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**Working Report on Job Satisfaction Survey of  
Cleaners and Caretakers  
Sheffield Education Department**



**WE'RE COMING OUT  
FROM  
UNDER THE CARPET**

**PROJECT TO DEFEND AND IMPROVE LOCAL AUTHORITY  
SERVICES AND JOBS IN SHEFFIELD**

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**Sheffield  
Education Department  
Cleaners and Caretakers  
IMPROVE  
JOB SATISFACTION  
to  
FIGHT CUTS,  
PRIVATISATION  
AND RATE CAPPING**

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Cartoons:  
Navvie Brick

# INTRODUCTION

The City Council is asking all Council workers to join with them in the defence of Council services and jobs. Yet it recognises many workers will not automatically wish to defend their jobs in their present form. We have been ignored, underpaid and undervalued for too long.

Against this background the Employment Department agreed to fund a special Project to Improve and Defend Local Authority Services and Jobs. The idea was to enable a group of stewards and workers from two sections of the Council workforce to have the time and the resources to look critically at ways of both improving and defending the service.

Service to Community Action and Trade Unions (SCAT), the national housing, planning and public service project were commissioned by Sheffield's Economic and Public Sector Development Panel and the Local Government Campaign Working Party to assist with this work. SCAT was chosen for its extensive work experience on public services, in particular on cuts and privatisation. This has included research and analysis, educational workshops, campaign organising and tactics together with worker and user alternatives to improve and expand services.

One group of school cleaners and caretakers has met most weeks between September 1984 and March 1985. Much of our work has concentrated on discussing ways of defending and improving the service and our jobs. During this time we have produced a range of publicity materials. Part of the Project has involved devising and distributing a job satisfaction questionnaire to some 50 schools and discussing the results.

This report details our findings. It reveals widespread dissatisfaction in areas of training, pay, equipment and materials, equal opportunities and promotion prospects. However it also reveals positive aspects of the work such as the convenience of the working hours and the location of the workplace and often great satisfaction at the end results of the work.

We believe that if the Council is to involve school cleaners and caretakers in the defence of their jobs against ratecapping and privatisation then a programme of fundamental improvements must be started.

Whilst we know that in some areas, such as low pay and training, proposals are already under way, these proposals by no means meet all the needs of the workforce as shown by this survey. Whilst some of our proposals will need extra financial resources, some issues can be dealt with without any specific increase in costs.

This report shows what the workforce feels but is not a detailed plan for change. We see it as a working document which we believe should be taken through negotiation channels as fast as possible. Detailed proposals for change should be planned by management in conjunction with the workforce and their union stewards and representatives.

The key danger we see is for this report to disappear into a black hole of Council bureaucracy and management complacency. It presents positive ideas and opportunities which would benefit not only us as workers but also all schools, education and personnel management and the reputation of the authority as a whole.

We must not be brushed under the carpet again.

## **MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **TRAINING**

■ cleaners and caretakers feel a definite need for more training of a higher quality. We fully support the new cleaning and caretaking development panel and urge new training programme as soon as possible.

### **COMMUNICATION**

■ the poor communication between management and caretaking and cleaning and staff needs to be improved. For instance by means of groups of caretakers meeting with all supervisors and on-site meetings in schools. A working group is needed to consider the best ways of improving communication.

### **ATTITUDES TO CLEANING AND CARETAKING STAFF**

■ Cleaners and caretakers are an essential part of school life and must not be seen as an 'extra bit' of the education service. They should be consulted and involved more in school affairs and must be treated as equal members of school staff. The value of our work needs publicising within schools, the Education Department and in other relevant areas.

### **PAY AND CONDITIONS**

■ the present consultations on upgrading the pay and status of caretakers, assistant and mobile caretakers should be finalised as soon as possible.

■ efforts must be made to upgrade cleaners' conditions and pay and grading should be introduced, wherever possible, to allow for promotion prospects.

### **EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS**

■ the existing advisory panel of management and trade unions should have far greater powers. It should immediately be instructed to investigate the achievement of a higher standard of equipment and materials. Cleaners and caretakers must be involved in viewing and choosing the most suitable equipment and materials. Finance must be made available to make these improvements.

