

# Women, work and welfare: conditionality & choice

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**June 2018**

# Women, work and welfare, 1997...



‘ the message was coming through loud and clear from women in my constituency was that they wanted to work. And this was the case among lone mothers too. ... the last thing they wanted was to bring up their children on benefits. They wanted to work, something married mothers were increasingly doing...

... there was no government help for lone mothers to get into work. Jobcentres helped the ‘unemployed’ with advice, with searching for a job and training as well as benefits, but lone parents were not classed as unemployed, so they couldn’t set foot in a Jobcentre; they were regarded as ‘not available for work’ until their youngest child turned sixteen...

Harriet Harman, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions from 1997 to 1998, (2018, p185)

# Overview: UK focus

- Welfare-to-work and work requirements
- Trends in women's employment
- What have we learnt about what works
- Universal Credit – changing the game?

# Twenty years of embedding welfare-to-work

## **Labour's first principle for reform (1998):**

'First: the new welfare state should help to encourage people of working age to work where they are capable of doing so. Work offers the best escape route from poverty and dependence, a platform on which to save, and a sense of individual purpose.'

## **Conservative led Coalition, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Welfare (2010):**

'We are going to end the culture of worklessness and dependency that has done so much harm to individuals, families and whole communities. ... By actively putting work at the centre of working-age support we want to create a new contract with the British people.. We will help them to find work and make sure work pays when they do. They in return will be expected to seek work and take work when it is available.'

# Women (with children) as a key target

New Deal for Lone Parents – from 1997, advice, information and support

Employment target for lone mothers – set in 2001, 70% by 2010

New Deal for Partners – from 1999 (for JSA) and extended from 2001, similar to NDLP from 2004

National Minimum Wage – from 1997, 1.9 million workers, 1.3 million women

Tax Credits – increased for families with children

Childcare provisions expanded and % of costs covered in tax credits

# Requirements for lone parents to think about/prepare for work: work-focused interviews



- **2001**, at point of claim, roll-out over 3 years
- **2002**, annual for all, six-monthly for new/repeat claimants
- **2005**, quarterly WFIs for lone parents with youngest child aged 14+
- **2007**, six-monthly for lone parents with a youngest child aged 5-13, quarterly for lone parents with a youngest child aged 11-13
- **2008**, six monthly for lone parents with a youngest child aged 0 to 4.
- **2008**, quarterly in the last year before the youngest child reaches the age beyond which they are no longer eligible for IS.
- **2011**, not required at time of claim
- **2014**, flexible WFIs for lone parents with a youngest child aged 1 – 4, frequency and duration decided by the adviser. Lone parents with a youngest child aged 3 - 4 mandated to undertake Work Related Activity.

Source: Income Support Lone Parents Regime  
Official Statistics

# Requirements for lone parents to be available for work...

## Box 3: Age at which single parents must comply with full job-seeking requirements

Youngest child  
turns 16



Before Nov 2008

Youngest child  
turns 12



Nov 2008

Youngest child  
turns ten



Oct 2009

Youngest child  
turns seven



Oct 2010

Youngest child  
turns five



May 2012

Youngest child  
turns three



April 2017

NB There are still 'work preparation' requirements that single parents must comply with when their children are younger

Gingerbread, 2018

# Universal Credit: work requirement further embedded



<b>Age of your youngest child</b>	<b>Your responsibilities</b>
Under 1	You don't need to look for work in order to receive Universal Credit.
Age 1	If you are not already working, you don't need to look for work in order to receive Universal Credit. You will be asked to <a href="#">attend work focused interviews</a> with your work coach to discuss plans for a future move into work and will need to report any changes of circumstances.
Age 2	You will be expected to <a href="#">take active steps to prepare for work</a> . This will involve having regular work focused interviews with your work coach, agreeing a programme of activities tailored to your individual circumstances which might include some training and work preparation activities (for example, writing your CV).
Age 3 or 4	You will be expected to <a href="#">work a maximum of 16 hours a week (or spend 16 hours a week looking for work)</a> this might include some training and work-focused interviews.
Age between 5 and 12	You will be expected to <a href="#">work a maximum of 25 hours a week (or spend 25 hours a week looking for work)</a> this might include some training and work-focused interviews.
Age 13 and above	You will be expected to <a href="#">work a maximum of 35 hours a week (or spend 35 hours a week looking for work)</a> this might include some training and work-focused interviews. You should let your work coach know as soon as you accept a job offer, as you can claim support for your childcare costs for at least a month before you start work.

