



Equality Impact Assessment on the Review of Childcare Provision

Summary of Consultation Responses

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Table 1 Letters from Councillors and MLAS

Comments
<p><u>Councillor Billy Leonard</u></p> <p>Stated that a number of elected representatives from Coleraine Council met with parents and committee members of Stepping Stones and requested that the consultation period be extended to allow time for student input.</p>
<p><u>Councillor Barney Fitzpatrick</u></p> <p>Concerned that if crèche facilities were no longer available on the Coleraine campus then this could hamper the education of students who make use of this facility.</p>
<p><u>Councillor David Barbour</u></p> <p>Request to extend the consultation period to allow persons to record their feelings on the current proposals in particular with regard to Stepping Stones Crèche.</p>
<p><u>Gregory Campbell MLA</u></p> <p>Letter with regard to Stepping Stones Crèche highlighting that there area lack of nursery places available in the Coleraine area and that Stepping Stones Crèche provides a much needed and valuable service.</p>
<p><u>Ken Robinson MLA</u></p> <p>Responded on behalf of constituents who will be impacted by the Review of Childcare Provision. Requested that the consultation period be extended to allow as many users as possible to give a measured response and concurred with the request made by students.</p>
<p><u>Councillor Thomas Buchanan</u></p> <p>Support for the Magee Day Nursery and stated the facilities should be safeguarded and enhanced. Made reference to the £250 expansion plans for Ulster and felt that the budget deficit for the nurseries was not a vast amount of money.</p>
<p><u>Mark Durkin MLA</u></p> <p>Noted the concerns of parents using the Magee Day Nursery in terms of closure or privatisation. Stated need for stronger childcare provision at the Magee campus in relation to the anticipated expansion and requested that the University should meet with the Nursery Action Group at Magee.</p>

Roy Beggs MLA

Requested that the consultation period be extended so that more people would have an opportunity to respond.

William Hay MLA

Wished to record his support for the retention of Nursery provision at the Magee campus.

Councillor Gerry MacLochlainn

Responded on behalf of constituents who were concerned about closure of facilities at Magee. Commented that the Magee nursery is renowned for the quality of care and the dedication of its staff and should be preserved.

Table 2 Letters from Organisations/Groups¹

Key Issues
<p><u>Committee on the Administration of Justice</u></p> <p>Recommended that the closing deadline for responses is extended until the students return to the University.</p> <p>Closing the facilities (Option One) or privatising the facilities (Option Two) would have serious adverse consequences for a number of the Section 75 groups - including men and women generally, age, gender, marital status and those with dependents. Adverse consequences would be reflected in terms of increased costs, work/life balance and quality of service and job losses.</p> <p>Report does not provide information on why a budget deficit was created and how this increase was allowed to rise.</p> <p>Recommended that alternative measures to ensure retention of existing facilities but which addresses the economic viability issue.</p> <p>Recommended the University should consider potential legal challenges with regard to Section 75 and Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order.</p>
<p><u>Women's Centres Regional Partnership</u></p> <p>It is unfortunate that the University has not consulted in a manner that engages and elicits the views of women who access community-based education and childcare as key stakeholders.</p> <p>Endorse the arguments and recommendations made by the Committee on the Administration of Justice.</p>
<p><u>Students' Union (Jordanstown)</u></p> <p>Recommended that the consultation period is extended until 30 October 2009 to enable the student body to respond to the Consultation Report.</p>
<p><u>Coleraine Borough Council</u></p> <p>The provision of the crèche facility at the Coleraine campus is very important and that the University should take all steps within its power to protect this facility.</p>

¹ Disability Action sent a letter stating they had no comments and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council sent a letter stating they did not wish to make a response to the EQIA. Comments from a letter from the Parents at Jordanstown Crèche are attached as Appendix E.

Key Issues

UNISON

Recommended a minimum 4 week extension to allow the full involvement of service users and the University community.

Failure to comprehensively identify adverse impacts on staff parents with dependents and impact on women and work/life balance has not been fully addressed.

No adequate identification or mitigation/alternative policy with regard to staff redundancies or redeployment. Unison proposes Option 3 to address this.

Option 1 and 2 not conducive to Ulster's strategic priority of 'widening access' and 'widening participation'; and fail to take account of disruption to staff in organising alternative childcare provision.

