Abstract

COVID-19 has had an immense impact on every aspect of UK society, not least the economy. It has radically altered the labour market and workplaces, with potentially long-term ramifications for the nature, location, and organisation of work, pushing existing post-Fordist shifts considerably further towards flexibility and precarity. This is especially significant for men, given that paid employment has long been a core component of male identity. However, during the pandemic, women's jobs became more precarious due to their disproportionate role in caregiving, potentially undermining moves towards gender equality in the labour market. Yet COVID-19 has simultaneously shone a spotlight on the importance of care to the functioning of society – and to people's welfare. The need for community support, and the closure of schools and childcare, meant that many people became more actively involved in caregiving – including men. The pandemic thus potentially heralded forward movements in active fatherhood and 'caring masculinities', which are beneficial for the welfare of women, children, and the planet – and men themselves. However, as explored in this chapter, this is not inevitable, and the long-term implications of the pandemic remain to be seen, with the reinforcement of patriarchal inequalities also distinctly possible.

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Men, work, and care in the wake of COVID-19 in the UK

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Introduction

In this chapter, we explore gendered changes in work and care patterns prompted and accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how the relationship between the two impacts on men's (and women's) welfare. When it comes to analysing gender, we argue that a relational approach is vital; the welfare of people of any gender cannot be considered in isolation, because human lives are closely intertwined, as they are with other living things and with the planet (Connell, 2021). COVID-19 has underscored this in multiple ways, in that it is a zoonotic virus, with origins in humanity's exploitative relationship with nature, which has in turn had devastating impacts on physical and mental health globally. Yet it has also presented new opportunities to reflect on and shift social arrangements in important ways. This includes in the workplace and in the relationship between work and care, which are so often considered in conflict with one another with particularly deleterious effects on women, but for men too, especially if we wish to create a society where everyone is more actively and equally involved in caregiving. This chapter focuses on welfare in the UK context and represents a snapshot of a moment in time when economies have opened up again and the pandemic is a recent yet increasingly distant memory in people's minds, and in the decisions of policymakers.

The gendered context preceding COVID-19

Work, especially paid and employed work, has long been seen as a core component of male identity (Morgan, 1992). But the ways that masculinities have played out in different environments have been significantly affected by wider shifts in the economy and labour market (Popay et al., 1998). Since the 1970s, the old 'Fordist' pattern of manufacturing, with lifetime attachment to a single employer, has been transformed, with a loss of 'male' manual jobs, especially in heavy industry in particular communities and regions. Alongside increasing automation and use of new technologies, there has been a simultaneous shift towards service sector economies in industrialised countries such as the UK, with care and interpersonal skills playing a greater role, and a steady rise in women's employment (albeit often part-time and low-paid). Common features of this post-Fordist model are organisational structures and employment practices such as flexible working, zero hours contracts, and job insecurity.

Well before Covid-19, the effects and implications of these shifts have been much discussed (e.g. Sennett, 1998; Bauman, 1998). A key question is how gender relations have been affected, how men have responded, and what it means for their welfare. For example, for those men who are more career-oriented, these changes often appear to have created tensions at home, owing to the need to relocate and/or negotiate career moves with partners. Meanwhile, families and care responsibilities have been identified either as a threat to breadwinner identities and financial security or as a potential turning point and opportunity for reappraisal of the relationship between work and care (Nolan, 2005).

While these issues were already emerging in 1998 when 'Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare' was written, this represented a very different economic, political, and social context. In the original text, men were typically considered in policy terms to be either 'troubled' or 'troublesome', but since then, language and policy drivers have become more sophisticated, with greater emphasis on supporting men's involvement in both work and care. For example, the development of leave schemes has made it more likely that fathers will share day-to-day care with their partners, although challenges remain in encouraging men to take up such arrangements.

The pandemic has thrown issues of care, and men's relationship with it, into sharp relief (see also Chapter 3). Confronted by this crisis, the centrality of care to individual and community well-being has never been more visible. This has encompassed acts of kindness and assistance to vulnerable neighbours and family members, and open displays of public support ('claps for

carers') for low-paid key workers such as nurses, carers, cleaners, and delivery drivers who maintained economic and social life throughout the crisis (Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy, 2020). Yet care has historically been associated with women's domestic work, routinely unseen, undervalued, and regarded as 'unproductive' to the economy. Often, care work is undertaken by women from working-class, Black, and minority ethnic and/or migrant backgrounds, labouring under insecure conditions. These gendered, classed, and racialised inequalities already existed, but the pandemic has focused new attention on them, while simultaneously highlighting the importance of ties to others, interdependence, and reciprocity.

