

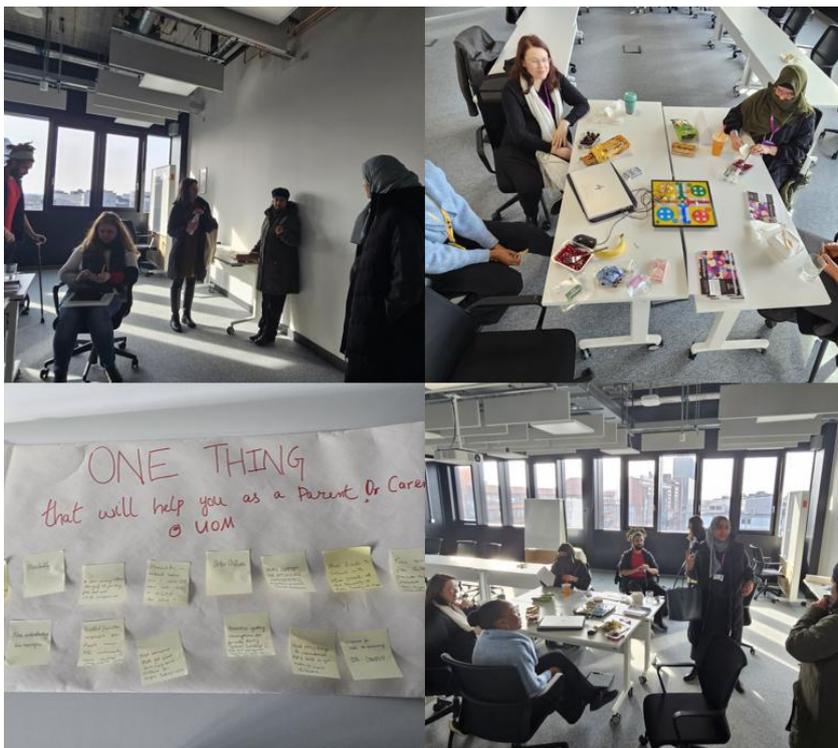
Lunch N Connect

Building a Supportive Community for Parents, Carers, and Guardians at UoM



The University of Manchester's Parents, Carers, and Guardians Network hosted their first Lunch & Connect session on the 18th of February, at the Nancy Rothwell Building. The event held from 12 noon-2pm was a drop in lunch and chat session aimed to provide a welcoming space for parents, carers, and guardians at UoM to relax, share experiences, and foster connections.

The network provided a safe and inclusive space for both staff and students, fostering a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Attendees enjoyed relaxing activities, including games like Ludo and other activities to relax and step away from work and childcare responsibilities. Although some parents brought lunch with them, fruits and beverages were available, ensuring everyone stayed refreshed while networking.



As expected, the session enabled open discussions for sharing personal experiences and challenges. A key focus of the event was discussing the realities of balancing work/study and parenting, with attendees sharing both struggles and moments of resilience. One returning parent expressed how lovely her experience was coming back from maternity leave, while an expectant parent voiced concerns about managing two children with work post-delivery. These conversations highlighted the adjustments and challenges that come with work-life

transitions for parents that cannot be openly shared in workspaces. Another parent shared the immense difficulty of submitting her first-year PhD report while caring for her child at A&E, highlighting the unpredictability of balancing academic deadlines with parenting responsibilities. Whilst this may be the case for some, others shared their experience of overworking and the pressure to prove their worth at work, alongside the fear of being left behind compared to peers with no children. Indeed, the mental and physical toll of meeting academic and work deadlines while raising children is often ignored.

Many participants shared their daily struggles of balancing school runs with work deadlines which emphasises the critical need for flexibility in the workplace for parents. One parent highlighted the financial strain of affording childcare or any paid activities, explaining that she often must travel long distances to find more affordable options. As an international student, she is not eligible for free childcare policies, making it even more challenging to manage living costs. This reinforces the need for tailored support for international student parents, who often face additional financial and structural barriers due to limited assistance from both the government and the university.

Some experienced attendees also shared positively how they have navigated challenges and progressed despite some of these difficulties. It was particularly encouraging to hear from participants at the end of the session, as they expressed how the discussions provided reassurance, valuable insights, and practical strategies, helping them feel more supported in navigating their concerns. This immediate feedback highlights the transformative impact of peer support within our community.

A special highlight of the event was the “One Thing” activity. Attendees wrote down ONE KEY THING that would make life easier for working and studying families @ UoM. This included several suggestions from more flexible policies to better childcare support, reflecting the diverse needs of parents within the university. The enthusiasm and shared ideas reinforced the need for stronger institutional backing for parents and provided the network with a valuable set of recommendations to advocate for meaningful change at UoM.

Lunch & Connect was a valuable opportunity for parents, carers, and guardians to exchange experiences and offer mutual support. It highlighted the power of peer connections and the importance of fostering a strong support network at UoM. With such positive engagement, we look forward to more gatherings and welcome more parents to join us in the future.

Join the **UoM Parents, Carers & Guardians Network** to stay engaged with our community, access resources, and receive updates on upcoming events.

- LISTSERV: [UOM-PARENTS-CARERS-GUARDIANS](#)
- Teams: [UOM-EDI-Parents-Carers-Peer-Support](#)
- Follow us on social handles: Instagram | Facebook | LinkedIn

Save the date! Our next Lunch N Connect will take place 29th of April @12 -2 PM (Venue TBC). We look forward to seeing you there!

For further information, please contact UOM-ParentCarerGuardianNetwork@manchester.ac.uk

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