UNISON recommends Option 3 with clarification on how a review of contracts would impact upon nursery staff.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Commend the University for its decision to conduct the EQIA and the collection of relevant quantitative and qualitative data.

Confirms that the availability of childcare provision has a particular impact on the ability of women with childcare to secure equality of opportunity in employment and in further and higher education.

Recommended that Option 4 (maintain the status quo) is considered more fully in terms of implications for the promotion of equality of opportunity. For example, the Commission states that current service users are of the view that maintaining the status quo is one that positively promotes their equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends that this needs to be acknowledged and objectively considered by the University as part of the final decision-making process.

If current users are correct that the continuation of the status quo promotes equality of opportunity, then it may also be possible that an expansion of the current services might better promote equality of opportunity?

Comments made by the service users, particularly their views on how the various options will impact on their equality of opportunity, should be brought to the attention of and given appropriate weight by those persons who will make the final decision.

Key Issues

Staff at the Jordanstown Day Nursery

Option 1: Closure

- Staff strongly oppose Option 1. Primarily, from a staff perspective this option would entail the loss of our jobs and redundancy.
- The mitigating factors referred to in the Summary of Option include the University's Redundancy policy and redeployment. Staff at the nursery are qualified in childcare provision and are therefore unable to transfer these skills to anywhere else in the University.

Option 2: Privatisation

- Staff strongly oppose Option 2.

Option 3: Review of Contracts

- Option 3 could be one that should be considered by the University. The nursery could be made more financially viable with some changes being implemented.
- Ulster Day Nursery does not charge for Bank Holidays or emergency days. If these charges were implemented this could help to accrue additional finances.
- Suggest a change in the minimum of session requirements as this would also enable us to take in more children.
- To open at 7.30am like other day nurseries is not necessary because staff members and lecturers do not start until 9am and this also applies to the 5.30pm finish because this provides sufficient time for the staff and student to leave and collect their children.

Option 4: Status Quo

- We assume that the status quo option is not a feasible one, as the Review would not have been required if the existing circumstances were acceptable.

Process

Concerned that there was no representation from any of the nurseries on any campus on the Working Group.

Table 3 Letters from Individuals

Key Issues
Majority of consultees opposed to Option 1.
People who have moved to the area with no local family support will be particularly affected.
Proposed voucher scheme of no benefit due to scarcity of alternative registered childcare provision in the Coleraine area, many with significant waiting lists.
Working mothers rely on convenient and reliable childcare.
Closure of Childcare facilities will work in direct opposition to the University's aim of gender equality of employment and opportunity as stated in the Gender Strategy and Action Plan.
Concerns over effects of closure on children using the crèche.
Female, single, Catholic students in full-time study and female, Catholic full-time staff would be negatively impacted by any decision to close the childcare facilities.
No evidence was given on actions to redress the under-occupancy evident in 2005 (Figures in Table 1 and 2 of the EQIA report).
Users prepared to pay more and have the terms of their arrangements revised.
University should fully explore opportunities with Commercial providers.
Facilities affordable and accessible.
Childcare of the highest standard.
One consultee, a full-time student stated, 'I doubt I would have graduated from my course without the remarkable help of the girls and the facility of the crèche'.
On-campus childcare assists mothers to be able to return to work while continuing to breastfeed.
Minority groups are represented at the crèche and it promotes good community relations.
Childcare provision provides a valuable service to foreign staff and students whose families are far away.

Key Issues

Students who are parents would be disadvantaged by a decision to close childcare facilities.

In view of the £250 million expansion plan recently announced, it would not take much to tackle the budget deficit of £137,533.

Childcare should be seen as a crucial support service.

Expansion plans at Magee will increase student numbers; all those staff and students should have access to quality on-campus childcare to facilitate their work and studies.

Privatisation could place nursery jobs at risk.

Comments recommending extension to the consultation deadline to October.

If Stepping Stones Crèche closes, students will have difficulty with alternative daycare places, this is because they do not need daycare during holidays (other crèches require 51 week contracts, rather than the 33 week contract at Stepping Stones).

Huge cost differentials will have implications on decision-making for students with children, many of whom may not be eligible for grant income.

No figures presented for what the projected costs will be for the University for any voucher or top-up scheme.

Voucher scheme which applies to crèches off-campus is less advantageous than the salary sacrifice being used by most staff.

Closure of childcare facilities will increase costs for transport to and from off-campus crèches.

