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Working dads failed by workplace policies

The government must reform workplace policies to ensure they meet the needs of the 21st century family and to better support working dads in caring for their children, says the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee.

Current policies supporting fathers in the workplace do not deliver what they promise, despite good intentions and this is particularly the case for less well-off fathers.

The committee's report concludes that the right to request flexible working has not created the necessary cultural change and the government itself admitted to the inquiry that its flagship Shared Parental Leave scheme will not meet its objective for most fathers.

The report, *Fathers and the workplace*, has been published as the deadline approaches for gender pay gap reporting. The government says that dads taking a more active role in caring for their children is a key way of ending the gender pay gap.

The committee recommends that:

- Statutory Paternity Pay should be paid at 90% of the father's pay (capped for higher earners) to help ensure that all fathers, regardless of income,

can be at home around the time of their child's birth;

- the government should consider the costs and benefits of introducing a new policy of 12 weeks' standalone fathers' leave in the child's first year as an alternative to Shared Parental Leave when it reviews the policy this year;
- the government should legislate immediately so all jobs are advertised as flexible from day one, unless there are solid business reasons not to; and
- the government should harmonise workplace rights for fathers who are agency workers or self-employed with those for employed fathers where practical – for example, by introducing a Paternity Allowance similar to the Maternity Allowance.

Maria Miller, chair of the committee, said: "The evidence is clear – an increasing number of fathers want to take a more equal share of child-care when their children are young but current policies do not support them in doing so.

"There is a historical lack of support for men in this area, and negative cultural assumptions about gender roles persist.

"Effective policies around Statutory Paternity Pay, parental leave and flexible working are all vital if we are to meet the needs of families and tackle the gender pay gap."

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/women-and-equalities-committee/news-parliament-2017/fathers-and-the-workplace-report-17-19/>

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Jobless increase at start of 2018

Unemployment posted a second increase in as many months, official figures show.

The number of unemployed people in the UK increased by 24,000 to 1.45 million in the three-month period ending January 2018 compared with the previous three-month period ending October 2017, according to Labour Force Survey data.

The increase in numbers was not enough to change the unemployment rate which remained at 4.3%.

The rise was due to a 49,000 increase in the number of unemployed women. This took their numbers to 696,000 from 647,000 and pushed their unemployment rate up to 4.4% from 4.1%.

The number of unemployed men, on the other hand, fell by 25,000 to 757,000 compared with the previous three-month period ending October, and their unemployment rate was down to 4.2% from 4.4%.

Unemployment seasonally adjusted

	Claimants ¹		LFS ³	
	(000s)	% ²	(000s)	%
December 2016	783	2.2	1,594	4.8
January 2017	765	2.2	1,580	4.7
February	762	2.2	1,559	4.7
March	784	2.2	1,541	4.6
April	796	2.3	1,530	4.6
May	801	2.3	1,495	4.5
June	806	2.3	1,484	4.4
July	803	2.3	1,455	4.3
August	802	2.3	1,443	4.3
September	805	2.3	1,425	4.3
October	812	2.3	1,429	4.3
November	824	2.3	1,439	4.3
December	830	2.4	1,470	4.4
January 2018 (r)	829	2.3	1,453	4.3
February (p)	838	2.4		

¹ Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit claimants ² Percentage of working population – the employees, unemployed, self-employed and the armed forces.

³ The Labour Force Survey definition of unemployment – the number of unemployed people who want a job and are ready to start work in two weeks, and have looked for work in the past four weeks. Each figure is the average of the past three months – a rolling average. (p) provisional (r) revised

There was an increase on the other main unemployment measure – the claimant count – which only in-

cludes claimants receiving Jobseeker's Allowance and those on the means-tested Universal Credit.

In February 2018, unemployment under this count rose by over 9,200 to 837,800 from the revised figure for January of 828,600. The increase in numbers was helped push the joblessness rate up to 2.4% from 2.3%.

Male claimant numbers increased by 4,400 to 511,500 and their joblessness rate was up to 2.8% from 2.7%.

The number of female claimants increased by 4,800 to 326,300, and their joblessness rate increased to 2.0% from 1.9%.

