



A CARE-CONNECT POLICY BRIEF

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WORK, CARE, WELFARE AND WOMEN



KEY POINTS

- In the last five years the gap between women's and men's position in the Leeds labour market has increased.
- Leeds parents find it difficult to pay childcare fees, even with available financial support: many rely heavily on grandparental childcare and some women, for financial reasons only, choose to drop out of work until their children start school.
- Working carers in Leeds work long hours and are often under enormous physical and mental pressure.
- Working mothers and carers in Leeds see reducing their working hours as the only, main or most natural way to achieve some work-care balance, but suffer both short and long term financial losses as a result.



Part time was then a balance, but actually not working was never an option.

Kristy, mother of one

Because my manager has been so nice from the start about flexibility, I've always offered more.

Arlene, mother of one

I've seen perfect jobs come up and I haven't applied for them because I just don't feel I've got the capability to learn a new job at the moment.

Maureen, carer

I work during the week and then I can go up at the weekends and look after my Mum while my sister is at work.

Anne, carer

If it was me, I would want to have home care services from the local authority more than from a private agency. Even if I was a multi-millionaire, I'd still prefer to have local authority, because I know that the monitoring is there.

Gina, carer and mother of two

It would have been nice to have someone prepare a meal for them, but it was just me, putting a sandwich in the fridge.

Lara, carer

My mother works full time, but has my daughter. She's 63 and has my daughter all Tuesday morning for five hours and takes her off to play things.

Leah, mother of one

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INTRODUCTION

The FLOWS project¹ is exploring how local welfare systems affect women's participation in paid work and their impact on women's position in society. The study is examining arrangements in 11 cities in as many European countries, with Leeds as the UK case study. In each city, a new survey of 800 randomly selected women aged 25-64 was conducted in autumn 2012, with focus groups subsequently organised with women who combine paid work with childcare or other care responsibilities. The findings for Leeds provide unique insights into women's work-care arrangements and attitudes and their opinions about support services.

This *Care-Connect Policy Brief* draws on the study findings to explore the following questions:

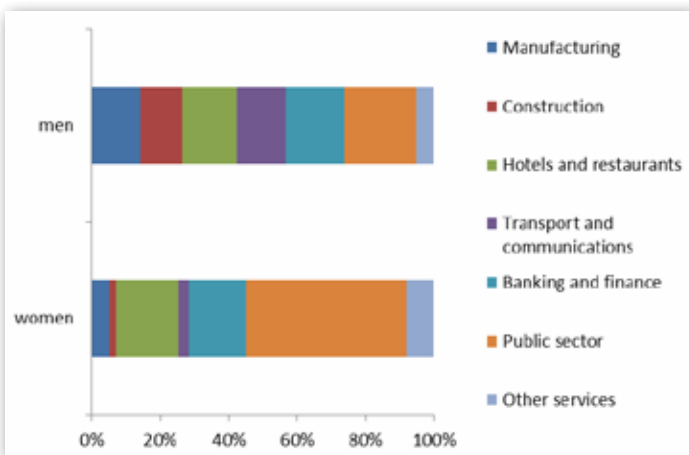
1. What are the recent trends in women's employment in Leeds?
2. How do women divide their time between paid work and family life, and what are their perspectives on their work-care balance?
3. In Leeds, how do local arrangements for care shape women's working lives?
4. What employment and welfare policy priorities do these findings signal at the local, national or European level?

KEY FINDINGS

1. Women's paid work in Leeds: latest trends

From official statistics², we know that between 2007 and 2012, women's employment rate in Leeds declined from 69 to 64%, while their unemployment rate rose from 4 to 7% and their 'inactivity' rate increased from 27 to 29%. While in these years men's labour market position became weaker too, in the Leeds labour market the gap between men and women has widened³, and gender segregation has increased: employed men continue to be distributed evenly across industrial sectors, whereas women's jobs have become more segregated since 2007. By 2012, 80% of employed women in Leeds were working in only three of the seven main sectors (Chart 1).