The mitigating factor re the University having a redundancy policy that considers redeployment of staff does not apply to Stepping Stones as these staff are not staff of the University and would be entitled to statutory redundancy only.

Separate option could be applied to all the campuses as the options available to parents are different in each area.

Table 4 Table of Impacts from Response Pro Forma (summary of organisations and individual responses)

Are there any data, needs, issues or adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in the equality impact assessment? If so, what are they?

Section 75 Category	Summary of data, needs, issues and adverse impacts
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report does not fully take children into consideration. • No childcare facilities could affect potential students' decision. • Mature students or those returning to education are likely to have family. • Adverse impact on persons of child-bearing age. • Stress, upheaval and disturbance to children involved. • Impact on students with limited income – private childcare more costly. • Students without private transport disadvantaged. • 18-40 year olds most affected as this is the age group with the greatest childcare responsibilities. • The needs of very young children. • Not able to access their parent in good time in case of illness or accident could cause considerable stress for the child. • For older women, one of the key contributors to the lack of well-being is the burden of children being placed upon them as grandparents/other retired female relatives see <i>Mary McColgan et al (McColgan, M., Campbell, A., Duffy, J., Naylor, R. and Coogan, M. (2006) "Childcare on the Borderline" Research Report, University of Ulster).</i> • Older women in the community would be asked to take on this burden due to the lack of alternatives locally. • Adverse impact on the children receiving care. • Further evidence submitted relating to this issue: <i>Rowntree Survey of Poverty in Northern Ireland</i>
Marital Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single parents are more likely to be adversely affected as they are likely to have less support for childcare and less financial resources at their disposal. • Married couples without a support network. • Single parents disadvantaged by having to find facilities further away. • Work life balance significantly affected.
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely to impact on women, especially those who have recently given birth and wish to continue breast feeding. • Impact on the ability and opportunity for women to maintain full-time work. • Men and women in terms of work life balance. • Men and women may experience difficulty undertaking/completing study. • Crèche staff facing redundancy are female. • Women may be prevented from returning to work/study through lack of suitable childcare provision.

Section 75 Category	Summary of data, needs, issues and adverse impacts
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce access to third level education. • Barrier to those with mobility issues. • Removal of facilities increases travel. • Further research regarding disabled students needed.
Dependents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affects working hours as introduces travel issues. • Adverse impact on staff parents with dependents. • Adverse impact on catholic females with dependents. • Adverse impact on students with dependents. • Particular difficulties for students where childcare responsibilities are likely to take precedence over ability to continue or commence study. • Impact on those with multiple dependents. • Persons with dependents reliant on part-time provision offered on-campus. • All options will impact upon this group in terms of lack of continuity, lack of alternative provision and cost implications.
Political Opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse impact to existing integrated community.
Racial Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International staff and students will be more adversely affected than others as they will not have family support available to them. • Crèche provides international bridge-building and cultural learning experiences. • Higher percentage of SSC users from racial groups.
Religious Belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University facilities viewed as inclusive and welcoming; may be different experience externally.
Sexual Orientation	No information submitted.

Table 5 Summary of Response Pro formas from Organisations/Groups

Do you have any comments on the following options and mitigating factors? Please state any other actions you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts identified. If your comments are campus specific, please state which campus.

Key Issues
<p><u>Convocation</u></p> <p><u>Option 1</u></p> <p>Little local childcare available and extensive waiting lists for what is available.</p> <p>With vouchers the costs will be substantially higher especially given that most other provision must be taken on a full-time basis.</p> <p><u>Option 3</u></p> <p>Staff would certainly consider some increase in fees though students would find it difficult to support this.</p> <p>Increased use of hardship finds might help student users but leaves staff at Coleraine with no facilities and no support of any kind.</p>
<p><u>Stepping Stones Crèche Committee</u></p> <p><u>Option 1</u></p> <p>Disagreed with this option.</p> <p>No other readily available childcare in Coleraine, all other outlets are over subscribed and far away from the campus, making personal transport essential if they could be used.</p> <p><u>Option 2</u></p> <p>Management model adopted by SSC is clearly the most efficient in terms of cost and service provision. Fundamentally disagree with the concept that all campuses must have the same provision because, as stated above, the campuses are all different and have differing requirements.</p> <p>If UU decided to outsource Day Nurseries on all UU campuses, the SSC model would be best for all concerned.</p>

Key Issues

Stepping Stones Crèche Committee cont'd

Option 3

There is a large amount of vacant accommodation on campus.

