

# Achieving Equality for Single Parents Information for Organisations



## Single Parents in the UK

There are 2.9 million single parents in the UK<sup>i</sup>. On average, each constituency in the UK has around 4460 single parent families<sup>ii</sup>, accounting for one in four parents and around one third of parents experience some period of single parenting<sup>iii</sup>.

The average age of the single parent is 39 years and almost 70% of single parents are employed<sup>iv</sup>. Despite this, a third of children in working single parent homes live in poverty<sup>v</sup> and almost 30% (double that of coupled parents) report mental health concerns<sup>vi</sup>.

## The Problem

Single parents face discrimination throughout their daily lives, from the workplace to accessing housing. This has knock on effects for them, their children and society.

The Equality Act, 2010 outlaws discrimination towards certain groups who have 'protected characteristics'. Currently, there are nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Although a natural corollary to many of the current protected characteristics, single parenthood is not included. This means despite the challenges single parents face, businesses and policy makers aren't encouraged to proactively consider their treatment of single parents and where unfair treatment occurs, it cannot be legally challenged.

Many single parents face multiple discrimination given 90% are women<sup>vii</sup>, around 27% live with a disability<sup>viii</sup> (compared with 21% of couple parent households), and single parents from black and mixed ethnicity backgrounds have higher percentages of single parents<sup>ix</sup> compared with white communities.

Discrimination towards single parents occurs in:

- the workplace when it comes to recruitment, professional development and promotion<sup>x</sup>;
- housing, specifically accessing private rental properties, especially for those reliant on housing benefit<sup>xi</sup>;
- child benefit calculations: a couple earning £98,000 combined will receive full child benefit for one child, whilst a single parent on £60,000 will receive no child benefit for two children;
- exclusion from the 30 hours of childcare for 3-year-olds for registered carers who are single parents;
- childcare vouchers with couples able to access double the voucher amount where both are working, regardless of the amount spent on childcare;
- universal credit childcare payments<sup>xii</sup>;
- adaptations required for a disabled child to live safely in both homes where parents share care<sup>xiii</sup>;
- holiday costs<sup>xiv</sup> and entrance fees are generally higher per person for single parent families than couple families<sup>xv</sup>. At the National Trust single parents pay 25% more per adult;
- inheritance tax - the child(ren) of a couple essentially have double the threshold of a single parent; and
- government and business policies and restrictions during the Coronavirus pandemic<sup>xvi</sup>.

This discrimination impedes single parents' ability to improve their own lives, preventing them from accessing housing, jobs and other services, and results in single parents spending time fighting these challenges rather than focusing on contributing to their family and life and society more broadly.

## Our Research

Research conducted by Single Parent Rights in late 2020 with over 1000 single parents revealed 80%<sup>1</sup> of single parents experienced discrimination and 96%<sup>2</sup> either experienced or identified single parent discrimination. 96% of single parents also wanted single parents added to the Equality Act. 100% of those who experienced reported

<sup>1</sup> This is the number of single parent respondents who answered 'yes' (64%) or 'maybe' (16%) when asked if they had experienced single parent discrimination. It should be noted all those who answered maybe went on to provide details of the discrimination which occurred.

<sup>2</sup> This is made up of the 80% that experienced discrimination plus a further 16% who – although they had not experience discrimination, reported they had identified or had 'maybe' identified single parent discrimination.

a negative impact on themselves, and 73% reported it had a negative impact on their child(ren). Two key areas of impact were on the mental health of single parents (96%) and decreasing ability to work (76%).

## The Solution

We are calling on the UK government to add single parents as a tenth characteristic to the Equality Act.

## The Benefits of This Law Change

- greater single parent employment for those applying for roles;
- better working conditions, professional support and career development for those in employment;
- reduced reliance on government benefits;
- fairer access to government benefits and the tax system;
- greater disposable income for single parents to spend in society;
- more stable and decent housing for single parent families;
- better mental health for single parents;
- lower poverty levels for children of single parents; and
- better outcomes for the children of single parents.