Chart 1 Jobs held in Leeds by women and men: selected industrial sectors, 2012⁴



Source: Annual Population Survey 2012, ONS

Another notable finding from official statistics for Leeds is that in the financial sector, the city's most important industry, an estimated 11,700 women, but only 2,700 men lost their jobs between 2009 and 2012.

As is common in England, women in Leeds work shorter hours than men. Recent official data for the city show considerable volatility, and ongoing gender differences, in part-time working. Between 2007 and 2011, women's part-time employment rate increased from 36% to 43%, dropping to 39% by the end of 2012. For men, part-time employment rose sharply between 2007 and 2010, from 12% to 17%, but dropped to 13% by 2012.

The 2012 FLOWS survey⁵ of women in Leeds produced findings about many topics on women and work not covered in official statistics, including their preferences. This reveals that:

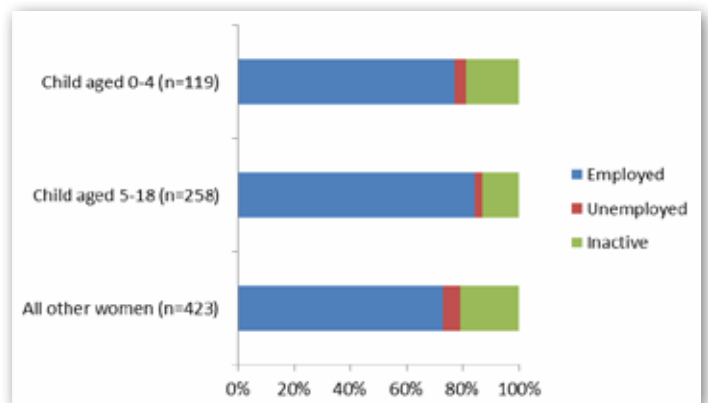
- Even with 'completely free choice', 78% of economically active women would still want to work for pay.
- Very few women in Leeds (12%) agree with the statement 'a man's job is to earn money and a woman's job is to look after home and children'.
- Most employed women (77%) are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their jobs. In focus groups they say they appreciate the economic independence, the companionship of their colleagues and the self-fulfilment that paid work brings.
- Many would prefer to work shorter hours: 52% of employed, and 36% of unemployed, women would like to work a maximum of 20 hours per week - but only 15% of employed survey respondents actually work such short hours. And while 35% of the employed women surveyed had paid work for 36+ hours per week, just 15% of those employed, and 22% of those unemployed, wanted to work such long weekly hours.
- Women are pessimistic about finding a job with their preferred working hours: 40% of those employed, and 86% of those unemployed, feel it would be difficult or impossible to find such a job.

2. Work-care reconciliation for three groups of women

Working mothers

Of the 377 mothers with dependent children in the FLOWS survey, 119 had at least one pre-school child. Mothers in Leeds are well integrated into the labour force (Chart 2).

Chart 2 Women's labour force participation by age of youngest child



Source: FLOWS Survey, University of Leeds, 2012

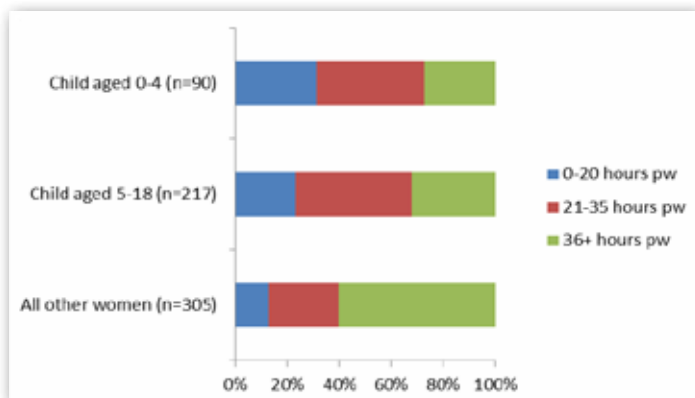
This high level of maternal employment fits with women's values about motherhood: 90% of those with a pre-school child agree with the statement 'a working mother can establish as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.'

