



UNISON CITY OF EDINBURGH BRANCH

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL, DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

RESPONSE TO ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW – MARCH 2008

1) Introduction

- a) UNISON City of Edinburgh Branch is the largest union representing staff (except teachers) in the Children and Families Department. The Branch welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department's consultation paper on the Organisational Review.
- b) UNISON expressed major concerns about the creation of a Children & Families Department, especially in relation to the lack of structures for professional lines of accountability (especially in child protection services and services for vulnerable adults). UNISON therefore welcomes the identification of this problem and many of the measures to address it laid out in the consultation.
- c) However, UNISON was supportive of the integration agenda at local level and is concerned at the proposed break up of the neighbourhood systems that deliver this.
- d) UNISON is disappointed that a major driving factor for the organisational review is financial rather than organisational. The union does not believe that an exercise so strongly driven by the need to make cuts can arrive at best considered decisions about service delivery and meeting the needs of children and families.
- e) UNISON does not believe that the cuts arise from 'over-spending'. It believes that the issue is one of 'under-budgeting' for the three main reasons below:-
 - i) Existing expenditure (especially in terms of care placements and so-called 'section spend') reflecting the real cost of providing essential social services to children and their families.

- ii) The effect of inspections and inquiries in exposing the long term chronic underfunding of children's social work services.
- iii) A failure to match the political drive for neighbourhood service-delivery with the funds to make it effective. While the consultation paper refers to an 'expensive' management structure with more managers than other authorities, it does not make the link with the increased management requirements of neighbourhood based delivery, management and integration of services.

2) Aims

- a) UNISON believes there is a major conflict between the aims outlined in the consultation and the proposed changes to the extent that the laudable words in the aims are misleading and have little chance in reality of being achieved. We cite some examples below:-
- b) **Strengthen devolved management and empower staff at all levels: Co-ordinate and strengthen our neighbourhood arrangements: Create more integrated services...** It is very difficult to see how this can be achieved when the plan is to remove the very management structures at neighbourhood level that can deliver this. The loss of School Service Managers, the reduction in CLD, Early Years and Working Together management and the dismantling of neighbourhood management structures takes away the very infrastructure that can create devolved management and integrated decision making at local level.
- c) **Reduce bureaucracy and micro management:** There is nothing in the consultation that evidences how this will be done. On the contrary, especially in Working Together services, the consultation misunderstands the operational and service delivery role of front line managers. UNISON believes the whole consultation tends to display a misunderstanding of management and service delivery roles at the front line and at neighbourhood level.
- d) **The consultation mentions 'invaluable early intervention' yet it seeks to cut the key early intervention service provided by Working Together, Early Years and Community Learning and Development.**

3) New Structure

- a) **Schools:** A perception of 'over-management' is reported from schools. UNISON members have questioned whether this may refer less to over management and more to increased managerial demands on schools to play a stronger role in integrated working. No real evidence is presented for the 'over-managed' perception.
- b) **Early Years:** The reduction in management and the removal of key neighbourhood links will undermine the close co-operation and need

for integrated working between early years and targeted services. This is another area where the focus on early intervention is undermined by the actual plans.

- c) **Community Learning and Development:** The comparatively major cuts in the CLD service attack the basic principles listed under the 'Aims' section. Building community capacity, universal early intervention services for young people and the essential services to adults so that they can contribute to the wellbeing of children are all essential to delivering the Department's aims. It is UNISON's view that lessons from 'Communities that Care' are being ignored and that these cuts will have a wide-ranging effect on all of the preventative strategies of the council.

Although no specific cuts are mentioned in relation to Arts, Sport and International work, cuts in service are a fact on the ground. This section mentions a curriculum for excellence, achievement and personal and social development yet this key area and the wider key role of CLD in delivering this is ignored.

Cuts in Community Learning are set to hit at the very fabric of Edinburgh's proud history in lifelong learning and building better and safer communities. It is surprising that these cuts are being made when all over the country the focus is on early intervention rather than waiting to sweep up the problems in the future

- d) **Services for vulnerable children: Working Together:** The cuts in Working Together are totally at odds with the stated value given to early intervention and the Scottish Government long term strategy.

The Senior posts in Working Together provide direct services to children and the key role in Pupil Support Group structures as well as the essential consultation and supervision role of supporting other front-line staff. As such they are not merely 'management' posts.

In the case of Working Together Managers, it was well accepted before the creation of the new department that the Working Together service was considerably under-managed. A return to that situation would be a regressive step.

- e) **Planning etc:** UNISON is seriously concerned about the possible effects of the loss of specific posts providing child protection training, lifelong learning and the consumer involvement role for example. The dilution of the latter role in terms of the stated aim to 'engage children, young people and families' in the development of services is astonishing.

These are key areas in the child protection action plan and the dilution of these services will be picked up at re-inspection. Our members could do without the further blow of a poor follow-up report at a time when

they have put enormous efforts into the improvement plan.

- 4) **Fairness and transparency – Employment issues:** UNISON is very concerned about the apparent process of identifying deleted posts and functions. From the information we have so far, duties are not being totally deleted but are being assimilated into the duties of different posts.

We have had no opportunity to review job descriptions or detailed structures and we believe that throughout the process there has been totally inadequate consideration given to pools of staff affected and the ring-fencing of posts to be assimilated.

The absence of any detailed information on how duties will be allocated makes it impossible to assess the fairness of some of the decisions and leads to a suspicion that people rather than functions are being singled out in some circumstances.

In terms of 'central' services and the School Service Manager/QIO roles, UNISON is disturbed that there has been thus far no willingness to address functions across the range of staff affected and no detail about the changes in job descriptions. As such it is impossible to assess the fairness of decisions.

In terms of Working Together and CLD posts, UNISON will need to be assured that there is an honest acceptance that all of the services provided before the review cannot be provided after it with the reduction in resources. UNISON will not accept increased pressures on its members to cover up the effect of cuts.

5) **Conclusion**

UNISON is aware of the difficult financial situation facing the Department due to political decisions. We are disappointed that the Council has chosen to 'spin' serious service and job cuts as 'investment and improvement' which does not match the reality faced by many staff.

This difference of understanding, experience and knowledge of the 'real world' of pressures on services and staff, between those delivering the service and those strategically managing it is written large throughout this process. The conflict between the aims and objectives and cuts in the very areas that would deliver on these is stark. The expectations placed on staff often do not reflect a clear understanding of the day to day issues facing them

This has a major effect on staff morale. UNISON believes it was a significant issue in the HMIE and SWIA inspections and will figure again in follow-ups unless real efforts are made to listen to front-line staff.

It should not surprise the Department that the effect on staff morale is significant and many people who have put enormous efforts into delivering

services (sometimes against the odds) are left feeling – despite the assurances in the consultation - that they are not valued.

UNISON urges the Department and the Council to:-

- a) Reconsider and reject cuts to front line services and to the support systems needed to back them up
- b) Enter open negotiations regarding job descriptions, staff allocations and job matching
- c) Take measures to communicate at Council and Scottish Government level the real cost of providing the standard of essential services society expects for vulnerable children.

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Branch Secretary
20 March 2008