***CHILDCARE CHAMPIONS NEWS RELEASE***

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**WORKING PARENTS WARN OF ‘CONTINUED CHILDCARE CHALLENGES’ AS LOCKDOWN EASES**

**Survey reveals working parents’ worries that childcare won’t meet the needs and expectations of their families, their employers and the wider UK economy**

As many nurseries and schools open from 1 June, working parents warn that childcare is unlikely to meet the needs or expectations of parents and children, childcare providers and employers - and threatens the prospects of the economic recovery.

Recent government guidance means most childcare providers can’t re-open providing what they did pre-lockdown; parents can’t access services they could previously; employers take the view that ‘it’s not our problem’; and the government simply says work is open again, ignoring the realities of families’ working lives.

Working parents say: “We’re a long way from being anywhere near back to ‘normal’.”  Many still haven’t got any childcare, while others have real concerns about the environments that government is asking their children to be cared for and educated in. The new requirements are particularly difficult for parents with more than one young child, those who have children with special needs, and those who rely on a patchwork of providers including informal care from grandparents.

The findings are published today (Saturday 30 May 2020) by Childcare Champions following an in-depth survey of hundreds of working parents with young children.

Over half of parents (52.2%) were concerned that their childcare providers or schools were not going to be able to care for their children when restrictions lifted:

* More than 40 per cent were concerned that while the childcare provision or school was re-opening, due to the social distancing restrictions that are currently in place, there would not be the capacity to offer their children a place.
* A quarter of parents relied on grandparents to support them with their childcare and restrictions on their lockdown have not been lifted.
* 10 per cent of parents reported that the coronavirus crisis had resulted in changes to the way that they worked and that their childcare providers were not able to provide the childcare that they now required.
* Almost 10 per cent of parents reported that their childcare provider had either confirmed that they had closed and weren’t re-opening or had not been able to confirm when they would re-open.

Just over a third of parents (36%) reported that a school or childcare provider not being able to provide a place for their children would prevent them from returning to work:

* More than 40 per cent (42%) of parents needed schools and full childcare provision in place in order to fully return to work.
* Just under a quarter (21.5%) of parents had already had to make alternative childcare arrangements in order to work.

Almost two thirds of parents (63%) also harboured concerns about their children returning to their childcare provision as lockdown restrictions are eased.

Parents’ concerns clustered around:

* That what we know about coronavirus is still in its infancy and that in re-opening childcare provision and schools too early will contribute to a second wave of virus transmissions.
* That the government strategy to re-open childcare provision and schools to the youngest children was not embedded in a cohesive and comprehensive scientific evidence base.  Parents spoke of their children being used ‘to test’ the government’s theory for a wider easing of the lockdown.
* The risks to adults – both teachers and carers and parents that re-opening childcare provision and schools will increase the likelihood of catching coronavirus, coupled with the absence of a proven and established ‘testing and tracing’system being in place in advance.
* The impact that the social distancing requirements that are outlined in the government guidance will have on the learning environment and the effect that will have on the emotional health and mental well-being of children.

The most recently released government guidance to schools and early childhood education providers has made it even harder for parents:

* Some schools and childcare providers are re-opening and some are not.
* Childcare providers and schools that are re-opening are only able to do so at partial capacity.  Not all children have places to return to and some children are only able to access places on a restricted basis due mainly to the government guidance that is in place.
* The majority of before and after school clubs are not yet re-opening and therefore even those parents with children returning to school are not able to access the wrap around care that they used before the lockdown in order to work.
* There are significant holes in the patchwork of provision that many parents rely on for childcare.  This includes being unable to access childcare that is provided by friends, family and secondary ‘paid for’ providers.

Employers also seem to expect that now lockdown is easing, employees with parenting responsibilities will be able to ‘snap back’ into normal working arrangements.  Parents are already concerned that:

* Those who have noted some ‘goodwill’ from their employers are seeing it rapidly come to an end.
* They will be discriminated against in the event of redundancies or coming off any furlough schemes because they continue to have childcare challenges.

Stephen Burke from Childcare Champions said: “Parents are very worried about how they will juggle work and childcare as lockdown eases and the impact on their children and their family life. It’s particularly difficult for parents with several young children and children with special needs and those who rely on a patchwork of providers.

“Childcare providers, employers and government must listen and respond to parents’ concerns at a time of massive changes in working lives and economic adjustment. Government must review its guidance to ensure it evolves to provide sustainable solutions during summer, autumn and beyond, and prevent employers discriminating against working parents.

“The Childcare Champions survey provides further evidence that the childcare and early education system in the UK is broken and beyond repair.  Tinkering is not an option.  The massive changes that this crisis has brought about provide an opportunity to build a new childcare system that meets the needs of children, parents, employers, our society and economy. Social and economic progress is dependent on creating sustainable and affordable quality childcare for all families.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

For more information and interviews including parent case studies, contact Stephen Burke 07714 334510 stephen.burke@unitedforallages.com or Megan Pacey 07747 824895 meganpacey@hotmail.com

Childcare Champions conducted an-depth survey of 227 parents with young children from 22-28 May 2020. The survey can be seen [here](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfSupYoVQzL2trzOCTNNfrdEbaR3P6twQMgsw1YppcvN2cqGA/viewform)  Parents who took part in the survey are available for media interviews. The full survey report by Megan Pacey can be downloaded from 30 May from [www.childcarechampions.com](http://www.childcarechampions.com)

For more about Childcare Champions, visit [www.childcarechampions.com](http://www.childcarechampions.com)