



**UNISON Scotland response:  
Early Learning and Childcare Service Model for 2020**

**June 2018**

**Introduction**

UNISON is Scotland's largest trade union with members across the public, private and voluntary sectors. UNISON members work in a range of settings in nurseries, schools, and health services and across local government delivering education and care services for children including those with additional support needs. UNISON therefore welcomes the opportunity to take part in the consultation on the Early Learning and Childcare Service Model.

**General comments**

The provision of a free at the point of use public childcare service has been a demand of the trade union movement for over a hundred years. UNISON therefore welcomes the proposal to increase the current "free hours" to 1140 a year and the plans from local authorities to ensure change the pattern of hours to better meet the demands of working parents. The service model must be one that closes rather than widens the attainment gap. Otherwise there is a real risk that the better-off benefit more from the changes than those on lower incomes. There is growing evidence that this has been the case following the move to 30 hours per week in England<sup>1</sup>.

There is widespread agreement that poverty and inequality in Scotland are too high and that they damage not only those who live in poverty but society in general. We don't just see wealth inequalities but also an enormous gap in qualifications between children in poor and wealthy areas in Scotland. A well-fed child living in a comfortable warm home is going to find it easier to take part in education than one who is hungry and cold.

The majority of children living in poverty are living in households where someone is working. The high costs of child care contributes to the financial challenges facing working parents on average salaries and hits lower paid families hard. Many women experience little financial benefit from working when their children are young other than contributing to a pension and keeping a foothold in the workplace to ensure future earnings. Ending the poverty related attainment gap requires eradicating poverty itself. That requires a range of measure including decent benefits for those who cannot work and decent wages and secure jobs for those who do.

That does not mean that action cannot be taken to reduce the impact of poverty on children's attainment. UNISON agrees that the delivery of 1140 hours of free at the point of use Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) could make a huge difference to families in the short term and to children's attainment. To be fully effective the proposed expansion of "free hours" in ELC will also require investment in a range of public services not just nurseries. The services also need to work together. This is why it important that all education services including early years are embedded in local authorities where links to social work, libraries, youth work, leisure and cultural services as well as social work, welfare rights, educational psychologists and housing can be best co-ordinated.

---

<sup>1</sup> R Johnes and J Hutchinson Widening the Gap? The impact of the 30-hour entitlement on early years education and childcare. Education Policy Institute May 2016

The evidence is clear that an anti-poverty early learning and childcare service (ELC) needs to follow a supply side model rather than the “funding follows the child” “provider neutral” model laid out in this consultation.

As the Joseph Rowntree Foundation state<sup>2</sup>

*“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 services. This approach provides the means to offer universal access to services and effectively shape quality, affordability and flexibility. ....demand side subsidies do not offer the same means to achieve integration and deliver improvements in services. 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 parents’ ability to pay”*

There is little detail yet on how the demand led “funding follows the child” model will work in practice with only a footnote in the consultation indicating a feasibility study into ELC accounts. There is a risk that this leads to a system where those who are able to spend more to top up the money from the government will be able to access a higher quality, or indeed take up a higher proportion of scarce places than those on lower incomes: Widening rather than closing the attainment gap.

High quality childcare is a vital tool for closing Scotland’s attainment gap. This means a system that is child centred and based on the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach. That requires highly qualified staff. Recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff requires attractive pay and terms and conditions.

Currently there are far too many employers who do not currently pay staff a living wage. While the proposed standard of the real Living Wage will provided a well deserved pay rise for the staff who are currently on the national minimums for their age group it is far too low for qualified childcare workers. The living wage is a calculation based on the bare minimum wages to survive: it is not set to reflect the skills that fully qualified early years staff have. On top of wages staff also need decent pensions, leave, access to flexible working and ongoing professional development. We cannot build a childcare system based on low paid (largely) women workers. Not only will this lead to a two tier system where some women will be able to earn high salaries and get subsidised childcare while other earn the bare minimum to survive delivering that childcare. Pensions are also an important issue as many women work part-time and/or take a break from paid work due to caring responsibilities alongside lower paid jobs leading to poverty in their old age. All early years workers should have access to a high quality pension scheme.

All the available evidence point to the need for a highly qualified workforce to ensure that children thrive in early learning and childcare centres. The public sector already has far higher rates on qualified staff: it is this sector the government should focus on expanding.

---

<sup>2</sup> A Butler and J Rutter Family and Childcare Trust Creating and anti-poverty childcare system JRF January 2016 (executive summery)

**Table 4: Proportion of registered workforce qualified, Sept 2015**

	Setting				Total
	Local authority settings	Partner provider settings	Non-funded (LA)	Non-funded (Private & Voluntary)	
Managers	58%	31%	28%	22%	32%
Practitioners	95%	78%	70%	66%	83%
Support workers	58%	24%	39%	26%	41%
<b>Total</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>71%</b>

Source: SSSC Register, September 2017

UNISON believes that all practitioners should be qualified to HNC level and managers to degree level. This does not mean that we do not support work based routes to achieving that level just that only those who are fully qualified should count towards the staff/child ratio in a setting. This way guarantees that children are being supported by qualified staff. Research<sup>3</sup> undertaken on UNISON’s behalf indicated the value of a qualified workforce in ensuring the delivery of a high quality service. It is vital that all those working in the sector have a qualification that includes child development. This must include childminders otherwise children in this type of setting will not be getting the same quality of experience as others. If there is to be an expansion of the number of staff undertaking work based rather than college routes to their qualifications then staff/ratios will also need to take into account the time that qualified staff will spend supporting trainees in their development.

There is little in the proposal about supporting children (or parents) with Additional Support Needs (ASN). There are already<sup>4</sup> serious issues in our schools caused by lack of funding and appropriate training for staff working with pupils with ASN. It is therefore vital that ASN is fully mainstreamed into this expansion from the start. Earlier intervention for those with ASN will benefit the children more and save money in the long run. Additional support will require extra funding including higher staff/child ratios as well as specific and ongoing training for the staff involved.

The proposal suggests that procurement guidelines will be introduced to ensure quality outwith the public sector. The problems in the social care sector, the recent Carillion collapse, and Edinburgh trams are clear examples of the risks of managing procurement in public services. Proper monitoring of the contracts will be essential including the wages and terms and conditions of staff.

