

Council wants more men to work in childcare ^[1]

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Source: Evening Times

Format: Article

Publication Date: 16 Nov 2017

AVAILABILITY

Read online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

With plans to double free childcare hours, Glasgow is preparing for the surge in nursery places it will need to honour the Scottish Government's new policy.

Education bosses have been looking at ways to encourage people to train in early years education to ensure places will be available by August 2020.

Among the unique initiatives launched by the council are Approved By Dads and Career Pathway.

These, along with First Steps to Childcare, aim to draw in people who may otherwise not have considered a career working with children.

Approved By Dads was launched to get men working in early years as, across Glasgow, fewer than one per cent of childcare workers are men.

Training is given through company Experiential Play and now five dads and one uncle have qualified.

Thomas Cairns has made his way to a career in childcare thanks to the Approved By Dads programme - although he's actually an uncle.

Thomas's mum has kinship care for his sister's two children and the proud uncle is hands-on with both children.

His skills were spotted by the head teacher of the tots' nursery who made enquiries about enrolling Thomas in Approved By Dads despite the fact he wasn't a father.

Thomas has completed level two and three of his National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and is now working in Budhill Family Learning Centre.

The 22-year-old said: "I have always been told that I'm good with kids but I didn't think doing that professionally would have been something for me as it's seen as a female job.

"I have been in and out of jobs left, right and centre trying to find my place and I think I finally have now."

Thomas, from Cranhill, says men should not be put off by the fact early years education is dominated by women.

He added: "I have been made welcome from day one.

"Working mostly with women is something that does cross your mind and it is a bit odd being the only male other than the janitor.

"But children need male role models and they don't always get that at home.

"The children are comfortable coming and approaching me - they don't seem to bother at all."

Last month Nicola Sturgeon launched a campaign to recruit up to 11,000 more people to work in childcare.

Currently, all three and four year olds and some two year olds receive 600 hours of childcare a year for free.

Under the new plans, this will increase to 1140 hours - almost double the current level of entitlement.

Career Pathway sees Glasgow City Council staff who have moved from other roles or, for example, been at threat of redundancy retrained in childcare.

Fiona Campbell, Employment and Skills Partnership Coordinator, said initially 600 applications were received for the scheme.

Some 200 were interviewed before 90 chosen for retraining, including Pamela Brooks who had previously worked in the council's Customer Care Centre.

Pamela said: "I had often thought about I would like to work in nursery education.

"However, I had been apprehensive to take the risk of leaving my job to gain a qualification without the guarantee of employment once I had it.

"I am really looking forward to the new challenges the role will bring."

First Steps to Childcare sees mums such as Tracy Rennie, from Castlemilk Family Learning Centre, go on to train once their children are older.

Fiona said: "Tracy and the other mums like her are spotted by nursery head teachers and put forward to take part.

"They have to be really dedicated - they are volunteering their time to train for no payment. We pay their travel expenses and make sure they have childcare while they are studying but it is a big commitment from them and they are really impressive."

Increased hours will be offered gradually across the city up until August 2020 when they must be available to all families.

Education bosses said the process will be developed as it becomes clearer how best the extra hours can be used by parents and carers.

Chris Cunningham, City Convener for Education, Skills and Early Years, said: "As we work towards the 1140 hours expansion of early learning and childcare for all eligible three and four year olds in Glasgow, it's never been so important to promote early years job opportunities.

"There are so many pathways into early years jobs across the city and this is evident from the different individuals and projects honoured at the graduation ceremony.

"This is an exciting time for our nurseries and family learning centres and for our families who will be able to help in designing a bespoke, quality early years' service that might be made of a number of elements including nursery provision, child minders and private provision - whatever works best for parents and carers."

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