

Anonymous:

Getset Staff Member

Are members aware of the loss not only of frontline staff but of managers with many years of experience and comprehensive knowledge of safeguarding and child development? (Community Development Officers & Early Help Officers roles are being deleted). How confident are you that this is matched by partners in other services? Also Play Workers who deliver Level 2 groups are being deleted and Level 3 Team Leaders are being reduced. This brings the total number of staff losing jobs closer to 80 not 60. Why is this not highlighted in the report and why is the proposed new getset structure not being made available to cabinet? Can Somerset afford to lose these skills? Some of these staff have worked for SCC for 20 + years.

The cuts to getset are no reflection on the dedicated staff and managers that have provided an excellent service to local families and their children. These difficult decisions are purely based on what the council can afford to provide at this time. The total FTE reduction across getset is 61.78 FTE, including managers, playworkers, family support workers and family intervention workers. The staff consultation is for staff and unions to consider and respond to.

The public consultation will shortly take place to consult on the future provision of the level 2 service; SCC will look to engage with all partners, stakeholders, service users and staff to understand impacts and possible opportunities.

Getset Worker

All staff have been told that they can only apply for redeployment positions on the same grade as their substantive posts or one grade below. The current Strategic Manager is an interim position as detailed in the consultation papers from March 18 and subsequent Job Description and the acting Strat. Manager's substantive position is an Operations Manager position which is being deleted and so will no longer be available. As this is a priority position when will this post be advertised for people to apply for and what is the timeline for the Substantive vacancy to be filled?

It would be inappropriate to respond to an individual's situation and position. No posts will be available until the staff consultation is concluded and the final structure agreed.

Getset Worker

The proposal that went before cabinet for decision was an immediate reduction of the Level 2 getset early help by 50% and a reduction of Level 3 getset early help. Following this approval the consultation papers were released which outline the cuts and provide a future staffing structure. Looking at these figures they are substantially higher than the 20% and 50% proposals considered by cabinet for either staff level or financial cuts. How are these figures accounted for, and should the approval given by cabinet for the proposed cuts be overturned due to this being made on inaccurate and misleading information?

These percentage figures were given in August staff meetings as a very early indication of the likely reductions of family support workers (level 2) and family intervention workers (level 3), as proposals were still being prepared for cabinet and

the HR Business Cases. The details of actual staff reductions are included in the staff consultation paper that has now been shared with the unions and staff. The data in the reports to cabinet included information on open cases and caseloads and the total savings that would be achieved by the proposal.

Getset Worker

In the consultation papers released there is a new staffing structure included. At a consultation meeting held with staff 10/10/18 getset workers were informed by Philippa Granthier that the staffing structure included in the consultation papers does not reflect what the staffing structure will actually be in reality as demand in different areas will need to be taken into account in staffing levels for that area. How can staff and the public be asked to consult on information that is incorrect and does not represent the actual structure going forward? What is the actual structure going forward, why has this not been included in the consultation papers and when will this be released? If staffing levels are intended to be higher in some areas, how does this comply with SCC's policy of maximum supervisee numbers?

The staffing reductions outlined in CAF 14a is not a public consultation but is a staff consultation only. The structure chart shared with staff and unions shows the posts and total staff numbers that are being proposed for getset. The comments made at the staff meeting were that the bases for those staff would be dependent on local factors including need and demand for the service; this is how getset currently operates. The actual structure for the service will not be confirmed until the staff consultation is completed.

Mum – Anonymous

I am a new young mum and I have really appreciated the support that I have had from getset. I really enjoy coming to the young mum's group as I suffer from anxiety but I know the getset workers and parents in this group and I get lots of help. I would hate to see getset lose their jobs and there not to be these supportive groups

Thank you for taking the time to comment on the support you have received from getset. These are difficult decisions, and no one wants to see staff losing their jobs.

Separate proposals around the future provision of getset level 2 service are shortly to be the subject of a public consultation. This will also consider what other support is available across Somerset and what are the likely impacts of change.

