

Out of School Care in Scotland A Draft Framework 2019

Scottish Out of School Care Network Consultation Response

Question 1.

What range of services are needed: regulated out of school care, childminders, activity-based clubs and programmes such as sports clubs, creative arts clubs, outdoor activities, other types of activities?

Page | 1

The Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) tagline is: *"Supporting Children's Rights to Play, Care and Learning"*, and this is based on our primary charitable purpose, set out over 25 years ago, which is *"the advancement of the education and social welfare of children by the development of daycare and recreational facilities for them."*

For this question, we make two important points:

- Given the Scottish Government's commitment to incorporation of the UNCRC into domestic law as far as it is possible with the devolution settlement, taking a children's rights approach alongside the National Performance Framework outcomes, future policy development should be based on children's rights.
- For children of school age to access (equally and with equity) a wide range of services requires considerable financial investment long term from the Scottish Government

Children's Rights to care, play and learning

Our view on this question focuses on children's rights, and indeed parents and carers rights, as set out in fully in Article 18 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: *Article 18 point 3 "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible."* (UN, 1989).

Other relevant articles in relation to this question include Article 31; the right to culture, leisure, rest and play; Article 12, the right to consultation. Children in need or in poverty (Article 22) and support the provision of care for children with disabilities (Article 23).

As mentioned in the framework, the Scottish Government is moving towards incorporation of the UNCRC into domestic law, therefore, a rights-based approach to the development of out of school care policy is in line with this national policy focus. As the consultation also helpfully maps out of school care on to the National Performance Framework, this, taken together, with a children's rights approach, including the views of children and young people, is the best way forward. We believe children have a right to a wide range of services, which are known to be safe and good quality, and which cater to their own individual needs.

Funding investment in services

Just like the expansion of to the 1140 hours of early learning and childcare, there needs to be ongoing, sustainable and substantial funding investment by the Scottish Government in providing out of school care and holiday provision. With extra investment to ensure the most disadvantaged children and children with disabilities can attend services where staff are trained to meet their needs. Investment should be at the delivery level, funding costs of provision, supporting staff costs on the real living wage and hours of work, which include time for training and development.

It is clear from parent feedback for the framework that a system where they claim costs, especially in retrospective claims, does not work well for them, indeed many do not know what they can claim, or give up frustrated through the complexity of the process.

Question: Can you tell us why these services are important?

All such services, if of good quality and safe, are important for children, parents, communities and the country.

- Good quality services enhance children's everyday health and wellbeing, which supports their development, helps meet their human rights, to play, care and learning, and enables their parents and carers to work study or have respite from difficulties in their lives.
- Good quality services are linked and valued in their communities, very often community or parent run, with parents, especially women, enabled to work, this partly addresses child poverty and helps overall with local and national economic growth.

Question 2.

What can we do to support community-based approaches to delivering out of school care?

There is plenty of evidence from past funding programmes (e.g. Lottery funding) out of school care, play and learning, to demonstrate how this support can be delivered. For such support to lead to long term, sustainable, good quality development, we recommend the following points:

- Secure funding investment which is protected, e.g. ring fenced and linked to clear but not onerous reporting on outcomes; this should recognise the greater costs of rural provision, provision for children with disabilities and for children of the lowest income backgrounds.
- Infrastructure of expertise is required to be rebuild in Scotland; while SOSCN does a great deal and works in close partnership with local authorities and others such as CALA, and any still existing local networks or forums, there are now only a couple of dedicated posts in local authorities for development staff to support local out of school care. Back in 2003 nearly every local authority had at least one person with this role, and SOSCN supported them with the opportunities to network and share skills amongst themselves.

- Expansion should build on existing provision except where an area clearly has a complete lack of provision of any kind, where support will be needed to develop new services.
- There needs to be a strong and clear commitment to opening spaces in communities where services can feel secure and valued; using indoor and outdoor spaces, and where they are not charged overwhelmingly high costs, by local authorities, trusts and community centres etc.
- To stabilise and to develop and expand care, play and learning services for children of school age, just like the ELC expansion, requires workforce development, recruitment, retainment from a broad base of society. It requires decent pay and conditions and investment in training, relevant qualifications and widening the scope of experience and skills of staff across the sector.

Question 3.

What name should we use for the range of out of school services and activities? Is there a better term than 'Out of School Care'?

The legal definition goes back to “daycare of children of school age” as mentioned in the Children Act (Scotland), 1989. The Care Inspectorate defines it in terms of the regulated before and after school and during school holidays being “Out of School Care” or “Holiday playschemes”.

We like the fact that many services have their own unique names, perhaps chosen with the children, or relating to their locality or purpose. We think this could continue.

We use the tagline, children’s rights to play, care and learning, and we recognise, just as in ELC, that are all interrelated and necessary for children’s wellbeing and development.

Question 4.

