

# Social Impact Report



# Foreword

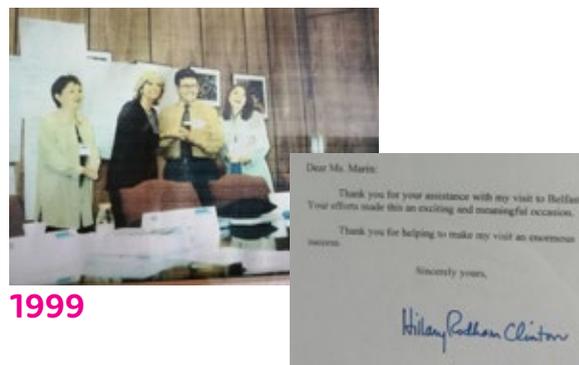
It is now twenty years since, on a study visit to the USA, the idea for Employers For Childcare was born. Originally established as a small community project, I am immensely proud of what our organisation has grown to become over the course of two decades, and the impact that we have had. It was very special to receive a letter from former First Lady, Senator and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton commending us on our milestone year and the difference we have made for children and families.

Little did I think, back in 1999, that twenty years later we would be reporting that our team has identified more than **£66 million in support for families**. Nor could I have imagined that we would have been commended by MPs during debates at Westminster, discussing our seminal research on national media channels...or building an indoor activity centre – High Rise – on such an epic scale!

Employers For Childcare has evolved as an organisation that doesn't just cope with change, but embraces it and the opportunity to do new things, as well as to do things better. And it has certainly been twenty years of change! In 1999, Britney Spears, the Vengaboys and Ricky Martin were hitting the charts, we still didn't know what horrors the Millennium Bug could bring, iPhones hadn't been invented, and 'social enterprise' was still a largely unknown term. Now, we're listening to Ed Sheeran, Lewis Capaldi and Adele, Brexit is in our daily lingo, Donald Trump is in the White House...and there is a clear, growing understanding that the worth of a service or business should be measured not just on financial grounds, but on the wider benefits it brings to society. I'm not making any predictions for the next two decades!

In commending this report to you, I would like to thank everyone who has supported our work over the last 20 years – you inspire us to do all we can to support, and advocate on behalf of, working parents, employers and childcare providers. And finally, I would like to pay tribute to my team at Employers For Childcare. On a personal note, this has been a very challenging year for me – it has meant so much to have the support of my colleagues both in ensuring another fantastic year at Employers For Childcare, and through your cards, messages, gifts and visits. Thank you for being so amazing!

**Marie Marin, Chief Executive**



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Charity Number 101176



## Twenty years of Employers For Childcare



It is 20 years since Employers For Childcare was set up as a small community project by Marie Marin, our Chief Executive. In that time, the organisation has come a long way and made a real difference in the lives of families across the UK. Employers For Childcare has been entirely self-financing since 2008 having established the UK's first – and only – Social Enterprise Childcare Voucher scheme. As a social enterprise, our business activities are designed to generate profit – but it is what we do with that profit that sets us

apart. 100% of our profit is invested for social good in our charity supporting parents, employers and childcare providers or back into our social enterprise. Our ethos is to address childcare, not only as a social issue, but also as a labour market and economic issue.

Our 20th birthday year has seen other important milestones achieved...

### 10 years of the Family Benefits Advice Service



Over the last ten years, our charity's Family Benefits Advice Service has provided free, impartial and confidential advice to almost 100,000 parents on the financial support available with childcare and other help that they are entitled to. We deliver this support through our Freephone Helpline, face-to-face outreach, presentations and clinics. As a result, we have identified collective financial support of almost £66 million for families across the UK!



Over the last 10 years we have identified collective financial support of  
**£66 million**  
 for families who received a calculation from us



### 10 years of the Northern Ireland Childcare Survey

We were delighted to launch our 10th Annual Northern Ireland Childcare Survey at an event in Parliament Buildings, Belfast in June. This marked an important milestone in this series, which is widely used to inform political debates and policy development in relation to childcare.



