

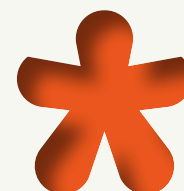
Gingerbread*

Single Parents, Equal Families





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From Tori, a single parent campaigner

"I don't know how you do it..."

"I don't know how you do it!"

"I don't know how you do it." This was the well-meaning phrase, uttered to me not long after I became a single parent. Most single parents will recognise this phrase. My desire to provide a happy, healthy childhood for my children hadn't changed, but the path had become fraught with obstacles that weren't there before.

And that well-meaning person was simply stating the stark reality that everyone knows to be true: life in the UK is significantly harder for single parents than non-single parents.

There are currently 1.8 million single parent families in the UK, which has been a consistent figure since the late 1970's. Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister when single parent households started to make up a quarter of all families in the UK. Isn't it time we are listened to?

And yet, in 2024, being a single parent defines our journey through life because successive governments and opposition parties have failed to address the specific challenges we face. And let's be clear - it's long overdue that everyone, on all sides of the political spectrum, gets this right.

My son is statistically more likely to drop out of education sooner than his classmate whose parents are married. My daughter is statistically more likely to live in poverty than the girl who plays on her team.

Not because of their ability.
Not because of perseverance, work ethic, or talent.
Not because of how much they are loved.

I jumped at the opportunity to join Gingerbread's campaign group. This group is a vibrant, thriving mix of people from all walks of life, but as I sat in that first meeting listening to my fellow members' stories, I was struck that our collective experience is one of hardship, frustration, and despair. We are different genders, races, and religions; we come from different cultures and socio-economic groups. We have different ambitions and aspirations. But shared barriers stand in our way that long ago should have been removed. I doubt that if you put a group of non-single parents in a room together you would hear that same cacophony of pain.

So I challenge everyone not to ask how we do it all, but why we're still having to. I challenge you to truly listen to the experiences of single parents, and remove the unnecessary struggles that face us at every turn. I challenge the incoming government to take up the 1.8 million hopes, dreams, and futures contained in this manifesto.



Tori

Mum of 3 amazing children

Doesn't agree that single should mean second-best










What we are asking for

Many people tell single parents, “I don’t know how you do it”, and the truth is, it is a challenge – a challenge made harder by policy decisions, welfare systems and employment practices that at best ignore the needs of single parent families and at worst actively discriminate.

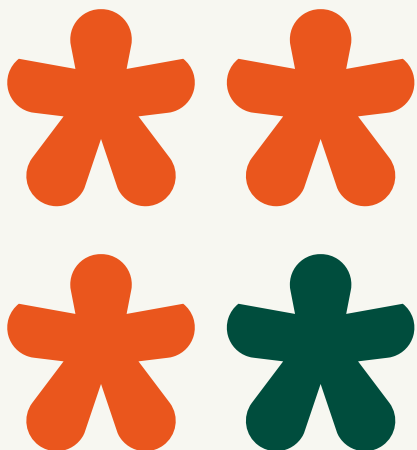
Single parents are twice as likely to live in poverty compared to couples. Every day, they battle constant financial, emotional, and social challenges, yet they show remarkable resilience in managing their finances and caring for their children. While they prioritise their children, Rachel says “every penny I have goes on my children”, it’s crucial to ease the burden for the UK’s 1.8 million single parent families.

Using years of real-life experience, thorough research, and collaboration with single parents, Gingerbread and a dedicated team of single parent campaigners have come together to put forward our proposals for the next government. Our full list of recommendations is included at the end, but in essence we urge the next government to:

-  Undertake a full review and reform of the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) and introduce a minimum CMS payment from government.
-  Take action so that a whole range of flexible working options becomes normalised and available allowing single parents to find work that meets their skill level, supported as appropriate by dedicated single parent work coaches.
-  Invest in a childcare system that supports single parents, including ensuring any childcare entitlements are available to those who are studying or training.
-  Take action to ensure adequate levels of benefits are paid to single parents and make sure the benefit system is fair. This includes reforming the Universal Credit conditionality system, and abolishing the two-child limit on benefit policy.
-  Introduce a process so that all impact assessments for new policies look at the impact that changes would have on single parents.