Since the 1970s, feminist theory has explored what is meant by 'care', identifying distinctions between caring 'for' (the practical tasks of care), caring 'about' (emotional investment in and attachment to others) (Ungerson, 2006), and caring 'with' (care as a political ideal within democratic societies) (Tronto, 2013) (see also Chapter 9). More recently, and chiming with the pivotal moment of the pandemic, the 'Care Collective'1 (2020) has suggested the notion of 'universal care', making the case that we are all jointly responsible for hands-on care work as well as the care work necessary for the maintenance of communities and the planet. Similarly, the Women's Budget Group has argued that a 'caring economy' goes well beyond a narrow focus on domestic care or workers in the care sector, encompassing broader societal issues of gender equality, environmental sustainability, and well-being (Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy, 2020).

Although care is widely (and erroneously) understood as women's responsibility, some men contribute significantly to the care economy – but many more could. Drawing on the work of Hanlon (2012), Elliott (2016) has analysed how many of the values associated with care by women, such as positive emotion, interdependence, and relationality, are at the core of a new conception of 'caring masculinities'. For men, this concept involves rejecting domination and aggression (hooks, 2004), and repudiating hegemonic masculine expectations. While this reorientation may be difficult for some to accept, men can adapt constructively to changing work forms and patterns (Puchert et al., 2005), which can potentially involve them to a greater extent in care. Moreover, there is evidence that the practice of care work can help men develop caring masculinities and more nurturing identities, with positive impacts on gender equality and on men themselves (Elliott, 2016).

COVID-19 and the labour market

Given the enduring centrality of work to men's sense of self and well-being, in addition to their economic sustenance, paid employment remains strongly linked to men's welfare. Hearn (1998) highlights the particular importance of work to men in terms of its loss or potential loss; the possibility of marginalisation for such men; men's relationships with women at work (especially those with higher pay or status); and the uncertain impact of change on men's identities. Overall, the relationship between work and masculine identity is a contradictory one, providing opportunities to build selfhood, but also potentially undermining it (e.g. through overwork or unemployment).

In the UK, as elsewhere, the unprecedented health and economic crisis brought about by the pandemic has had different effects for women's and men's employment. In the early stages of the pandemic, there was evidence to suggest that women were significantly more likely to have lost their jobs than men (Adams-Prassl et al., 2020). More recent statistics have not shown the same pattern in the UK, a contrast to countries such as the United States and Japan, where women's labour force participation has been hit harder. In fact, women's employment rate in the UK held steadier than men's between March 2020 and 2021, reducing 0.8% compared to 2.4% for men (Women's Budget Group, 2021). Over the same period, economic inactivity for men was up 1.4% on the year at 17.4%, while for women the rate was roughly unchanged at 24.6%.

Initial expectations were that women's labour market outcomes in the UK would be more damaged, as they are more likely to work in low-paying customer-facing sectors such as hospitality and retail where the impact of social distancing measures was most significant. But the available data suggest that there has been a weak relationship between the sectors where employee numbers have fallen fastest and those which employ more women than men. The Resolution Foundation has proposed several explanations for these trends (Slaughter, 2021). Male-dominated sectors like manufacturing were more affected by the crisis than early modelling suggested they would be, reflecting a similar pattern to the 2008 global financial crisis, where men's employment was initially more impacted (although austerity inevitably impacted on women and their employment as time went on) (McKay et al., 2013). And while women dominate the hardest hit sectors like retail and hospitality, they also make up more than

70% of health and education workers – areas where employment rose significantly. Women in employment were also twice as likely as men to be in the public sector before the crisis (30% of women compared to 14% of men), and employment increased in education and public administration during the crisis.[2] By contrast, men were twice as likely to be self-employed beforehand, an area that suffered considerably during the pandemic.