## What it means to be a social enterprise

### What is a social enterprise?

Social enterprises are businesses set up to change the world for the better. They do this in lots of different ways: creating jobs for people who would otherwise be left out, reinvesting profits in community projects or charitable work, protecting the environment, or providing vital services for people who might not get them otherwise.

Since 2008,  
 we have invested  
**£6.7 million**  
 into helping working  
 families across  
 the UK

### Our work matters

Through investing in our charity, we secure direct savings for parents, identify support they are entitled to, and generate savings for the whole economy by supporting those who are out of work back into the workforce. We help employers to be more family friendly, enabling them to recruit and retain vital staff. And we provide recruitment solutions for childcare providers, or assist them in registering to accept Tax-Free Childcare payments.

### In 2018/19 we invested almost

**£500,000**  
 in our charity through our Social Enterprise  
 activities

### We identified collective financial support of almost

**£10.4 million**  
 for callers to our Family Benefits Advice  
 Service

That means for every **£1 invested** in our charity,  
 we identified a direct saving for parents of **almost £21**



"#MyJobMatters as my research with parents and childcare providers lets their voices be heard through the NI Childcare Survey. Our work is important in campaigning for the support and investment our vital childcare infrastructure needs!"

"Working on the Family Friendly Employer Workshop 2019, I watched delegates leave feeling inspired with practical advice. I'm proud to be part of a Social Enterprise that helps employers introduce & promote better work/life balance policies."



"I knew #MyJobMatters when a client told me how the additional benefits I identified for her family meant she could reduce her working hours, making a huge positive impact to her mental health - she now feels better both emotionally and financially."

"I encourage employers to switch to our social enterprise Childcare Voucher Scheme, funding our charity's work. To know the work I do helps change the lives of working parents gives me extra job satisfaction I would not receive in the private sector."



### We support the development of social enterprise

Through our membership of the All Party Group on Social Enterprise we promote the social enterprise sector, and have kept up the call for the introduction of a Social Value Act in Northern Ireland. At the 2018 Social Enterprise UK Awards we sponsored a category - the Prove It: Social Impact Award - recognising a Social Enterprise that can truly demonstrate and communicate its impact with its stakeholders. We also had a dedicated Social Enterprise category at our UK Family Friendly Employer Awards. We have chosen to 'buy social', ensuring that we use other Social Enterprises in our supply chain and included a strong Social Clause in the tender for our new social enterprise venture.....High Rise!



We were proud that in 2018, Marie Marin, our Chief Executive, was shortlisted as a finalist in the Women in Social Enterprise Category at the Social Enterprise UK Awards which took place in London in December, and was featured on the WISE100 list for a second year.

## Reaching new heights with High Rise

Our new social enterprise project – High Rise, an indoor adventure centre - opened in October 2019. We involved the local community and a range of stakeholders in the design of the centre. As well as creating jobs in our local area it is accessible for all and offers unique experiences and activities for the whole community. The centre includes:

- Clip 'n Climb indoor climbing arena
- Soft play with baby, toddler and junior areas (up to age 8)
- Party rooms and corporate rooms
- Sensory and quiet rooms, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund
- Café serving meals and snacks
- A Changing Places accessible toilet.



### High Rise is different

We have invested **£2.5 million in High Rise**, and will use **100% of profit generated to support the work of our charity**. So every time you visit, as well as enjoying a fun day out, you'll be making a difference to families who need it most!



### High Rise promotes social value

We included a social clause in our tender to create employment, training or work experience for a job seeker. As a result, we have provided employment to someone who was previously long-term unemployed. We engaged with our contractor to deliver a workshop on construction site safety to a local school. We also facilitated our contractor to join Social Enterprise NI as a corporate member.





Paula McClinton and her son Thomas, Marie Marin, Employers For Childcare and Kate Beggs, The National Lottery Community Fund, announcing details of funding for the sensory and quiet rooms in High Rise

Official 'launch' of High Rise with Employers For Childcare Chair Michael Stevenson, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Mayor Uel Mackin, and building contractors Connolly + Fee



## Recruitment services

For childcare providers, we help remove the time and hassle involved in finding staff by offering tailored recruitment packages. We developed this service responding to the needs of the clients we work with who identified this gap. In 2018/19 we delivered **seven recruitment packages** for day care settings and completed **181 Access NI checks**.