The SSC Committee has never been approached by the University to ask whether the costs for accommodation and services could be incorporated into its business model.

We feel that our relatively low cost to the University, when compared to the other day Nursery facilities, of £28k per annum could be budgeted for. Why was such an approach never made in the run up to this EQIA? Why was the financial study alluded to in the EQIA document never made available?

The estimated University financial losses due to childcare of £200,000 per year, it appears that >85% is attributable to the Magee and Jordanstown crèche operations. It is apparent that the business models under which they were instituted are different to those at Stepping Stone Crèche and far less efficient at revenue generation.

Option 4

We wish to develop the tenant/landlord relationship, with realistic costs. We feel that these could be incorporated into our business model. If the University wishes to review the way it runs the crèches on the other campuses, we do not see any reason why that should affect SSC.

Parents Committee, Jordanstown Crèche

Option 4

Our assumption is that this is not really a feasible option if the Review has been initiated in the first place. However, the Parents' Committee would also be in favour of maintaining the status quo for the simple reason that we are all happy with the current provision as it stands.

Are there any options that have not been included? If so, please provide details in comparison to the criterion identified in the report. If your comments are campus specific, please state which campus.

Key Issues
<p><u>Convocation</u></p> <p>No figures for running costs are given (for SSC) and it is stated that there is no space available for re-location. Given the amount of empty space currently available in South Buildings and the extent of the land owned by the University on the campus, this beggars belief!</p>
<p><u>Stepping Stones Crèche Committee</u></p> <p>Option 5 – Provide SSC with on-campus accommodation at Coleraine in parallel with discussion about the management/funding structure between the SSC Committee and the University.</p> <p>Option 6 – Bring SSC into the University model as at Magee and Jordanstown. The SSC brings an established reputation and customer base. It has a highly trained professional and experienced staff and is a going concern.</p>
<p><u>Parents Committee, Jordanstown Crèche</u></p> <p>Option 3 has not been fully considered as a viable option. Options 1 and 2 are supported by financial figures, while Option 3 is not. We would argue that financial projections showing potential income (via fees increase) set against the state deficits, over a projected timeframe, would help to illustrate this option more fully. Furthermore, it is the University Student Support Services responsibility, at a senior level, to conduct extensive business planning of its departments and we would hope that this is being considered.</p>

Do you have any suggestions to improve equality of opportunity for the nine categories and/or good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? If you comments are campus specific, please state which campus.

Key Issues
<p><u>Convocation</u></p> <p>To ensure equality of opportunity each campus needs to have equality of provision.</p> <p>The use of facilities by the wider community helps to establish good relationships between the University and its surrounding populace and break down religious, political and cultural barriers.</p>

Are there any other comments you would like to make in regard to this pro forma or the consultation process?

Key Issues

Convocation

The consultation process is seriously flawed in that the timing has prevented the stakeholders with the most to lose (i.e. students) from having an opportunity to respond.

Many staff and members of the wider community were also on holiday or otherwise away from the University and were unaware of the Consultation.

Stepping Stones Crèche Committee

The University disenfranchised the students by having the consultation period during the summer vacation.

The proposed voucher system is largely untried at this campus and, is unlikely to work in Coleraine.

It is evident that little research into alternative childcare facilities in Coleraine was performed as part of this EQIA.

No evidence of the cost of operation of the voucher scheme has been provided and therefore no comparative costs can be made. Would the cost of operating the voucher scheme exceed the cost of maintaining on-campus crèche facilities?

Parents Committee, Jordanstown Crèche

The key criticism of the consultation process was the timing. Unfortunately, given that this was the holiday period for the University many of the key consultee (i.e. other crèche users, students) will be disadvantaged by this timeframe, particularly with respect to attending meetings to discuss the proposals in more detail.

The Parents would like to point out that there was no consultation with parents who are current users of the crèche at the information gathering stage in order to ascertain the quality of childcare on offer.

Membership of the Working Group was not representative of the key stakeholders in the process.

The pro forma for responses is difficult to use.

The Report notes that there are a number of reasons why “spaces/session may be unused including the type of childcare contract (i.e. mostly part-time) and availability of staff to meet statutory requirements” - this information should be explained more clearly and a fuller explanation of the unused places provided. Lack of fee increase in recent years may have contributed to such a deficit, the decision to apply a discount of £10 to full-time users should be noted. Committee would welcome clarification on the deficit issue and how the management of Student Support Services sought to address those financial deficits when they became apparent.