UNISON is concerned about any plans to simplify the process of becoming a partner provider. Any simplification must not put children or staff at risk. UNISON believes that the best way to ensure quality and safety of the service is for councils to deliver the services directly. Staff must also have the opportunity to join and be active in a trade

<sup>3</sup>R Stewart, J Findlay and P Findlay Early Learning and Childcare Research Report December 2017 <http://www.unison-scotland.org/library/EarlyYearsFinalReport.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> UNISON Scotland Evidence to the Education Committee Feb 2017 <http://www.unison-scotland.org/library/evidence-to-Education-Committee-ASN-feb-2017.pdf>

union so that they have protection to raise any concerns they have about the quality of any service or the treatment of staff. If the government goes ahead with its provider neutral stance then any system must put the safety of children at its heart. Poor quality childcare doesn't just put children at risk of physical harm it also affects their development while in that centre and for the rest of their lives. It puts them at a disadvantage starting school and we know that it is very difficult for them to close the gap. Therefore any decision of becoming a partner provider must include, health and safety, they physical environment, staff qualifications, staff turnover, the quality of the interactions with children and staff and the systems in place for parental consultation/interactions and for staff to report on any concerns they may have.

The government consistently state that they are focused on the provision of a quality service. Stating that the Living Wage is the minimum pay for the sector contradicts that ambition. It should be shocking that that around 80 per cent of practitioners and 50 per cent of supervisors in partner settings are paid less than the Living Wage<sup>5</sup>. So while the commitment will bring a welcome pay rise for many it is much less than is being paid in the public sector.

UNISON believes that the government has substantially underestimated the number of extra staff needed to meet their ambition but even accepting their figures it will be very difficult to attract sufficient people at that rate of pay. Why would anyone undertake the training (in-work or at college) needed to become an early years practitioner with all the responsibilities, the demands of maintaining professional registration and required ongoing professional development to earn the same rate of pay you could cleaning or in a supermarket?

Here are a few examples of available jobs at or around the Living Wage advertised this week:

---

 **Cleaner**

**Salary:** £8.51 - £8.51

**Location:** Edinburgh

**Date posted:** 3 hours ago

City of  
Edinburgh  
Council

Job Description Resources Cleaner Longstone Primary School Living Wage: 8.51 per hour Please note this position is school term-time only, and is offered on a fixed-term basis until 31 December 2018...

---

<sup>5</sup> Skills Development Scotland Skills Investment Plan For Scotland's Early Learning and Childcare sector page 6 <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44206/early-learning-and-children-sip-digital.pdf>

## Customer Assistant - 11 - 20 Hours - Bathgate, West Lothian

**Salary:** from £8.75 with the ability to earn up to £9.87  
dependent on experience

**Location:** Bathgate

**Date posted:** 2 hours ago

We need people with a willingness to work hard and the flexibility to turn their hand to any task to join our team as a Customer Assistant. Introduction The variety and pace that comes with every shift as a Customer Assistant...



[View profile](#)

In the short term the better rates of pay and pensions in the local authorities mean that authorities will be able to fill their current vacancies by attracting qualified staff from other sectors and lower paying authorities. For example average earnings for practitioners are <sup>6</sup>

- public £28,000
- private £15,000
- voluntary £16,000

There is a wider gap at other levels.

A practitioner moving from the private to the public sector is looking at an average wage rise of £13,000 per year plus a final salary pension. The Living Wage is far too low a salary to attract new people to the sector in the numbers required to meet the demand. Low pay is already affecting the ability of the low payers to recruit and retain staff.

A recent report from the National Day Nurseries Association (Scotland<sup>7</sup>) states that private nurseries currently lose 3 staff per year to the public sector. The sector already struggles to keep staff: the “stability index for 2016 gave a score of 76.2% well below the UK average of 88.4%<sup>8</sup>. Lower payers are going to struggle to keep staff during such a massive expansion and employers will not attract new staff at that rate of pay.

According to the Skills Development Scotland report the vacancy rate is 19%<sup>9</sup> and 35% report problems filling vacancies. No wonder why would you go to college and get and HNC and put up with all the work and responsibility of being an early years practitioner

---

<sup>6</sup> Skills Development Scotland Skills Investment Plan For Scotland’s Early Learning and Childcare sector page 7 <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44206/early-learning-and-children-sip-digital.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> NDNA Scotland Media Release 12/6/18  
[https://www.ndna.org.uk/ndna/News/Press\\_releases/2018/Act\\_now\\_or\\_1140\\_hours\\_childcare\\_policy\\_is\\_at\\_risk.aspx](https://www.ndna.org.uk/ndna/News/Press_releases/2018/Act_now_or_1140_hours_childcare_policy_is_at_risk.aspx)

<sup>8</sup>Skills Development Scotland Skills Investment Plan For Scotland’s Early Learning and Childcare sector page 14 <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44206/early-learning-and-children-sip-digital.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Skills Development Scotland Skills Investment Plan For Scotland’s Early Learning and Childcare sector page 9 <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44206/early-learning-and-children-sip-digital.pdf>

for the same money as a customer assistant. Failing to attract enough qualified people to work in the sector put the whole expansion programme at risk.

The government makes much of its commitment to parental choice but given the challenges to create enough space to physically hold children for the extra hours can they really guarantee that every child will get a space in their parent's first choice location? If not what criteria will be used to make decisions? We already know that some schools do not have enough space to meet demand. The NDNA report states that 46% of nurseries surveyed are unlikely to be involved in the delivering the 1140 hours<sup>10</sup>. There is little evidence that the private and voluntary sector are willing or able to expand to meet the government's targets.

While the consultation rightly sets some limits on extra charges stating that the 1140 hours entitlement must be free at the point of use that does not mean that there will not be varied charges for extra hours and other activities such as outings. This risks a two tier system where those than can afford to pay more will have access to a wider range of nurseries than those on lower incomes. As is the case in our schools increased charges for outings, music and drama lessons etc will mean that those in wealthier areas will have a wider range of activities and in some nurseries those from lower income families will be excluded from some activities. How will a child be cared for if their parent can't afford to pay for a trip that requires all the staff to accompany those who are going?

### **National Standards**

The consultation lays out what the government believes to be the standards that will ensure delivery a consistent service. UNISON believes that it is only through properly funded direct delivery of that service in the public sector that can guarantee the quality of the service.