It’s essential for politicians to prioritise single parents and their children. The policies of the next government will shape the future, so let’s ensure they work effectively for single parent families and their children.

Child Maintenance



**In a recent survey,
1/4 of single parents
told us this was the
most important
issue for them**

A functioning Child Maintenance Service (CMS) is absolutely vital in order to ensure that children are supported financially by both parents. With 44% of children of single parents currently living in poverty,^[1] the need to reform the service is more urgent than ever. If child maintenance was paid in full to all children in separated families living in poverty who currently do not receive financial support from their other parent, it has the potential to lift 60% of them out of poverty.^[2] However, the system set up to support those parents who have their child(ren) living with them (parents with care or PWCs) to secure maintenance payments from the other parent of their child(ren) (non-resident parents or NRPs), is failing on a number of counts. Campaigner Jo told us "If I had a magic wand, I would make it compulsory for the non residential parent to pay towards the support of their child(ren)."

The CMS appears to be taking too little action to enforce payments – a third of children persistently receive not a penny of what they are owed^[3] – while arrears mount and are predicted to rise to £1 billion by March 2031^[4]. There are also a significant number of paying parents who find loopholes in the system to hide their income and reduce liability. We need action to up enforcement and close loopholes. Children of single parent families shouldn't have to go without because their parent has to survive through injustice and inequality. Chasing payments owed can also be extremely labour intensive for receiving parents and campaigner Tori found "the (receiving) parent is left carrying the heavy burden and you become consumed by this issue. It impacts mental health and ability to find work." She adds that without an effective CMS: "children are left in the most vulnerable position. It's about that acknowledgment that it costs to raise a child. If you take away the pressure of receiving funds, you're able to focus on the child."

Meanwhile, perpetrators of domestic abuse are using the service to maintain coercive control over ex-partners. This can include things like withholding payments intentionally. Rachel highlighted that payments from her children's other parent "always stopped when I needed the money the most, like right before Christmas or Easter."

Those who use the Collect and Pay service, to secure payment from those who have been failing to pay, are charged for it and many of these will be victim-survivors of domestic abuse). Effectively, these families are being financially penalised for the behaviour of their ex-partner. These fees need to be abolished.

Campaigner Yasmin suggests that when the CMS agrees to a payment plan for owed money (never discussed with the receiving parent), they should make sure the receiving parent gets the full monthly amount, with the government making up any difference. This forces the CMS to chase the owed money and use enforcement if needed. This way the child always gets the right amount, their welfare is prioritised and it's the government's responsibility to get the payments because the money belongs to them.

Some single parents tell us that the problems that exist with the service means that they actively avoid engaging with it because it's known to be "a nightmare" (Nicola.) Campaigner Nicola has instead opted for an informal arrangement with her ex-partner, despite this meaning uncertainty in terms of her payments and a lot of stress - this stress is incomparable to engaging with the CMS in her opinion.

There are also a significant number of families that have no arrangement at all.^[5] This has increased from 25% in 2011-12 (when the Child Support Agency became the CMS) to 44% in 2019-20 and while we don't know much about this group, what we do know is that they are more likely to be poor, disabled or have a disabled child. Black, African, Caribbean and black British parents are also less likely to use the CMS scheme than white parents.

Harriet explains "the experiences of people in minority ethnic communities can be exacerbated due to factors such as lower income and systemic barriers to opportunities. These barriers can be compounded by language barriers and lack of awareness about available support services. The cultural norms and pressures around family responsibility can have an impact. For example, in my community it can be frowned upon if you're going through the system due to distrust in government institutions."

We need a full review and reform of the service to make sure it works for all children and parents. As a priority, we also need to see the introduction of a minimum payment system that would see PWCs receive regular payments from government where NRPs are not paying. The government would then be able to recoup that money back from the NRP.

