

**Brighton & Hove City Council**  
**Children and Learning**  
**GMB response to Nurseries consultation**

Further to the above, GMB would like to raise the following concerns on behalf of all our members across all of the Nurseries affected by these restructures;

- The reductions in level 5 posts, nursery practitioners who are trained, experienced and qualified staff, many of whom have given many years dedicated service to the Council nurseries is not only damaging to the individuals concerned in regards to their financial situations but also to the skill base of the nurseries and arguably, the quality of care offered to the children.
- In regards to the cuts, it is devastating and highly concerning for the GMB that some of this workforce could face 3 levels of cuts; to their pay scale, working hours and possibly also working weeks.
- The proposed changes include a reduction of working hours, with all staff at nursery assistant level only proposed to work between 25-30hrs a week and not even in a pattern that suits many of those that are already working part time hours.  
The loss of hours for those already at scale 3 but especially for those downgraded from Sc 5 to Sc 3 is going to have a drastic impact on the wages that staff take home.
- Losses to salaries will obviously vary but examples include;  
(based on currently working full time and top of scales, working 52 weeks/yr)

Nursery assistants on Scale 3 reduced to 30 hours = **£3320 loss**  
 “ “ “ 26.25 hours = **£5099 loss**  
 “ “ “ 25 hours = **£5691 loss**

Nursery practitioners that succeed in getting scale 4 role on 37 hours = **£2495 loss**  
 “ “ “ downgraded to scale 3 on 30 hrs = **£8207 loss**  
 “ “ “ on 29 hrs = **£8681 loss**  
 “ “ “ on 26.25 hrs = **£9986 loss**  
 “ “ “ on 25 hrs = **£10,578 loss**

Of course, these reductions could be greater for staff also proposed to face reduction in their working weeks from 52/yr to term time only.

- We understand that staff who see a downgrade in pay scale are being offered pay protection but these staff have been misled before this consultation was even released as they were told by their managers, following press articles that went out earlier in the year, that they would receive the Councils pay protection policy of 3 years. Now they are informed that promise and guarantee has been taken away from them and they will only receive the new lower level of pay protection following changes to the pay protection policy. This is despite knowing full well that a consultation was upcoming and of course, having already completed a restructure of Jumpstart nursery ending July 2015 using the same model proposed in these consultations. Therefore the balance of probability and reasonable belief is that management knew they would be proposing these changes before any discussions were started regarding changes to pay protection and VS policies. They also started discussions with the Trade Unions regarding these current consultations before the new policy on pay protection was presented to the Policy Resources Committee and then later implemented in July. For us as a Union this is a fundamental issue and we firmly believe that the Council should honour what they informed their staff of prior to the launch of this consultation and that 3 year protection is applied.