Labour market policies and statistics are often rooted in an assumed 'norm' of full-time, continuous (male) employment (e.g. in relation to national insurance and pensions). However, women's employment is often part-time (especially following the birth of a child), and over-concentrated in lower-waged posts that offer weaker workplace benefits than full-time jobs, bringing a heightened risk of financial insecurity. The evidence suggests that part-timers have been affected more severely than full-timers by the pandemic, facing higher levels of reduced hours and redundancy. Part-timers have also been less likely to return to normal working hours or to keep their jobs during lockdowns (Cockett et al., 2021). Having said this, male part-time employment has been growing in recent years, and although part-time jobs in the UK are associated with financial hardship, they do provide potential for a more gender-equal sharing of core domestic work (Warren, 2022). A growing concern since the 2008 economic crisis and the austerity which followed it has been stagnating wages, and this problem has heightened in the wake of the pandemic as inflation has risen rapidly, with significant implications for men's welfare.

Intensifying inequalities

COVID-19 appears to have widened the gap between 'haves' and 'have nots' at work, especially in relation to flexibility. The former have often been able to work flexibly in professional roles, combining home and office work, with some control over working hours (even if homeworking has intensified working hours). The latter – predominantly women, young people and people of colour – have tended to be in 'frontline' jobs with little flexibility: rigid and fixed hours or shift patterns, precarious contracts, and minimal autonomy or control over their hours (Cockett et al., 2021). Those in insecure work have also suffered greater falls in earnings and hours during the pandemic than those on more secure contracts (Adams-Prassl et al., 2020).

Overall figures therefore mask the experiences of particular groups of women and men. COVID-19 has exacerbated inequalities along previous axes of disadvantage, including age (Major et al., 2020; Sehmi and Slaughter, 2021; ONS, 2021a) and ethnicity (ONS, 2021b; Public Health England, 2020; Women's Budget Group et al., 2020). Class differences are also significant. There is evidence that working-class communities, and especially women, have borne the brunt of extra physical and emotional labour generated by the pandemic, on top of their habitual domestic and care workload (Warren et al., 2021). This demonstrates the importance of analysing the complexities of gender's interactions with other inequalities during the pandemic. women have also been disproportionately working in frontline health, social care, and education roles requiring face-to-face interaction, with significant risk of exposure to the virus.

Yet some groups of working-class men in essential jobs (e.g. food production, deliveries, utilities, and transport) have also worked at considerable risk, and death rates involving COVID-19 among men in certain occupational groups (e.g. process plant workers and security guards) were highest (ONS, 2021c). Although less visible, and often driven by economic necessity, some see men continuing to work in these circumstances as demonstrating an ethic of care for others. However, Wojnicka (2022) has argued that this is more akin to what she terms 'protective masculinity', in that such practices still draw upon traditional notions of physical power and male economic dominance associated with the role of breadwinner. She concludes that while protective masculinity can appear like caring masculinity, it actually stands in opposition to it, by neglecting issues of power and hierarchy and thus, ultimately, continuing to maintain hegemonic masculinity.

In the wake of implementing its first COVID-19 lockdown, to avoid mass job losses, the UK government introduced the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which allowed employers to furlough workers with the state contributing 80% of employees' salaries, up to £2,500 per month. Whereas for the first year or so of the scheme, the number of women on furlough was greater than men (likely influenced in part by caring responsibilities), this picture shifted by May 2021, reflecting decreases in the number of furloughed jobs in sectors with a higher proportion of female employees, such as accommodation and food services (HMRC, 2021). One concern for furloughed workers – perhaps especially among men – was the loss of a sense of purpose, structure, and social networks.

Workers on less secure contracts (more of whom are women) were less likely to have their wages topped up by their employer beyond the 80% government subsidy (Women and Equalities Committee, 2021b). Moreover, furlough was not designated as a right for those with caring responsibilities, so making use of the scheme for this purpose was dependent on employers' goodwill (Rubery and Tavora, 2020). A Trades Union Congress (2021) survey found that seven of ten mothers who requested furlough on the grounds of childcare were turned down, while two of five were unaware that they could ask to be furloughed for this reason. The reliance on the discretion of the employer to decide who to put on the scheme and who to let go may have also placed workers perceived as more dispensable (such as caregivers on insecure contracts) at greater risk (Cook and Grimshaw, 2021). In many ways, policy responses to COVID-19 have magnified disjunctures between care responsibilities and work, reflecting long-standing concerns about the undervaluing of forms of unpaid activity, such as domestic care and community work.

