

UNISON Cymru/Wales response to the consultation on the Childcare Funding (Wales) Bill

- 1.1 UNISON is Wales' largest public service union organising over 90,000 public service workers and more than two thirds of our membership are women. Our experience representing and negotiating on women's issues guide this response.
- 1.2 We represent full-time and part-time staff who provide public services, although they may be employed in the public, private and third sectors.
- 1.3 UNISON regularly engages with employers and government to protect and improve the pay and conditions of all who work in public services as well as the services they provide to society.
- 1.4 This paper will respond to the issues within the consultation that UNISON has identified as a priority, as a public sector trade union.
- 1.5 Attached is a summary of findings from a recent UNISON Cymru/Wales survey which questioned participants on gender equality issues in the workplace. The survey results will be referred to throughout this response.

To consider the general principles of the Childcare Funding (Wales) Bill and whether there is a need for legislation to deliver the Bill's stated policy objectives;

- 2.1 The primary purpose of this Bill is to 'support the Welsh economy, by helping parents, particularly mothers, to return to work or increase the hours they work. This will both increase the size of the workforce, and improve the employability of parents, especially mothers.'
- 2.2 The current childcare offer does not support those women returning to work directly following maternity leave, leaving a gap in childcare from this point until the child turns three years old.
- 2.3 Nearly 60% of the respondents to our survey stated they had made changes to the way they work as a result of being a woman. A large proportion of those respondents stated their need to go part time following maternity leave.
- 2.4 Women returning to work after maternity leave and struggling with childcare costs are in an awkward position; their request for flexible/part time working is wholly dependent on their employer's attitude. A negative response could

force women to leave their job entirely, to look for suitable alternative employment (potentially in a lower paid role).

- 2.5 Our survey showed women do not feel confident to formally challenge discrimination they experience in the workplace relating to pregnancy and/or maternity at the time they are experiencing it because they already feel vulnerable. A number of respondents to our survey gave specific examples;

“I went from full time to part time due to child care. I now remain on reduced hours due to caring for an elderly parent, when going for promotion I was told the role is not suitable for part time workers and it was given to a full time colleague who is much younger with less experience.”

“Childcare means I have stayed longer in one role as opposed to trying to move up the career ladder.”

“I had to work hours that fitted around child care, which was often at weekends or evenings. This impacted on family life as we were very rarely all together.”

“My contract was not renewed when I was on maternity leave so I found a part time job closer to home (although it paid less). Prior to having children, I always earned the same or more than my husband but now I earn 10k less than him based on FTE. I currently work 4 days a week but it's very difficult to progress in my career despite being ambitious.”

“(My) job role changed completely following maternity leave and I missed out on training due to being part time.”

- 2.6 Under the new childcare offer, by the time the child has reached three years old, the parent(s) eligible for the childcare offer, may have already been forced to make key changes to their working life, such as changing job, going part time etc.
- 2.7 Parents not in employment when their child becomes eligible for the offer will have been out of the workplace for three years, may have lost confidence, and experience a skills or knowledge gap.
- 2.8 In addition, the eligibility criterion for funding requires that ‘*both parents*’ or ‘*the sole parent in lone parent families*’ are working. On the one hand a lack of childcare restricts access to employment, yet on the other, you can’t get childcare without being employed. Parent(s) not in employment may see this as an additional obstacle to employment.

To consider any potential barriers to the implementation of the key provisions and whether the Bill takes account of them

- 3.1 Whilst implementation of a single, consistent, national online application and eligibility checking system is welcome, there are concerns that digital

exclusion may apply, particularly for those not in employment and those in more rural areas.

- 3.2 The pilot is slow to roll out across Wales, resulting in a number of issues. Anecdotal evidence from our members suggests that communication of the offer has been limited. Whilst it is appreciated that the offer is currently only available across 7 Local Authorities, information on the offer is not widely available.
- 3.4 The childcare offer is complicated, particularly when two childcare providers may be needed between the existing 10 hours of Foundation Phase Nursery (FPN) provision, to the extended 30 hours.
- 3.5 Where 2 childcare providers are required (as outlined in 3.4), there is no provision for transport between the 2 establishments which could cause further barriers to employment.
- 3.6 Whilst it is recognised that all registered childcare providers are able to deliver the offer, and that they must be registered with CSSIW, steps must be taken to ensure consistent, quality provision across Wales.
- 3.7 All local authorities in Wales are currently required to provide a minimum of 10 free hours of FPN per week for all three to four year-olds. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a postcode lottery exists, whereby an administering local authority may not recognise childcare provision that is in a separate authority area (e.g. if a parent is living in one area and working in another). There is concern this may be echoed in the new funding Bill.

To consider the financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum)

- 4.1 As per concerns raised in 3.7, if 'Option 1' of the Bill (Local authorities accept applications and check eligibility) were to be considered, further thought should be given to cross border implementation.
- 4.2 UNISON is a trade union that covers public sector workers, and as a principle, actively campaigns against outsourcing and the contracting out of services. UNISON believes that Option 4 stated within the Bill (i.e. a Contracted Party to accept applications and check eligibility) would not be a suitable option, on the basis of additional cost, potentially less favourable terms and conditions for employees and a convoluted dilution of quality service provision.