- Whilst of course we appreciate some staff being considered for the VS package under the previous multiplier of x2, the calculations used to decide which staff are granted this are being based on whether the cost of VS is less than the cost of salary protection. These calculations and decisions would therefore obviously differ if the higher salary protection of 3yrs was also still being applied, possibly allowing more people to take opportunity to leave the service should they decide they cannot cope with these changes.
- With regards to the proposed reductions in working hours, this is another cheap and easy way for management to reduce experienced staffs pay as management and HR are fully aware the current pay protection policy, which GMB doesn't agree with, along with the previous one, does not include protection of reduction in hours even though the contractual pay is of course affected by these reductions. This is a poor way for management and HR to attack a workforce that the equality impact assessment confirms is over 98% female.  
The GMB are formally requesting that firstly, compensation for staff facing a loss of hours is considered and secondly, as stated in the EIA that "will seek to implement changes through mutual agreement with staff" GMB request that rotas and any reduction in hours are adjusted so that working hours and patterns are agreed to match those that staff either currently have, or wish to have, regardless of managements apparent desire for consistent rota patterns across the nurseries considering each individual nursery is independent of the others.
- A further issue regarding hours is regarding the proposals for the scale 5 and scale 4 posts to only be offered as 37hr roles, where some staff on the higher scales currently only work part-time. Again the EIA confirms a majority of these staff are part time staff and obviously they require these patterns and hours of work to fit with other commitments they have, mainly caring responsibilities. To propose staff fit into one of the new proposed rotas, including only 37hr rotas if they wish to maintain their higher grade, again as part of the apparent desire for greater consistency, is contradictory to the Fairness Committee recommendations to "Promote flexible working and offer quality part time jobs" and ignoring individuals with their own needs for work-life balance.
- Additionally to this, the start and finish times of the proposed shifts currently mean that childcare for their own children is almost impossible as working hours range from a 7.45/8am start to a 6/6.15 finish which are beyond the normal hours of breakfast and after school clubs. Even where childcare may be available, those staff on a scale 3 salary they would already struggle to pay for this additional childcare and GMB believes this again is contradictory to Fairness Commission recommendations and makes parents wanting to return to work within this service increasingly difficult.
- With regards to the care of the children, a number of staff in their one to ones questioned the consistency of care that will be provided for the children as none of the nursery assistant posts are proposed as being for a full day, they are only proposed to be either morning or afternoon shifts as opposed for example 2 full days or 3 full days a week which is a more common pattern of children's attendance
- On a separate note, we welcome apprentices however GMB believe these posts should be over and above the existing staff establishment not instead of that, which is what is being proposed, especially as they are being offered 37 hours where nursery assistants no longer are. It is our position that these apprentices will not have the support of skilled staff because of the reduction of permanent establishment level to accommodate them and the qualified professional staff won't have the time to support and aid development of these apprentices. Also we question how the legal ratios will be maintained when, from the rotas provided in the consultation papers, it appears apprentices are often already calculated as part of the ratios when it is admitted by management that it will be some time before they are appropriately skilled and trained to an appropriate level to be included as such.

**In conclusion, GMBs position as a Trade Union is that these proposals needs to be torn up and a proper open dialogue with both the Unions and staff affected needs to be held on how this service moves forward to have minimal effect on the 98% female workforce bearing the brunt of cuts as currently proposed. We cannot rule out taking action by staff and ourselves should these current proposals remain in their current form and you should not under estimate the sense of feeling within the nurseries and the impact not only on staff but also on children and parents using the service.**

**For us as a Trade Union this is unprecedented anger we are experiencing, the last time we did experience any feelings as strong was in 2004 in the dispute within support staff in schools which did culminate in Industrial action. We have not yet seen any action of that sort in the City since then from a workforce predominantly made up of low paid women workers and ironically, this happened under a Labour controlled administration.**

Due to the serious nature of these proposals GMB have launched a petition against them and the cuts which we will be releasing shortly however here is a very small sample of some of the comments received to date from members of the public, particularly those that have worked in the service or those using the service;

