

My name is Jane Carter and I am the Branch Secretary for the B&NES Unison Branch.

Our Branch Executive committee are opposed to the cuts to the Children's Centre services for a number of reasons.

We are concerned about the loss of skilled employees from the Children's Centres. There are currently just over 127 Paid posts in Children's Centres. We don't know the detail yet but we anticipate that the cuts will see around half of those lose their jobs –around 60 posts.

These 60 paid posts can't be replaced by volunteers. The Councils own policy is very clear:

"Volunteers will only be used to provide additional or extended services to the community, to support the work of paid staff and not replace them"¹

Our Branch certainly recognises that volunteers have a crucial role in the success of Children's Centres and we value highly their work, alongside the paid, skilled, trained and qualified employees. The importance of a recognisable person and consistent approach in offering support and services to children cannot be underestimated.

Another reason why our Branch are opposing these cuts is that we understand the importance of the work that is carried out by the Children's Centres. We are fearful of the massive costs that will be built up for the authority in the future if you cut this really important service which can help tackle problems as early as possible.

The purpose of Children's Centres is to improve outcomes for young children with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged. We would be concerned about the most disadvantaged being reached if the skilled and qualified employees aren't there.

We welcome the finding of an extra £500,000 into the Early Years budget however we remain concerned that this still means massive cuts to the service for some of the most vulnerable in our community.

¹ Page 3, Bullet Point 2 under 2. Principles of the Document 'Volunteers at Bath and North East Somerset Guidelines for Managers and Staff