## Childcare Vouchers - #SocialVouchers

### Buy Social - make the switch!

Employers For Childcare operates the only social enterprise Childcare Voucher scheme for employers across a range of sectors, of all shapes and sizes. Employees can save a maximum of £933 per year and employers also save on Employer's National Insurance Contributions. As a Social Enterprise, we reinvest our profit to create positive social change. This year, Baker Hughes, a GE Company made the positive decision to Buy Social and make the switch to Employers For Childcare as their Childcare Voucher provider.

Here is what they have to say:

“BHGE switched our Childcare Voucher service to Employers For Childcare in June 2019, and are delighted that we did. The transition was seamless, and Employers For Childcare supported us through each step. All of our staff now have access to the Family Benefits Advice Service, which offers guidance on financial support they are entitled to. This is a great addition to our package of support for staff, and will help us to recruit and retain the best employees. The team have been great to work with, and in working with a social enterprise, we are helping to contribute to positive change in the lives of families across the UK.”



Find out more at [www.employersforchildcare.org](http://www.employersforchildcare.org) about how you too can Buy Social!

### How much parents and employers using our Childcare Vouchers saved in 2018/19:



### What is the impact?

For every member of staff that an employer signs up to use our Childcare Vouchers, as well as generating a saving to themselves and their staff, the employer also supports the work of our Family Benefits Advice Service helping them deliver free, impartial and confidential advice to families across the UK.



## Our charity's impact

Our charity works directly with parents through the Family Benefits Advice Service, and for parents through our research, policy and lobbying work.



**11,400+**  
people helped directly



**8,000**  
calculations for parents



**386**  
outreach sessions



**27**  
research reports, factsheets and consultation responses



**24,800**  
almost 24,800 people helped indirectly, including partners & children



In 2018/19 we invested almost

**£500,000**

in our charity through our Social Enterprise activities.



We identified collective financial support of almost

**£10,400,000**

for callers to our Family Benefits Advice Service.



Since 2008, Employers For Childcare has invested

**£6.7 million**

into helping working families across the UK.

**For every £1** invested in our charity we identified a direct saving for parents of **almost £21**

## Delivering impact through the Family Benefits Advice Service



### What difference did we make?



Where we identified **financial support** was available for families, the average amount identified was

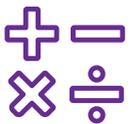
**£3,499 per family**



In 2018/19 we identified collective financial support of

**£10,400,000**

for families who received a calculation from us



### Helping parents get into, and stay in, work

Through follow up evaluation with parents we found that all of those who were unemployed when they contacted us, and were seeking work, reported that they felt better prepared for finding work as a result of their call. This applied to approximately 15% of our beneficiaries. Based on figures produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, there is an annual average increased economic output of £13,000 every time an out-of-work benefit claimant moves into work.<sup>1</sup> This means that we will have contributed to a further **£15,522,000** in increased economic output across the UK.