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

■ all cleaners should be made aware of opportunities and procedures for changing their job to one of being a caretaker. They should be actively encouraged to apply for these posts.

■ better publicity with improved distribution is needed concerning other job opportunities within Sheffield City Council. Qualification requirements for certain jobs could be relaxed.

### **ACTION ON THIS REPORT**

■ This working report must be distributed as widely as possible and all the recommendations and contents discussed through normal channels.

## SUMMARY

The report is based on detailed questionnaires from over 100 cleaners and caretakers in 24 different schools. It shows both positive and negative aspects of our jobs. The results reveal:

### CLEANERS

- The majority of cleaners feel there should be more training on cleaning methods and materials, health and safety and the use of machines.
- 10% felt the pay was far too low, 45% felt it was too low whilst 40% said it was alright.
- Convenient hours, the nearby workplace, and satisfaction from completing the work were the 3 main positive aspects to the job.
- The list of dislikes was far longer including misuse of toilets, excessive dust and dirt, and arduous lifting and climbing and poor equipment and materials.
- A third of the all cleaners feel women are discriminated against in terms of wages, employment conditions, status and promotion. 11% would be interested in other jobs within Sheffield City Council.
- Many cleaners had positive ideas of how the job and service could be improved. These included increased community use, certain jobs being taken in-house, more hours to do the work.
- A common feeling was that holiday cleaning exploits cleaners by demanding particularly hard work at a time when other Education workers are taking paid holiday.

### CARETAKERS

- Caretakers felt a more comprehensive training programme was needed.
- The 3 aspects of the job most liked were: working with children and other people; the comparative independence and freedom; the variety of work.
- The 3 aspects most disliked were: communication and attitudes from other staff; the pay and the hours.
- There was bitter criticism of the wages: 62% said they were far too low, whilst 33% said they were too low.
- Many caretakers were interested in the other jobs within Sheffield City Council.
- There were many suggestions as to how the job and the service could be improved. These included taking on work presently done by private contractors and opening up the school further for community activities.
- 65% felt there was insufficient equipment provided. Moreover the quality of cleaning materials and machines was often poor.
- There was widespread criticism over the lack of rewards for shifts and unsocial hours and loss of cleaning time due to annual holidays. It was felt the terms of employment should be substantially improved.

# THE CLEANERS REPORT

## SURVEY METHOD

A postal questionnaire was sent out to some 200 cleaners and 50 caretakers and assistant caretakers with a stamped addressed envelope. One questionnaire was used for cleaners and a slightly amended one for caretakers and assistant caretakers. 79 cleaners replied and 23 caretakers making a response rate of 40% and 46% respectively. These figures compare favourably with typical response rates to postal questionnaires. Responses were obtained from 24 different schools ranging from large comprehensives to small primary schools.

## 1. HOURS OF WORK

We asked each cleaner how many hours they worked on average each week and whether they would like the chance to work more hours. The chart below shows the range of hours worked

Less than 19½ hours	76%
20 hours or more	25%

The majority of cleaners work between 12-20 hours. Indeed the average using the Education Department's own statistics is 16 hours 18.6 minutes (\*\*). As part of management's cost cutting exercise a few years ago many cleaners were given contracts of less than 16 hours. This saved the Council paying Employers National Insurance contributions but meant that many cleaners lost maternity and sickness benefits.

46% said they did not want the chance to work extra hours whilst 34% said they would like the chance sometimes and 20% said they definitely would like the opportunity.

## E is for EARLY START



[\*\* according to Education Department statistics there were 2,574 cleaners on 31.3.84.]

## F is for FLOORS



## 2. TRAINING

We asked: 'Do you believe you should have training to do the job'

- 51% said YES
- 45% said NO
- 4% said DON'T KNOW

The majority of cleaners thus feel there should be training for the job and the key issues in training were singled out as:

- health and safety
- use of machines
- cleaning methods
- cleaning materials

We asked a further question as to whether people felt they were provided with enough information about the potential dangers of cleaning materials and other hazards in school. 70% said they were not provided with enough information. (23% said they were, whilst 7% did not know). Those who thought training was necessary were asked to say what kind of training was needed:

**"Cleaning methods, chance of training for other jobs first aid in case of accidents"**

**"We should have approximately 4 weeks being shown how to use the machines and different types of cleaning materials to be used."**

**"Training should be by other experienced workers, making sure that the employee is fully competent at the job before being left alone"**

45% of those who thought there should be training thought it should be 'on-site'. There were differences of opinion as to how long any training course should be and suggestions ranged from 2 days to 6 months or **"as long as necessary"**.