There are numerous examples of failed privatisations. The delivery of public services requires democratic oversight to ensure that services meet the needs of all citizens. Despite the many promises and a range of methods the fabled private sector efficiency has led not to improved service delivery but to failure. The Carillion collapse will cost millions to correct. The change of time table on Northern rail is a disaster. Again and again we see private failure and the public sector having to step in and pay to fix the mess. When One Plus, a third sector provider, fell apart in 2007 it was the public sector that had to ensure that children still got the care they needed. UNISON is disappointed that the government is going forward with a plan which risks all of the issues which plague the adult care sector. High costs, complexity and a race to the bottom in terms of quality and terms and conditions for staff. They should have learned the lessons of this "provider neutral" service.

Principles and standards are fine but it's how they operate in practice that matters. Robust and effective monitoring is required to protect service users, staff and prevent waste of public money.

---

<sup>10</sup> NDNA media release 12/06/18

[https://www.ndna.org.uk/ndna/News/Press\\_releases/2018/Act\\_now\\_or\\_1140\\_hours\\_childcare\\_policy\\_is\\_at\\_risk.aspx](https://www.ndna.org.uk/ndna/News/Press_releases/2018/Act_now_or_1140_hours_childcare_policy_is_at_risk.aspx)

## **Quality**

The quality of the service is directly related to the staff who will deliver that service. It is the staff who set out the nature of the relationships which enable children to thrive in a setting. This includes relationships with children, between children and with parents.

Settings also need to be safe places which encourage learning. Children need access to outdoors. There also needs to be access to outdoor learning. This isn't doing the stuff you do indoors outside which is also a great learning experience. It is specific form of learning.

Food in nurseries is a key part of early learning. Lunch and snacks aren't just about nutrition at this age it's also about learning "the how to" of eating and the social aspect of eating together. It is also a key part of developing fine motor skills and learning to use tools like knives and forks. These fine motor skills are essential for learning to write.

The national standard needs to be clear about minimum qualifications levels for staff to deliver the service. UNISON believes that regardless of the setting the same minimum qualifications level should apply. UNISON believes that only fully qualified staff should count on the staff/child ratio. Children should not be receiving their ELC from trainees. UNISON believes that practitioners must be qualified to HNC level and managers should have a relevant degree. This does not mean that UNISON is not supportive of work based learning. There are many legitimate routes to achieving qualifications. Trainees/apprentices should also be entitled to genuine training routes and not be treated as cheap labour. They should not be able to count towards the staff/child ration in a setting.

Staff must also have time in their working day for continuous professional development (CPD). This should be both in the form of reflective practice and access to formal training. This is the most effective way children will have access to a quality service.

Staff child ratios must also reflect the diverse needs of the children who attend the nursery. If qualified staff are expected to have a role supporting trainees/apprentices then the staff/child ratio should reflect this demand of staff time. The numbers of children with ASN should also be taken into account when deciding the ratio. Clearly children with additional needs will require more staff time.

Staff pay and terms and conditions are a key route to attracting and retaining high quality staff. UNISON believes that low pay in the sector is the key reason for high staff turnover and difficulties in attracting staff in the first place. The proposed minimum level of the living wage is far too low to both reflect the skills needed for the job and to attract the number of staff needed to the sector. The whole discussion on delivering a high quality sector is completely contradicted suggesting this as an appropriate rate of pay.

## **Flexibility**

Parents want a safe nurturing place to leave their children that will enhance their development not a complex shopping trip. "Flexibility" should not lead to the privatisation of such a vital service. We do not talk about choice of provider when we talk about health care or school education. Early learning and child care should be treated as an equally essential service. Privatisation leads to poorer services and money lost to profit. The model used in the adult care sector should not be replicated in any children's

service. What we see in adult care is a race to the bottom in terms of both standards of care and term and conditions for the staff who deliver the service.

UNISON believes that local authorities should have the same responsibilities for early learning and childcare as they do for the rest of children's education. This means they should operate the settings which deliver the service. This is the best way to ensure a high quality service and that nurseries are imbedded in all the other local authority services which support children's development and can ensure a smooth transition into school. The sessions still needs to focus on the needs of children ensuring suitable hours, continuity of care and relationships with their key workers. Children need consistency and stability in their early learning and childcare.

This of course means that nurseries should offer sessions for hours that meet parents' working needs. Investing in expanding hours in the public sector is a far more efficient way to ensure that the service meets the needs of working parents than expecting the private sector to expand. The whole emphasis of discussion round funding in the paper seems to be about how to speed up the transfer of money out of local authorities rather than how best to invest the funding to improve the lives of children The short term plan appears to be to stick with the current method but to speed it up, to give more to partner providers and to give them money up front. The consultation process is becoming very piecemeal: the details on "affordable and sustainable rates of delivery" will not be ready until the autumn. How can we fully comment on proposals if there is no detail on the funding? There no detail on the longer term plan for Early Learning and Childcare Account which sounds like the type of education vouchers proposed by successive Conservative politicians. These types of proposals for school education have been frequently rejected by the people of Scotland.

### **Accessibility**

It is vital that children have access to early learning and childcare in their own communities. Children shouldn't be commuting long distances to access the service. There is a real opportunity to ensure the viability of rural schools by investing in them to ensure they can also deliver an early years service. This also makes it easier for parents of children with different ages as they have fewer "drop off" and "pick up" locations. Accessing the service in the community also means that children spend time with those they will later attend school with making that transitions easier.

Accessibility should also include children with Additional Support Needs and minority ethnic communities. This will in many cases mean that those children will need additional resources and the funding system needs to take into account any additional support that those children will need. This may include specialist staff and equipment, initial and ongoing training for the staff involved as well as a lower staff child ratio (in some cases 1:1 support).

### **Affordability**

The Scottish government's poverty advisor Naomi Eisenstadt in her report<sup>11</sup> to the First Minister on poverty and inequality recommended that childcare provided by high quality qualified staff would both help work pay for women on lower incomes but also improve the life chances of lower income children through the provision of quality care. Her report highlights the evidence showing that low quality care disproportionately

---

<sup>11</sup> N Eisenstadt Shifting the Curve January 2016

affects poor children's development. Her report also states<sup>12</sup> that "more needs to be done to ensure that early years practitioners are trained to the same standards and teachers of children in school, and pay and conditions differentials are ironed out. An added bonus of improving pay and conditions generally in the early years workforce will be the additional income for a largely female workforce on traditionally low wages"

The need to pay appropriate wages and provide suitable premises means that the provision of ELC is expensive. Quality childcare cannot be provided on the cheap. This is why UNISON believes that ELC, like school education, should be provided free at the point of use paid for by general taxation. The cost of childcare is a huge burden for working families, in many cases costing more than housing. This is why the UNISON is so keen to ensure that this expansion is done properly.