During Covid, receiving parents on CMS received a weekly payment from the government, and this made a huge difference (some of them were receiving nothing prior to the pandemic.) Campaigner Rachel says: "it made a real difference that I was getting at least £7 a week during covid."

Employment and Childcare

In 2023, we published a report^[6] on the barriers to work for single parents – the vast majority of whom are either in work or want to work. **Through this research, single parents told us that not only was this important financially but also for their own mental health and wellbeing as well as them wanting to act as role models for their children.**

As Angharad says:



My daughter is my priority, but I've reclaimed my power by going back to work.



One of the biggest challenges we found through our research was the lack of flexible and part-time roles available for single parents to balance work with their parenting responsibilities. Yet other evidence shows that at least 100,000 single parents could be in “quality” part-time roles but are currently unemployed or in a lower paid part-time position.^[7] There is therefore a clear business case for employers to harness the skills of single parents who need employment opportunities to be set up in a different way.

We do recognise that there have been some positive regulatory changes in this Parliament around flexible working, but we would like to see further action so that employers consider every single role and whether it could be done more flexibly, as well as work to change the culture of the employment market in the UK around part-time work

So, we are calling for leadership from the next government to secure culture change in the employment market so that part-time work, job sharing, and a whole range of flexible working options that fit the needs of single parents – and others too – become normalised, with roles readily available.

In practice, this will mean **an advertising duty on flexible work and duties to report on numbers of roles that have been fulfilled flexibly, alongside a recommitment to the flexible working taskforce to lead cultural change and ensure employers are equipped to meet new requirements and expectations.**

The advertising duty would mean that every time an employer advertised a new role they would have to advertise the flexible options for the role, focusing minds on how roles could be filled creatively in a more flexible way. Campaigner Emma explained that it was important to be able to talk to a potential employer during the interview process about the need for flexibility so that once you got the job they didn't feel like you'd sprung it on them, but then you are always thinking about whether you are disadvantaging yourself in the interview process.



We believe that this new duty would mean employers more actively thinking about flexibility, making these conversations a more regular and normal part of the recruitment process.

However, without a significant cultural shift, flexible working legislation won't go far enough. There is a fear among single parents that many employers will play slip service to any new requirements. Campaigner Faith highlighted the importance of accountability for flexible working on the part of employers, and we agree that monitoring needs to be put in place to monitor flexible working practice.

There is also a need for real leadership from government and employers to bring about cultural change. This means a recommitment from the next government to a renewed Flexible Working Taskforce, which as well as working on monitoring would also be given the remit to identify what incentives could be put in place to encourage employers to create more flexible and part-time roles as well as providing support for employers on what good looks like.

Job shares could serve as one way in which single parents can progress their careers whilst still juggling childcare and other responsibilities. Simon told us that "I hear from lots of single parents whose careers plateau when they become a single parent", and he himself had to take a significant cut in pay and responsibility at this juncture. Many single parents feel that job shares would be a great option to allow people to continue to progress in their careers, but this is often viewed as too much like hard work for many employers. The Taskforce would be able to myth bust in this area, whilst also developing proposals for reducing any additional costs that an employer may incur through filling roles in this way.

Flexibility is not just about agreed working hours. It's also about the flexibility to take some time off during the day to attend medical appointments – particularly when your child has a disability - finish early to attend parents evenings or events at school, as well as days off to look after your child when they are sick. As Emma highlighted, "when you are a single parent, there is nobody else" to share the load with. At Gingerbread, we support the new right to up to one week of unpaid carer's leave per year that can be taken flexibly in half-day segments, introduced by the Carer's Leave Act 2023, which will apply to the parents of disabled children. However, we agree with Carers UK that this needs to go further and support their campaign for a new right to 10 days of paid carers leave, which again would be made available for the parents of disabled children.

We would also urge employers to recognise that when a positive culture around flexible working is harnessed, single parents can thrive. Campaigner Sian's current employer is great, but that "is down to my line manager rather than the organisation's policies. She is supportive and understanding."