Whilst most of the suggestions centred on the 4 subjects mentioned above other ideas included: more information on exactly what work a cleaner is meant to do; what other jobs were available with the Council; training to be a caretaker or assistant caretaker.

What is clear from all the comments is that although, many people claim "anybody can be a cleaner" or as one person commented "it's just common sense", many of our colleagues know there are many techniques and skills that need to be acquired as well as health and safety problems that need tackling to do the job effectively and safely. Industrial cleaning is not the same as home cleaning.

### 3. PAY

We asked what everyone thought of the wages

GOOD	5%
ALRIGHT	40%
TOO LOW	45%
FAR TOO LOW	10%

Those who thought the rates too low or far too low were asked what they felt was a fair wage for their job for a 39 hour week. Asking such a question is almost meaningless without other information about national wage levels. So two national wage rates were quoted as a reference point. The average basic wage for Manual workers (April 1984 New Earnings Survey) at £114 and the average basic wage for all males in the same month £150.60.

The average wage chosen by people responding was £134.23 equivalent to an hourly rate of £3.44.

There were some comments made saying that the rate for men should be higher than that for women. Other women however strongly disagreed stating firmly that there should be equal pay for equal work.

One particular way of boosting wages recommended was to boost pay for holiday work. As we see later the issue of pay for this work raises strong feelings.



### 4. WHAT IS LIKED ABOUT THE JOB

We asked everyone to say what 2 aspects of the job they liked most about their job and also the two aspects they disliked most of all. 9% of those surveyed didn't fill in any positive or negative reactions whilst a further 8% could only think of things they disliked.

	(of all responses)
CONVENIENT HOURS	26%
FRIENDLY WORKING ATMOSPHERE	17%
CONVENIENT WORKPLACE	16%
SATISFACTION FROM JOB	11%
MISCELLANEOUS REASONS	9%
THE WAGE	8%
BUFFING/POLISHING FLOORS	5%
ABLE TO WORK ON YOUR OWN	5%
HOLIDAYS	4%

Many cleaners felt the convenient hours were the most important issue for them.

**"It fits in well with the rest of the family"**

**"Fits in with children and holidays"**

The way that the hours could be fitted round other commitments or left the daytime free was a very positive factor. At the same time many workers valued the "friendly working atmosphere", the "company", a "good partner", "meeting people" and the "fellow worker companionship". Schools also offer a convenient workplace, near to home, with little or no travelling costs. Other factors which were valued were the satisfaction from seeing the work done:

**"Leaving the classrooms clean and tidy"**

**"Happy children in a clean school".**

Or the satisfaction from polishing the floors. So for many workers there are parts of the job that are valued and that do provide satisfaction. However there are many parts that are not.

## 5. WHAT IS DISLIKED

The answers to what was disliked were even more various

	(of all responses)
TOILET CLEANING	14%
HOLIDAY CLEANING	12%
DUST and DIRT	8%
WINDOW CLEANING	7%
LIFTING, CLIMBING & MOVING FURNITURE	5%
POOR EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS	5%
VANDALISM AND GRAFFITI	4%
SPIT, GUM AND MILK	4%
POOR PAY	4%
CLEANING IN WINTER	4%
WORKING ENVIRONMENT	4%
WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE CARETAKER	3%
OTHER REASONS	29%

We expand these heading in a little more detail:

● **TOILET CLEANING** was singled out as the most objectionable task. The reasons ranged from smelling toilets to "having to clean urine off toilet floors and excreta off toilet walls" and to "removing faeces from waste bins and other obscure places".

● **HOLIDAY CLEANING** was singled out for the following reasons:

"In the holidays we have to do heavy cleaning and extra work for the same wage, men wouldn't put up with it. After all it is different work from the work we do at night, it's much harder and so I think we should be paid better."

