal information is a huge and resource-intensive undertaking, and so this year we embarked on our first Hackathon.

The event drew on the support and expertise of our existing volunteer Employment Law solicitors, while also establishing new relationships with volunteers who will continue to provide ongoing support to our Legal Advice Team.

Working Families

- ♥ **20 employment law specialists**
- ♥ **From 15 firms**
- ♥ **Reviewed and updated a quarter of our employment law pages.**



Collaborations

We have continued to reach out to as many working parents and carers as possible through existing partnerships and media opportunities, while laying the groundwork for future collaborations.

♥ **Instagram** live legal clinics with Pregnant Then Screwed **viewed over 80,000 times.**

♥ **Featured in** The Telegraph, The Independent, Grazia and **BBC Radio.**

♥ **Be A Lifeline** appeal reached **12,000 new people.**

Legal Advice in Action

Parental leave dispute

When I was heavily pregnant, my brother died by suicide. I went into shock and couldn't function. I was signed off work sick. My employer started my maternity leave a month early instead of fully paid sick leave, and I lost my saved-up annual leave. It seemed unfair but I was in no fit state to dispute it. After the birth, the trauma of my brother's death affected me bonding with my baby son; I needed more time with him. Working Families confirmed that my work had made mistakes as my sickness wasn't pregnancy related. I contacted my manager

and explained. My employer paid me an extra month's pay to cover my month of sickness and I was allowed to use the annual leave I had lost before maternity leave, which meant two further months on full pay. Without Working Families, I wouldn't have had the confidence to challenge my employer. I'd have missed out on pay, and time to bond with my son and get mentally well before returning to work, without money worries.

Legal Advice in Action

Continued...

Benefits advice

I work part-time due to caring responsibilities for my disabled wife, elderly parents who have dementia, and autistic children. I had questions about some of the benefits our family receives and how these might be affected by my work hours and income. Some of my queries were 'technical' and Citizens Advice couldn't answer them. HMRC and the DWP gave conflicting advice. So I contacted Working Families. Your advice is always 100% accurate, even with complicated circumstances. I have since been able to increase my family's income by £500/month, making our financial situation much more manageable.



Objective 2

We promised to...

Support more employers to create and sustain successful flexible and family-friendly workplaces.

Flexible working legislation

We were identified as a key organisation to work with the Department for Business and Trade to raise awareness of the upcoming flexible working legislation and help employers prepare for the changes, by...

- ♥ **Providing** case studies of progressive employers.
- ♥ **Featuring** in a series of interviews for The Telegraph.
- ♥ **Relaunching** our Happy to Talk Flexible Working logo and guidance.
- ♥ **Updating** our employer resources.
- ♥ **Hosting** a dedicated roundtable event.

Benefiting from the support of our expert relationship managers, access to informative leading-edge events and insightful resources, our members are taking their rightful place at the forefront of family-friendly working. Our 2023 Benchmark demonstrated their readiness for the upcoming changes.

- ♥ **73%** of organisations reported more than three quarters of employees work flexibly.
- ♥ **86%** already offered flexible working as a day one right.
- ♥ **92%** carried out job analysis for some or all roles to determine flexible options.



Our Employer Members

- ♥ **140 members** of all sizes from a range of industries.
- ♥ Nearly **a million** employees represented.
- ♥ We completed **35 policy reviews** on areas such as carers, shared parental leave and flexible working.



“The recommendations our Relationship Manager suggested as part of our Carers Policy review have all been accepted by HR and will be incorporated into the Carers Policy within Freeths from June. This is great news and a fantastic example of how important our partnership with Working Families is – for our people and internal HR team.” *Freeths - Employer Member*

By listening to our members, we were able to identify areas of need and responded by enhancing our offering and creating new ways for members to network.

♥ **Two new sessions** added to our Lunch and Learn programme.

♥ **A LinkedIn** forum for members to connect and converse.

♥ **Events** that cover front-of-mind issues such as menopause, multigenerational workforces, and father/partner-friendly cultures.

♥ 13 events.

♥ Over 1,500 people registered.

♥ 13 Lunch and learns.



Our polling for National Work Life Week 2023 highlighted that flexibility is just one piece of the puzzle in creating workplaces where parents and carers can thrive. A new Generation Flex is emerging, for whom other practices have caught up in their list of priorities, whilst for others, the flexibility they need is still out of reach.

- ♥ **Culture** is the number one priority for working parents, proving more popular overall than higher pay and access to a preferred working pattern.
- ♥ **Two in five** parents would like mental health support at work.
- ♥ **9 out of 10** parents said access to flexible working has, or would have, a positive effect on their wellbeing.
- ♥ **A third** of parents said they'd thought about quitting their job because it isn't sufficiently flexible.

Policy Advice in Action

My son was born three months early and admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). It was the most emotional rollercoaster of mine and my family's lives.