This understanding is paramount. Many single parents feel that as long as they are doing their job and meeting objectives, it shouldn't matter exactly when they are going into work, obviously bearing in mind core hours and also sector specific requirements. For Tori, "there's too much about presenteeism, rather than seeing a person's value."



The other area where single parents tell us that they would value support in employment is around self-employment. We see a role for Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches to provide advice and information on self-employment. This would be part of the job of a single parent specialist job coach, which we believe is vital in ensuring that single parents can get the right advice, help and support to find work.

More widely, in our research, we found that support for single parents to move into work is most effective when it is consistent, focused, and bespoke. Specialist work coaches are therefore key. We have worked up a fuller paper that makes the case for these work coaches.

Childcare

Ensuring affordability and availability of childcare goes hand in hand with supporting single parents into quality jobs. We welcomed the expansion of the universal “free” hours in the Spring Statement in 2023. However, along with partners in the Early Education and Childcare Coalition, we are concerned about the feasibility to deliver the expansion with the funding that has been announced so far. Rebecca told us how childcare providers in her area were so oversubscribed that unless you could commit to a certain number of hours and days for your child, they could decide not to take on your child. This will effectively mean that the new entitlements will only be available for those parents who want and can pay for more than the 30 hours entitlement will provide.

We also have significant concerns that the expanded hours are only available to those in work. Our research shows a significant number of single parents want to change sectors to better balance work and parenting responsibilities – but this new offer isn’t available for those who are studying. Having a child in childcare would also assist those out of work in finding work. **Any universal offer of free childcare should be offered to all single parents or at a minimum for those who are studying or retraining.**

This would be a massive help for parents like Leanne, a student nurse and single mother to two children, aged 3 & 6. For her, the cost of childcare alongside studying is a massive strain. She said:



I do get a childcare grant of 85% (through Universal Credit), however, having children in nursery and school, the remaining 15% still adds up to around £300 per month. I have been told to hold off pursuing my dream until the children are in school. Which isn't helpful when the country faces nursing shortages and large numbers leaving the profession. The cost of childcare is crippling and has left me questioning if I can continue on with my studies.



Childcare element of Universal Credit

Historically, claims for the “childcare element” of Universal Credit were made in arrears, posing an impossible hurdle for many parents seeking work, particularly single parents, who could not find the money to pay the fees upfront, before claiming it back, or who were going into debt to do so. Gingerbread and a range of other organisations and campaigners have long been calling for the childcare element to be paid upfront and were delighted to hear the Chancellor announce a change to this effect in the Spring Statement in 2023. However, the way that this change has been made is problematic. The government has set out that the Flexible Support Fund (FSF) should be used to help jobseekers cover their first month of childcare, before future months are claimed through Universal Credit. The FSF is a discretionary fund available to work coaches to use with those they are supporting to pay for things that will help a jobseeker secure work. When it comes to using the FSF for the first month of childcare, the government has said that this should be offered by work coaches. However, our helpline is hearing of instances where this is not happening. This seems to be down to a combination of a lack of awareness or understanding of the support on offer or confusion over the role of the FSF itself. The government either needs to make it very clear that the FSF is always available to pay for the upfront costs and work with work coaches to ensure it is being offered as standard, or find a new mechanism for paying the upfront costs.

More widely, it’s clear the interactions between benefits, work and childcare are a real challenge for many. Single parents tell us they are being expected to work more hours or benefits will be cut. Availability and affordability of childcare is a real challenge and in many areas, you have to plan quite far in advance to get a childcare place, but you don’t know when you will find work and you can’t get work unless you have childcare in place. It puts you in a really difficult position in lining everything up. Nicola told us: “I got a job and then my child got chickenpox, so I couldn’t work on day two, so I no longer had a job and then lost thousands in childcare as I couldn’t just cancel that.”