"We should get a bonus of some kind with all the extra work i.e. washing from lights to floor".

We return later to this subject.

### ● WINDOW CLEANING

Most responses simply said "cleaning windows" but one person commented:

"cleaning high windows particularly if they aren't safe". There was a lack of information as to when it was safe to go up a ladder and what was expected of the cleaners.

### ● DUST AND DIRT

Whilst you can't expect to do the job without meeting dust and dirt, the amount we have to deal with and how we have to cope is out of the ordinary.

"The rooms I have to clean have a lot of dust - metal work and pottery room. The dry dust is dangerous. I would like a vacuum cleaner to suck the dust up rather than sweep it up with a handbrush, as this makes the dust fly about."

"Getting covered in dust from brushing the carpeted areas".

### ● LIFTING, CLIMBING AND MOVING FURNITURE

Our jobs often demand strenuous physical effort and

some of this is intensely disliked.

"I don't like carrying machines up and down stairs"

"And lifting and moving classroom furniture around"

"Having to climb and descend 4 flights upstairs when changing hot water"

"Climbing to clean walls and windows" and "climbing very high"

### ● POOR EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

So much was said about this throughout the survey that we have combined it all in one section later.

### ● VANDALISM AND GRAFFITI

Cleaning graffiti and dealing with vandalism is a job which is extra to routine. Spending time on this means you have to cut down on normal cleaning.

### ● SPIT GUM AND MILK

The state of toilets is top of this list but there are many other dirty jobs within schools.

"Cleaning up where children have spat on walls, windows and floor. I think it's a health hazard".

"Bubble gum stuck to floor and bins"

"Milk poured into bins..."

### ● POOR PAY

We have already discussed.

### ● CLEANING IN THE WINTER

Snow, sludge, rain and mud all get trampled in in winter and it was felt more time should be allowed to deal with this.

### ● WORK RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE CARETAKER

Relationships between caretakers and cleaners are not always good. Responses remarked on the lack of contact or liaison in some schools. We feel however that the low level of response on this issue was due to the reluctance of cleaners to put their comments on paper and that there is more below the surface.





### ● WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Most people imagine all a cleaners job is inside and in the warm. This is not necessarily so as a number of people pointed out problems in their schools.

**"There's no heating in my section of work"**

**"I have to cross the yard in all weathers"**

Just as important are facilities at work such as being told not to use staff toilets or to move your coat from 'teachers' pegs.

**"There's nowhere to put your personal clothes etc, no first aid box"**

### ● OTHER REASONS

There were a wide range of other factors involved in our work that were positively disliked. These included:

**"Not being able to have your holidays when you want"..."lack of co-operation between teaching staff during school activities"..."the repetition"..."the headmaster"..."cleaning sinks"..."the job"..."children flooding toilets"..."being moved about on different sections"..."no proper store room for equipment"..."scrubbing floors"..."split duty"..."getting up at 5.20 on 5 days a week"..."sand and carpets together" - "not much job satisfaction"..."going home smelling of VIM".**



## 6. WOMEN, JOB PROSPECTS AND DISCRIMINATION.

We asked various questions concerned with womens chances of promotion or alternative employment with the City Council. The first one was: **'Do you think women are discriminated against in any way in the school cleaning service?'**

35% SAID YES  
38% SAID NO  
27% DIDN'T KNOW

Applying these results to the whole workforce it can be calculated that some 900 cleaners feel that they are discriminated against in one way or another. Those who said discrimination existed were very clear why:

**"Cleaners are poorly paid and most cleaners are ladies. Teachers look down on us"**

**"No prospects"**

**"...one seems to be stuck in the same groove..."**

**"School cleaners have no chance of promotion"**

**"Is there a woman supervisor? No!"**

**"They do hard work and get little pay for it. I do not think they are appreciated enough"**

**"Extra jobs or heavier jobs are expected as part of the job but a man would expect bonuses and/or extra time"**

**"The consensus of opinion is, irrespective of how many hours are to be worked once the heavy duty (holiday) cleaning is completed, cleaners should be allowed with pay to take the remainder of the holidays off"**

**"No pension scheme for part time workers"**

**"People think less of cleaners (teachers included)"**

We then asked whether anyone would be interested in becoming an assistant caretaker or a caretaker and whether there were any other jobs within any department of Sheffield City Council that they would be interested in doing.