Feedback gathered from parents who used the service was **100% positive.**

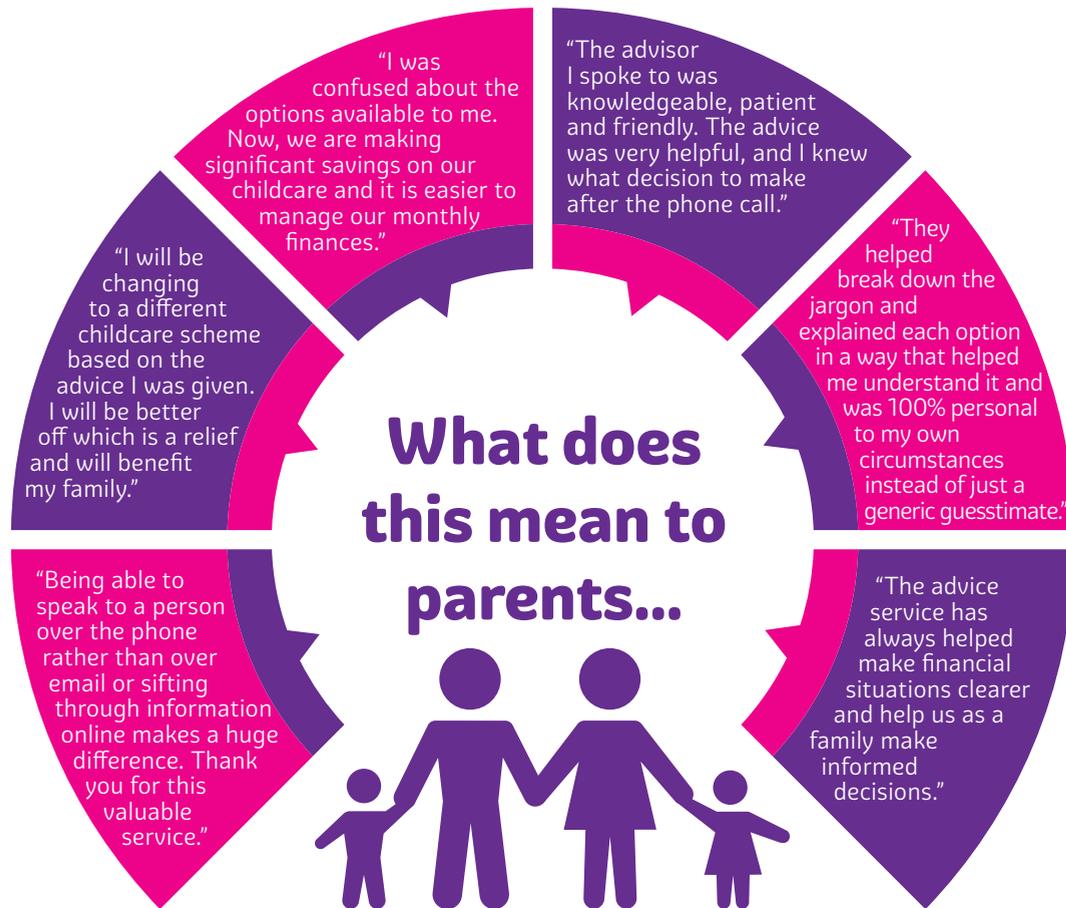
**100%**

...would recommend our services to other parents

**100%**

...rate the quality of the service as excellent or good

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/benefits-tackling-worklessness-and-low-pay>



We love to hear directly from you

Talk about amazing customer service! @EFCCG are amazing 🌟 for an idiot forever locking himself out 😊  
Simple & effect system, a service that is essential in helping working parents and a #socialenterprise to boot

Hi ☐ I've been trying to do a review on Facebook but for some reason it won't let me! I was talking to a fantastic lady last week, I think her name was Brenda (2 babies later and I've a head like a sieve 😊) She was so knowledgeable, Friendly and helpful; nothing was too much hassle for her, and really set my mind at ease re: returning to work and universal credits. I would just like to say thank you again and I've been recommending your organisation to everyone 😊

## Delivering impact through research

Each year Employers For Childcare carries out research providing up-to-date information and a robust evidence base to lobby government on childcare and work related issues.

### Ten years of the Northern Ireland Childcare Cost Survey

In 2019 we published the 10th annual Northern Ireland Childcare Survey, the latest in a series of research exploring how the affordability and accessibility of childcare is impacting on parents and childcare providers.



The report is unique in being based on direct research with thousands of parents and childcare providers. The difference this research series has made was highlighted by politicians, parents and childcare providers who spoke at the launch event, and explained how the research has given parents and childcare providers a voice in calling for investment in this vital sector. As a direct result, a key development is that discussions are ongoing to establish a new dedicated parliamentary group.

## Evidence based policy and lobbying

Our research informs our policy and lobbying work. We used it as a basis for engagement with the **UN Special Rapporteur on Poverty** and to influence the decision of the UN's **CEDAW Committee** (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) to report on the need for action to secure affordable childcare in Northern Ireland.

