

Funding crisis hits child care [GB] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Up to 500 child care jobs and 800 child care places could be lost in north and west Belfast due to a lack of funding, it was claimed today.

According to community child care providers in the area, an additional 867 after-school places could also go if the funding crisis continues.

The funding situation was highlighted today by the North and West Belfast District Child care Partnership.

A spokeswoman for the group said the funding plight had arisen due to the end of short term funding streams and the lack of long term mainstream funding for the sector.

She said that many groups did not know if they would be opening their doors again in September.

Belfast's Lord Mayor, Councillor Tom Ekin, who held a meeting with the partnership today, said he was "deeply concerned" at the potential loss of services.

"No effort must be spared in securing additional funding to prevent child care services being lost to the detriment of our children and our communities," he said.

"But short term funding solutions are not enough - government should introduce long term funding."

SDLP West Belfast MLA Alex Attwood also called for maximum support for the partnership.

"The most vulnerable section of society are the very, very young and they need every protection."

"That is why the funding proposed by direct rule minister Angela Smith to sustain child care places in north and west Belfast and around the north is ludicrous."

"The SDLP proposes that in a bolt-on to the September negotiations, all parties demand that the government restore funding for child care places."

- reprinted from the Belfast Telegraph

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