Interested in becoming an assistant caretaker or caretaker	11%
Not interested	83%
Don't know	6%

Although 11% may appear a low figure, some 280 cleaners could be interested in taking other jobs and there is therefore a large group of interested people who future assistant caretakers and caretakers could be recruited from.

Interested in other jobs with City Council	23%
Not interested	39%
Don't know	32%

Those who were interested fell into 4 groups:

1. The largest group were interested in:

**"Clerical, bookkeeper, receptionist"**

**"Part time telephonist" "General office clerk". "An admin job which I did before becoming a mother"**

2. The second group were interested in Family and Community Services..

**"I'd like to do social work but have no qualifications"**

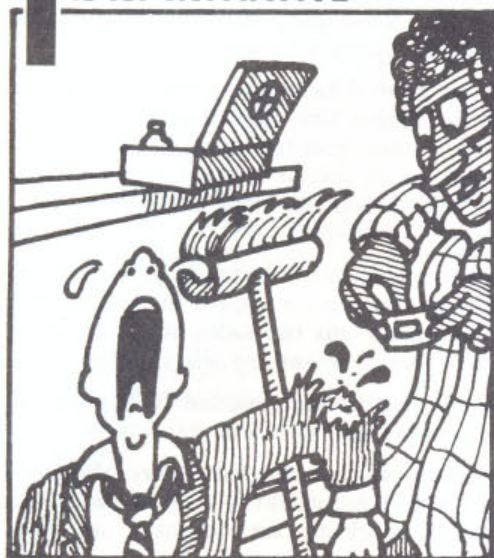
**"Care assistant or home help"**

3. The third group were interested in other jobs within schools such as cleaning supervisor, lunchtime supervisor, kitchen staff.

4. The remaining answers mentioned less strenuous work and wanting to find out about opportunities with similar hours.

So there are many cleaners who feel discriminated against as women and as a cleaner. Moreover many women would like to take on caretakers jobs or to be considered for other jobs within the City Council.

## Q is for INITIATIVE



## 7. IMPROVING THE SERVICE AND THE JOB

We asked a number of questions about how the service could be improved: whether there was other work that could be done by cleaning staff; whether schools could be used more; what, given total control, would cleaners like to change about the job.

When asked: **"How do you think the cleaning and caretaking service could be improved for the benefit of the local community and children?"**

22% said more cleaners and more hours were needed.

**"The cuts in cleaning allocated to our school have meant that the cleaners have more work to do and less time to do it"**

**"More hours needed to really be able to mop every room each night if possible, which it is not now."**

- 19% said better machines and better cleaning materials.
- 12% said more control should be kept over childrens' misuse of classrooms and dropping litter everywhere and writing on walls.
- 6% mentioned the need for training
- 6% said it couldn't be improved as it was very good as it was
- 6% mentioned that hours needed changing or flexi hours should be introduced.
- 6% said improved maintenance eg of leaking mobile classrooms and toilets
- 33% a variety of responses.

The response to: What would you like to change or improve if you had total control over your present job? was also very varied but again the most common response (17%) concerned **"outdated equipment"** and the need for **"improved equipment"**. The rest of the answers were difficult to categorise. Some of the points raised included:

**"Window fasteners repaired thus conserving heat"...**  
**"good working liason between cleaning and teaching staff"...**  
**"the appointment of a working chargehand elected from the cleaning staff."**

**"The wage, the hours, the dirt and conditions"**

**"I would give a bonus to cleaning staff for holiday work. As our school is scrubbed from top to bottom on hands and knees, doing corners, on ladders doing window sills and cleaning windows and cleaning the machine shops"**

**"Better floor coverings that can be more easily maintained"**

Other suggestions included the need for a rest room, cleaners covering for sick staff should be able to accumulate hours towards holidays and the need for relief cleaners

When asked what other work cleaners might be able to do (with pay) within schools suggestions included:

- cleaning and mending curtains
- overseeing or assisting children during after school activities
- outside window contract
- clerical, bookkeeping

Suggestions for how schools could be used more and be of more use for local residents answers included:

- more use at nights especially of specialist facilities such as woodwork, metal work and libraries
- serving meals for the elderly
- holiday activities
- public meetings and hire of hall for parties etc.
- playgroups, whist drives, youth clubs, keep-fit classes
- dances of even weddings
- opening up school playing fields for children in school holidays

However, some people thought their school was already well used.