100 Years On – Is Workplace Equality a Reality?

Survey Results & Comments

100 years after women gained the right to vote, public services union, UNISON surveyed 150 members to reveal the truth behind workplace equality.

The million-strong union, which has 100,000 members in Wales, is predominantly female in membership and is known for campaigning for better rights at work for carers, school support staff, healthcare workers, council staff and more.

71% of respondents said they think women have NOT achieved equality in the workplace

Examples given – parental leave is still not shared equally between parents, equal pay has still not been achieved, high ratio of male managers to female, women having the lion's share of caring responsibilities.

There is still pressure (on women) to 'have it all' whereas aspirations and expectations are lower for men.

61% of respondents have witnessed or experienced sexism in the workplace

Being told by a manager that they don't feel completely confident I can do my job because I'm female.

Jokes, being overlooked for promotion, pet names - babes, darling, sweetie etc.

Being told that my 'domestic situation' isn't my employers fault.

Derogatory remarks about achievements of women by management.

I witness men speaking for their female colleagues every day.

Men 'gawping' at women.

A manager in a previous employment commented on the 'cleavage' of co-workers as if this was acceptable.

(My) job role being changed completely following maternity leave and missing out on training due to being part time.

When taking up a promotion that would've involved me working closely with a male colleague, it was suggested that I consult with my partner first.

Women (are) being expected to take minutes in meetings or make the tea and coffee despite it not being part of their job.

A female teacher was instructed by a male teacher who was giving her feedback from an observation lesson to use the fact that some of the male students found her attractive to her advantage.

Men are more likely to get manual jobs.

(I was) questioned about my future plans for a family by a manager.

(Managers) giving statistical analysis to a man as 'they are good at maths'.

Whilst 62% of respondents said they felt able to challenge sexism, 20% felt they were unable or didn't know how to challenge the behaviour

It would bring on more trouble.

If you challenge management you are threatened and/or bullied

I did challenge and was told it was a career limiting move.

More tools in place now to help challenge it (sexism).

I would be fearful it would jeopardise my own position.

Many respondents commented that they have now become a trade union representative to speak up for others.

I may feel able to challenge it (sexism) as part of a collective, but not able to as an individual as I fear I would be labelled a trouble-maker.

59% of respondents said they have had to make reasonable adjustments at work as the result of being a woman

A number of examples provided such as part time working, flexible working, term time only working, and changes in career to suit domestic situations.

My children will soon be leaving full time education. I work in a school as a Teaching Assistant. I will need to change careers as unless you are married/ partnered with someone earning enough to compensate for the low income, or you are in receipt of child top up benefits, you cannot earn enough to live. Over ten years working in

education, a BSC hons in childhood studies: education all completely wasted. Should this have been a male dominated career path, this would not be the case. (There is) too much expectation on women to do work for free due to cuts.

As a mother, (I worked) part-time, in low paid work to fit in with school holidays, etc. Once out of that situation, I have made a career but (I have) been blocked from promotions several times due to 'business need'.

I went from full time to part time due to child care. I now remain on reduced hours due to caring for an elderly parent, when going for promotion I was told the role is not suitable for part time workers and it was given to a full time colleague who is much younger with less experience.

Childcare means I have stayed longer in one role as opposed to trying to move up the career ladder.

I changed my position after marriage, but now I have a perceived 'less important' career.

I had to fight to get back to 40 hour week.

I feel I have to work a lot harder and do a lot of extra work to gain the same as some male colleagues.

I had to work hours that fitted around child care, which was often at weekends or evenings. This impacted on family life as we were very rarely all together.

My contract was not renewed when I was on maternity leave so I found a part time job closer to home (although it paid less). Prior to having children, I always earned the same or more than my husband but now I earn 10k less than him based on FTE. I currently work 4 days a week but it's very difficult to progress in my career despite being ambitious.

I reduced my working week in order to have a day off with my daughter. I asked my husband if we could both consider working a compressed fortnight in order for us to both fulfil childcare responsibilities but he did not feel able to request it or had no will to do so despite being in a senior position.

(The) menopause has required me to make changes at work – although its primarily self managed e.g. trying not to arrange meetings when having a bad day, making excuses when having a bad day and suffering from 'brain fog'.

What do you think is women's greatest achievement since achieving the right to vote?

Examples of successful disputes and victories including the Dagenham women.

(Women are) better educated.

(Women) undertaking senior and leadership roles e.g. Woman Prime Ministers, in 2017 Cressida Dick was appointed as the first female Met Police Commissioner etc.

Legislation on women's and children's rights –discrimination law, Equality Act, maternity/pregnancy rights, equal pay, the right to control fertility and abortion rights, domestic abuse provisions, equal property rights.

Women now have a stronger voice at work through their trade unions.