Regions In the three months to January 2018, unemployment increased in seven of the UK's 12 regions/countries, was unchanged in the East Midlands and fell in four. There was a 17,000 increase in the East region, along with a 14,000 increase in the South East.

The regional falls included a 10,000 drop in the North East, with numbers down by 9,000 in the West Midlands and by 6,000 in Northern Ireland.

The unemployment rate was above the UK average of 4.3% in five of the 12 regions/countries. The highest rate was 5.2% in the North East.

In February 2018, the claimant count rose in all but one of the 12 regions/countries – the exception was Northern Ireland where it fell.

The claimant count rate was above the UK average of 2.4% in seven regions/countries. The highest rates were 4.5% in the North East and 3.2% in the North West.

Region	Feb claimants		LFS Nov – Jan	
	Number	%	Number	%
North East	56,000	4.5	67,000	5.2
North West	118,000	3.2	147,000	4.1
Yorkshire & the Humber	78,700	2.8	136,000	5.0
East Midlands	49,100	2.1	98,000	4.1
West Midlands	90,000	3.1	141,000	5.0
East	51,900	1.6	132,000	4.1
London	125,400	2.1	247,000	5.0
South East	69,500	1.4	159,000	3.3
South West	46,700	1.6	106,000	3.7
Wales	40,000	2.6	73,000	4.8
Scotland	83,800	3.0	118,000	4.3
Northern Ireland	28,700	3.1	28,000	3.2

Inflation cut but no end to living standards crisis

Retail price inflation has fallen for a second consecutive month.

In February, the Retail Prices Index (RPI) stood at 278.1 and the annual rate of inflation on the measure favoured by union negotiators was down to 3.6% against the 4.0% increase at the start of 2018. Cheaper petrol and a slower rise in food prices contributed to the slowdown.

In February, inflation under the new Consumer Prices Index Housing (CPIH) was down to 2.5% from 2.7%. Meanwhile, inflation under the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) was down to 2.7% from 3.0%.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "Britain's living standards crisis is far from over. Today's fall in prices may ease the pressure a bit. But working people will still be worse off at the end of this parliament than before the crash."

	Price inflation			
	RPI ¹	% increase on a year earlier		
	RPI	RPIX ²	CPIH	
January 2017	265.5	2.6	2.9	1.9
February	268.4	3.2	3.5	2.3
March	269.3	3.1	3.4	2.3
April	270.6	3.5	3.8	2.6
May	271.7	3.7	3.9	2.7
June	272.3	3.5	3.8	2.6
July	272.9	3.6	3.9	2.6
August	274.7	3.9	4.1	2.7
September	275.1	3.9	4.1	2.8
October	275.3	4.0	4.2	2.8
November	275.8	3.9	4.0	2.8
December	278.1	4.1	4.2	2.7
January 2018	276.0	4.0	4.0	2.7
February	278.1	3.6	3.6	2.5

¹ January 1987=100 ² RPI except mortgage interest payments

Seven of the 14 groups that make up the basket of goods used to calculate the RPI increased by more than 3.6% in February.

The 10.1% increase in the clothing and footwear group included a rises of 12.3% and 11.5% in women's clothing and children's clothing respectively.

The overall increase fuel and light group of 6.6% included an 11.4% increase in electricity prices and a 10.5% rise in domestic oil and other fuels.

Fares and other travel costs group were up by 5.2% overall, but included a 6.8% increase in bus and coach fares, while "other travel costs" were up by 5.7%.

The overall rise in the food group was down to 2.5%, but included substantial increases of 13.7% for butter and 10.9% for milk products, while a loaf of bread was up by 5.0%.

Dearer foreign holidays, with a 6.3% increase, contributed to the leisure services group's overall increase of 4.3%.

The housing group's increase was only 2.5% – well below the overall 3.6% rise – but included a 3.8% increase in council tax and rates.

More than 3.6%	%	Less than 3.6%	%
Clothing & footwear	10.1	Alcoholic drink	3.2
Tobacco	7.9	Leisure goods	3.1
Fuel & light	6.6	Catering	2.9
Fares etc	5.2	Food	2.5
Household goods	4.9	Housing	2.5
Leisure services	4.3	Household services	1.5
Motoring expenditure	3.9	Personal goods & services	1.5

www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/february2018

Earnings rise falls back below 3%

The rise in earnings dropped back as the influence of City Xmas bonuses fell out of the equation.