## Q is for QUALITY



## 8. EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

We asked : "Is there sufficient equipment provided?"

NO 70%

YES 30%

There was a widespread attack on the standard of cleaning materials and cleaning equipment.

**"The Hoover doesn't pick up or falls apart. No special detergent for washing walls down we mostly use soapy water, we need some flash or something like that".**

**"I don't think the bleach and disinfectant used are strong enough for cleaning toilets, sometimes we run out"**

**"We still use heavy mop buckets when there are now plastic ones. No proper cleaning materials"**

**"We have to share a buffing machine, between 5 or 6 of us which in 3 hours a night makes it hard deciding on whose night it is to use the buffer!"**

**"Out of date equipment e.g. U banks having to do the work of industrial cleaners. Not enough scrubbing machine to go round".**

**"Cutting back on cleaning machines i.e. old fashioned buffers, hardly any seal, poor quality bleach"**

**"All machines should have regular maintenance instead of waiting until they break down".**

**"Materials such as bleach and soap aren't provided as often they should be"**

The overall picture is of stone age machines, a totally inadequate budget for cleaning materials and years of neglect that simply make our jobs harder and the service poorer than it should be.

**P** is for POLISHING



## 9. FINAL COMMENTS

We left a section for any further comments and although many of the issues have already been discussed we include some of the final comments:

**"I think we should have a bonus in holidays when we have to do double the cleaning work".** (A number of people mentioned how teachers get full pay in holidays but don't come in, dinner women get half pay and don't come in whilst cleaners work extra hard and certainly have to come in).

**"Instead of trying to cut hours in schools, the Council should be searching for higher standards of cleaning and maintenance for the sake of the children. Their health and environment are what matters"**

**"A modern upright as opposed to the backbreaking cylinder now in use would be preferred"**

**"Owing to the fact of changing caretakers every few weeks (11 in 18 months) there does not seem to be a satisfactory working arrangement as their ideas differ"**

**"Yes many union meeting are on a Sunday when can most women, with this being the most tying day, get to these?"**

**"Cleaners covering absentees should, although overtime is not necessarily worked, be given proportionate time off to compensate for the extra work load."**

**"I think we should be allowed, by rights, to a tea break for the dust we swallow...."**

**"Do not let Industrial cleaners into schools or Sheffield's Departments."**

**"Not to get private cleaners working in schools as wages will be lower and hours will be cut."**

**"Yes, it's nice to know someone is interested in us."**

# CARETAKERS AND ASSISTANT CARETAKERS

## 1. TRAINING

The caretakers' report follows a similar pattern to the cleaners report with a few less questions.

We started by asking whether caretakers and assistant caretakers believed they should have training to do the job?

**95% said YES (5% did not know).**

We recognise that an induction course already exists but it seems that some assistants don't necessarily go on it straight away. Moreover the feelings from the survey were that training should go into greater depth and that there should be more of it. The kind of training felt to be needed were:

- on site
- off site
- induction training
- updating training
- health and safety training
- cleaning methods
- training in boiler maintenance and care

A few quotations illustrate the main ideas:

**"It would help new caretakers and assistants to gain confidence if they were introduced to the different types of boilers in use, shown the correct procedure for filling in time sheets etc and the rules and regulations concerning employment as well as cleaning methods before starting."**

**"A whole range i.e. City and Guilds cleaning sciences:**

1. Cleaning methods and implementation, frequency and schedules
2. Health and Safety
3. Communications (staff and officers and works dept)
4. On the job training for cleaners."

**"Training should be on an annual basis, to inform and re-inform and update all areas of service"**

Only one person felt the present training to be sufficient. Whilst others felt training should last 1,2 or 4 weeks. Many felt it should be carried out at a training centre as well as on site. Part of the training should concentrate on health and safety since 55% felt they had insufficient information about potential dangers of cleaning materials and other hazards in the school. (41% said they did have sufficient information whilst 4% were not sure).