Some women drop out of paid work after having children: 23% of those currently outside the labour force, and 10% of unemployed women, left their last job to look after their children or their home

and family. The FLOWS survey found that 9% of unemployed women are looking for a job because they no longer need to provide childcare, while 15% of those outside the labour force say they will consider entering the labour force when their children start school.

Most mothers with young children are in employment, but they work shorter hours than other women (Chart 3).

Chart 3 Working hours of women by age of their youngest child



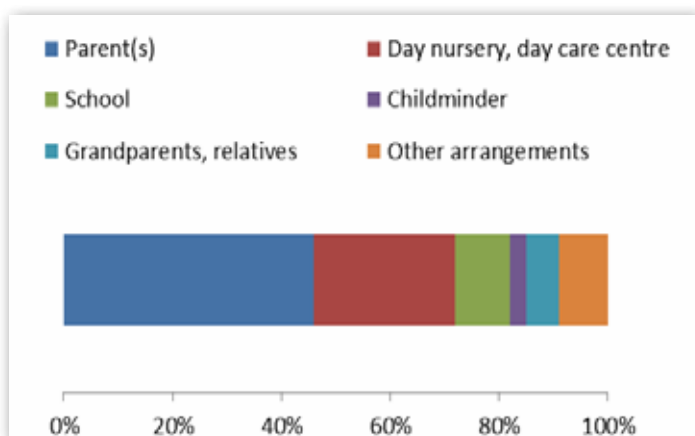
Source: FLOWS Survey, University of Leeds, 2012

In Leeds, part-time work is in harmony with mothers' values: 76% of those with pre-school children agree with the statement 'a woman must be prepared to reduce her working time in favour of her family'.

How do mothers in Leeds arrange childcare?

Most mothers look after their pre-school children themselves or with their partners, but formal childcare services, especially nurseries, are also widely used (Chart 4)⁶. The high proportion of grandparental and other informal childcare used by Leeds families is also notable.

Chart 4 Childcare arrangements of women with pre-school children



Source: FLOWS Survey, University of Leeds, 2012

Note: 119 women said they had a pre-school child



Pre-school children spend relatively few hours in formal childcare: 42% of mothers report placing their children in formal day care for up to 20 hours a week, 42% for 21-35 hours, and 15% for 36+ hours. Comparison of these figures with mothers' actual working hours (Chart 3) shows that formal childcare services alone are insufficient to cover the hours mothers in Leeds work.

The availability of appropriate formal childcare does affect paid work for some mothers. A minority (9%) of those currently outside the labour force who have a pre-school child say they 'would consider working for pay again' if they had access to their preferred form of childcare. No women outside the labour force said this was because of a lack of childcare in their local area, or because the childcare available was of poor quality.

At the moment I'm doing fine, but there's not one position above mine, a senior position that works part-time. I think I'll be held back and I'm aware of that. I want another child, so I could spend the next seven years in this post and not progress.

Leah, mother of one

The FLOWS survey shows mothers' motivation in choosing a particular form of childcare: of those who look after their pre-school children themselves (or who share this with their partner) 44% believe children of this age should be looked after at home; 21% look after their children at home because they find childcare too expensive; and 3% think available childcare is of poor quality. Perhaps surprisingly, no women who mainly care for their pre-school child(ren) themselves say this is because of a lack of local childcare⁷.

With regard to the services offered for pre-school children in Leeds, mothers in the study mostly (79%) think their needs are fully or mostly met, but only half (52%) think the public provision of childcare is 'good' or 'very good'.

Grandmothers' role in providing informal childcare

As noted above, grandparental childcare contributes to mothers' ability to do paid work. The FLOWS survey enables us to focus on grandmothers' role in childcare arrangements in more detail.

The survey included 144 women (18% of respondents) who are grandmothers, among whom 40% regularly care for their grandchildren while their parents work. (A quarter of the latter group provide 20+ hours of childcare per week.) Among those providing childcare while parents work:

- 58% are economically active – they are once more combining paid work and childcare.
- 48% say looking after grandchildren limits their ability to work for pay.
- 28% are also caring for an older, sick or disabled family member.