Family – Anonymous

I am a single parent of a 3 month old baby boy, I myself am 20 years old. Before I met my getset worker I was in a dark place. I had no money, no food, nowhere to live, I had no support and being 7 months pregnant this all played a big part in my wellbeing and my mental health. I never asked for help, I just wallowed in my own self pity. But when meeting my getset worker that all changed. I got given the support that I had secretly been crying out for. I got the confidence to make a stop to my self pity and focus on my baby. I got the housing support I needed meaning I had a suitable home for my baby to come home to. I had food in my cupboards and I had a smile on my face. getset are there when you need them the most. I can't imagine how I would be now if it wasn't for them and the support I have received. I actually look forward to seeing my getset support worker once a week and knowing any problem that I face that may be too big for me to tackle alone, I will never be too big

for my support worker. getset is a breath of fresh air that I needed and that I will continue to need for the foreseeable future.

Thank you for taking the time to comment on the support you have received from getset. There will be no immediate changes to getset.

Separate proposals around the future provision of getset level 2 service are shortly to be the subject of a public consultation. This will also consider what other support is available across Somerset and what are the likely impacts of change.

In the mean time I hope you continue to go from strength to strength, and look to use the wider support that is available to you and your baby in your local area.

Yeovil Mum – Anonymous

getset groups are very helpful for parents who do not know people in the area. I moved to Yeovil not long ago and I find it very helpful to have somewhere to go to socialise with my baby. The groups are a brilliant place to go to get your baby to interact with different ages of children. Some parents can't afford to send their children to nursery or childminders, so groups give them a chance to interact, learn and socialise.

Thank you for taking the time to comment on the support you have received from getset. There will be no immediate changes to getset.

Separate proposals around the future provision of getset level 2 service are shortly to be the subject of a public consultation. This will also consider what other support is available across Somerset and what are the likely impacts of change.

Anonymous

I have worked as part of a Taunton One Team for 4 years and have seen various changes to getset services. I have valued the service and appreciated working together with Family Intervention Workers. Prior to April 2017 L2 and L3 FIWs regularly played a significant part in multi-agency one team working. In addition to sharing advice with agencies about issues relating to early intervention they were able to suggest when a referral was appropriate and promoted their service. I was shocked and disappointed that following changes to management in April 2017 a decision was made that L3 FIWs would be represented at one team meetings but not L2. I challenged this, not least because a great deal of the families causing concern discussed at meetings have children under school age and one teams are aimed at providing early intervention. In my experience when agencies do not participate in one team meetings other professionals miss opportunities to make referrals. Over time I think this has most certainly happened and perhaps agencies have forgotten how valuable a service L2 is. There are 10 one teams across Somerset and I would suggest the decision last year to restrict L2 attendance has had a significant impact on referrals. I think the potential loss of a L2 service would be catastrophic in an area where there is a busy children's centre and so many families with young children.

Thank you for your comments. Getset staff have continued to attend multi agency meetings like the One Teams and Team Around the School, and they represent the whole service when they are in attendance.

This proposal is to reduce staffing levels but to maintain a smaller level 2 service. Separate proposals around the future provision of getset level 2 service are shortly to be the subject of a public consultation. This will also consider what other support is available across Somerset and what are the likely impacts of change. In November a public consultation will be launched to explore the future provision of the service.

Anonymous getset worker

A reduction in staff means a reduction in service. If my caseload increases to 20 there is no way I can deliver groups or parenting course as well. I won't have time to go to clinics or do anything "extra" to help families. I cannot believe that CAF14a will not impact on the standards of case recording or recording Team Around the Child Meetings or agreeing safety plans. It is inevitable that more responsibility for caseload means more hours spent on that and less on other services. Taking this into account have the council followed Sure Start Statutory Guidelines in regard to the reduction of services in Children's Centres in Somerset? There is a duty to consult with service users and partners. anonymous for fear of repercussions.

I can understand the concern that getset staff will have regarding the planned changes to caseloads. As part of good management practice the capacity of all casework teams across Children's Services is regularly reviewed and adjusted to address demand. There is no national guidance on the appropriate level of caseloads for early help practitioners, and practice varies across Local Authorities depending on service focus.

There is an established supervision policy in getset. Core to this is assessing the quality of interventions by practitioners based on an assessment of family needs and outcomes of intervention. The supervision programme is supported by an audit framework which provides an opportunity for learning about how to maximise the effectiveness of interventions. The supervising manager is required to ensure that the practitioner has capacity to undertake the work and take action should there be evidence that the practice is not to the high standard expected. This typically includes providing additional training and support and reallocating work if necessary.

This specific proposal is not to reduce children's centre services. A public consultation will be launched in November to explore the future provision of the service, in line with that required by Sure Statutory Guidelines. The decisions made by Cabinet in February 2018 re Children's Centre buildings remains unchanged.