Additional comments underlined how present arrangements are very hit and miss:

**"It's left for you to find out yourself"... "some materials are not even labelled"... "the amount of information depends on your supervisor".**

## K is for KEYS



## 2. WAGES

Everyone was asked to comment on the level of pay:

FAR TOO LOW	62%
TOO LOW	33%
ALRIGHT	5%

**"My weekly wage without overtime is £85.60. After stoppages it's £63.77."**

The average wage chosen when asked what a fair wage for a 39 hour week (without overtime, bonus and shift payments) would be was £121.04. An hourly rate of £3.10. A number of people emphasised that the amount of shift and overtime pay was very important in addition to this.

## G is for GRAFFITI



### 3. LIKED

Everyone was asked what they liked most about the job. A breakdown of the total responses revealed:

- 23% said the people and children

**"having contact with a wide variety of people"**

**"being with happy carefree kids"**

- 15% said the comparative independence and freedom from supervision.

**"being able to organise my own work"**

**"most of the time its like being your own boss"**

- 15% said the variety

**"no two days are alike which makes it more interesting"**

**"not knowing what tomorrow will bring"**

- 11% said the overall job satisfaction

**"satisfaction in doing a good job"**

**"I get immense job satisfaction in all aspects of the work".**

- 36% gave a variety of reasons for instance

**"healthy"**

**"security"**

**"near home"**

**"being regarded as vital member of the school"**

**"chance of working different hours every other week"**

**"after holidays when school is nice and clean and the head and others say so"**

**"working in an environment completely different from other jobs"**



### 4. DISLIKED

When asked what was disliked about the job there was a very wide range of responses. The main 4 grievances centre on:

1. Communication and attitudes from other staff (22% of all responses).

**"arrogant people who imagine you to be stupid because you wear overalls"**

**"lack of co-operation from teaching staff"**

**"lack of communication between teaching and non-teaching staff"**

**"no discussion from heads or staff when things interfere with cleaning times"**

2. The pay.(20%)

**"poor wages and promotional prospects"**

**"having to work weekends to make a decent wage"**

3. The hours.(9%)

**"split duties making your working day much longer with no anti-social pay"**

**"teachers thinking I am working 24 hours a day and seven days a week"**

4. The accomodation. Being so close to the job and also losing the house if you lose the job (9%).

**"you can never relax"**

**"not being able to settle down."**

Other dissatisfaction included:

**"people expecting you to undertake public works jobs i.e. joinery, electrical, plumbing etc."**

**"cleaning windows and shovelling snow"**

**"the outside area cleaning which leaves you frustrated and with no job satisfaction"**

**"you can work your fingers to the bone for the headmaster and he will always find you that one extra job"**

**"second best equipment — we get no choice"**

**"not being able to dismiss staff"**

**"disciplining people"**

**"vandalism"**

**"being blamed for things outside your control".**



## 5. OTHER WORK FOR SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Asked if there were any other jobs within any Department of Sheffield City Council that people would be interested in doing:

55% said YES

30% said NO

5% said DON'T KNOW

The main response was "any that pay a fair living wage". Other suggestions included:

- supervisory staff/management in our own department
- Recreation Department
- driver/handyman
- training new cleaners and caretakers
- in charge public works depot
- building and property repair
- personnel
- office job/cashier
- community centre

### H is for HEATING



## 6. IMPROVEMENTS TO THE JOB AND TO THE SERVICE

Many ways were suggested in which the cleaning and caretaking service could be improved for the benefit of the local community and the school.

"give cleaners a fair deal on cleaning hours." (i.e. many cleaners feel unable to do the job properly in the hours allocated).

"more communication i.e. groups meetings, with management and staff off site and on site meetings of caretakers, cleaners and teaching staff."