Welfare Reform and the cost of living

Many single parents are in an economically precarious position, with campaigner Gemma telling us she’s “literally counting the pennies”. With a typical savings pot 20 times smaller than the UK average and a typical median income of around £15,000 per year,^[8] they are extremely exposed to the rising cost of living. The consequences of this are particularly evident in the rising rate of child poverty among single parent families. Other evidence shows:

- ✿ The number of single parents in “serious financial difficulties” rose from 23% in October 2021 to 34% in December 2022.^[9]
- ✿ The financial situation for 2 in 3 single parents worsened over 2022-23.^[10]

Many of those facing such financial issues are in receipt of Universal Credit (37% of claimants are single parents), demonstrating its insufficiency.

For campaigner Chris, social security is “totally inadequate” and must be urgently, permanently updated. For Gemma, whilst additional cost of living payments were welcome, these “plaster problems” and genuine uprating needs to be introduced.

The basic rate of Universal Credit has eroded over time and its value now at its lowest ever level as a proportion of average earnings. Analysis from the Trussell Trust and Joseph Rowntree shows that this rate falls short of what’s needed to afford essentials.^[11] Moreover, sanctions, the benefit cap and the two-child limit mean that a great proportion of single parents see their payments reduced even further. Welfare benefits need a genuine review to ensure that levels are set at such a rate that means people can afford the basics. **Action is needed from the next government to make sure that benefit levels are set at an adequate rate and keep pace with inflation.**

Two child limit on benefit policy and cap on benefits

The sufficiency of current benefit levels are further eroded by policies such as the two-child limit on benefits and the benefit cap, both of which leave some single parent families with even less in their pockets. More than two-thirds (62%) of capped households are single parents, with over 90,000 single parents having their benefits capped in total^[12]. Almost half of families affected by the two child limit are headed by single parents. This policy means affected families cannot claim around £3,200 a year per extra child, and pushes a significant number into poverty, or deeper poverty. Gingerbread frequently gets calls to our helpline where this amount of money would make all the difference for families financially. Rachel, whose children are older, told us she was “so lucky the two-child limit was introduced after” she had her children, else she would have really struggled to afford things for them. When policies like this are introduced, they completely ignore the fact that, some families may make plans based on being a dual income household, and then end up with a single income. This is why we are asking for single parenthood to be considered in Equality Impact Assessments for all new policies. Further, a cultural and racial lens must be applied to policy – this policy also disproportionately affects ethnicity minority families, as campaigner Marvina shares the two child limit on benefits policy affects ethnic minority families because we have bigger families. There’s no racial literacy or cultural humility applied to that policy being created and it’s not coming from a place of a trauma informed lens.

It is well established that abolishing the two-child limit is the most cost-effective way of reducing child poverty – it would lift 250,000 children out of poverty, and a further 850,000 children would be in less deep poverty at a cost of just £1.3 billion.^[13]

Conditionality

The welfare system is also deliberately hostile, and incredibly complex and new conditions have been placed in the last year on lead carers (i.e. those with the main caring responsibility for a child) - a significant number of whom will be single parents. Under these new rules, over 700,000 lead carers on Universal Credit will need to increase their work hours significantly or spend more time seeking work to be eligible for the benefit.

We are extremely worried about the impact this will have on those affected largely due to the fact that the requirements ignore individual circumstances:

- ✿ Sufficient childcare provision is not in place to support increased requirements.
- ✿ There are not enough part-time, flexible roles available.

Conditionality risks forcing people into poorly paid jobs – they take the first job that works with hours needed, rather than a role that matches their skillset. The changes therefore risk placing lead carers in the impossible position of needing to work more hours without suitable childcare or jobs and a potential increase in sanctions among parents of young children. A five-year academic study of welfare conditionality published in 2018 found that not only were sanctions ineffective, but they also impacted on people’s wellbeing and pushed them further into poverty. ^[14] **These new rules must be reversed. More widely the sanctions process is in need of urgent review.**

Other issues

The complexity of the benefits system and how different parts interact is also a significant challenge. For Joy, when she was claiming benefits she found it “extremely hard to access information”. She wanted to be able to make the calculations herself but felt that there was a real lack of transparency, which is disempowering, and creates further uncertainty. We also hear from single parents who find it challenging to work out how childcare entitlements and support interact with benefits when they go back to work and get confusing and conflicting advice from job coaches. That’s why we are calling for single parent specific work coaches who will be better equipped to advise single parents on their entitlements, alongside a better understanding of local options for childcare and the knowledge of the local labour market.