Ahead of the local government elections in May, we published a **refreshed policy Manifesto**, highlighting key issues to be prioritised by policy-makers and political parties, proposing actions to benefit families, the local economy, and society as a whole. We also engaged with policy makers and others in responding to consultations.

We have continued our work, together with a range of organisations from different sectors, to drive the **Childcare For All campaign**, organising a policy conference in March: 'Childcare Policy Development in NI: Exploring Drivers and Addressing Barriers'.



**We have strong, constructive working relationships across all parties, and within Government Departments, and are recognised as a key organisation on issues relating to childcare, flexible working policies, financial support for families and social enterprise.**

## Encouraging and celebrating family friendly employers

It's widely accepted that implementing family friendly policies in the workplace to support those with caring responsibilities (whether for children or older relatives) boosts staff loyalty and increases retention. Employees need support and flexibility in order to balance work and family. When an organisation harnesses a family friendly ethos its employees feel understood and valued not just as employees but as parents, grandparents, siblings and children.

Our Family Benefits Advice Service offers employers a Freephone helpline 0800 028 3008 and outreach service which provides help with implementing family friendly policies and navigating employment legislation.

### Family Friendly Employer Workshop 2019

We were delighted to welcome 70 attendees from a wide range of organisations to our annual Family Friendly Employer Workshop, kindly hosted by Allstate Northern Ireland, in April 2019. Attendees heard from a number of speakers, representing different sectors, on how they have planned and implemented family friendly practices in their workplaces. There was lively discussion around approaches to developing family friendly working policies and delegates had the opportunity to highlight those initiatives they'd like to see extended to their own places of employment.



### Family Friendly Employer Awards 2019

Now in their 9th year, Employers For Childcare's annual UK Family Friendly Employer Awards recognise employers who go above and beyond legal requirements to implement family friendly working policies. The 2019 Awards Ceremony was held in October 2019 in the Galgorm Resort and Spa, where the judges commended the high calibre of entries and the dedicated approach shown by organisations to investing in and supporting their staff.

The Awards Ceremony was compered by Sarah Travers and we were delighted to welcome Belinda Brown, who leads Diageo's Global Audit & Risk (GAR) agenda for Africa and Europe, as the keynote speaker. Diageo has recently announced a number of progressive family friendly initiatives, including fully paid 26 weeks equal parental leave for all UK employees. Belinda, who comes from Co Antrim, has been named in the 2019 Power 50 Awards, the annual list that celebrates the most outstanding senior business figures that work flexibly across the UK.

Congratulations to all of the 2019 winners, particularly South Eastern Regional College which was named Overall Family Friendly Employer 2019, and thank you to our sponsors.

Find out more on our website where you can also watch the highlights.

Thank you to all of our sponsors for helping to make this year's Awards possible

### Family Friendly Employer Award 2019 sponsors



[www.employersforchildcare.org](http://www.employersforchildcare.org)



## Award-winning communications and engagement

In another busy year for our Communications Team, we were delighted that the impact of our #SaveChildcareVouchers campaign was recognised when we won the 'Not for Profit Campaign' of the year at the Chartered Institute of Marketing Awards 2018. Over the last 12 months we have extended our profile across the UK with live radio interviews on BBC Five Live, as well as featuring on local radio programmes, in newspaper articles and on television news packages and in online podcasts such as for Belfast Live.



We were delighted with the range and breadth of engagement when we launched our 10th Annual Northern Ireland Childcare Survey earlier this year. In fact, our hashtag on the day was trending on Twitter!

Our objectives in our communications and engagement are to:

- ensure parents, employers and childcare providers know where to go for advice and guidance about developments impacting them or support they are entitled to and
- encourage policy makers and politicians to invest in our vital childcare infrastructure.

We have successfully built on the foundations we've established with media outlets, helping us work towards achieving these objectives, and have seen an uplift in calls to our Family Benefits Advice Service following engagement such as:

- 23** Radio interviews (BBC Radio 5 Live, Radio Ulster, CoolFM/Downtown Radio, Q Radio, Radio Foyle, U105)
- 64** Newspaper articles (Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, Newsletter, regional newspapers)
- 7** Television news interviews (BBC Newsline and UTV Live)



## Feedback from our clients

We are always keen to hear from the people we work with about their experience – both what is working well, and how we can improve. We conduct an annual customer satisfaction survey, and were delighted with the positive feedback this year. We are now working to implement some of the constructive comments to enhance our service.