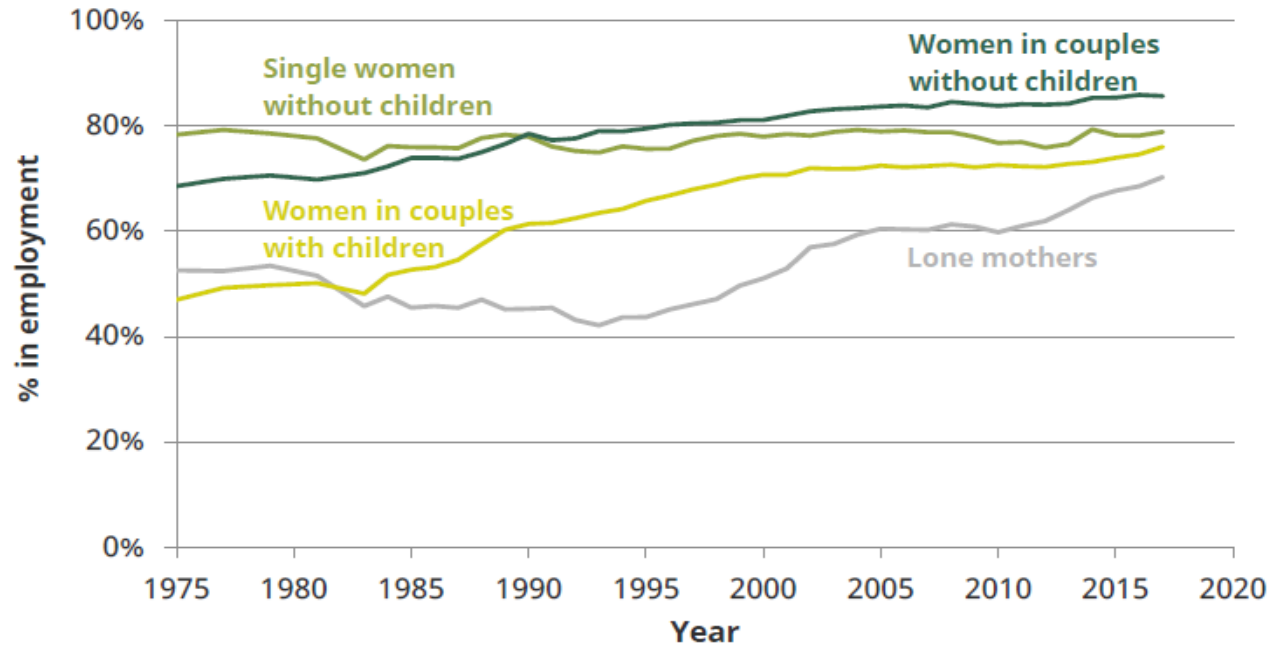
**(DWP guidance)**



# Trends in women's employment

# By 2018: the ‘rise and rise’ of women’s employment

Figure 8. Employment rate of women, by family type