It is essential therefore that charges for extra hours are set at an appropriate rate, and that there are limits on what extra charges can be levied. There is a huge risk of a two tier service developing where ability to pay higher rates for extra hours and to buy extras in nurseries (like outings to museums, galleries and theatres and sports, drama or music coaching) mean that inequalities of opportunity are widened not narrowed by the system. What would happen to a child whose parent's couldn't afford a trip out when the rest of the children and staff are on that trip? Would they have to stay off or would the nursery have to provide that child with care on that day?

## **Standards**

UNISON believes that it would be a much more efficient use of public money to allow local authorities to take control of the whole service and not have to waste money of procurement policies and contract monitoring to ensure standards are met. If the government continues with its provider neutral policy then there will need to be considerable guidance and adequate monitoring to ensure standards are met and children receive a high quality experience.

A key issue in assessing whether a setting can deliver the 1140 entitlement must be ensuring that it will be able to stay in business for the full years of a child's entitlement. We cannot end up again in a situation like One Plus where children and parents lose their care. This is particularly important as it appears the funding plan is to pay public money to a provider up front rather than after the service is delivered. If local authorities are also going to give money to external providers for capital spend to expand premises then again it is vital that public money is guaranteed. UNISON expect that any capital spend should be a guaranteed loan and that there should be evidence of long term viability and commitment to stay in business for a substantial number of years. A business cannot get money to double the size of a building stay in business for 2 years then sell up the expanded property and move on with the money.

Currently nurseries cross subsidise the cost of care over a child's time in a nursery. It costs more to look after babies and toddlers than 3 and 4 year olds<sup>13</sup>. The difference in charges across years currently does not reflect the full cost gap meaning parents underpay for younger children and overpay for older ones. This averages out for parents over their child's years in a nursery and makes business more sustainable for private

---

<sup>12</sup> N Eisenstadt Shifting the Curve January 2016 page 11

<sup>13</sup> <https://theconversation.com/business-of-childcare-will-fail-so-long-as-toddlers-are-the-cash-cows-96770>

providers. The 1140 hours expansion reduces nurseries ability to do this and so may lead to increased charges for those using a service for younger children.

The June 2018 report from the NDNA is clear that many of their members are concerned that the extra “free hours” reduce the amount of space they have to sell in their nurseries in order to ensure financial viability. Only 7%<sup>14</sup> indicates that they can offer 1140 hours at the current funding rate. Clearly this is part of their campaign to increase funding rates but UNISON agrees that appropriate levels of pay and decent pensions for a skilled workforce will make it difficult for any business to be viable. The government must not dilute any quality standards to make service delivery cheaper for businesses. All sector must meet quality guidelines. This includes ensuring that all staff on the adult/child ratio are fully qualified.

The proposal in the paper to make the Living Wage the standard for pay in the sector is substantially below an acceptable rate of pay for the skilled workers in the early years sector. The average pay in the public sector is £28,000. As the governments poverty advisor stated pay closer to that of teachers is needed in the sector to ensure quality and to stop the workers themselves living in poverty. This isn't just about principals. The government is not yet clear about exactly how many new workers will be needed it is clear that the numbers are substantial. Pay needs to be at an appropriate rate to recruit and retain staff otherwise there will not be enough people to deliver the expanded service. The government's ambition to make the service more diverse by attracting men and people from minority ethnic communities will not be achieved without realistic pay.

Other key issues round staffing guidelines include not just wages but decent pensions, opportunities for ongoing training and professional development. Staff turnover/retention rates are a key tool in measuring whether a workplace is of a high quality. This is particularly important in any care or education setting where personal relationships and bonding are essential parts of the actual service.

Health and safety for children and staff is also a key areas, this should also include polices and training for dealing with violence and meeting children's healthcare needs in ELC settings. .

A key element of fair work is trade union membership and activism. This means staff not just joining a union but the employer engaging meaningfully with staff and their union about bargaining issues. This require staff to have time and space to meet with other members and union officers, to take part in training organised by their trade union. This will support the introduction of other parts of the Fair Work Framework.

Good work isn't just about wages, it's about pensions, equal pay and wider equality issues/discrimination, hours worked, access to flexible working, leave entitlements, contracts and ongoing training and professional development and career progression.

The link between pay rates for work traditionally done by women and how that is rewarded in the labour market is the key reason why pay is so low outwith the public sector in early learning in childcare. It is no surprise that in the public sector where workers are part of a trade union are substantially higher than in the other sectors.

---

<sup>14</sup> NDNA media release 12/06/18

[https://www.ndna.org.uk/ndna/News/Press\\_releases/2018/Act\\_now\\_or\\_1140\\_hours\\_childcare\\_policy\\_is\\_at\\_risk.aspx](https://www.ndna.org.uk/ndna/News/Press_releases/2018/Act_now_or_1140_hours_childcare_policy_is_at_risk.aspx)

If the government rejects calls for more reasonable pay for those out with the sector then there is a real risk that the expansion will fail because there won't be enough staff to deliver the service.

The success of the whole programme is based on not just getting children into nurseries but in ensuring that the services is of a high enough quality to improve their outcomes.

The consultation states that apprentices will not have to be paid the living wage. The current minimum rate of pay for apprentices is £3.70 per hour. Apprentice pay is allowed to be so low as they are supposed to be in training not actually working. Apprentices cannot be used as cheap labour. The service cannot be expanded based on delivery via apprentices. These must be genuine training roles and cannot count towards the child/staff ratio. Children must be looked after by fully qualified staff if this is a high quality service.

### **Funding Follows the child**

Again UNISON believes that the services should be a wholly local government service. The current funding follows the child plans risk creating exactly the same complex low pay mixed service level mess of social care.

If the government chooses to go ahead with this model then there will need to be very strict guidelines to protect staff and users. The Framework for Fair work<sup>15</sup> provides a starting point. This will need to be more than warm words.

The consultation states that local authorities will retain responsibility for guaranteeing quality. What funding will be provided to support their scrutiny of external providers. What powers will local authorities have, if any to inspect premises or should they be working with current inspection bodies?

