



PRESS RELEASE
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Call for overarching review of 220,000-strong children's sector workforce

A new report is calling for an over-arching review of the whole children's sector workforce – one that addresses qualification levels, pay and conditions, gender inequality and the emergence of new types of workers.

Working for the future: re-imagining the children's sector workforce, expresses concern that previous and current national workforce reviews, including previous reviews of education and health and current reviews such as the 21st Century Social Work Review and the Early Years Child Care and Workforce Review, all focus on specific groups of workers, while excluding others. For example, the early years review includes nursery nurses but excludes pre-school teachers.

The report, published by Children in Scotland in association with the Scottish Council Foundation, the International Futures Forum and Scotland's Futures Forum, points out that this approach does not reflect the Scottish Executive's commitment to the creation of integrated children's services and joined-up working. The challenges that the sector is facing are not compartmentalised and without considering the broader picture, it is difficult to see how the impact of these challenges can be properly assessed.

Qualifications, pay and conditions:

Qualifications vary considerably across the children's sector workforce. Two-thirds of social workers and virtually all teachers, nurses and midwives have qualifications at levels four and five and many are graduates. Only a quarter or less of residential and child care workers, education assistants and eight per cent of child care related occupations have qualifications at this level. Teachers on average finish full-time education around the age of 21, education assistants at 17, and residential and child care and related occupations at 16. These differences are reflected in pay and conditions. For example, in the late 1990s, social workers, teachers and midwives earned around 50 per cent more than the average for all women workers, while child care workers and educational assistants came well below with earnings not much above the minimum wage.

Gender inequality:

The children's sector workforce is overwhelmingly female. Women accounted for more than 95 per cent of nursery nurses, playgroup leaders and other child care occupations, education assistants and midwives. They also accounted for 89 per cent of nurses, around 85 per cent of nursery and primary teachers, matrons and houseparents, 71 per cent of welfare workers, community workers and youth workers and 69 per cent of social workers.

The emergence of new types of workers:

Recognition of the importance of the arts, culture and creativity to the well-being of children and families is leading to the creation of new links between these and health, social work, education and community development – and to the emergence of new types of workers.

An overarching review of the children's sector workforce could potentially encompass around 220,000 workers. This new figure, compiled by Children in Scotland for the report, is more than twice the only previous estimate of 100,000 from the Scottish Executive in 2001.

As well as incorporating long-established professionally qualified groups within education, health and welfare such as teachers, paediatricians, nurses and social workers, the new figure includes key groups of workers previously excluded such as nannies, foster carers and youth workers.

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive for Children in Scotland, said: "Child and family centred services require a more joined up and flexible workforce. Whilst boundaries between health, care and education are blurring and issues such as child protection and involvement of children and parents run across services, the education and training of the workforce remains far too compartmentalised and some key groups of workers such as arts and culture workers are marginalized.

"We believe that what is required is a review of all groups in the sector covering both initial education and ongoing professional development to ensure that we can make effective use of workers at a time when recruitment in this area will not be able to rely on a continuing supply of women with low levels of education."

James McCormick, director of the Scottish Council Foundation, said: "It is time to draw together the findings of individual workforce reviews in Scotland to examine future directions for the whole of the children's sector workforce."

George Reid, presiding officer of the Scottish Parliament, said: "A debate that scrutinises the education, roles and relationships of those in providing services for children, young people and their families in modern Scotland is of vital importance in preparing for future challenges, and there is no doubt that the challenges are numerous. We must seize the opportunity to be creative in imagining a future for Scotland's 220,000 strong children's sector workforce - to ensure that it is educated, informed and sustainable in the 21st century."

Notes for editors:

- **Children in Scotland** is Scotland's national children's agency, bringing together voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals to improve the lives of Scotland's children and their families.
- *Working for the future: re-imagining the children's sector workforce* can be ordered from Children in Scotland's website at www.childreninscotland.org.uk/workforce
- **The Scottish Council Foundation** develops leading edge thinking and world class practice to address the strategic challenges facing Scotland and other modern economies and societies in an age of complexity and rapid change. www.scottishcouncilfoundation.org Contact: Jim McCormick, director.
- **The International Futures Forum** exists to develop the capacity to sustain human aspiration, realised through wise action, in a complex and challenging world. www.internationalfuturesforum.co.uk
- **Scotland's Futures Forum** is the Scottish Parliament's initiative to develop strategic thinking on the issues which will shape Scotland's future. www.scottish.parliament.uk