Broader cost of living issues

While our priority is reform of the welfare system, we are aware of lots of other initiatives and proposals to tackle the cost of living crisis and tackle child poverty. We support any other policy changes that would alleviate poverty among single parent households. For example, we see the need for an extension to the Household Support Grant, we would welcome the introduction of universal free school meals or at the very least further expansion for the poorest groups, as well as actions among utility companies to support their most vulnerable clients.

Visibility and tackling discrimination

Single parents tell us and policy decisions show us that the very systems that should be in place to provide support ignore single parents, at best. For many single parents, policy decisions, the behaviour of employers and the attitudes of wider society can feel actively discriminatory. One parent told us:

// We are “invisible” to decision makers... we are the invisible family. //

We believe that any new government needs to put in a proactive process to make sure the specific needs of single parents are reflected in the way that welfare and employment policy, childcare and wider family policy as well as broader policy across government are developed and delivered. A key option for delivering this would be **including the impact of a policy on single parent families as part of any impact assessment.**

Additionally, we would welcome a broader discussion with any future government on how to best ensure the needs of single parent families are met by policy and practice.










Full list of recommendations

On the child maintenance service





- ✿ Undertake a full review and reform of the Child Maintenance Service (CMS).
- ✿ While that review is underway, make the following changes to the CMS:
 - ✿ Introduce a minimum CMS payment from government.
 - ✿ Abolish fees for Collect and Pay, at the very least for survivor-victims of domestic abuse.
 - ✿ Introduce measures to close the loopholes that allow NRPs to reduce their liability.
 - ✿ Develop an enforcement action plan that sets out targets for improving enforcement measures, with an annual report to Parliament on progress.




On employment and childcare

-  Put a duty on employers to advertise all roles as flexible and explain what that flexibility looks like, unless there is a very good business reason why not to.
-  Recommit to and redevelop the Flexible Working Taskforce, giving it a remit to:
 -  Monitor flexible working practices among employers.
 -  Develop proposals on the incentives needed to encourage employers to create more job share roles and other flexible working options.
 -  Work with employers to make sure they have the support they need to deliver on developing flexible and part-time working options.
 -  Run behavioral change campaigns, demonstrating the value of all flexible working practices.
-  Introduce a policy of paid carers days to allow parents of disabled children time off for hospital and other appointments.
-  Make sure any universal childcare entitlements are available to all single parent households, regardless of work status, or at the very least, make sure entitlements are available to those who are studying or training.
-  Either act to ensure that the Flexible Support Fund (FSF) is always available to pay the upfront costs of childcare for those who will go on to claim the childcare element of Universal Credit or find a new mechanism to allow for upfront costs to be paid.

Welfare reform and cost of living

-  Review the adequacy of Universal Credit and invest to make sure that it is sufficient to pay for the essentials.
-  Abolish the two-child limit and the benefit cap.
-  Reverse the newly introduced conditionality changes for lead carers and review the use of sanctions overall.
-  Introduce new single parent specialist work coaches to support single parents with their unique needs when returning to work.





Visibility and tackling discriminatory policy

-  Ensure that all impact assessments for new policy look at the impact that changes would have on single parents.



Measuring success

Not only is it paramount that the above policy changes are made, it's also vital that parameters are introduced to measure success.

-  In 2023, DWP statistics revealed that 44% of children from single parent families are in poverty, this number should be at least halved by 2030.^[15]
-  For children of single parents who are both in poverty and not receiving maintenance, actually receiving child maintenance payments would lift them out of poverty in around 60% of all cases.
-  Last year, 35% of people who were supposed to be paying child maintenance through CMS via Collect and Pay did not pay any child maintenance at all.^[16] By 2030, the number of resident parents receiving nothing on a regular basis would be eliminated through the introduction of a minimum payment scheme.
-  Recent analysis by Gingerbread and the Learning and Work Institute found that one in three (33%) single parents were stuck in low pay, earning below the voluntary Living Wage.^[17] All single parents should be able to access well paid, flexible employment that works for them and their childcare needs. We would like to see the supply of flexible jobs meeting demand, which is something Timewise measures, and the rates of unemployment and underemployment for single parents dropping.

