



ELC 1140
hours
Expansion
Programme of
Trials

The UNISON Scotland Submission

March 2016

Introduction

UNISON Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government Discussion paper on Early Learning and Childcare 1140 hours expansion. UNISON is the biggest trade union in Scotland representing members across Scotland's public, private and voluntary sectors. Our members are the key workers in early years and childcare. UNISON members pay taxes as well as delivering and using public services and are therefore in a unique position to comment on public services in Scotland. The majority of our members are women, many of whom are also balancing work with their care responsibilities. UNISON in particular and the trade union movement in general have led the way in campaigns for a comprehensive childcare service in Scotland and across the UK.

Response

The current childcare system is patchy, complex and expensive. Parents in Scotland pay 27% of their household income on childcare, compared to the OECD average of 12%. 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. The best way to do this is to deliver childcare in the public sector, paid for via taxation and therefore free at the point of use.

It's not just the high cost of childcare which creates a barrier for women trying to return to work. The system is patchy and hard to navigate. Places are hard to find. Until you know what specific childcare is available then it's impossible to say what hours you will be able to work and vice versa. This is hard for those hoping to negotiate changing working patterns returning to their job and almost impossible for those trying to find new work.

There is no one place to go to find out what's available: local authorities in Scotland don't have to monitor childcare availability in their area, far less what it costs or find out what demand for care is. There is no statutory obligation to provide/organise childcare for under-threes except for those whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits or are "looked after". Many working parents are forced to use expensive private sector nurseries because they cannot buy extra hours on top of their free hours in local authority nurseries.

The recent JRF programme paper: *Creating an Anti-poverty Childcare System*¹ states that a shift to supply side funding for pre-school childcare services is the most effective route forward:

"International evidence and the best examples of high quality provision in the UK suggest that the most effective approach to funding pre-school childcare is supply side funding, where investment is made directly in service. This approach provides the means to offer universal access to services and effectively shape the quality, affordability and flexibility" (Executive Summary page 3)

¹ JRF programme paper: *Creating an Anti-poverty Childcare System*
<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/creating-anti-poverty-childcare-system>

“the case for supply funded childcare is simple: it is the most effective means of delivering reliable access to affordable, flexible and high quality childcare regardless of ability to pay” (Executive Summary page 3)

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.

While childcare should enable parents to work, its focus must be on what's best for children and their development. There is already a substantial body of work in this area for example: *Joining the Dots: a better start for Scotland's Children* by Susan Deacon and JRF programme paper: *Creating an Anti-poverty Childcare System*. The government is committed to preventative spending: free at the point of use, high quality childcare offers massive future savings and also considerable immediate benefits for Scotland's families.

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. Childcare workers need access to flexible part-time working. Many first choose this work because it fits in with their own caring responsibilities. 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 but also the extra children who take up the service if as it is hoped more mothers take up paid work. As many staff will want to work part-time the number of actual employees will be higher than the FTE figure. We are therefore not convinced that the number of staff required to deliver expanded childcare is being properly calculated.

The childcare workforce, particularly in the private sector, is not well paid. The knowledge and skills required, as with much work traditionally done by women, are not widely recognised or rewarded in the market. This needs to be challenged. Pay must reflect the skills, knowledge and reflective practice required to do the job. There has been progress in the public sector, one of the key reasons for our support for ensuring that the public sector delivers childcare is to ensure that this is not pulled back by expanding the low paid private sector.

Evidence indicates that having well qualified staff, particularly staff with a degree level qualification working in a nursery is key to good outcomes for the children. Since 2011 managers and lead practitioners of a day care of children's service in order to register with the SSSC have to have or be working towards a level 9 qualification. The Education Scotland Report² shows that of the nursery centres they had inspected: 27% of local authority centres, 28% of private centres and 13% of voluntary centres had one member of staff with a BA in Childhood Practice. In local authority centres 87% had

² Making the Difference: the impact of staff qualifications children's learning in the early years (2011)

access to a teacher, 39% of private sector nurseries and 32% in the voluntary sector. Those who are able to access nursery services in the public sector have substantially more access to staff with degree level qualifications.

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Qualifications and career progression are essential to attract and keep experienced staff in the sector. This will require training and ongoing professional development. Few people will be willing to take the time required to achieve additional qualifications on top of working if the wages on offer are the minimum/living wage. The degree level early years qualification and the recent clarification that it qualifies holders for leadership roles are welcome. This offers a clear career path for childcare workers which is welcome. Wages for senior/management roles in the must also reflect the level of qualifications and experience required.

Cuts and centralisation in further education colleges will impact on colleges' ability to delivery training for this expanding workforce. Meeting the longer term aspirations of expanded childcare by 2020 requires planning and investment in training now.

Delivery of the new extra hours will require adequate funding. Working with children isn't just about the time spent with the child. Workers also have to plan, evaluate, and monitor learning and keep detailed records of each child's progress. There needs to be wider recognition of what these jobs actually involve and adequate funding for the staffing levels and hours of work required to do the job.

Gender segregation in the workforce and its impact on the gender pay gap is a key issue in Scotland and just as there needs to be support for girls in schools to consider a wider set of job options but boys should also be encouraged to consider childcare as a career.

Barriers

UNISON believes that getting childcare right will cost money. We believe this is a worthwhile investment in Scotland's economy, in children's lives and will bring long-term savings to a range of budgets through improved outcomes for children and families. Paying for services universally via taxation is much fairer than through charges. We are though concerned that not enough work is being done to assess the detail of the costs far less allocating adequate funds to deliver.

The Scottish Government needs to provide far more detail on

- The current number of places available for children
- Population projections to work out future demand for the service in terms of numbers of children and mothers who will take up paid work
- The requirements for extra buildings/refurbishment/extension of current premises and the costs involved
- Current numbers of qualified staff
- The numbers of qualified staff needed to deliver the new service: This workforce is currently predominantly female and many have caring responsibilities of their own. Many will need to work part-time and/or term time due to these responsibilities so actual numbers needed will be higher than for a full time workforce. As does keeping a nursery open 8-6, covering lunch times etc
- Pay: tackling low pay in the childcare sector is essential to delivering a high quality services and recruiting and retaining qualified staff. We need data on pay across the sector, agreement on minimum qualifications and support for continued professional development. No one is going to take on night classes and further study to earn the living wage.

Best Practice

One of the many advantages of public sector provision is the ability to better co-ordinate childcare with other services, for example where an extended day nursery is co-located with a primary school on the same campus. This type of delivery means that parents only have to leave and collect their children(aged up to 12 years) from one place. This also improves the transition to formal education at 5 as they are already familiar with the school. Example include

Lime Tree Day Nursery – Merrylee Primary School

Shaw Mor Family Learning Centre – Tinto Primary School

Kelvinpark Family Learning Centre – Hillhead Primary School

Govan Family Learning Centre – Pirie Park Primary School

Knightswood Early Years Centre – St Ninian’s Primary School

Garthamlock Family Learning – St Rose of Lima Primary School

Conclusion

UNISON is concerned that we keep asking the same questions over and over rather than getting on with delivery. This consultation quotes the OECD on what works. Only recently Children Ist produced a report on Childcare, the Government’s own Childcare Workforce Review has been published. There is already widespread agreement on what works. It really is time to move into a delivery phase.

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