The recent work that UNISON had done on monitoring of social care providers by local authorities does not fill us with confidence that that this will be an effective route for monitoring early years provision. For the last two years we have reviewed councils' monitoring of social care practices. Most were confident that social care contractors were paying the living wage. Other monitoring seemed to involve "risk management" where they focused on those with identified risks such as incidents rather than prevention. Monitoring focussed on regular meetings with contractors rather than unplanned visits.

Last Year when asked what percentage of clients were visited by the council to check whether they were satisfied with the care service they were receiving most were unable to answer our question. Some confirmed they undertook no client monitoring at all. Other use electronic monitoring but all that tells is how long the spent in a home not the quality of the visit. There seems to be some improvement this year from some authorities in terms of contact with clients but there is still a great deal of room for improvement. ELC procurement must build monitoring in from the start.

When it comes to monitoring meeting the guidance on fair work set out in procurement regulations there were also question about the effective use of this guidance. Given that social care is a personal service the weighting given to staff matters in contact evaluation should be high. A number of councils again didn't answer the question which leaves

---

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.fairworkconvention.scot/framework/FairWorkConventionFrameworkSummary.pdf>

questions as to whether they do this at all. Some gave a value as low as 4 or 5% Only 3 gave a value above 20% which should be the minimum acceptable level. We are not aware of any hard evidence being sought from bidders under the fair work heading.

Given that a 5 year old will spend two or three years of that short life experience in a nursery before school it is vital that the services is of a high quality. Any standards set need to be fully enforced. Warm words about quality and fair work are not enough.

### **Transition to the new system**

The transition will be much easier to organise if local authorities are the only providers of the service. This way they can properly plan the expansion. They have the structures in place to consult with both series users and the staff who deliver to ensure the best quality service. If the government goes ahead with its provider neutral plans then it will be much harder to plan, particularly to ensure provision in less affluent and/or rural area where it is harder to make a profit.

Councils also already run the parks and outdoor education services that will ensure that the government's ambition for more outdoor education can be met. UNISON accepts that in order to actually meet the deadline for the new service that some settings may have to have funding confirmed before they have been fully inspected. This is not ideal and is yet another reason for preferring a universal public service. If this is the case then a setting must be inspected within the year and only a very limited time allowed to correct any issues. Even a limited time in a poor setting can affect children's development for many years and so impact seriously on their life chance.

### **Consultation Questions**

**Question 1: What factors should be considered in developing a simple, standardised yet flexible process for becoming a funded provider?**

UNISON welcomes the proposal to increase the current free hours to 1140 a year and the plans from many local authorities to ensure change the pattern of hours to better meet the demands of working parents. The service model must be one that closes rather than widens the attainment gap. Otherwise there is a real risk that the better off benefit more from the changes than those on lower incomes. There is growing evidence that this has been the case following the move to 30 hours per week in England<sup>16</sup>.

The evidence is clear that an anti poverty early learning and childcare service (ELC) needs to follow a supply side model rather than the proposed "funding follows the child" model laid out in this consultation.

As the Joseph Rowntree Foundation state<sup>17</sup> "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 services. This approach provides the means to offer universal access to services and effectively shape quality, affordability and flexibility. ....demand side subsidies do not offer the same means to achieve integration and deliver improvements in services. The

---

<sup>16</sup> R Johnes and J Hutchinson Widening the Gap? The impact of the 30-hour entitlement on early years education and childcare. Education Policy Institute May 2016

<sup>17</sup> A Butler and J Rutter Family and Childcare Trust Creating an anti-poverty childcare system JRF January 2016 (executive summary)

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 parents' ability to pay"

The quality of the service is directly related to the staff who will deliver that service. It is the staff who set out the nature of the relationships which enable children to thrive in a setting. This includes relationships with children, between children and with parents.

Settings also need to be safe places which encourage development. Children need access to outdoors. There also needs to be access to outdoor learning. This isn't doing the stuff you do indoors outside which is also a great learning experience. It is a specific form of learning.

Food in nurseries is a key part of early learning. Lunch and snacks aren't just about nutrition at this age it's also about learning the how of eating and the social aspect of eating together. It is also a key part of developing fine motor skills through learning to use tools like knives and forks.

The national standard needs to be clear about minimum qualifications levels for staff to deliver the service. UNISON believes that regardless of the setting the same minimum qualifications level should apply. UNISON believes that only fully qualified staff should count towards the staff/child ratio. Children should not be receiving their ELC from trainees. UNISON believes that practitioners must be qualified to HNC level and managers should have a relevant degree. This does not mean that UNISON is not supportive of work based learning. There are many legitimate routes to achieving qualifications. Trainees/apprentices should also be entitled to genuine training routes and not be treated as cheap labour. They should not be able to count towards the staff/child ration in a setting.

Staff must also have time in their working day for continuous professional development (CPD). This should be both in the form of reflective practice and access to formal training. This is the most effective way children will have access to a quality service.

Staff child ratios must also reflect the diverse needs of the children who attend the nursery. If qualified staff are expected to have a role supporting trainees/apprentices then the staff/child ratio should reflect this demand of staff time. The numbers of children with ASN should also be taken into account when deciding the ratio. Clearly children with additional needs will require more staff time.

Staff pay and terms and conditions are a key route to attracting and retaining high quality staff. UNISON believes that low pay in the sector is the key reason for high staff turnover and difficulties in attracting staff in the first place. The proposed minimum level of the living wage is far too low to both reflect the skills needed for the job and to attract the number of staff needed to the sector. The whole discussion on delivering a high quality sector is completely contradicted by allowing this rate of pay.

**Question 2: What are the key shared principles which should underpin an effective and positive partnership between local authorities and funded providers?**

UNISON believes that it would be a much more efficient use of public money to allow local authorities to take control of the whole service and not have to waste money on "partnerships", procurement policies and contract monitoring to ensure standards are met. If the government continues with its provider neutral policy then there will need to

be considerable guidance and adequate monitoring to ensure standards are met and children receive a high quality experience.

The key principles for the delivery have already been drawn up: Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) the Wellbeing indicators: Safe Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Respected, Responsible and Included (SHANARI) and the Fair work Framework

If, as the consultation states, local authorities are responsible for the quality of the service then they will have to have the appropriate powers and resources to manage the process should they choose to use partners to provide that service. There will need to be a clear route for parents to raise any concerns that they have about their provider and a way of monitoring provision that goes beyond occasional meeting with a manager from the provider. It must be meaningful monitoring of the quality of the service.