A few years later, initial conversations began between the [bp's] UK Policy team and UK Working Families Employee Resource Group. I was thrilled when bp launched their neonatal care leave policy as a result. I love that bp listened and cares about its employees, and I hope this inspires more companies to do the same.

Five years since my son's NICU experience and he's loving life and often comes to Mummy's work at the bp campus where he's had lots of fun – especially at our bp Family Day.

Thanks goes to our partner, Working Families. We have valued their expertise, specialised knowledge and experience that guided us, especially the focused working sessions which our policy team also attended.

The UK family-friendly policies and benefits at bp are amazing and keep evolving. We are working with Working Families to review our paternity policies, so they remain up to date and in line with best practices in the market, and they've enabled us to build relationships with other organisations to share best practice. Thank you for all your help. And thanks to bp for listening, caring and taking action.

Tania Marston,
bp

Policy Advice in Action

Continued...

It has been a pleasure to work with Working Families to develop our family friendly policies and a joy to build on their advice.

By removing any provisions that are no longer fit for purpose, we have succeeded in creating a progressive new portfolio of support for our staff with caring responsibilities. Our provisions are now all in line with best practice and embedding a family friendly, flexible working culture is central to our organisational values and strategies.

We are delighted to be in the lucky position of tracking our progress with Working Families, growing as an inspirational employer, supported by our committed EDI team and WF's Relationship Manager.

Sodexo



Objective 3

We promised to...

Drive meaningful policy and legal changes to engender secure and flexible jobs as the norm, and advocate for a baseline of protection that delivers equality in the workplace.

This year saw the culmination of much hard work as the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Bill received Royal Assent, giving 13 million working parents and 3 million unpaid working carers in the UK better access to the flexibility they need. But that wasn't all. Other legislation that Working Families was involved with came into law.

- ♥ The Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act. (due to come into force April 2025)
- ♥ Amends to the Equality Act to ensure that EU protections for working mothers are enshrined in UK law.
- ♥ Protection from Redundancy (Pregnancy & Family Leave) Act.
- ♥ Carers Leave Act.