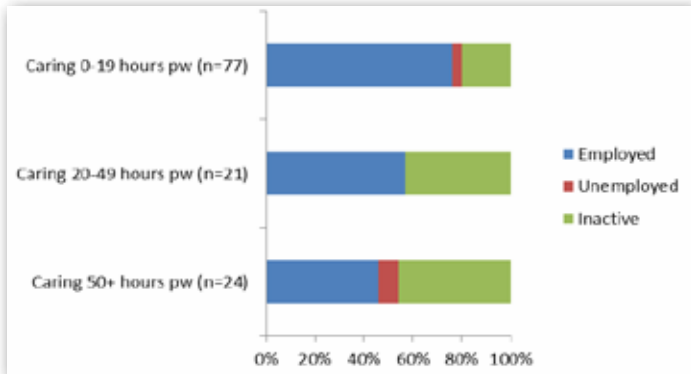
You don't get any tax credits for childcare if your family are helping you out. You can offer to pay them, but it's obviously out of your own pocket, isn't it?

Thelma, mother of three

Carers of older, sick or disabled family members

The labour force participation of the 128 carers of older, sick or disabled people in the FLOWS survey (16% of respondents) is affected by the amount of care they provide (Chart 5)⁸. There is a relationship between caring and not having paid work: among women outside the labour force, 2% had left their last job to care for a sick or disabled adult, and 7% say they would consider paid work if they could find a job that fitted with their caring role.

Chart 5 Carers' labour force participation by weekly hours of care

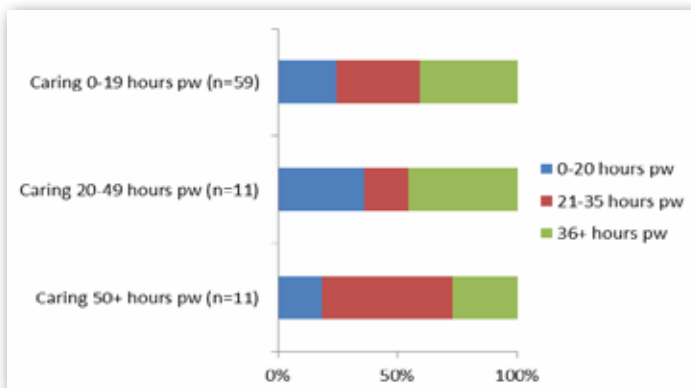


Source: FLOWS Survey, University of Leeds, 2012

Women are very aware of the difficulty of combining paid work and caring for an older, sick or disabled family member: 74% of employed carers 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement, 'caring for an older relative limits the type or amount of paid work you can do'.

Employed carers in the Leeds survey work between 3 and 65 hours per week and provide 1 to 168 hours of care per week. Among them, 60% spend up to 10 hours a week caring and 25% spend 20+ hours per week providing care. Some of those still in their jobs seem to combine paid work and care successfully⁹, but those with long weekly hours of care tend to have paid jobs with shorter hours.

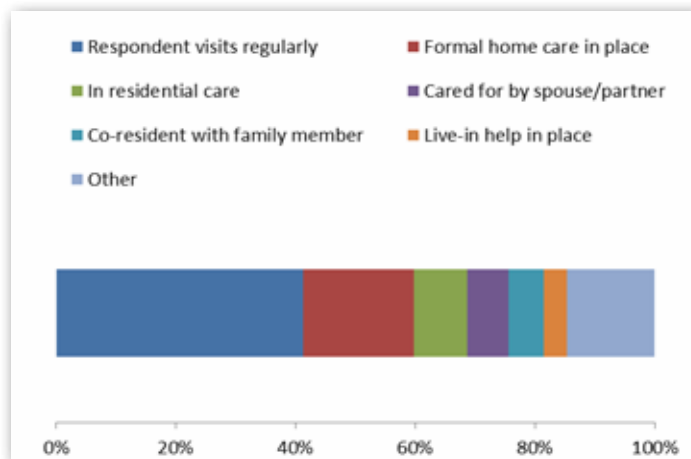
Chart 6 Employed carers: hours worked by weekly hours of care



Source: FLOWS Survey, University of Leeds, 2012

In the survey, all respondents were asked if they had an older relative with health and social care needs, and if so, how these were met. The care they provide and the support services used are shown in Chart 7.