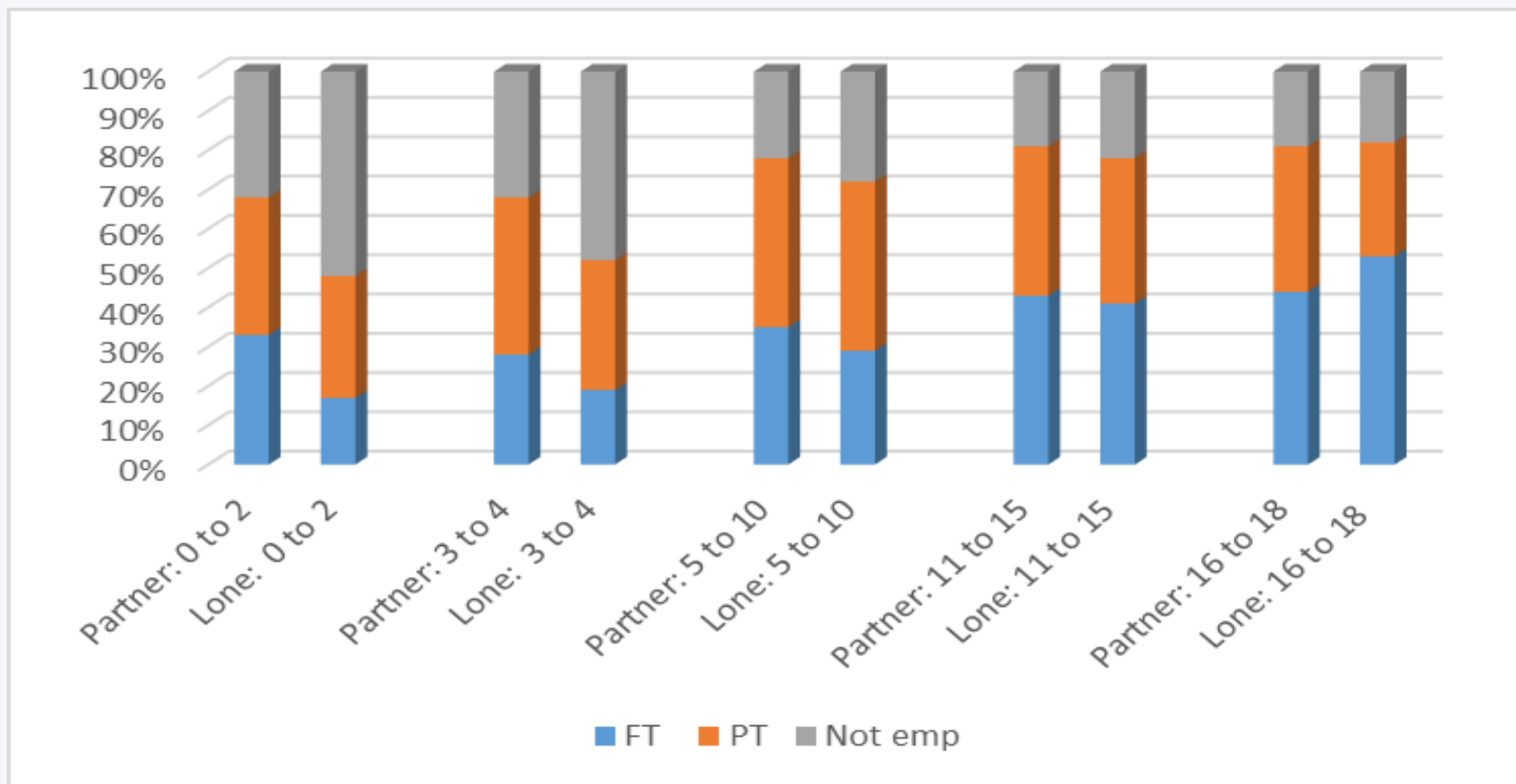


Note: Shows share of women in each group in either paid employment or self-employment over time. Restricted to women aged 25–54.

Source: Authors’ calculations using the Labour Force Survey.

