

Children's Commissioner – An Author on how to Privatise!

On 1st December 2016 a report was published on the Department for Education's website entitled, "*The potential for developing the capacity and diversity of children's social care services in England.*" This report is effectively a blueprint on how to drive the private sector into children's social care.

Basically, the authors were frustrated that after condemning Birmingham's children's services they couldn't privatise it because there were no private providers who could take the service over.

The report looks at attempts to privatise children's services in the USA, Canada and Australia. Their findings basically point to mixed results but interestingly they conclude that costs for the first few years after privatisation are likely to be higher.

"In some American states...they witnessed an increase in expenditure for the first three to six years."

So the plan in the report is to hand some of the £6.7 Billion of tax payers money spent each year on children's social care over to the private sector by forcing Councils to outsource through the setting up of 'Trusts' and through 'segmenting' services up into smaller pieces so that private firms could take those services over. The 'segmentation' approach is exactly what is currently happening to the Adoption Service in Sandwell.

Outsourcing children's services into 'Trusts' includes:-

- ***"An Ofsted finding of inadequate***
- ***Inadequate capacity within the Local Authority to improve***
- ***Appointment by the Department for Education of a Commissioner***
- ***A statutory direction to the local authority issued by the Secretary of State."***

Sound familiar?

Well it should do as this is exactly what has happened in Sandwell.

And guess who one of the authors of this report is, amongst others?

Yes, you guessed, the Government Commissioner imposed upon Sandwell Council, "Malcolm Newsam, Cobc Consultant Advisor."

Planned Timeline of Industrial Action Ballot in Children's Services

- Ballot to begin
Wednesday 8 February
- Ballot closes Thursday
2 March
- Ballot result to be
announced at AGM
Thursday 2 March
- Earliest date of action
Thursday 23 March

Glasgow IT Workers Win 'secondment'

After taking a one day strike in November and three – week long strikes before and after Christmas, Glasgow Unison members won a 'secondment' deal that keeps them as council workers in the plans to privatise their service. The concession that protects pay, terms and conditions plus a no compulsory redundancy deal, was accepted by members after they voted to escalate the industrial action even further.

This successful strike shows that 'secondment' arrangements can be won.

New Council Social Media Policy

We have seen some staff disciplined at work from what they have posted on line, even in their own time and on their own personal accounts.

The Council has drafted clear guidelines on both personal use and professional use of social media. We urge all members to check the policy on the Council's intranet.

UNISON asked for this policy to also include protection for staff who become victims of cyberbullying.

Check out www.sandwellunison.co.uk for a UNISON guide to e-safety.