**Question 3a: We are proposing that the National Standard includes a qualification requirement for childminders delivering the funded entitlement to be qualified to or working towards the same qualification level as is required for an ELC practitioner (SCQF level 7). What are the advantages of including this criteria?**

UNISON believes that regardless of the setting the same minimum qualifications level should apply. UNISON believes that only fully qualified staff should count on the staff/child ratio. UNISON believes that the minimum standards should apply for all staff working in the service including childminders. Children should not be receiving their ELC from trainees. UNISON believes that practitioners must be qualified to HNC level and managers should have a relevant degree. This does not mean that UNISON is not supportive of work based learning. There are many legitimate routes to achieving qualifications. Trainees/apprentices should also be entitled to genuine training routes and not be treated as cheap labour. They should not be able to count towards the staff/child ration in a setting.

Staff must also have time in their working day for continuous professional development (CPD). This should be both in the form of reflective practice and access to formal training. This is the most effective way children will have access to a quality service.

Staff child ratios must also reflect the diverse needs of the children who attend the nursery. If qualified staff are expected to have a role supporting trainees/apprentices then the staff/child ratio should reflect this demand of staff time. The numbers of children with ASN should also be taken into account when deciding the ratio. Clearly children with additional needs will require more staff time.

Staff pay and terms and conditions are a key route to attracting and retaining high quality staff. UNISON believes that low pay in the sector is the key reason for high staff turnover and difficulties in attracting staff in the first place. The proposed minimum level of the living wage is far too low to both reflect the skills needed for the job and to attract the number of staff needed to the sector. The whole discussion on delivering a high quality sector is completely contradicted suggesting this as an appropriate rate of pay.

**Question 3b: Are childminders able to access adequate funding to pay for training to SCQF level 7? Are childminders able to access training to SCQF level 7 in a way that is flexible enough to allow them to continue to run their businesses?**

UNISON believes that childminders should have access to the same funding for training as any other practitioner.

**Question 4: Our aspiration is to see outdoor learning and play becoming a defining feature of funded ELC in Scotland.**

**Does criteria 3 capture this ambition? If not, how could it be strengthened in a way that is sustainable for providers?**

**What challenges, if any, exist for funded ELC providers to ensure children have access to outdoor play? How can these challenges be overcome?**

Ensuring that children in nurseries get access to the outdoors is welcome. This needs to be access to safe places and safe transport/walking routes to the chosen venue. These will require being risk fully assessed. This isn't just about avoiding accidents. Nurseries have locked doors with entry systems to ensure that children are not collected by a parent whose access is restricted or by a predator. Ensuring the same level of protection is available in outdoor settings will require detailed planning.

Staff and children need access to toilets facilities while learning outdoors. Not everyone is comfortable or able to use improvised toilets. There will need to be specific assessments and solutions found for people with disabilities, menstruating and menopausal women and for changing nappies/those who are toilet training..

Staff will need training in order to ensure that full benefits of going outdoors are realised. There will be minimum benefit if all that happens is children do the things they were doing inside outside. This must include both pedagogy/child development and health safety/risk assessment. In order to support the training and ongoing professional development experts in outdoor learning will need to be identified from within current practitioners and other outdoor learning environments. There will also need to be a review of safe staffing levels to ensure that they are correct for the risks of each specific environment.

Clothing: not all families have the resources to ensure that their children have appropriate clothes for outdoor play in all weathers. In order for this welcome initiative to be a success there will need to be funding for nurseries to have warm waterproof clothes and boots to enable children and staff to take part safely.

**Question 5a: Will the criteria set out in the draft National Standard:**

- **ensure that high quality, accessible, flexible and affordable Early Learning Childcare is delivered in all funded provider settings?**
- **Support increased choice for parents and carers?**

**Question 5b: Is there any criteria not included in the National Standard that is required to ensure a high quality service is provided to all children?**

**Question 5c: Do the proposed criteria within the National Standard seem fair and proportionate for all? Do the proposed variations for some criteria seem fair and proportionate for childminders?**

## **National Standards**

The consultation lays out what the government believes to be the standards that will ensure delivery a consistent service. UNISON believes that it is only through properly

funded direct delivery of that service in the public sector that can guarantee the quality of the service.

There are numerous examples of failed privatisations. The delivery of public services requires democratic oversight to ensure that services meet the needs of all citizens. Despite the many promises and a range of methods the fabled private sector efficiency has led not to improved service delivery but to failure. The Carillion collapse will cost millions to correct. The change of time table on Northern rail is a disaster. Again and again we see private failure and the public sector having to step in and pay to fix the mess. When One Plus, a third sector provider, fell apart in 2007 it was the public sector that had to ensure that children still got the care they needed. UNISON is disappointed that the government is going forward with a plan which risks all of the issues which plague the adult care sector. High costs, complexity and a race to the bottom in terms of quality and terms and conditions for staff. They should have learned the lessons of this “provider neutral” service.

Principles and standards are fine but it's how they operate in practice that matters. Robust and effective monitoring is required to protect service users, staff and prevent waste of public money.

## **Quality**

The quality of the service is directly related to the staff who will deliver that service. It is the staff who set out the nature of the relationships which enable children to thrive in a setting. This includes relationships with children, between children and with parents.

Settings also need to be safe places which encourage learning. Children need access to outdoors. There also needs to be access to outdoor learning. This isn't doing the stuff you do indoors outside which is also a great learning experience. It is specific form of learning.

Food in nurseries is a key part of early learning. Lunch and snacks aren't just about nutrition at this age it's also about learning the how of eating and the social aspect of eating together. It is also a key part of developing fine motor skills and learning to use tools like knives and forks. These fine motor skills are essential for learning to write.

The national standard needs to be clear about minimum qualifications levels for staff to deliver the service. UNISON believes that regardless of the setting the same minimum qualifications level should apply. UNISON believes that only fully qualified staff should count on the staff/child ratio. Children should not be receiving their ELC from trainees. UNISON believes that practitioners must be qualified to HNC level and managers should have a relevant degree. This does not mean that UNISON is not supportive of work based learning. There are many legitimate routes to achieving qualifications. Trainees/apprentices should also be entitled to genuine training routes and not be treated as cheap labour. They should not be able to count towards the staff/child ration in a setting.

Staff must also have time in their working day for continuous professional development (CPD). This should be both in the form of reflective practice and access to formal training. This is the most effective way children will have access to a quality service.