Getset worker

Staff work incredibly hard to support vulnerable families across the county. Why on earth are Level 2 and Level 3 services being cut when it is getset and Early Help have made a direct contribution in the "Journey to Good"? What will Ofsted say at their next inspection? Do senior managers still think it will be a positive outcome

These cuts are no reflection on the excellent work that the service provides and the significant hard work undertaken by the staff and managers to improve the service over the past 3 years. Unfortunately, the council cannot afford to continue funding the service and has to concentrate its funding on its core statutory duties. The council is still committed to improving children's services and getting to a good Ofsted rating, and that work continues with partners.

Getset worker

Getset was subject to a consultation and restructuring in the spring this year. New posts were created with staff being appointed with effect from June 2018. How can the data that was used to as a basis to create the new posts now be used to reduce the very same service?

The restructure which was implemented in June 2018 was designed to prepare for the proposed integration with the Public Health Nursing team from April 2019; after April 2019 further staffing changes would then have been made. Unfortunately, the financial position of the council means that savings have to be made more quickly and more deeply than was originally planned.

Getset worker

Why haven't SLT taken pay cuts to help towards the deficit? Why is there a Strategic Manager in the structure for the drastically reduced getset service? This post was supposed to have been interim. Couldn't the new getset service come under Prevention and be overseen by Strategic Manager – Prevention? An Operations Manager could manage the 4 Senior Team Leaders which would be cheaper and save SCC money.

Thank you for your comments. The proposed structure is still out for staff consultation, so this would be helpful to feed into that process. The current proposal is to remove 2 Operations Managers and retain an interim Strategic Manager.

Separate proposals around the future provision of getset level 2 service are shortly to be the subject of a public consultation. This will also consider what other support is available across Somerset and what are the likely impacts of change.

Getset worker

How will you deal with the unavoidable impact on social workers as a result of the getset cuts? There is no doubt the cuts to getset will result in an increase to referrals to children's social care, whether it be 6 months or 2 years, it will happen.

This proposal is not to withdraw the getset service, but to manage current demand by a planned increase in caseloads. SCC will be consulting shortly on separate proposals for the future provision of the service in the context of the early help offer across Somerset and understanding the possible impacts. Unfortunately, the council no longer has the funds to afford everything it once did.

Getset worker

In Wellington the Children's Centre has been closed. The community were told it's people not buildings that matter but now these people- experienced Family Support

Workers- are being made redundant. Some have been working with families in Wellington for 12 years! On top of this there is no support locally for adults and children who have been the victims of domestic abuse. The Chill & Chat support group has stopped running and the getset Level 3 service have no plans to deliver an Overcoming Abuse course in Wellington in the near future. There are women we are working with who need this support desperately and our local Health Visitors also have a long waiting list. Who will support these families when we have gone?

The changes to the Wellington Children's Centre building were approved in February 2018 and work on implementing those decisions continues. Unfortunately, the council can no longer afford everything it once did; however, this proposal is to retain a county wide getset service with reduced staffing but with a planned increase in caseloads. SCC will be consulting shortly on separate proposals for the future provision of the service in the context of the early help offer across Somerset and understanding the possible impacts.

Anon Getset

HOW will Somerset County Council now provide Early Help to vulnerable families with the likelihood of getset level 2 service being cut and children's centre closures throughout the region? Are you in a position to provide this help as it seems you are not?

SCC is not and should not be the only provider of early help services; it is the responsibility of all agencies who work with children. SCC can no longer afford to provide the services it once did.

Getset worker

With the imminent reduction in family support workers, is the senior management structure in getset also needing reductions to be made? If so where and when are these likely to happen

The staff consultation paper outlines the reduction of 3 senior manager positions down to 1 interim post. The paper also removes other management positions, namely 6 Early Help Officers at level 2 and 3 Senior Team Leaders at level 3.

Getset worker

Has anyone considered staff welfare with the increase of case load? Additionally the impact on the support and time we can give to each family?

These proposals where we are looking to reduce staff numbers are incredibly difficult for the staff involved, and they are being supported in a variety of ways. The staff that remain will continue to be closely supervised as to their caseloads and welfare; managers take daily decisions to ensure the workload is managed and that families receive timely and effective support that helps them achieve positive outcomes.