COVID-19 and care work

COVID-19 has had considerable implications for caregiving in ways which are closely connected to the welfare of men, and that of society more broadly, given the decisive role it plays in human well-being (for givers as well as receivers of care). One of the most significant factors has been the closure of schools and childcare facilities on multiple occasions during lockdowns (though many still taught 'vulnerable' children and children of key workers). This and wider child absences placed substantial additional pressures on parents, such as looking after and attempting to home-school their children while continuing to juggle paid work. One of the starkest manifestations of gender norms in the UK remains the unequal division of care work, which in turn holds back women's participation in other aspects of society, underscoring the importance of expanding men's involvement. The pandemic shone a spotlight on this, with the bulk of increased care responsibilities undertaken by women even though more men were working from home.

ONS (2020a) research suggests that during the first four weeks of lockdown, women carried out two-thirds more childcare duties than men – an average of 3 hours and 18 minutes per day compared to 2 hours by men – rising to 78% more in households with a child under 5.

During April and May 2020, women spent about 15 hours per week doing housework compared to men's 10 hours, while women spent 20.5 hours per week on home-schooling compared to 12 hours by men (Xue and McMunn, 2021). Working mothers' days were also interrupted 57% more by childcare needs than fathers' (Andrew et al., 2020). Increased childcare demands have had a substantial toll on the mental health of parents, including fathers (who may have often lacked outlets or support for these struggles), but especially mothers (Barker et al., 2021; Xue and McMunn, 2021).

Mothers were also 5% more likely to reduce their working hours and 7% more likely to change work patterns than fathers (Xue and McMunn, 2021), with particularly severe impacts on working-class women, whose jobs could not be done from home (Warren et al., 2021). The pandemic has thus exacerbated gender inequalities in the labour market by reducing women's ability to engage in paid work. There are concerns that this will have longer-term consequences, with more women under- and unemployed and lacking experience compared to men. That said, there has also been pressure on employers to become more flexible during the pandemic, leading some to give more recognition to employee well-being and work-life balance (Burrell, 2021). This could make at least some workplaces more inclusive for caregivers in the longer term and increase acknowledgement that this is needed for fathers as well as mothers.

However, the increased care requirements of the pandemic may leave other employers more averse to prioritising such needs among employees in the future, perhaps especially those struggling in the wake of economic fallout. Some may associate this 'burden' with women even more than before and look at them less favourably as employees. There is evidence of discriminatory practices where mothers and pregnant women have been targeted in COVID-19-related job cuts by some employers (Andrew et al., 2020; Pregnant then Screwed, 2020). In the aforementioned TUC (2021) survey, a quarter of mothers feared losing their jobs during the pandemic, through being singled out for redundancy, sacked or denied hours. In March 2021, women were re-entering work at less than half the rate of men (15% and 36%, respectively). This may be because caring responsibilities such as home-schooling either stopped some women from seeking work or led them to put this off as they stayed home to look after children (Adams-Prassl et al., 2020). Some men may have also been put off from attempting to balance work and childcare more – something which is often already difficult for families to afford when the father's income is higher – having observed how other caregivers have been treated.

Men's involvement in care

There is also a risk that it is primarily men returning to office spaces as these become more widely used again, and who will reap the potential benefits of face-to-face working on career progression as a result. This demonstrates the need for men to reflect on how they can contribute to gender equality in both the workplace and their personal lives in the wake of the pandemic. One important element of this is engaging more actively as fathers, such as by taking more parental leave and reducing their hours if affordable, so this is no longer associated predominantly with women. Employers need to do more to enable and encourage men to do this, such as putting in place comprehensive and well-supported parental leave policies, making flexible working more affordable, setting an example from the top, and challenging masculine notions of the 'ideal worker' as someone committed only to their work, without domestic distractions.

It is important to note that men's contribution to caregiving and housework has also grown during the pandemic, with many spending more time with their families than before due to schools being closed, having to work from home, or being furloughed. ONS (2020b) research suggests that men's contribution to childcare increased by 58% during the first lockdown (see also Chapter 3), and that while women were still doing more, the gender gap in unpaid work (including childcare, adult care, housework, and volunteering) reduced to 1 hour and 7 minutes a day. There also appears to have been an upsurge among men discussing fatherhood and joining fathers' groups (Burgess and Goldman, 2021). This could have positive impacts on men's involvement in caregiving in the longer term, as once they become more active in fatherhood, men tend to enjoy and value this involvement and wish to continue (Barker et al., 2021; Elliott, 2016). While children have been detrimentally impacted by COVID-19 in numerous ways, receiving more care and interaction from their fathers will have been a positive experience for some. In another survey during the pandemic, 73% of fathers stated that they would like to work flexibly and 64% said that they would like to reduce their working hours to spend more time with their family (Chung et al., 2020).