Conclusion from single parent campaigners

Harriet

In our dynamic and ever-evolving world, change isn't just an option; it's a necessity, especially for single parents navigating the intricacies of life. The journey of single parenthood is a testament to resilience, strength, and adaptability. However, it's also a journey filled with challenges that demand a paradigm shift and a forward-looking approach.

Policy change is vital for single parents because it paves the way for growth, empowerment, and improved opportunities. It's about creating a future that is more inclusive, supportive, and understanding of the unique needs and experiences of single parents. By embracing change, we can break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and foster a more compassionate society.

For single parents, change means access to better resources such as affordable childcare, flexible work options, and robust support networks. It means advocating for policies that promote work-life balance, parental leave, and equal opportunities in education and employment. Change also involves challenging societal norms and stigmas associated with single parenthood, promoting positive representations, and celebrating the diverse strengths of single parent families. Our future is shaped by our willingness to embrace change and work towards a more equitable and inclusive world. Single parents are not just raising the next generation; they are shaping the future leaders, innovators, and change-makers of tomorrow. By championing change today, we are investing in a brighter and more promising future for all families, regardless of their structure or circumstances.



Sian

Single parents can so easily be edged out of decision-making spaces for simple practical reasons like bedtime duties, the cost of childcare or simple exhaustion. And so, trust, that for us to have formulated these asks and raised a collective voice something else would have given. Energy put in one area of our lives will always be at the expense of another immediate and important demand of our energy...our work, our children, our rest, our health. For this reason alone, this manifesto deserves attention.

With nearly one in four households with children in the UK being headed by a single parent, we are not a minority. The children of single parent households deserve the same opportunities as others. The asks are simple, but the benefits would be compound. Improving their prospects means improving our prospects at a national level and over generations.

Single parent households are the ones that feel cutbacks the most. Clumsy policy making and stagnant systems can too easily divest us of our agency when it should be capitalising on our commitment and dedication. We need visibility, consideration and policies that are sensitive to the challenges that we and our children face. Then, with our heads above the water line, you won't find a better set of allies when it comes to working towards a strong, healthy, and happy future for everyone in the UK.

About Gingerbread

Gingerbread is the leading national charity working with single parent families in England and Wales. Since 1918, we have been at the forefront of shaping policy and services that support single parents. We undertake research as well as provide support through our **helpline, online services and our peer support groups**. We have a number of Gingerbread support groups across the country, for more information about Gingerbread, or to find out if there's a group in your constituency, please contact campaign@gingerbread.org.uk.

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Endnotes

- 1 [Households below average income \(HBAI\) statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- 2 Hakovirta et al (2019) Child Poverty, Child Maintenance and Interactions with Social Assistance Benefits among Lone Parent Families : A Comparative Analysis. Journal of Social Policy. pp. 19-3
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- 4 [National Audit Office, Child maintenance report, 2022](#)
- 5 <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Child-Maintenance.pdf>
- 6 [The Single Parent Employment Challenge – job loss and job seeking after the pandemic | Gingerbread](#)
- 7 [Can a more flexible jobs market raise the status and pay of part-time workers?](#)
- 8 [Single-parent families “most exposed” to cost of living crisis in Great Britain | UK cost of living crisis | The Guardian](#)
- 9 [Nearly 60% increase in UK households in serious financial difficulties \(financialfairness.org.uk\)](#)
- 10 [Single-Parents-in-2023-Single-Parents-Day-report.pdf \(gingerbread.org.uk\)](#)
- 11 [Guarantee our essentials - The Trussell Trust](#)
- 12 [Benefit Cap statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- 13 “My children are people, not numbers.” How the two-child benefit limit impacts families | [Barnardo’s \(barnardos.org.uk\)](#)
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