In January 2018, average weekly earnings growth, including bonuses, were provisionally estimated to have risen by 2.8% against the revised increase of 3.2% for December.

As retail price inflation rose by 3.6% in January and by 4.0% in December there was a real-terms decrease in earnings of 0.8 percentage points in both months.

The sectoral figures for January, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), show manufacturing earnings growth was down to 2.9% from 3.2% in December.

Growth in services was down to 2.7% from 3.3%.

In the private sector as a whole, growth was down to 2.9% from 3.5% the previous month. In the public sector, excluding financial services, growth was up to 2.5% from 1.9%.

Headline earnings growth (the rolling three-month average) for the whole economy in January was up to 2.8% from 2.7% in December.

In manufacturing, growth was steady at 3.1%. Growth in services edged up to 2.8% from 2.7%.

In the private sector as a whole, growth was up to 3.0% from 2.8%, while in the public sector, excluding financial services, growth was unchanged at 2.1%.

Average Weekly Indices ¹						
2000= 100	Whole economy		Manu- factur- ing	Serv ices	Private sector	Public sec- tor ²
	annual change					
Nov 2016 (r)	159.5	3.0%	159.2	163.0	159.6	160.4
Dec (r)	158.8	1.8%	159.3	162.2	158.7	160.4
Jan 2017 (r)	159.4	1.9%	159.8	163.0	159.4	160.4
February	159.4	2.7%	160.0	162.7	159.4	160.7
March	160.3	2.4%	159.9	164.0	160.4	161.1
April	160.7	1.4%	160.9	164.3	160.8	161.1
May	160.8	2.0%	160.6	164.5	160.8	162.2
June	161.3	2.8%	160.9	164.8	162.0	161.2
July	161.5	1.7%	162.2	165.1	161.5	162.1
August	162.0	2.4%	162.3	165.6	162.2	163.2
September	162.6	2.8%	162.8	166.2	163.0	162.2
October	162.8	2.4%	163.8	166.5	163.1	163.5
November (r)	163.3	2.4%	164.1	166.9	163.6	163.5
Dec (r)	163.8	3.2%	164.4	167.4	164.2	163.5
Jan 2018 (p)	163.9	2.8%	164.5	167.4	164.1	167.4
% annual rise for January			2.9%	2.7%	2.9%	2.5%
% rise — January headline rate ³		2.8%	3.1%	2.8%	3.0%	2.1%

¹ Average weekly earnings in Great Britain seasonally adjusted ² Excluding financial services ³ Annual increase in rolling three-month average (p) provisional

The ONS also produces regular pay figures which strip out bonuses. In January, earnings growth for the whole economy was up to 2.8% from 2.7% in December rise. The annual increases in the year to January for various sectors, along with the previous month's rises in brackets, were: manufacturing 2.8% (3.1%); services 2.7% (2.6%); private sector

2.8% (2.9%); and public sector, excluding financial services, 2.5% (2.1%).

The average increase in regular pay in the whole economy for the three-month period ending January was up to 2.6% from 2.5% the previous month.

The three-month sectoral increases were: manufacturing 2.9% (2.8%); services 2.5% (2.4%); private sector 2.7% (2.6%); and public sector, excluding financial services, 2.1% (2.0%).

The following table is based on the median average earnings figures for April 2017 published in the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. The original median figures have been updated by the 2.0% increase in average weekly earnings, including bonuses, for the whole economy between April 2017 and January 2018 to give a rough estimate of earnings now in the various occupational groups.

Full-time average weekly earnings by occupation	
	£ a week
All employees	£561.40
All male	£603.30
All female	£503.50
Managers	£840.60
Professionals	£747.80
Associate professionals	£617.70
Admin & secretarial	£440.20
Skilled/craft	£520.00
Services	£368.60
Sales	£377.80
Operatives	£482.00
Other manual jobs	£377.00

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/march2018>

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