However, this increased engagement has been uneven, given that working-class men have not been able to work from home to the same extent as those in white-collar jobs (Smith,

2020). There have been barriers to men's involvement too; for example, for large parts of the pandemic, hospitals did not allow fathers to attend childbirth or antenatal appointments (Tarrant et al., 2020). Some fathers may have struggled to make sense of what their role should be at home, if their partner had been doing the lion's share previously. One study found that during the Spring 2020 lockdown, 40% of involved separated fathers saw more of their children than before, and 46% less, due to factors including health and safety risks, parents' paid work timetables, distance between households, transport options, and costs (Burgess and Goldman, 2021). While the pandemic presents a significant opportunity to increase men's engagement in caregiving, there appear to have been relatively few steps taken to promote this by policymakers or employers.

We have also seen harmful expressions of masculinity in numerous households, with already pervasive levels of domestic violence exacerbated as many victim-survivors have been trapped at home with their abusers (ONS, 2020c), and some men have sought to exert greater control over partners and children (see Chapter 3). Research suggests that the experiences of male victim-survivors worsened during the pandemic too, with virus prevention measures, and the ensuing economic crisis often exploited to further domestic abuse (Westmarland et al., 2021). Sexual harassment has also continued, in the workplace (e.g. moving online in some cases) or in public (which many women and girls reported getting worse when the streets were quieter) (Young Women's Trust, 2020). Many young people have received less education about sexual and reproductive health, while already struggling mental health services (which men often find it particularly difficult to turn to) have come under increasing strain while being harder to access during lockdowns (Ruxton and Burrell, 2020).

Another issue parents have faced is the worsening of the already entrenched crisis in the UK care sector during the pandemic. Crucial to balancing work and caregiving, and thus for gender equality, is access to affordable childcare. The UK has some of the most expensive childcare in the world (OECD, 2021) despite staff often being low paid and precarious. Yet many providers within this chronically underfunded sector were financially vulnerable even before the pandemic. More than 2,600 early years providers closed between April 2020 and March 2021, including 442 nurseries and 2,185 childminders (Ofsted, 2021). Many more risk closure in the future, after significant losses in income from fee-paying parents during lockdowns

and inconsistent financial support from government, who have barely mentioned the sector in its economic recovery plans (Women and Equalities Committee, 2021b).

While it has been providing crucial services throughout the pandemic, social care faces a similar funding crisis, and is also staffed largely by women on low pay. Yet this long-marginalised sector has often been ignored within the government's pandemic response, and tens of thousands of service users and hundreds of staff have died from COVID-19. This suggests a degree of negligence from policymakers towards parts of society (such as older people and people with disabilities, with older men being particularly badly affected) who do not fit into masculine images of strength and invulnerability. It has been notable that, as with previous economic downturns, government recovery measures have focused primarily on 'industrial renewal' and male-dominated sectors (Women and Equalities Committee, 2021b). This also defines men solely as workers, obscuring their identities as caregivers and hampering progress towards active fatherhood, which is known to be beneficial to the welfare of men themselves, as well as their partners, children, and society (Barker et al., 2021).

This is one among several features of what has arguably been a gender-blind, somewhat masculinist approach (i.e. universalising and prioritising normative masculine perspectives) from the UK government to the pandemic. There has been little leadership, recognition, or analysis on gender issues within the government response, from the gendered impacts of its economic policies to the particularly damaging effects of COVID-19 on men's health, with the Government Equalities Office seemingly having minimal influence (Women and Equalities Committee, 2021b). This has not been helped by the under-representation of women among decision-makers and advisory bodies such as SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies), further marginalising women's voices and experiences (Wenham and Herten-Crabb, 2021). It also echoes masculinist responses to the pandemic from several other (typically, but not exclusively, conservative, and right-wing) leaders and governments across the globe, from the United States to Brazil (Ruxton and Burrell, 2020). It is grimly ironic that such responses have had deleterious effects on the welfare of large sections of society including innumerable men, not least in terms of some of the highest death tolls globally.