Chart 7 Care arrangements of older family members, as reported by women in Leeds¹⁰



Source: FLOWS Survey, University of Leeds, 2012

Note: 193 women said they had an older relative with care needs

The care arrangements reported are not fully in harmony with what the Leeds women would prefer. While 40% of survey respondents believe older people needing care should receive professional care services in their own home, only 19% of those who have an older relative with a health or social care need report that such care is in place¹¹.

I think you've got to plan more because of having to work. I always have to know when my Mum's hospital appointments are to be able to plan and put them in my diary in order to get either the flexitime around it or days off.

Gina, carer and mother of two

Women's motivations in providing care for their older relatives themselves are primarily emotional and moral: 39% provide such care because 'they are my parents' and 27% because 'older people should be looked after by their children'. Some (8%) care for their older relatives because the older person 'does not wish to leave their own home', while 10% mention factors related to the availability of support services: 'there are no residential services available nearby' (2%); 'home care services are not available' (6%); 'my older relative does not qualify for home care services' (2%); or 'other reasons' (16%).

I changed all my hours to change how much my childcare cost. At that stage, because of the tax credit system, I was actually ready to resign at work until they went to school.

Thelma, mother of three

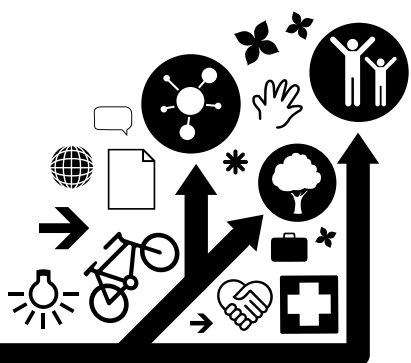
DISCUSSION POINTS FROM FLOWS FOCUS GROUPS

The FLOWS focus groups with women in Leeds explored women's perspectives on work-care reconciliation in detail. Data from these discussions is indicative rather than representative of women's views, and the points quoted below are those that seem salient for current policy debates.

- Working women are highly committed to employers who support their work-care reconciliation – even if this means no more than that their employer agreed they could take unpaid family leave in an emergency.
- The flexibility of working hours plays out differently for different groups of women: women in higher ranked job roles had struggled to reduce their working hours when a care need emerged in their family, while women in lower paid jobs had struggled to work longer hours.
- For women with higher level qualifications, part-time work means putting their careers on hold or 'working below potential.'
- In the focus groups, mothers in lower paid jobs did not mention using childcare vouchers, contradicting other research¹² which finds that UK parents from all income groups use childcare vouchers.
- Families find arranging childcare for school-aged children in the afternoons and during school holidays is a considerable challenge.
- The care of older relatives is often shared between family members: women who work long hours in paid work often 'help out' another relative who works shorter hours and is the 'main carer' of an older, sick or disabled adult in the family.

What kinds of policy change do focus group participants want?

- More, and more affordable, childcare places for pre-school children, including 2 year olds.
- More, and more affordable, childcare options for children over the age of 11, including during school holidays.
- Paid parental leave which can easily be shared between parents, instead of the current system of maternity/paternity leaves.
- Longer care leaves to enable parents to look after children when they are sick.
- Childcare vouchers to be accessible to self-employed parents.
- Regulations about emergency family leave to be 'set in stone' for employers.
- The right to request flexible working to be available to new employees (not restricted to employees with a minimum of six months' service with their employer).
- Easier access to information about services and benefits for older, sick or disabled adults and carers.
- Extended eligibility for Carer's Allowance.
- More services for older people with impaired mental capacity, such as dementia.