Table 6 Summary of Response Pro formas from Individuals

Do you have any comments on the following options and mitigating factors? Please state any other actions you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts identified. If your comments are campus specific, please state which campus.

Key Issues
<p><u>Option 1</u></p> <p>Option 1 would adversely impact on student parents with dependents and could have implications on their studies.</p> <p>Magee parents who study or work mainly at the campus and/or who live in the central area are well served by the existing University provision (except that waiting lists indicate that expansion is required to meet needs). There are very few alternatives for these parents in the City so that childcare vouchers would not have any useful function for these parents.</p> <p>Option One may well disadvantage staff financially as Busy Bee vouchers (at max. £55 per week) can only be used to pay for a fraction of the fee of alternative good-quality care.</p> <p>A system of giving out vouchers might be the fairest support in a situation where plenty of childcare and choice is available. This is definitely not the case in and around Coleraine, where a voucher system therefore wouldn't work.</p> <p>Identified in the Options Summary (Appendix 2) as meeting Criterion 1, but this contradicts the findings of the 2005 survey, where 10 out of 32 respondents identified that the campus childcare provision was a factor in them taking up a place/employment with the University of Ulster.</p> <p>Option 1 is identified as meeting Criterion 5, but the University's reputation if withdrawing existing childcare provision will be detrimentally impacted, since the reputation of the provision is consistently and uniformly seen as higher than private childcare providers.</p> <p>Considering the current economic climate, it is hoped that the University of Ulster would not add to the number of unemployed people in Northern Ireland by making 32 members of staff redundant.</p> <p>Option 1 would have negative impact not only on the individuals involved, but also on the local economy.</p> <p>Option 1 – 12 months notice is inadequate in terms of accessing alternative childcare arrangements.</p> <p>The emphasis in the criteria on flexibility and diversity of provision would appear to be too strong.</p> <p>What most parents require is top quality childcare convenient to either their home or place of work.</p> <p>What seems to be missing in the analysis is the fact that there is already choice.</p>

Key Issues

Option 1 cont'd

For a significant minority who have neither relatives who can help nor trusted local child minders, the crèche providers an invaluable service. Therefore Option 1 will not contribute further to “meeting children’s needs”.

Is redeployment of staff really a mitigating factor? Are the childcare staff likely to either want to relocate within the University or have the skills to do so?

Option 2

Opposition because of cost implications for student parents.

Doesn't apply to SSC in Coleraine.

Although the maintenance of quality cannot be guaranteed, childcare facilities are routinely inspected by Ofsted and will ensure that an appropriate and safe environment is provided.

Concerns about the quality of provision in the private sector.

External provider would not be answerable to the University in the same way as existing on-campus facilities which could potentially result in a situation where their profit-driven motives have a negative impact.

Provision may indeed be reduced if the priority given to staff and students was effected by the facility being opened to the public/community.

Option 3

Option 3 favoured, although this would be a price increase for student parents it means we can still use the facilities provided on campus.

The best option and much fuller data than that presented in the report would be required to calculate whether there is indeed any “deficit”.

Clarification on the amount the University is prepared to “subsidise”.

Management options need to be reviewed in order to increase the viability of the service.

Stepping Stones Crèche is financially viable, even if including additional costs for rent.

Why have none of the options of alternative accommodation proved possible for Stepping Stones Crèche?

Key Issues

Option 3 cont'd

Option 3 is identified as failing to meet Criterion 3, yet it is the most likely of all options to meet this criterion. Continuity of care arrangements will automatically be impacted by Option 2 and 3.

Option 3 is regarded as being mitigated by the possibility of increased use of hardship funds. The Consultation does not provide a firm commitment to using cost saving in this way.

The areas of crèche marketing, sales and financial management are not discussed in detail in the report and yet a review of the figures provides clues as to how these are fertile areas for improvement in the existing crèche provision. Historically Magee crèche has been difficult to get into.

Issues of non-payment may be a concern and yet no deposit, payment in advance, etc. seem to be in place. Room to market the crèche more effectively, to introduce tighter financial management, to increase the utilisation rate and not to lose so many parents off the end of long waiting lists while those above them do not take up places.

Consideration of more commercially viable services, such as after-school care could be financially lucrative.