### Employers

- **100% of employers** say the level of contact they receive from Employers For Childcare is 'just right'.
- **100% of employers** rate the service they receive from Employers For Childcare as 'excellent' or 'good'.
- **100% of employers** plan to continue using Employers For Childcare as their Childcare Voucher provider.
- **96% of employers** who have used the E-Vouchers system rate it as 'easy' or 'very easy' to use.

"Employers For Childcare provide an excellent service, they are friendly and welcoming, with excellent and simple to use online systems. A great service and also excellent charity, worth supporting."

"I have been very pleased with the level of service provided. A good, easy to navigate website, backed up by friendly, knowledgeable staff. I would be happy to recommend Employers for Childcare to any organisation."

"It is a pleasure to use a company that if you have a query, you can be confident there will be someone pleasant and helpful at the other end of the phone."

"We had no experience of how to administer childcare vouchers, EFC guided us through the process from start to finish in a very caring, efficient and simple way. Thank you."

### Parents

- **96% of parents** told us they rate the service they receive from Employers For Childcare as 'excellent' or 'good'.
- **95% of parents** told us they find the online E-Vouchers system 'easy' or 'very easy' to use.

"Employers for Childcare offer an excellent service, the advice I have received has been accurate and very helpful in making decisions about what's best for my childcare options and what will suit my family best, I cannot recommend the service highly enough."

"Always pleased with the commitment and customer focus from all of the hardworking staff - always willing to go that extra mile."

## Our wider social and environmental impact

This Social Impact Report highlights the impact that we as an organisation have made in delivering against our social purpose, supporting parents with dependent children to get into, and stay in, work and addressing childcare as a labour market issue. But it is important to also reflect on what we do as an organisation more broadly to ensure that we are contributing to a world that is fairer and more sustainable.

### Commitment to 'Buy Social'

We have chosen to 'buy social', ensuring that we use other Social Enterprises in our supply chain and including social clauses in our tenders.

### Commitment to staff

We are committed to ensuring that staff are valued, supported and invested in. We offer dependents leave, flexible working, a private healthcare package and Childcare Vouchers. Additionally, our social committee regularly organises events, lunches and activities that allow staff to enjoy social time together whilst raising money for charity.

### Commitment to our ethical and green values

From ensuring all paper is recycled, to installing eco lights and ensuring they aren't on when they aren't needed, or encouraging staff to car share where possible – we continue to seek to find alternative ways to reduce our own environmental impact. We will be carrying this through into our new High Rise centre, for example, limiting any single use plastics and promoting recycling – and our team enjoyed planting trees around the perimeter of the new site!



## Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who made our work possible over the last year, whether you are a parent or childcare provider who completed a survey, a community organisation that hosted a Family Benefits Advice roadshow, an employer who switched to our Childcare Voucher scheme, or a policy maker who listened...your support is truly appreciated!

We welcome comments, feedback and reflections on this report and the work it documents. Please get in touch at [hello@employersforchildcare.org](mailto:hello@employersforchildcare.org)



## Come visit us at High Rise!

Our new indoor adventure centre, High Rise, opened to the public in October 2019. The centre has been designed to be inclusive and accessible, including for those with special and additional needs, and includes:



- A stunning Clip 'n Climb arena featuring 24 climbing challenges.
- Soft play area with dedicated baby section.
- Party rooms for all occasions.
- Innovative Sensory and Quiet Rooms.
- Café serving home-cooked meals and snacks.
- Corporate rooms.
- A Changing Places accessible toilet.



So when you are planning your next family outing, or corporate away day, why not come and visit High Rise?

[www.highriseni.org](http://www.highriseni.org)  
[contact@highriseni.org](mailto:contact@highriseni.org)  
 028 9263 6195

High Rise is a social enterprise, with 100% of profits going to support families across the UK.

# Employers For Childcare

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