Getset worker

The Director of Children's Services has not submitted the correct data to demonstrate how the service is set up. Currently, FSW at level 3 hold 12-15 cases and some families have several children up to 8-10 at times

The information that has been presented to cabinet and scrutiny committee are average caseloads across the county. Clearly within that there are some Family Support Workers who hold higher caseloads and some who have less. The Managers of the service have daily oversight on the capacity of their teams and the referrals coming into the service.

Anonymous Getset worker

Given that there's not been a dramatic socio-economic shift in Somerset to alleviate levels of deprivation, and thereby reduce demand for the service, then how confident are you that the need for getset intervention will continue to follow the figures for summer 2018? How can we be sure that this will not spike and match early higher levels? How will needs be met if the number of referral rise beyond the 1:20 ratio

The financial situation in the council means urgent savings must be made quickly, concentrating on its core statutory responsibilities. It is clear from Ofsted that partners need to do more to meet their responsibilities to provide early help for children and families, and that not purely falling to the council.

Both the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board and Early Help Commissioning Board will continue to monitor local information on need and demand across Somerset. Children's services managers will continue to monitor referrals and caseloads as part of regular supervision with their staff.

Anonymous Get set worker

Please could you explain the rationale for the increase in ratio of cases to staff which appears to be based solely on the views of Julian Wooster rather than any research into the ratios held in other similar Local Authorities in terms of geography , deprivation etc. Can Mr Wooster identify any another authority that has similar ratios for staffing to cases?

There is no national guidance on the appropriate level of caseloads for early help practitioners, and practice varies across Local Authorities depending on service focus.

There is an established supervision policy in getset. Core to this is assessing the quality of interventions by practitioners based on an assessment of family needs and outcomes of intervention. The supervision programme is supported by an audit framework which provides an opportunity for learning about how to maximise the effectiveness of interventions. The supervising manager is required to ensure that the practitioner has capacity to undertake the work and take action should there be evidence that the practice is not to the high standard expected. This typically includes providing additional training and support and reallocating work if necessary.

Anonymous Getset worker

Please could I have clarification of the consultation that took place with partner agencies to ensure that they have both the inclination and capacity to take on any additional work to replace that done by IGetSet Family Support staff.

I can confirm that partnership meetings to discuss these matters have taken place.

The separate proposal CAF-14b which was approved by Cabinet in September, outlines the requirement for a public consultation which will include the public, stakeholders, staff and service users to explore the future provision of the service. This will start in November 2018.

Anonymous Getset worker

Is there data showing referrals received by the hub for triaging and how many received at each level have been triaged and sent to areas at a higher or lower level? For example – a referral put in at level 2 is triaged at level 3 or vice versa. Until the last few months level 2 were receiving a number of referrals that had come in at level 3 but triaged at level 2, this no longer happens. It seems too much of a coincidence that level 2 referrals have plummeted as level 3 ones have increased over the same time frame.

As part of good management practice the capacity of all casework teams across Children's Services is regularly reviewed and adjusted to address demand. The adherence to thresholds is also monitored carefully in the Early Help Advice Hub and First Response teams. When cases are received into getset they are allocated carefully to workers, and these open cases would be recorded within the correct service area. Both the cabinet and scrutiny reports show there has been a reduction of children in need cases in children's social care and a corresponding increase in cases coming into the getset service.

Anonymous worker

I see that the ratio for cases to FSW/FIW has been reduced since the initial proposal. Is it true that the decision to increase the ration of cases was based on the CSC 1:17 ratio taking into account that the risk and complexity of getset's cases is lower. The CSC is 1 social worker to 17 children – not families whereas the getset ratios are based on families. Does this mean that Think Family is no longer relevant and getset only work with children identified?

The think family approach is still very relevant, as without addressing the needs of the whole family it is unlikely change for a child will be achieved. Getset will still work with families and caseloads will be managed in this way.

There is no national guidance on the appropriate level of caseloads for early help practitioners, and practice varies across Local Authorities depending on service focus. It isn't appropriate therefore to compare that with the caseloads of social workers.

There is an established supervision policy in getset. Core to this is assessing the quality of interventions by practitioners based on an assessment of family needs and outcomes of intervention. The supervision programme is supported by an audit framework which provides an opportunity for learning about how to maximise the effectiveness of interventions. The supervising manager is required to ensure that the practitioner has capacity to undertake the work, and take action should there be evidence that the practice is not to the high standard expected. This typically includes providing additional training and support and reallocating work if necessary.