SOME INSIGHTS FROM OTHER EUROPEAN CITIES

In **Jyväskylä** (Finland) parents have access to long and generously paid parental leaves, paid by the state, not by employers.

In **Hamburg** (Germany) children over the age of 1 have the right to formal day care services. The 'basic' right includes 5 hours of care a day and lunch. Parents who work or study are entitled to childcare vouchers, subsidised by the local authority.

In **Szekesfehervar** (Hungary) carers who provide care for more than one older or disabled family member may receive a 'cash for care' payment that equals the minimum monthly wage (subject to needs and means tests).

POLICY ISSUES TO DEBATE

- Can mothers in Leeds exercise real choice about paid work, given the high cost of childcare?
- Can mothers have 'good' jobs with the childcare options currently available to them?
- Can women with higher qualifications who are mothers and carers reach their full potential in their work?
- What changes to the infrastructure of home care services for older, sick and disabled people would benefit women most?

¹ FLOWS 'The impact of local welfare systems on female labour force participation and social cohesion' is funded in 2011-14 through FP7, the Framework Programme for Research of the European Union, as Collaborative Project SSH-2010-2 (for details, see www.flows-eu.eu).

² ONS Annual Population Survey, 2007-2012 (NOMIS).

³ Men's employment rate in these years dropped from 77% to 74% while their unemployment rate increased from 7% to 8%. Their inactivity rate remained at 18%. See Yeandle and Joynes, 2012 for detailed discussion.

⁴ 'Agriculture and fishing' and 'energy and water' are not included as very few people in Leeds are employed in these sectors.

⁵ The FLOWS Survey 2012 is a survey of women in 11 European cities overseen by Prof P. Jensen, University of Aalborg, Denmark. In Leeds, the survey sample was selected and interviewed (by telephone) on behalf of the University of Leeds by BMG Research, Birmingham. Our thanks to Viktoria Joynes for initial analysis of the Leeds results.

⁶ Pre-school children are those aged 0-4 years. Those who go to school are likely to attend school-based nursery classes.

⁷ The Council's assessment found that there is insufficient childcare available in certain areas of the city (Leeds City Council, 2011).

⁸ 23% of carers in the FLOWS survey are aged 55-64, an age when many women take early retirement, irrespective of any care responsibilities.

⁹ The FLOWS focus group data sheds some light on what a 'successful' combination of paid work and caring means for these women and their families.

¹⁰ Not all older family members mentioned are Leeds residents.

¹¹ Between 2008 and 2012, the number of people aged 65+ receiving home care in Leeds fell from 3,561 to 2,630 (HSCIC, 2013).

¹² Konings, 2010.

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Dr Erika Kispeter joined the University of Leeds in 2013 to work on the FLOWS project. She holds a PhD in Gender Studies and is an expert on gender issues in the labour market.

A NOTE ON THE FLOWS SURVEY

When measured against data from the 2011 Census of Population, the FLOWS Survey is a good representation of women aged 25-64 in Leeds. It slightly over-recruited women aged 30-34.

The educational qualifications of women in the FLOWS Survey are broadly in line with those seen in the Annual Population Survey (APS), with Leeds women with higher educational qualifications slightly over-represented.

The FLOWS Survey, when compared with the APS data for 2012, slightly over-represents employed women (75% compared with 69%), and slightly under-represents women outside the labour force (21% compared with 26%).



THE CARE-CONNECT POLICY ROUND TABLE SERIES

Care-Connect will be holding a series of Round Table events in the run-up to the General Election in 2015 to discuss policy options in areas where the University of Leeds has specialist research expertise. Forthcoming events currently in the schedule include:

- Migration
- Children and Young People Marginalised in Society
- Carers and Social Inclusion

Each Round Table will include a *Care-Connect Policy Brief* to inform discussion and the policy recommendations arising will be circulated in our *Policy Alert* series, which will be disseminated widely to politicians of all parties, policymakers and the wider electorate.

For information on these events, please visit our website.

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