

Aberdeenshire UNISON consultation response to 600hr Nursery provision

UNISON welcome both affordable childcare and employment opportunities within local government which the extension of nursery provision will provide, however the budget allocated to local authorities causes concern for UNISON. The Scottish government's budget to provide this extra provision has not been formulated to consider the varied cost of childcare within both local government and private sector provision across Scotland and its one size fits all approach could leave local authorities with a shortfall in funding.

Aberdeenshire UNISON has been in engagement with over 300 of its Nursery Nurse members through school visits, Nursery Nurse working group and recent consultation meetings with the authority. Our members feel that a reduction to their non-contact time will have a major impact on service delivery. The varied provision across Aberdeenshire means that some of our members will be harder hit than others and will find it very difficult to maintain the quality service they are used to providing. The reduction in non-contact time will not allow enough time for cleaning nursery equipment, setting up, preparing and sourcing resources including snack, displaying work, planning, washing clothes/laundry, writing up assessments and liaising with parents.

UNISON recently studied a rural nursery and an urban nursery within Aberdeenshire. Both nurseries had problems with children being dropped off or picked up late but the rural nursery had parents turning up 20 minutes late at end of morning and afternoon sessions, this impacts on the time staff have for carrying out other duties, their lunchtime or their contractual time.

The other key issue which our members are concerned about is the lack of time for team meetings, they will no longer be able to access a collaborative time during the day to meet with all of the nursery staff and discuss planning and day to day issues which arise in a nursery. Team work and communication have played a major role in the success of nursery provision and a happy, motivated workforce; it will be detrimental to both the staff and pupils to lose this time. UNISON will be keeping in touch with its members to monitor the new provision. Some of our members are based at the two schools which will be testing different models of delivery which will allow for team planning and should give us a useful comparison to build on and hopefully offer more flexible solutions for other locations.

Our members would like to see a more flexible approach to the delivery of 600hrs to allow for their own personal circumstances, especially when they are looking at only a 30 minute lunch break, the only break they will be having each day. Working with

children is not only very demanding but noisy too so this allowance and the fact that the lunchtimes will be staggered will further impact on staff motivation and health. Some staff will feel very isolated by the staggered lunch break.

We would hope that the authority would look favourably into options for accommodating more non-contact time and flexibility for Nursery Nurses to allow for these key areas in service delivery. We have heard from some of our members who would like to see their working day and contracts extended, so that is an area we should all explore for all those who are interested, especially as childcare is becoming a growth industry.

It is vital that UNISON, it's members and the authority keep the lines of communication open during the transition of the new provision from August to assess and monitor how it will be impacting our members across the different locations, so that any problems can be addressed, support given and hopefully, improvements made.

Susan Kennedy

Assistant Secretary

Aberdeenshire UNISON