Twitter Thread by Antonia Bance



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When schools (rightly) closed last week, we knew many working mums (& dads) would be plunged into the nightmare of trying to work AND look after their kids AND homeschool. So we @the_TUC asked them how they were managing. 55,630 parents replied (!), in four days, 7-10 Jan 1/

@The_TUC We knew the last lockdown hit mums hard. I say mums, cos it's still mums that do the majority of the childcare and who stepped back from paid work to look after their kids. Yes I know many dads do their fair share.

@The_TUC Here's what they told us. 9 in 10 said they were stressed and anxious. No wonder. Even with an understanding boss, it's hard. And for many mums, the kids at home all day meant they faced a catastrophic loss of income.

@The_TUC How are they managing? 65% are working from home and doing childcare. 25% are using annual leave (but that stores up problems for the long summer holidays later in the year). 18% have reduced their working hours. 14% are taking unpaid leave.

@The_TUC The government says furlough can be used if parents can't work cos childcare. But 40% didn't know this. 78% have not been offered furlough by their employer. And a totally unacceptable 68% who did ask for furlough were turned down for it by their boss.

@The_TUC Mums are exhausted. Reading the stories they shared with us, desperation comes through. Mums looking after kids all day, then up working half the night. Couple families where one is required to work outside the home. Single parents with no support at all.

@The_TUC It will hit single parents and low income mums worst. There’s a reason govt after govt have tried to get women into decent work: cos that’s how we cut women’s & children’s poverty. We are already going backwards. Shredding women out of the labour market will make poverty worse.

@The_TUC It’s happening. Women are leaving jobs, and cutting hours. In a recession, with unemployment rising, 48% fear they'll be treated negatively by their employer cos of difficulties with childcare. Scary when there are more so redundancies everyday.

@The_TUC The last lockdown was a surprise. This time, it's wearingly familiar. The government should have thought about how to support working families for the long term - and been ready to help.

@The_TUC UK parents don't get *any* paid parental leave – out of step with lots of developed economies. We need at least ten days paid pa. Plus a right to flexible working - eg predictable or compressed hours, as well as working from home. The government should sort these urgently.

@The_TUC But right now, we're in a crisis.

So @the_TUC demands that parents get a right to be furloughed, if all other options have been exhausted.

We don't ask this lightly. What we want are decent parental rights for the long-term. But working parents need a right to furlough now.

@The_TUC We can't just rely on employers doing the right thing.

Seven in ten mums who asked for furlough to cope with childcare were turned down.

We need a right to furlough.

@The_TUC Workers can be furloughed part-time, for as little as seven days at a time.

That means parents can share care. 42% told us they are already sharing care with a partner.

When furloughing parents, bosses must ask parents to share care - and dads should ask for furlough

@The_TUC Furlough isn't open to public sector staff.

Not all public sector staff can get critical worker school places - and wraparound care is closed.

The public sector should place parents who can't work on paid parental leave - and the government should fund this.

@The_TUC Another group who need a right to furlough too: clinically extremely vulnerable workers, who are shielding & can't work from home.

Too many are stuck on inadequate sick pay of £95pw.

Sick pay *must* rise - but right now, people shielding should have a right to furlough too.

@The_TUC TLDR:
Working mums need more help.

Fix rights for working parents long term :
- ten days paid parental leave
- right to work flexibly

Too many bosses are turning down furlough.

Give parents (& shielded) an emergency right to furlough now

Decent #SickPayForAll

@The_TUC A massive thanks to our partners @mother_pukka and @PregnantScrewed.

Kudos to the fab @SianCElliott who leads this work.

Thanks to 55,630 parents who told us how hard it is.

Working parents are stronger in a union. Join a one today https://t.co/t8NqVLZaSk