



# Early learning & childcare

Supporting children  
parents and the workforce

April 2016

**Manifesto  
Election 2016**

**UNISON**  
*Scotland*

## Supporting children, parents and the childcare workforce

Childcare should be provided free at the point of use by the public sector.

Currently Scotland's childcare provision is patchy, complex and expensive. We need a radical overhaul of childcare provision to ensure that it provides what families actually want: a safe nurturing environment for their children, that doesn't cost the earth. This will mean extending flexible working and leave for parents; and fair pay, training and career paths for those working in childcare.

There is a consensus in Scotland around the expansion of free childcare. We welcome this, however the promises of expansion must be accompanied by firm commitments to deliver the resources and funding to make that happen. As well as the many fine words about the role and value of childcare there is a need to go beyond promises over numbers of hours provided and focus on delivery.

Public delivery is the most cost effective way forward: money won't be lost to profit, and is where we will be best able to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive service. Public delivery also makes it easier to ensure that the workforce is properly paid and well qualified. Public delivery also gives better protection to childcare workers who need all the same rights and opportunities, for example flexible working, as other workers. Appropriate pay and good terms and conditions are how you attract and keep skilled workers.

Working with children is not just about the time spent with each child. Workers also have to plan, evaluate, and assess learning and keep detailed records of each child's progress. There needs to be wider recognition of what these posts involve and adequate funding for the staffing levels and hours of work required to do the job.

Delivering high quality childcare needs a well qualified workforce. This requires decent pay and access to decent pensions. This, largely female, workforce faces all the same challenges as other working women including balancing their own caring responsibilities with work and the high costs of childcare. There will need to be a substantial increase in staff numbers to cope with both the extra hours the current children will soon attend for and also the extra children who take up the service if as it is hoped more mothers take up paid work. Childcare workers need access to flexible part-time working, we therefore expect those who advocate expansion of childcare to commit to staffing the services adequately in order that part time and flexible working options are available in reality not just on paper.

Qualifications and career progression are essential to attract and keep experienced staff in the sector. This will require training and ongoing professional development. The degree level early years qualification and the recent clarification that it qualifies holders for leadership roles are welcome steps forward. This offers a clear career path for childcare workers and many studies have demonstrated the value of having degree level qualified staff working in nurseries. Childcare

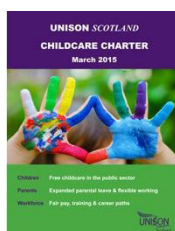


policy and strategy should aim at facilitating this and staff should have opportunities for preparation time and study leave as part of this. It should also be acknowledged that few people will be willing to take the time required to achieve additional qualifications on top of working unless it is unlikely to be reflected in their wages.

Developing the right childcare cannot be separated from improved maternity leave and flexible working rights. Families need time to look after their own children and a fair work/life balance. The workplace penalty for motherhood is substantial. The answer is to change workplaces: a year's paid maternity leave, flexible working, part-time work and extended paid paternity leave will reduce the impact of motherhood on women workers and reduce the gender pay gap. Those who look after their own children full-time should also have that work and the skills required recognised when they attempt to return to work.

# Questions for Candidates

- Do childcare workers deserve the same rights to flexible working conditions as other workers?
- What will you do to ensure that increased childcare entitlement is properly funded?
- How do you plan to make sure that we have proper staffing levels?
- How will you ensure that extra investment in childcare isn't used to prop up a low wage private sector?
- What are your plans to increase the opportunities for the childcare workforce?



Read UNISON Scotland's childcare charter here: <http://www.unison-scotland.org/service-groups-and-sectors/local-government/education-issues-group/>

Further election 2016 campaigns info here: <http://www.unison-scotland.org/campaigns/manifesto-scottish-election-2016/>

For further information contact

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