Advancing welfare post-pandemic

COVID-19 has illuminated the immeasurable value of caregiving to society – something which has too often continued to go unrecognised in the 25 years since 'Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare' was published. The virus has illustrated the fragility of human existence, and how at points in our lives, each of us relies on the care of others – challenging masculine expectations of self-reliance and invincibility in the process. The closure of schools and childcare facilities, and the need for support from family, friends, and community that so many people have experienced when unwell, self-isolating, shielding, or in lockdown, has demonstrated how fundamental care is to societal welfare. It is possible that the pandemic could help to instigate a societal shift in which work and care are brought closer together, with the latter receiving the prioritisation it warrants – to the benefit of men and women alike. Public attitudes may be moving in this direction. For instance, the British Social Attitudes Survey suggests that support for social security measures is at its highest for 20 years (Curtice et al., 2020) – not least because greater numbers of people have needed them.

Of course, the bulk of care work is still done by women. However, the pandemic could also sow the seeds for longer-term changes in men's practices, not only regarding increased involvement in childcare. It has created an opportunity for many to pause, reflect, and re-evaluate their lives. There has been widespread engagement in mutual aid activities at community level, with care for others at their heart. Volunteers have engaged in a wide range of tasks, including checking on neighbours, picking up medicines, delivering food parcels, making masks, and raising awareness locally. While there is evidence that women have tended to take the lead, men have also played a significant role in these initiatives, demonstrating alternative forms of citizenship beyond employment (Kaur-Ballagan, 2020). Some men may have become motivated to build closer connections with nature because of spending more time engaging with the environment during lockdowns, while the virus has exemplified the unsustainability of current human relationships with the natural world. The pandemic therefore presents a pivotal moment for efforts to shift masculinities in more caring directions; in men's relations with their own welfare, the welfare of the people around them, and the welfare of the planet.

Government claims about 'building back better' also pose the question of whether the pandemic will bring about more equal and care-based economy. Feminist activists have called for recovery efforts to focus on 'social' as well as physical infrastructure – including investing much more in care provision. This would form a crucial aspect of an urgently needed Green New

Deal, given that care jobs are already low-carbon (Cohen and MacGregor, 2020). The social upheaval of the pandemic provides a significant opportunity to move away from the environmentally destructive socioeconomic model that dominates, demonstrating that rapid and dramatic social change for the well-being of people and planet is possible with sufficient political will and leadership.

However, there are also risks that the fallout of COVID-19 will lead to significant steps backwards, as some men cling to, and seek to reaffirm, the patriarchal power they derived from the pre-pandemic status quo. We may see renewed expressions of traditional, 'breadwinner' forms of masculinity, as some respond to the shaking of social norms with backlash towards gender equality, vociferously expressed in online spaces such as the 'Manosphere' and 'Incel' subculture. Women's positions in the labour market could be weakened in the longer term, as families increasingly struggle to balance work and care. Years of government austerity measures diminished the capacity of public services to respond effectively, and even though these measures have now been widely brought into question, in many ways austerity persists and could be intensified. The logic of austerity can be observed in the government's clawing back of the £20 increase in universal credit[3], cuts to overseas aid, reluctance to improve public sector pay, desire to reduce taxes, and lack of action in the face of the cost-of-living emergency which has deepened in the pandemic's wake.

It is far from inevitable that COVID-19 will move us in the direction of a more nurturing society. This will require collective human action and coalition-building to achieve, which in the immediate term pushes for increased flexibility and liveable wages in employment while reducing unsustainable working hours, workloads and precarity; renewed investment in the welfare state; and an ambitious Green New Deal focused on care. Men have been comparatively quiet about many of these issues to date. This must urgently change, not least because they continue to possess most positions of power – and because men and their welfare have much to gain from a more caring and equal society.

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[1] The Care Collective (Chatzidakis, Hakim, Littler, Rottenberg and Segal) was formed in 2017, originally as a London-based reading group aiming to understand and address the multiple crises of care.

[2] More than 2.5 times as many women work in education as men (c. 2.6 million women compared to c. 952,000 men) and three times as many women work in health and social work (c. 3.3 million women compared to c. 1 million men) (Women and Equalities Committee, 2021a).

[3] The UK's main social security payment, which was temporarily increased by £20 per week

during the pandemic.