

Mover: Bethnal Green and Bow CLP

Seconded: Kingston and Surbiton CLP

Composite Motion: Early Years

CONFERENCE NOTES THAT:

- Public nurseries (maintained nursery schools and council-run day nurseries) account for <4% of government-funded places in our increasingly chain-dominated Early Years (EY) sector.
- By April 2018 a third of Sure Start children's centres had been closed due to government cuts and the story is much bleaker in 2021.
- Affordable, quality, and public nurseries, that serve deprived communities, support children with SEND, and those learning ESL, were already struggling due to underfunding before covid-19. Funding payments for early years entitlements are based on inadequate costs per place
- Many childcare providers have struggled to survive the pandemic, with insufficient support from the government.
- The birth of a first child is the turning point at which gender pay disparity really starts to widen, resulting in a 20% gender pay gap among UK employees by the time a first child reaches the age of 20 (Institute of Fiscal Studies).
- Women have been more likely than men to deal with home-schooling, childcare and chores during Covid19 restrictions. (London School of Economics and Political Science)
- Childcare costs in the UK are high. Childcare prices have again risen above inflation, with a part time nursery place for a child under 2 costing 4% more than a year ago. (Family and Childcare Trust's Childcare Survey 2021). Just half of councils in England had enough childcare places for working parents in 2018. (Family and Childcare Trust's Childcare Survey 2018).
- Our 2019 manifesto committed to reform EY by “funding providers directly [... introducing] a national pay scale, driving up pay for the overwhelmingly female workforce.”

CONFERENCE BELIEVES THAT:

- The hostile environment means the worst exploitations of various childcare crises are invisible and racist.
- 363,400 childcare workers (a 98% female workforce) many already earning under minimum wage, are at risk of redundancy and worsening terms and conditions with any EY crash.
- The pandemic is setting back progress on gender equality, as women have been disproportionately hit. Loss of affordable childcare risks reversing decades of

progress, increasing the gender pay gap, and damaging national economic productivity (TUC).

- Difficulty obtaining paid work that fits in with childcare, or where work is so low paid it cannot cover childcare costs means many mothers are caught in a poverty trap and/or reliant on a partner and this can lead to abuse. Where parents receive Universal Credit this is often paid to the main earner, usually the man, even when the payment includes a child element, further limiting the mother's autonomy.
- Children have been impacted by lack of opportunities during the pandemic. The pre-school period is a crucial time in children's development.

CONFERENCE CALLS FOR THE SHADOW CABINET TO ACTIVELY CAMPAIGN FOR:

- An urgent conditional bailout of the sector (including childminders), with settings committing to:
affordable, flexible childcare for parents, Real Living Wage for all, and no dividends or share buy-backs.
- Changes to funding so settings get direct payment from DfE (as schools do) to cover the actual costs of staff and overheads, increasing democratic accountability, and to make all childcare provision for the under fives affordable and of high quality and to make sure there is enough childcare for every family who needs it.
- An end to No Recourse to Public Funds and improved rights for those on an Overseas Domestic Worker visa ability to renew after six months and change employer.
- Changes to Universal Credit (UC) so parents don't have to pay for their childcare costs up front (alongside calling to replace UC completely).
- Immediate, meaningful increases to Child Benefit and removal of the two-child cap.
- Statutory paid parental leave extended to 52 weeks.
- Making access to free hours begin from one year of age
- A non means-tested payment to be made to all parents in recognition that rearing children is valuable work and has social and economic value, and parents not in paid employment outside the home given an additional income at a level which recognises child care as work. Increasing recognition of the social and economic value of currently unpaid work done primarily by women.

CONFERENCE CALLS FOR THE SHADOW CABINET TO ACTIVELY CAMPAIGN AGAINST:

- The permanent closure of Sure Start Centres.

Salford and Eccles CLP

Bethnal Green and Bow CLP

Ashfield CLP

Horsham CLP

Kingston and Surbiton CLP

Barrow and Furness CLP

Poplar and Limehouse CLP