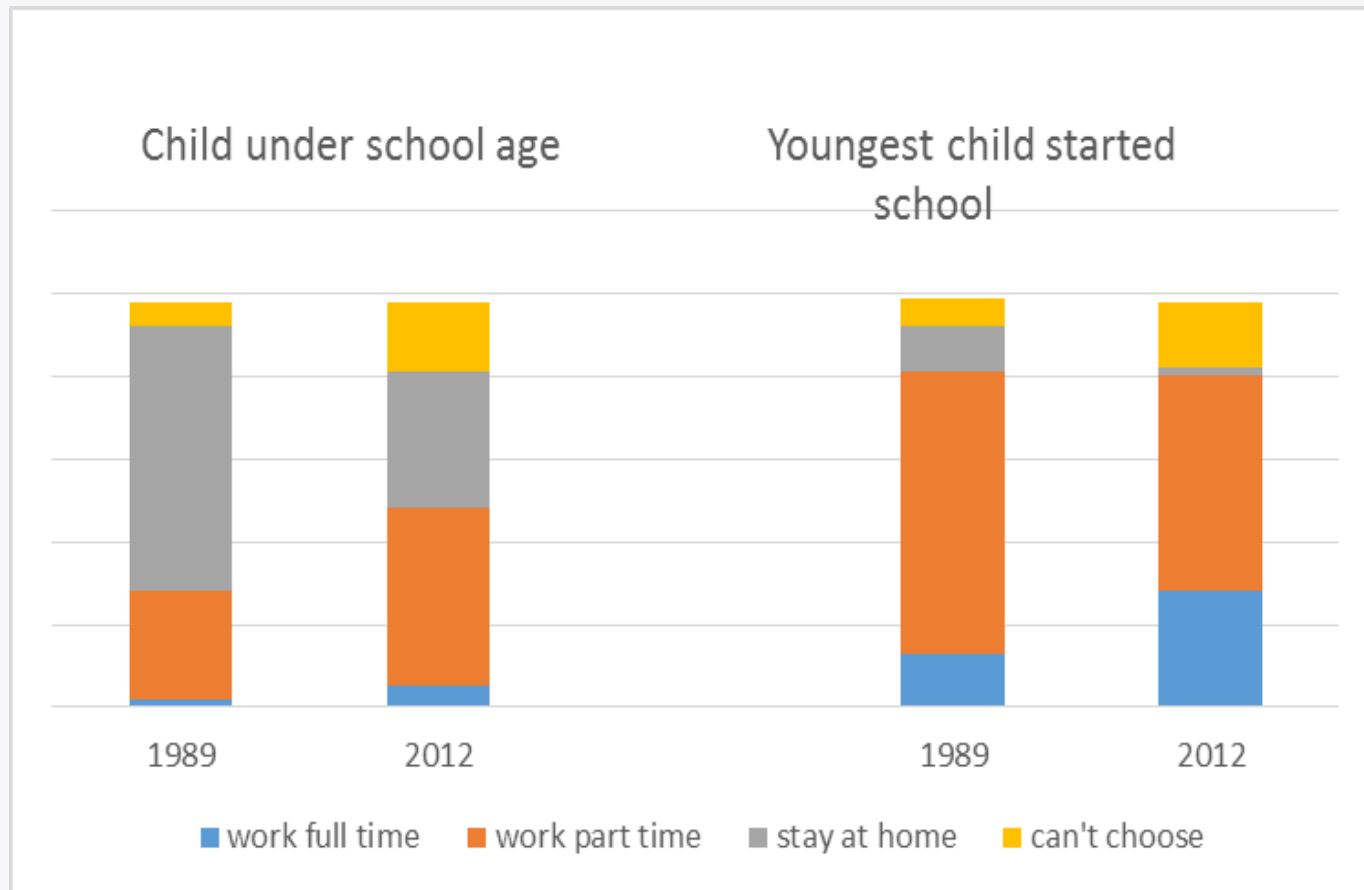
Roantree and Vira (2018)

# Mothers' employment by age of youngest child, 2017



Families in the Labour market,  
ONS, 2017, Figure 7

# Changing social attitudes: % agree that a mother should work ...



Scott and Clery, 2013

# Lone mothers, work and welfare: what works?

# Context matters

- A mix of factors – labour market conditions, demography, policy
- Hard to isolate independent effects of different types/combinations of policy measures – the whole is more than the sum of the parts

# To help lone mothers get into work ...

1. Motivation
2. Personal Advisors, offering tailored support
3. Practical support, including financial
4. Compulsion

# And in work ....

5. Finding the 'right' job – and embedding in everyday life, family first
6. Achieving a degree of financial security - ongoing in-work benefits and the loss of these
7. The importance of social support in sustaining work



# How well does UC fit?

1. Capacity to work/work more
2. Work coaches
3. The level and security of the financial support
4. Social support
5. Motivation and commitment

## Context, Attitudes, Behaviour

- ‘UC influences behaviour more meaningfully (rather than ‘compliance only’ behaviour) when it is administered smoothly, supported by positive Work Coach interactions and where people’s personal circumstances mean that working in a wider range of more flexible employment is seen as appropriate.’  
(Rahim et al, 2017)

## Intrinsic motivation

- Autonomy, Competence and Relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000)

# The last word ...

*They're my children...I should obviously look after them and I understand yes, that I should be working and I shouldn't be claiming money from the Government and what have you, but I will eventually go back to work and I'll pay back, in my eyes, what I've had from them.'*

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