"instead of an area to be cleaned in fixed time, things that are in room need to be considered"

"more supervisors with small areas of responsibility"

"more mechanical aids, proper facilities for cleaning staffs e.g. broom cupboards"

"make the job more attractive to younger people"

"caretaking could be improved by offering more money"

"another house for an assistant caretaker on site would work wonders for security on site"

Asked: "if you had total control over your present job, what would you like to change and improve", answers emphasised many of the previous points e.g. more hours to do the job properly, better communication with other staff and the maintenance departments, and better wages and shift allowances. Additional points include:

- Some work presently done by private contractors being taken in-house e.g. outside window cleaning and high inside windows, immediate blocked drains service and maintenance of desks and chairs.

- Getting rid of the old Mrs Mopps image for cleaning.

- Caretakers should become a building supervisor with no cleaning duties, thus giving caretaker more time in school to make it more efficient.

The question of what additional work could be taken on by present staff with pay was expanded in answers to a further question. Ideas included:

- cleaning blow heaters on a regular basis and cleaning out boilers more thoroughly at weekend
- repairing furniture and lockers
- routine maintenance
- more repair jobs around the school.

However as a number of people pointed out the whole question of repairs and maintenance obviously affects the Public Works Department.

62% thought schools could be used more for other purposes and be of more use for local residents. The remainder felt they couldn't as one person said:

"It already has its quota 7 days a week!"

Ideas for further use mainly centred on adult education and evening classes. Jumble sales, sports meetings, dances, arts and crafts, teaching music, whist drives and youth clubs were also mentioned.

### R is for REPAIRS



## 7. DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

83% of caretakers and assistant caretakers felt that women weren't discriminated against in any way within the cleaning and caretaking service. "I don't think so, at least I haven't come across it while I've been working for the Education Department."

Just 8% felt they were (8% were not sure) as one man put it:

"Women don't appear to have the same opportunities as caretakers. A look at the percentage of women should make any answers unnecessary."

### V is for VANDALISM



## 8. EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

Asked if sufficient equipment was provided:

65% said NO  
35% said YES

However the wording of the question meant that some of those who said 'yes' commented "but it's sometimes of the wrong type" or "but there is room for improvement". Those who felt there was not sufficient equipment added their comments:

"Cleaning products are inferior"

"Shortage of everything"

"Equipment appears to be standard without too much emphasis on individual needs"

"Better climbing equipment is needed permanently on site"

"There's no consultation. You get what is being bought at the time, not what you require to do the job properly"

"Tools and scaffold for hall and gym"

"The equipment is old, outdated, techniques have

changed yet schools remain in the iron age."

"Shortage of wet and dry pick ups"

"I believe machines are purchased by price rather than quality."

### X is for EXTRAS



## 9. TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

The main complaint was the lack of flexibility over holidays and also the need for replacements and for more holidays. Inadequate rewards for shifts and unsocial hours was emphasised. One person commented:

"I think we should be regarded as staff members and paid in full for sickness and staff superannuation benefits which are far in excess of ours at present."

Other comments included praise for the new industrial relations framework, criticism of the wording of the contracts and the need for a rent allowance when a caretaker retired before alternative accommodation is found.

### S is for SWEEPING



## 10. FINAL COMMENTS

Asked for final comments, some were specific, some summed up common feelings voiced throughout. The particular ones included:

**"Caretakers who started after April 1st should get a rent allowance..."**

**"Should get paid straight through the day instead of time off as you never get time off what with one thing and another"**

**"An extra payment should be made for being on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week"**

**"A bonus for extra cleaning at holiday times"**

General comments included:

**"It's about time something like this was done. This questionnaire is a great idea and gives the workforce a chance to state their views."**

**"Biggest drawback to caretaking is definitely the pay which, for the work and the responsibility, is far to low."**

**"It's about time we dragged our sector out of the antique dust and set it up on its box so it can show it is worth more than the derogatory complaints and comments it gets. The annual turnover of the cleaning industry is about £5 billion, that's on a par with the tourist industry. People ought to be made**

**aware that without the cleaners and caretakers their children would learn, eat and play in filth. It's a vastly underrated service."**

**"The Department do not enquire from its staff what we require to do a better job, or consult us on what we require before it's too late to do anything about it."**

**"If as much enthusiasm was put into the job that is going into Projects like this everything would improve in the caretaking service and the career potential of the caretaker might just be recognised."**