Option 4

Option favoured by some consultees due to the satisfaction of level of care and service.

We have never called into question the quality of service and importance of the service to our work/life balance that already exists.

Consultees believed this option would be accepted as a recommendation, given the fact that the review of childcare provision has been initiated in the first place.

In my option, criterion 4 is flawed because the conditions for all campuses are different. For all other criteria, keeping the Stepping Stones Crèche scores positively.

Are there any options that have not been included? If so, it would be helpful if you could provide details in comparison to the criterion identified in the report. If you comments are campus specific, please state which campus.

Key Issues

Main option that has not been included in an extension of Option 3 that is change and development of existing provision. The Magee parents' survey indicated that there is demand and therefore need for after-school and holiday care for primary age children, amongst staff, students and community parents.

Consider the following:

- The lack of alternative childcare facilities;
- The comparatively small financial contribution from the UU, which could easily be distributed between parents;
- The space available on the Coleraine campus;
- The "rural" location; and
- A particular need to promote Section 75.

Perhaps, costs could be reduced by reducing the full-time staff complement in favour of a supplemented arrangement that utilised lower cost student labour.

Option 3, while included, has not been fully explored.

Increase charges slightly perhaps with a lower rate for students than staff.

A slight increase in charges would be outweighed by the convenience and reassurance of having childcare facilities on campus for students and staff.

Tighter financial management; pay in advance; direct debit, etc. are not discussed. Taken along with an increase in payments by parents to the market rate as set out in the report, there is no reason why the crèches cannot continue to provide excellent childcare.

Do you have any suggestions to improve equality of opportunity for the nine categories and/or good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? If you comments are campus specific, please state which campus.

Key Issues

The University crèches are more economical and provide a more flexible service and are close to the place of study/work to allow use of public transport. Therefore, they supply a service to people who otherwise couldn't afford it.

By keeping the on-campus childcare facilities, the University would further equality of opportunity and relations of persons of different backgrounds, particularly in Coleraine.

The Magee crèche brings together parents and children from all ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Are there any other comments you would like to make in regard to this pro forma or the consultation process generally?

Key Issues

Recommend that a Day Nursery Management Committee is formed as soon as possible.

The on-line questionnaire for staff was too limited in scope and did not really allow staff to express their views.

The questionnaire was not made available to parents from the community.

The pro forma is not an easy document to fill. The process is very time-consuming.

Part of the review of childcare provision comprises the economic impact of existing provision and alternatives. This information isn't available. Only the EQIA has been made public, but mostly economic arguments are used against current provision. Therefore, insufficient information is available to provide a full picture.

Throughout the document it becomes clear that the University is committed to supporting student parents, but is less interested in supporting their staff with childcare other than Busy Bee vouchers.

The needs/wishes of students that the report cited was based on 126 students out of 23,800 (0.5%) overall and it is a self-selecting sample, therefore not representative.

The consultation period was entirely within students' vacation.

Many staff and student may have chosen the Coleraine campus because of the on-campus facility (including my husband and me).

The UU vision of itself includes "regional engagement" and says "UU makes a major contribution to social development in NI" for which provision of facility for childcare would be a prime example.

Disabled students and staff are likely to profit from convenient childcare facilities.

UU Wants to attract foreign students which are often more mature and have families. UU should have consulted foreign students with children about their needs/wishes for childcare support, which are likely to differ from NI students.

I think the report is of excellent quality and that the issues have been carefully considered and clearly reported. I felt that the report was nicely presented and very well constructed.

Very high quality of childcare was the most consistent feature of both the survey of users. Under Option 1 and 2 this can no longer be assured since alternative providers are stated by respondents to be of lower, and in some cases, unacceptable quality. Therefore, Option 1 and Option 2 do NOT meet Criterion 3.

Key Issues

For those reliant on part-time provision of childcare, Option 2 and 3 fail to meet Criterion 1. The likelihood of private providers offering part-time provision has not been addressed in the consultation.

The removal of access to the salary sacrifice scheme will have a considerable financial impact.

The major stakeholders identified by the consultation are students, yet this consultation has been conducted out of term time, when students are not generally available.

Option 3 has been an option since the 2005 survey, but there is no evidence that this option has been properly explored. No business case has been put forward by the University to understand or explore its potential viability.

The pro forma is difficult to use. While set questions and format may make the collation of responses more straightforward, the framework provided for responses is very limited and limiting.