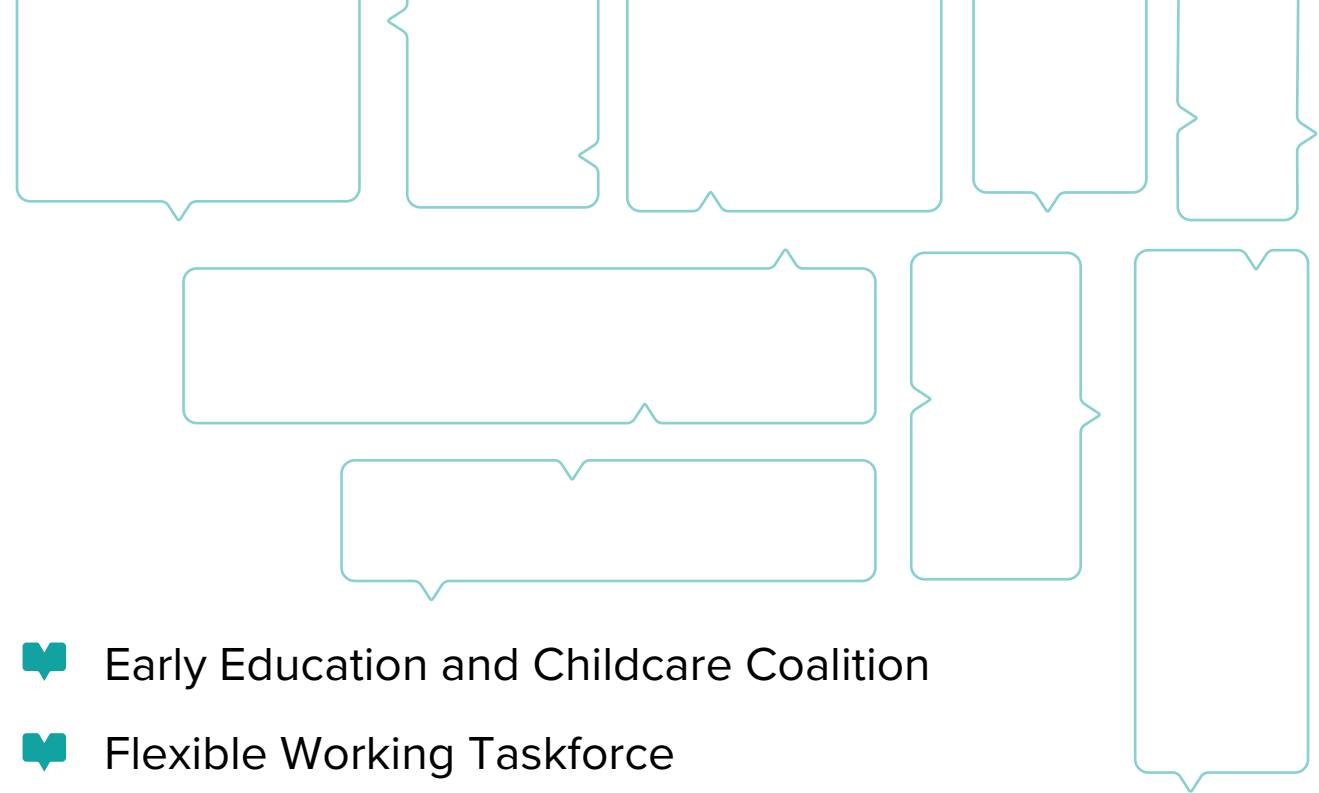
Collaboration

Collaboration is a key value of ours that has enabled the progress we have made. Our collaborative spirit came to fruition when we were approached to establish a cross-party group on flexible and family-friendly working to further debate and advance policy action.



It was an honour to be asked to act as the secretariat for this new and exciting opportunity and over the coming years it's our hope that by bringing together parliamentarians and organisations in the charitable and business spheres who want to improve access to flexible working, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) will be an effective route to policy change.

At Working Families, collaboration is at the heart of our mission to create family-friendly workplaces across the UK. We have partnered with like-minded organisations and individuals who share our commitment to making workplaces more inclusive and supportive for working parents and carers. Together, we have informed key policy discussions, advocated for progressive changes in UK employment law, and provided practical tools for employers to implement family-friendly policies, ensuring a greater impact for working families nationwide.



- Early Education and Childcare Coalition
- Flexible Working Taskforce
- Pregnancy and Maternity Discrimination Advisory Board
- Families and Work Group
- Parents and Carers Panel
- Academic Advisory Board

Childcare reform

Having called for childcare reform in the Autumn statement, we cautiously welcomed the announcement of extending funded hours by the Government.

As holes in the new scheme quickly appeared, we urged the Government in an open letter signed by members of the Academic Advisory Board to plug the funding gap and introduce other measures to support families to weather the storm.



Our research laid bare inequalities in our current system of parental leave.

- ♥ **Mothers on a lower income** take four months less maternity leave than the UK average.
- ♥ **8 out of 10 fathers** take less leave than they need to due to financial concerns.
- ♥ **A fifth of working parents** on a lower income were not eligible for parental leave and thereby, in many cases, statutory maternity or paternity pay.
- ♥ **Only 29% of working parents** on a lower income had access to any enhanced parental leave and pay entitlements from their employer.



Our pre-election polling of parents in marginal seats highlighted an appetite for the Government to do more to support families in the first year of a child's life.

- ♥ **65%** said that statutory rates of maternity and paternity pay are not adequate to support parents.
- ♥ **92%** agreed that it is important for new fathers and partners to take time off to care for their baby in their first year.
- ♥ **52%** proposed that new fathers and partners should be entitled to 12 weeks of government-funded leave in their child's first year.

Having heard the message loud and clear through our research and through the helpline, an improved deal for new parents is one of our policy recommendations, which will be the cornerstone of our campaigning going forward.

To be effective as a campaigning voice, we developed a new policy grid to solidify our positions.

Having consulted extensively with our co-creation groups to give a voice to those we represent, and underpinned by evidence and research, we arrived at policy recommendations that reflect the needs of parents and carers.

“I think the policies prioritised lend themselves beautifully to changing the culture around work and acknowledging the importance of families. They emphasise the need for mutual support, showing that it’s not just the responsibility of one individual in a household to provide that.”

“I think they’re really important, especially the policy around job design. As a carer, you might have a period of unpredictability where you need to take time off to take someone to hospital, so it’s not always structured.”

Parent and Carers
Advisory Panel members

Through technology, partnerships, and collaboration, we've continued to evolve, each step bringing us closer to our vision.

- 📌 **Curating diverse voices** to shape our policy positions.
- 📌 **Enhancing data analysis** from our Legal Advice Service, employer partnerships, and research.
- 📌 **Developing strategic metrics** and a central data dashboard with the Scottish Tech Army and JP Morgan's Force for Good.
- 📌 **Leveraging our Academic Advisory Board** to identify gaps in access to justice for working families and prioritise future focus areas.



In the next

5 years

Over the next five years, we will work to ensure that more people with caring responsibilities have the opportunity to attain and thrive within secure and flexible jobs.

Our objectives provide a roadmap for achieving this and will not change until we have achieved our mission and our vision.

To ensure we can best serve working parents during the period of this strategy, we will:

- Put the needs of parents and carers at the heart of all we do
- Promote research to bring evidence for change in workplaces
- Invest in growing sustainable unrestricted income
- Build our profile, engagement and influence to grow our support and impact
- Continue to make Working Families a great charity to work for.



Read the Working Families 5 year strategy 2024/2029

Get in touch

We would love to hear from you!

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If you require this information in a different format, please get in touch.

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