**Dear MP**

**CAMPAIGN TO KEEP EARLY YEARS SAFE AND FUNDED**

I am writing to you as a local MP to ask for your support in our efforts to improve workplace and community safety in nurseries and early years settings in the immediate context of Covid-19 and for a series of measures to shore up and improve the immediate and future resourcing of the sector.

UNISON represents members in many roles throughout this sector.

**Covid-19 Opening**

As you will be aware, nursery schools and early years facilities are currently required to remain open to all children.

We are told by scientists that we need to reduce contacts so that levels of Covid-19 infections and transmission in the community will fall. In this light, we believe that to exclude nurseries and early years from the lockdown is likely to adversely affect health and wellbeing in our communities as well as that of the UNISON members who work in these services.

These workplaces are recognised as posing a significant risk of spreading the virus. Public Health England reports that 10% of coronavirus outbreaks or clusters in education have occurred in early years settings.

Nationally, UNISON is asking the government to take urgent action to mandate maintained nurseries and the early years sector to admit key worker and vulnerable children only, as in other educational settings. We are also asking for parents to be granted automatic furlough should they need to care for and educate their children at home during the pandemic.

We ask for your support in making our case on these immediate measures to central government and the local authority.

**Immediate and long-term funding of the sector**

UNISON believes that nursery schools give children the best start in life and provide vital support for people in our local communities. However they have been struggling to maintain standards and resourcing following years of chronic underfunding. The current pandemic has added to this strain as the sector has not received any additional funding to support maintenance of safe workplaces and services in the circumstances dictated by the pandemic.

The very survival of nursery schools and the sector is under threat. Without immediate action from government, these may close.

We wish to see the immediate provision of emergency funding to the sector to cover additional costs incurred due to Covid-19 and we believe that a long-term funding formula for maintained nurseries and the early years sector as is needed soon as possible to maintain current funding and to cover the additional costs of operating during the pandemic.

The sector would be helped immensely if funding allocations can be guaranteed on the basis of the 2019/20 pupil numbers until the pandemic is over.

We are asking you as the local MP to add your voice to this call for funding this much needed sector of education sector.