Staff child ratios must also reflect the diverse needs of the children who attend the nursery. If qualified staff are expected to have a role supporting trainees/apprentices

then the staff/child ratio should reflect this demand of staff time. The numbers of children with ASN should also be taken into account when deciding the ratio. Clearly children with additional needs will require more staff time.

Staff pay and terms and conditions are a key route to attracting and retaining high quality staff. UNISON believes that low pay in the sector is the key reason for high staff turnover and difficulties in attracting staff in the first place. The proposed minimum level of the living wage is far too low to both reflect the skills needed for the job and to attract the number of staff needed to the sector. The whole discussion on delivering a high quality sector is completely contradicted suggesting this as an appropriate rate of pay.

### **Flexibility**

Parents want a safe nurturing place to leave their children that will enhance their development not a complex shopping trip. "Flexibility" should not lead to the privatisation of such a vital service. We do not talk about choice of provider when we talk about health care or school education. Early learning and child care should be treated as an equally essential service. Privatisation leads to poorer services and money lost to profit. The model used in the adult care sector should not be replicated in any children's service. What we see in adult care is a race to the bottom in terms of both standards of care and term and conditions for the staff who deliver the service.

UNISON believes that local authorities should have the same responsibilities for early learning and childcare as they do for the rest of children's education. This means they should operate the settings which deliver the service. This is the best way to ensure a high quality service and that nurseries are imbedded in all the other local authority services which support children's development and can ensure a smooth transition into school. The sessions still needs to focus on the needs of children ensuring suitable hours, continuity of care and relationships with their key workers. Children need consistency and stability in their early learning and childcare.

This of course means that nurseries should offer sessions for hours that meet parents' working needs. Investing in expanding hours in the public sector is a far more efficient way to ensure that the service meets the needs of working parents than expecting the private sector to expand. The whole emphasis of discussion round funding in the paper seems to be about how to speed up the transfer of money out of local authorities rather than how best to invest the funding to improve the lives of children. The short term plan appears to be to stick with the current method but to speed it up, to give more to partner providers and to give them money up front. The consultation process is becoming very piecemeal: the details on "affordable and sustainable rates of delivery" will not be ready until the autumn. How can we fully comment on proposals if there is no detail on the funding? There no detail on the longer term plan for Early Learning and Childcare Account which sounds like the type of education vouchers proposed by successive Conservative politicians. These types of proposals for school education have been frequently rejected by the people of Scotland.

### **Accessibility**

It is vital that children have access to early learning and childcare in their own communities. Children shouldn't be commuting long distances to access the service. There is a real opportunity to ensure the viability of rural schools by investing in them to ensure they can also deliver an early years service. This also makes it easier for parents of children with different ages as they have fewer "drop off" and "pick up" locations.

Accessing the service in the community also means that children spend time with those they will later attend school with making that transitions easier.

Accessibility should also include children with Additional Support Needs and minority ethnic communities. This will in many cases mean that those children will need additional resources and the funding system needs to take into account any additional support that those children will need. This may include specialist staff and equipment, initial and ongoing training for the staff involved as well as a lower staff child ratio (in some cases 1:1 support).

### **Affordability**

The Scottish government's poverty advisor Naomi Eisenstadt in her report<sup>18</sup> to the First Minister on poverty and inequality recommended that childcare provided by high quality qualified staff would both help work pay for women on lower incomes but also improve the life chances of lower income children through the provision of quality care. Her report highlights the evidence showing that low quality care disproportionately affects poor children's development. Her report also states<sup>19</sup> that "more needs to be done to ensure that early years practitioners are trained to the same standards and teachers of children in school, and pay and conditions differentials are ironed out. An added bonus of improving pay and conditions generally in the early years workforce will be the additional income for a largely female workforce on traditionally low wages"

The need to pay appropriate wages and provide suitable premises means that the provision of ELC is expensive. Quality childcare cannot be provided on the cheap. This is why UNISON believes that ELC, like school education, should be provided free at the point of use paid for by general taxation. The cost of childcare is a huge burden for working families, in many cases costing more than housing. This is why the UNISON is so keen to ensure that this expansion is done properly.

It is essential therefore that charges for extra hours are set at an appropriate rate, and that there are limits on what extra charges can be levied. There is a huge risk of a two tier service developing where ability to pay higher rates for extra hours and to buy extras in nurseries (like outings to museums, galleries and theatres and sports, drama or music coaching) mean that inequalities of opportunity are widened not narrowed by the system. What would happen to a child whose parent's couldn't afford a trip out when the rest of the children and staff are on that trip? Would they have to stay off or would the nursery have to provide that child with care on that day?

### **Standards**

UNISON believes that it would be a much more efficient use of public money to allow local authorities to take control of the whole service and not have to waste money of procurement policies and contract monitoring to ensure standards are met. If the government continues with its provider neutral policy then there will need to be considerable guidance and adequate monitoring to ensure standards are met and children receive a high quality experience.

A key issue in assessing whether a setting can deliver the 1140 entitlement must be ensuring that it will be able to stay in business for the full years of a child's entitlement.

---

<sup>18</sup> N Eisenstadt Shifting the Curve January 2016

<sup>19</sup> N Eisenstadt Shifting the Curve January 2016 page 11

We cannot end up again in a situation like One Plus where children and parents lose their care. This is particularly important as it appears the funding plan is to pay public money to a provider up front rather than after the service is delivered. If local authorities are also going to give money to external providers for capital spend to expand premises then again it is vital that public money is guaranteed. UNISON expect that any capital spend should be a guaranteed loan and that there should be evidence of long term viability and commitment to stay in business for a substantial number of years. A business cannot get money to double the size of a building stay in business for 2 years then sell up the expanded property and move on with the money.

Currently nurseries cross subsidise the cost of care over a child's time in a nursery. It costs more to look after babies and toddlers than 3 and 4 year olds<sup>20</sup>. The difference in charges across years currently does not reflect the full cost gap meaning parents underpay for younger children and overpay for older ones. This averages out for parents over their child's years in a nursery and makes business more sustainable for private providers. The 1140 hours expansion reduces nurseries ability to do this and so may lead to increased charges for those using a service for younger children.