## Who We Are

A group of single parents supported by many organisations, including Single Parents Wellbeing, Single Parents Support and Advice Services, Asian Single Parents Network, One Parent Families Scotland, Save the Children, UK, The Childhood Trust, Parenthood Matters, Single Mums Business Network, Frolo, Single Parents on Holiday, Amicable, Career Mums, Only Mums, Only Dads, Global Equality Collective, Happity and Mush.

## How Can Organisations Support the Campaign?

We are asking organisations to join the growing list of organisations backing the campaign. Campaign backers can be as involved as they like, from merely providing a quote of support, to support behind the scenes with the campaign.

## To Join Us

For more information or to sign up to the campaign visit: [www.singleparentrights.org](http://www.singleparentrights.org) or email: [singleparentrights@gmail.com](mailto:singleparentrights@gmail.com)

## Single Parent Definition

We define a single parent as *someone who is solely responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and wellbeing of a child and/or children when that child and/or children is/ are in their care, whether on a permanent or temporary basis.*

This definition includes single fathers who don't have legal parental responsibility (e.g. aren't named on the birth certificate) and guardians who care for those alone as per the above definition.

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<sup>i</sup> [www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2019](http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2019)

<sup>ii</sup> 2.9 million single parents in 650 constituencies across the UK. This differs region to region, with London the highest and the South West the lowest.

<sup>iii</sup> [www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.812161!/file/Sheffield\\_Solutions\\_Modern\\_Families.pdf](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.812161!/file/Sheffield_Solutions_Modern_Families.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> [www.gingerbread.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/One-in-four-a-profile-of-single-parents-in-the-UK.compressed.pdf](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/One-in-four-a-profile-of-single-parents-in-the-UK.compressed.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> [www.itv.com/news/2018-02-21/poverty-report-single-parent-families](http://www.itv.com/news/2018-02-21/poverty-report-single-parent-families)

<sup>vi</sup> [www.gingerbread.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/One-in-four-a-profile-of-single-parents-in-the-UK.compressed.pdf](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/One-in-four-a-profile-of-single-parents-in-the-UK.compressed.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> [www.statista.com/statistics/281640/lone-parent-families-in-the-united-kingdom-uk-by-gender/](http://www.statista.com/statistics/281640/lone-parent-families-in-the-united-kingdom-uk-by-gender/)

<sup>viii</sup> [www.gingerbread.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/One-in-four-a-profile-of-single-parents-in-the-UK.compressed.pdf](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/One-in-four-a-profile-of-single-parents-in-the-UK.compressed.pdf)

<sup>ix</sup> [www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/families-and-households/latest#ethnic-groups-by-household-type](http://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/families-and-households/latest#ethnic-groups-by-household-type)

<sup>x</sup> [www.kentonline.co.uk/herne-bay/news/single-mum-wins-sex-discrimination-15639/](http://www.kentonline.co.uk/herne-bay/news/single-mum-wins-sex-discrimination-15639/)

<sup>xi</sup> [www.mirror.co.uk/money/single-mum-wins-huge-case-22348952](http://www.mirror.co.uk/money/single-mum-wins-huge-case-22348952)

<sup>xii</sup> [www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/universal-credit-childcare-rules-could-discriminate-against-women](http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/universal-credit-childcare-rules-could-discriminate-against-women)

<sup>xiii</sup> [inews.co.uk/opinion/single-parents-rights-lockdown-campaign-582986](http://inews.co.uk/opinion/single-parents-rights-lockdown-campaign-582986)

<sup>xiv</sup> [www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/holiday-firms-charging-single-parent-12869842](http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/holiday-firms-charging-single-parent-12869842)

<sup>xv</sup> [www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jul/05/revealed-hidden-costs-of-a-day-out-for-single-parent-families](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jul/05/revealed-hidden-costs-of-a-day-out-for-single-parent-families)

<sup>xvi</sup> [www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/coronavirus-lockdown-single-parents\\_uk\\_5e8c8175c5b62459a92f4e1e](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/coronavirus-lockdown-single-parents_uk_5e8c8175c5b62459a92f4e1e)