- My daughter attends \*\*\*\*\* Nursery, targeted in these cuts. All the staff are very professional and caring towards my child. Cutting staff numbers and working hours will have a detrimental affect on her early years education and development.
- I am the former head of a Brighton & Hove City Council Nursery and during my headship I always made it clear that my absolute priority was to provide the highest quality care and education for young children. Recruiting highly skilled and motivated staff who were appropriately rewarded for their expertise was a key factor in ensuring quality provision. The realisation of this vision was recognised in the outstanding OFSTED reports that the nursery has received. Nursery Practitioners and Assistants are already poorly paid by comparison to qualified teachers despite the fact that many display skills, knowledge and understanding that rivals the best early years teachers (and the best early years teachers will be the first to recognise that). I am profoundly concerned at proposals to both reduce the pay of nursery staff and cut the hours of work, seriously undervaluing this crucial work and seriously threatening the consistency of care for some of the city's most vulnerable children. When I was head...we were recognised as a beacon of good practice. I plead with the council not to snuff out that beacon.
- I have worked at \*\*\*\*\* Nursery for 22 years and many of my colleagues have also worked there for a similar amount of time. Collectively the nursery practitioners have worked for 100+ years. I am disgusted with the way we are being treated by a council that we have shown such loyalty to. The pay cuts and working hours offered mean many of us will be unable to afford to continue working in the job we have all committed the majority of our working lives to! The children would also no longer receive the quality and loving care that they receive now from less experienced, lower paid workers. We work together like a family as I am sure is true of all my other colleagues in other nurseries who are also affected. This is surely how all children's nurseries should feel for the families who trust us with the care of their children. You only get this type of loyalty and quality of care by investing in and respecting the staff who work within it.
- I am a nursery practitioner and am facing the cuts...and 1 comment continuously comes up from parents is "this has been a fantastic experience as a parent and for my child/ children. You are all highly experienced and skilled and the turnover of staff is very low. All the staff who cared for my child/children as babies are still there when they leave for school and it helps us as parents feel safe leaving our children with you"  
This will all change if this massive pay cut happens! Staff will not be able to afford to stay and the turnover of staff will increase. I have previously worked in nurseries where staff turnover is high and

the quality of care is different. The children have less security and have to continuously cope with staff changes which can have an effect on their wellbeing!

As nursery practitioners we are low paid already and all have mortgages/rent/bills not to mention anything else that needs paying. Rent and house prices are ridiculously high in Brighton and Hove. This is not an acceptable wage for the hard working, caring people in this profession!!!! We feel undervalued and under appreciated. This is a hard job but we do it because we love it! Please don't take advantage of us or underestimate the job we do!

- The high quality provision our council nurseries provide to some of the most vulnerable children in our city, is in no small part directly linked to the well qualified and professional staffing, I take issue with the reference to "every unnecessary penny" with regards to our pay, when considering the breadth of work we cover, ie SENCO, safeguarding, planning ,development record keeping, I could go on, I'd say we should get paid more rather than less. We the staff, are the most valuable resource, you could put all the best equipment, implement all the best plans , but without the staff to carry it out whole heartedly, its worthless, we deserve better, our children deserve better!
- As a nursery assistant at \*\*\*\*\* Nursery I am extremely proud of the work our team do in providing outstanding child care and education and particularly the work we do in supporting some of the most vulnerable and needy families. Our pay does not reflect the hard work, passion and knowledge we offer and to cut this further would be an insult to the team and the families we support. Please look at the long term effects that quality early years care and education can offer a child and it's family before destroying local services
- ...Our local authority nursery staff and early years staff are very dedicated in their work roles and should be supported to the hilt.
- By devaluing the profession and service provided you are almost guaranteeing a poorer quality of care. The most vulnerable children and families will suffer most as they rely most heavily on a high quality professional service in order to improve outcomes for them when they are already at a disadvantage.
- I used to be a nursery nurse and had to leave as I wanted to be able to have children myself and knew the money I made would never be enough to to support that, regardless of being in a relationship with someone. It is increasingly obvious that nursery workers are younger, less experienced and less passionate with their jobs. This is because people are being priced out of their dream careers, to educate young children and help them reach their goals whilst supporting parents who have to work to pay the bills.  
It is utterly disgusting that this cut is even being discussed. These people make a very small amount of money for the work they put it, often having to babysit multiple nights a week to supplement their income. These people need to be celebrated for their commitment to quality childcare rather than being persecuted for not owning a degree!
- My son went there. It's the only one I could afford when I worked for the council... It a huge disgrace for those in power, with bigger pay to stop the real workers of Brighton and Hove access to childcare. Not to mention the sickening act of depriving staff of a job to try and earn a wage to live... The whole city is being cleansed by those in power.  
All I can say is think again Tom, or loose another labour voter.
- These huge cuts will either drive skilled staff away, bring down the quality of services or leave staff feeling undervalued and struggling financially.  
Other ways should be found to make this level of savings without harming services and front line staff

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