The June 2018 report from the NDNA is clear that many of their members are concerned that the extra "free hours" reduce the amount of space they have to sell in their nurseries in order to ensure financial viability. Only 7%<sup>21</sup> indicates that they can offer 1140 hours at the current funding rate. Clearly this is part of their campaign to increase funding rates but UNISON agrees that appropriate levels of pay and decent pensions for a skilled workforce will make it difficult for any business to be viable. The government must not dilute any quality standards to make service delivery cheaper for businesses. All sector must meet quality guidelines. This includes ensuring that all staff on the adult/child ratio are fully qualified.

The proposal in the paper to make the Living Wage the standard for pay in the sector is substantially below an acceptable rate of pay for the skilled workers in the early years sector. The average pay in the public sector is £28,000. As the governments poverty advisor stated pay closer to that of teachers is needed in the sector to ensure quality and to stop the workers themselves living in poverty. This isn't just about principals. The government is not yet clear about exactly how many new workers will be needed it is clear that the numbers are substantial. Pay needs to be at an appropriate rate to recruit and retain staff otherwise there will not be enough people to deliver the expanded service. The government's ambition to make the service more diverse by attracting men and people from minority ethnic communities will not be achieved without realistic pay.

Other key issues round staffing guidelines include not just wages but decent pensions, opportunities for ongoing training and professional development. Staff turnover/retention rates are a key tool in measuring whether a workplace is of a high quality. This is particularly important in any care or education setting where personal relationships and bonding are essential parts of the actual service.

---

<sup>20</sup> <https://theconversation.com/business-of-childcare-will-fail-so-long-as-toddlers-are-the-cash-cows-96770>

<sup>21</sup> NDNA media release 12/06/18  
[https://www.ndna.org.uk/ndna/News/Press\\_releases/2018/Act\\_now\\_or\\_1140\\_hours\\_childcare\\_policy\\_is\\_at\\_risk.aspx](https://www.ndna.org.uk/ndna/News/Press_releases/2018/Act_now_or_1140_hours_childcare_policy_is_at_risk.aspx)

Health and safety for children and staff is also a key areas, this should also include polices and training for dealing with violence and meeting children's healthcare needs in ELC settings. .

A key element of fair work is trade union membership and activism. This means staff not just joining a union but the employer engaging meaningfully with staff and their union about bargaining issues. This requires staff to have time and space to meet with other members and union officers, to take part in training organised by their trade union. This will support the introduction of other parts of the Fair Work Framework.

Good work isn't just about wages, it's about pensions, equal pay and wider equality issues/discrimination, hours worked, access to flexible working, leave entitlements, contracts and ongoing training and professional development and career progression.

The link between pay rates for work traditionally done by women and how that is rewarded in the labour market is the key reason why pay is so low outwith the public sector in early learning in childcare. It is no surprise that in the public sector where workers are part of a trade union are substantially higher than in the other sectors.

If the government rejects calls for more reasonable pay for those out with the sector then there is a real risk that the expansion will fail because there won't be enough staff to deliver the service.

The success of the whole programme is based on not just getting children into nurseries but in ensuring that the services is of a high enough quality to improve their outcomes.

The consultation states that apprentices will not have to be paid the living wage. The current minimum rate of pay for apprentices is £3.70 per hour. Apprentice pay is allowed to be so low is they are supposed to be in training not actually working. Apprentices cannot be used as cheap labour. The service cannot be expanded based on delivery via apprentices. These must be genuine training roles and cannot count towards the child/staff ratio. Children must be looked after by fully qualified staff if this is a high quality service.

**Question 6: What areas would you look to be addressed in the technical guidance note for supporting implementation of the ELC Living Wage commitment?**

The technical guidance should be follow the current *Statutory Guidance on the Selection of Tenderers and Award of Contracts Addressing Fair Work Practices, including the Living Wage, in Procurement*<sup>22</sup> . There needs to be a strengthen of the implementation of that guidance to avoid the problems seen in social care where staffing matters are frequently not given the priority required. Both ELC and social care are services wholly delivered by people to people. Staffing is the biggest cost in the service and the key to the quality of that service.

**Question 7: Should newly established ELC settings be able to deliver the funded hours on a probationary basis, pending the outcome of their first inspection,**

---

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00486741.pdf>

**provided they meet all other aspects of the National Standard? Are there any particular challenges or issues that may arise from this approach?**

The transition will be much easier to organise if local authorities are the only providers of the service. This way they can properly plan the expansion. They have the structures in place to consult with both series users and the staff who deliver to ensure the best quality service. If the government goes ahead with its provider neutral plans then it will be much harder to plan, particularly to ensure provision in less affluent and/or rural area where it is harder to make a profit. Councils also already run the parks and outdoor education services that will ensure that the government's ambition for more outdoor education can be met.

UNISON accepts that in order to actually meet the deadline for the new service that some settings may have to have funding confirmed before they have been fully inspected. This has clear risks and is yet another reason for preferring a full public service delivery. If this is the case then a setting must be inspected within the year and only a very limited time allowed to correct any issues which arise. Even a limited time in a poor setting can affect children's development for many years and so impact seriously on their life chances.

**Question 8: What support will service providers require to prepare for the introduction of the National Standard and meet the criteria and delivery of the new service model?**

The expansion will cost substantial amounts of public money. UNISON believes the best way to ensure that this money is spent efficiently and effectively is by delivering the service directly through local authorities which already provide a consistent and high quality service. If the government chooses to go ahead with its current plan then they will need to ensure that any public money is spent properly by those that receive it.

If a provider needs substantial support to meet the guidelines then questions need to be asked about their suitability and the sustainability of their service. Money would be better spent expanding the public service. This reduces the risk of poor quality service and guarantees that public money is well spent.

## **Conclusion**

UNISON is Scotland's largest trade union with members across the public, private and voluntary sectors. UNISON members work in a range of settings in nurseries, schools, and wider children's services and have a range of experience to support improving the delivery of services for children. Done properly the expansion of "free" ELC could be a huge step towards closing the attainment gap, improving children's lives and reducing costs for families. There is though a risk that by not choosing a universal public ELC service the expansion will instead widen the attainment gap and benefit those on higher incomes more than those on middle and lower incomes. UNISON therefore welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation.

**UNISON Scotland**  
**June 2018**

**For further information contact:**

Kay Sillars

[k.sillars@unison.co.uk](mailto:k.sillars@unison.co.uk)

0141 342 2819

Dave Watson

Head of Policy and Public Affairs

[d.watson@unison.co.uk](mailto:d.watson@unison.co.uk) 0141 342 2840