Pro forms document 'wording' is difficult to understand and as a result I am concerned my views on the EQIA will not be well communicated to the review panel.

My husband is a full-time student in UU. It is very convenient for us to see our son in the University crèche.

We do not have a vehicle and it is not expensive for us to travel to the University with the public transport. We cannot afford for the childcare because we don't get any child benefit or child tax credit.

Having read the report I am no clearer on exactly why the University crèche performs poorly compared with commercial providers.

One major 'selling' point to me as a potential new employee was the Ulster was renowned to be a family friendly working environment and this had a huge impact on my decision to work at here. The closure of the facility would drastically change this perception of Ulster.

Rather than a discussion of options for discontinuation of crèche facilities, I would much prefer to be reviewing a document which sets out the measures required to overturn the losses at Magee crèche.

I would urge decision makers to arrange to visit the crèche facilities if they have not already done so.

We are disappointed that our request for an extension to the deadline for responses was refused.

We hope that this consultation will have a positive outcome for the children in the nurseries currently and for all University of Ulster students and staff.

Key Issues

Current mixed provision is ideal for parent users of the service as it allows parental choice and takes into account individual situations which are also diverse.

As a former Doctoral student with a young child, I would not have been able to complete my course of study if the on-campus crèche was not available. Familial childcare support was not forthcoming and I was not prepared to compromise on the quality of care for my child.

I believe it is crucial that the University retains current on-campus crèche facilities to both attract and retain new students with dependents and believe that the closure of same would have massive negative ramifications on how the University is perceived by potential students and the wider community.

The staff have been wonderful – their professionalism, dedication and caring manner means it has been much easier for me to leave my precious child off each day, safe in the knowledge that he is being cared for when I cannot be there for him.

Reassuring for me to know that I could be at the crèche within a matter of minutes if my child was ill or in the event of any other emergency.

It will affect our work/life balance as we have chosen the nursery in Jordanstown to accommodate flexible working hours to maximise time at work. If we have to make alternative arrangements for childcare this will have an adverse impact on our work/life balance in terms of trying to find suitable care provision that accommodates our working pattern. Waiting lists in quality childcare provisions are 12-18 months, also it is important to note that working parents who are not 100% satisfied with their childcare will find work/life balance harder to achieve.

Table 7 Specific Comments relating to the Consultation Report

Key Issues	Action
<p>Staff at Jordanstown Day Nursery</p> <p>4.3 The report claims that we have 15 full-time staff but this information is incorrect. We currently only have 12 staff, including the manager. This excludes the cook.</p> <p><u>Baby Room</u> The staff ratio in the Baby room is 1 staff to 3 babies, requiring 4 full-time members of staff in order for us to have our full quota of babies. The report claims that we are able to take 15 babies, however in accordance with Social Services regulations we are actually only permitted to take 12.</p> <p><u>Toddler Room</u> The report claims that we are able to take 20 children but because of the staff ratio in the Toddler Room; 1 staff to 3 children if they are under the age of 2 years and 1 staff to 4 children if they are over the age of 2. The Toddler Room is able to take children from the age of 18 months; this is the reason why only 14 places can only be allocated if there are children under the age of 2 and 16 places if they are over the age of 2.</p> <p><u>Pre-School</u> 16 places allocated at present with 2 full-time members of staff on a 1 to 8 ratio. However, we would need to employ a new member of staff if the numbers were to rise.</p> <p>4.5 <u>Table 2</u> The unused percentage is stated at 42.8%. We believe this to be incorrect because the nursery has the correct number of children in accordance with the regulations for ratios of members of staff to children.</p> <p>One staff member has been part-time since January 2008 and the University has yet to employ a new member of staff for the two remaining days for that part-time week. One member of staff has been on Maternity leave since May 2008. This results in places unable to be filled due to lack of staff.</p> <p>Our waiting list currently stands at: 37 for the Baby Room; 49 for the Toddler Room; and 22 for the Pre-School Room.</p> <p>We are actually only registered for 42 children and not 50 as stated in the report. We currently have 41 children enrolled. Our staff does not currently include banking staff. Therefore, we need to err on the side of caution to make sure that we don't have an oversubscription of children in proportion to staff as Social Services would revoke registration or close us down.</p>	<p>The report stated that 15 staff were employed (inc. full and part-time and any staff that may be off on sick leave or maternity leave).</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Occupancy rates in the report relate to number of reasons why spaces/sessions may be unused including the type of childcare contract (i.e. mostly part-time)</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>The Day Nursery at Jordanstown is registered for 50 children.</p>

