

Nursery nurses' pay strikes will lead to wide disruption [GB]^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Children attending Scottish nurseries face severe disruption as a series of one-day strikes get under way later this month.

Almost 5,000 Scottish nursery nurses have voted to take industrial action over pay, the trade union Unison said yesterday.

The strike, which starts on 20 May, will involve a boycott of duties which will effectively close many nurseries, especially smaller ones. It comes after a ballot which saw 90 per cent of those who returned their papers vote for strike action.

The move follows a long running campaign for a review and re-assessment of nursery nurses' pay and conditions, following changes in their jobs and responsibilities. Nursery nurses are paid about £13,000 a year by their local authority employers. They have to be qualified to NNEB, NVQ level 3, or BTEC standards.

The campaign will start next week with a rolling programme of action co-ordinated over a six-week period by the union. It will mean the closure of Scotland's nurseries and nursery schools on strike days.

Joe Di Paola, Unison's Scottish organiser for local government, said parents have been supportive over the action. He added: "Our members have been keeping parents informed of this campaign the whole time it has been going. They have been the mainstay of our public support and petition-signing.

Last month, the nursery nurses were told they could not vote on industrial action after North Ayrshire Council blocked a ballot. The council threatened legal action after it was not given full notice of a vote in its area. This forced Unison to abandon a national poll. But the vote went ahead after the correct notice was given.

Nursery nurses say they have not had a pay review for more than 15 years, despite new skills and responsibilities regularly being added to their job. They can only earn about £10,000 in their first job after two years' study which rises to a maximum of just £13,800 after at least eight years. Staff who want to progress from basic levels into management say they are unable to gain promotion without changing careers.

Unison raised a national pay claim 19 months ago and a body was set up to study the issue. A survey, commissioned by Unison, recently found that 49 per cent of nursery nurses work up to ten hours a week unpaid in excess of their contracted hours. The vast majority are women and 50 per cent are on temporary or fixed-term contracts.

Most nursery classes have at least one teacher and one nursery nurse. Nursery classes have to have a ratio of at least one adult to 13 children.

At present there are 7,500 nursery nurses working in Scotland's council-run nursery schools, day nurseries and special schools.

Last year, Unison submitted identical pay claims to each of the 32 local authorities as different rates were paid in different establishments, in different parts of the country.

The union asked for a four-level career structure, with salaries ranging from £16,000 to £20,000-a-year for staff working a 35-hour week.

At the time the authorities claimed that the union's regrading claim would cost £5 million if a new structure would allow nurses to move from basic grade earnings to become heads of establishment.

-Reprinted from The Scotsman

Region: Europe^[2]

Tags: advocacy^[3]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/03/07/nursery-nurses-pay-strikes-will-lead-wide-disruption-gb> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/europe> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/advocacy>