Key Issues	Action
<p>Staff at Jordanstown Day Nursery cont'd</p>	
<p>4.9 In regard to the financial report that you have given, we would like to know why this build up of debt has been allowed to accumulate over such a long period of time without appropriate actions being taken sooner to combat this.</p> <p>We believe that if appropriate actions had been taken sooner then this vast deficit would not have accumulated and that cost cutting measures could have been implemented over a period of time to ensure a reduction of ongoing costs for the future.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The major charge to the Day Nurseries is the cost of staff. Staff are paid for all sick leave. Over the past three years it has also been necessary to employ additional staff to cover maternity leave for 4 staff totalling 24 months and sick leave totalling 17 months.</p>
<p>4.11 Our current fees in comparison to other nurseries are considerably lower. Our fees are currently £460 per 4 week month, whereas many other nurseries are currently charging between £500 and £600 per month for full-time places.</p> <p>The University also offers a 10% discount for full-time places, which no other nursery offers and in our opinion is not helping to make the nursery financially feasible.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>4.16 There has been no agency staff employed since 2004 on the Jordanstown campus. See 4.5.</p> <p>In regards to Annual Leave and sick pay, this takes place right across the board within the University. The report also refers to payments for Maternity leave for members of staff within the nursery. The suggested changes would clearly be a breach of their rights as they should be treated the same as other Grade 2 staff throughout the University such as reception staff and we believe that any changes would amount to discrimination towards the nursery staff.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>4.22 The University of Ulster Day Nursery does not charge for Bank Holidays or emergency days and again with regards to 4.11, no other day nursery offers this. If these charges were implemented this could help to accrue additional finances.</p> <p>The report also states that the number of sessions for part-time is 6 when in actual fact it is 5. However, we would like to suggest a change in the minimum of session requirements as this would also enable us to take in more children.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>Our staff believe that the University is missing the main aim and objectives of the Nursery, which is to provide child care facilities for staff and students within the University. To open at 7.30am like other day nurseries is not necessary because staff members are lecturers do not start until 9am and this also applies to the 5.30pm finish because this provides sufficient time for the staff and students to leave and collect their children.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

Response from an Individual

Page 10 – Current occupancy rates are not contextualized. It is understood that the low rate at Jordanstown may be due to the lack of staff (due to non-replacements) rather than the lack of applicants. It would have been useful to give an estimate of waiting lists as a fairer indicator of demand and therefore need.

Page 10/11 – does not profile the children themselves by gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. which may vary from their parents/adoptive parents/carers. Similarly the profile of staff and student users does not profile their spouses/parents who may be of same/different genders/religions/ethnicities.

Page 11 – Costs are unclear. It is not possible to ascertain from this data whether there is really a “deficit”, how this maps out according to campus and indeed what the University regards as its reasonable contribution.

Page 12 – Income section requires further analysis clarification, e.g. what is the University saving through salary sacrifice? Might this saving be better for the University than general usage of Busy Bees vouchers? What might the University lose in terms of student fees if the nursery places are no longer available?

Page 12 – financial support section for students is confusing. If it is saying that students receive up to £149 per week (for 1 child) in childcare grant, for up to 52 weeks, what is the problem with Option 3 (asking students to sign for longer contracts and raising fees slightly to cover the small “deficit”). This all needs clarification.

Page 13 – financial support for staff section needs to show the comparative saving for staff using the salary sacrifice scheme to indicate the difference in “real money”. After all, vouchers can only provide around a quarter – third of the cost of fees at good quality private nurseries.

Page 15, Table 5 – It would have been useful to have given the full range (good quality nurseries can cost more than £130 per week) and to have cross-tabulated with an indicator of quality (such as, one taken from publicly available inspection reports); also Page 18, Section 4.32 – It might have been useful to have contextualized this: many students may attend campus 9 hours a week or less (depending on whether full- or part-time) and mainly study at home, whereas staff are likely to be at campus for much longer periods.

Noted.

The University does not hold equality monitoring data on children using the Day Nurseries.

Noted.

Noted. The Working Group will explore costs and savings as part of a proposed new financial model.

The Working Group has agreed to implement Option 3.

Noted. The Working Group will explore costs and savings as part of a proposed new financial model.

Noted.