To enable us to realise our vision, we have identified three key aims that we will need to achieve

-

- 1. High quality services which provide children with life-enhancing experiences**
- 2. Out of school care is accessible and affordable and meets the needs of children and young people, parents and carers and communities.**
- 3. Out of school care services are embedded in communities and enable children and young people to access a range of spaces including the outdoors**

Do you agree with our 3 key aims for a future out of school care framework?

Please explain your response.

We fully support these aims as children have rights to all of this for their wellbeing and development. Parents need services which are sustainable, accessible and affordable in order to work, study or have respite support.

We also note the actions identified to meet this vision and priorities; as set out in the driver diagram for the framework. These action points are highly important to the development of out of school care policy, so we set them out and comment on each of them.

Action points Underlining: 1. High quality services which provide children with life-enhancing experiences, the first four action points are on staffing:

- Increase diversity in the workforce
- Staff to receive fair pay
- Staff appropriately qualified
- Improve recruitment and retention

We cover these staffing issues in later questions, but we agree with all points.

The next two action points are:

- Health and wellbeing at the heart of out of school care services
- Regulatory requirements upheld

These action points should already be met, certainly, the regulated out of school care sector already must meet such requirements and, as GIRFEC is at the heart of regulation, health and wellbeing of children should already be a priority. We think this should also be the case for activities type services, which are currently not regulated but, as it stands, there is no way to measure this.

- Different models of out of school care to meet needs of different children

For this action point we agree that ideally services for older children and young people, and for some children with complex needs may need different models of service provision.

- Consistency across local policies
- High quality resources for out of school care services

In terms of improved resources and consistent policies, this is where both significant investment and very clear direction (and conditions of funding) from national government in Scotland is required to ensure consistency of approach across the country.

- Assess the need for food provision in out of school care settings

The issue of food provision does need further work as so many current services have little or no access to kitchens and other resources required; this is especially important if we aim to expand the provision of nutritious hot meals during school holidays.

Actions points underlining 2. Out of school care is accessible and affordable and meets the needs of children and young people, parents and carers and communities.

- Make out of school care affordable for all families
- Provision for children who cannot currently access out of school care

Page | 5

We agree with the first two action points here but as long as help with childcare costs remains as it is then the best way to meet these aims will be to invest directly in services so that they are available in every community at low, or in some cases no cost to those on the lowest incomes who need it most.

- Consider suitability of governance structures
- Consider financial sustainability of service

We agree that governance structures and financial sustainability of services need to be considered, for example, we do not recommend setting up unincorporated associations to create a parent managed service as that leaves them open to personal financial risk. We strongly agree that the long- term financial sustainability of services must be a part of the strategic approach to developing services further. We do not want to see short time limited projects which cannot be maintained in the future, although financial sustainability can include ongoing core funding, if resourced.

- Services are flexible to meet different family's needs

It is our view that services want to and try to be as flexible as possible to meet family's needs, the issue is more likely lack of access to premises beyond the hours on offer. Given most services are currently not funded, it is not financially viable to charge only per hour of use, staff and costs must be paid for the whole session. There is also the issue of a quality experience for children, which we turn to in later questions.

- Improve local links between local authorities and providers
- Raise the profile of the out of school care sector

We agree with both the above action points and refer to our comments for question 1 where we note that investment in infrastructure, local development staff for out of school care, is required to deliver the ambitious aims of the framework.

Action points underpinning 3. Out of school care services are embedded in communities and enable children and young people to access a range of spaces including the outdoors

- Consider community partnership approaches to delivery
- Promote outdoor learning in out of school care
- Out of school care services have access to public buildings and spaces

We agree will all these points and would stress they are all highly important to a successful strategy.

Services need to be part of a whole community approach to supporting the health and wellbeing of all citizens; they support employment, social inclusion, respite care, and high-quality services are known and linked with others, e.g. visiting local care homes for older people.

Promotion of outdoor provision, as part of or indeed mainly based outdoors provision is needed as there is enough evidence to show that this enhances children's health, wellbeing and enjoyment of life.

To grow and sustain out of school care provision, low cost or free access to public buildings and spaces, indoors and out, is essential. Every neighbourhood should be more child friendly; we would like to see more services set in public parks; sports grounds, or where a school or community or church hall is full (or too expensive), to be open to creative solutions locally and for the Care Inspectorate to also be open to different kinds of spaces for out of school care.

Question 5.

How can we help to ensure that all families have access to an out of school care place for their child/ren if they want it?

As outlined in our response to question one this is a twofold approach;

- Direct ongoing investment in the delivery of provision, including infrastructure, staffing, inclusion and equality, ensuring places for children in need, disadvantaged, with disabilities, and in rural and remote areas, with investment in training, qualifications, and opening up community spaces, indoors and out for all services needed.
- As long as help with childcare costs remains with the UK Government provide means to support parents in accessing this help with childcare costs, and, if there is a future devolution of this to the Scottish Government, then we suggest this finding is directly invested in childcare with a ceiling on the amounts parents pay, and a sliding scale or subsidy to the service for those on lowest incomes.

Question 6.

What do children and young people want from out of school care services and does this differ dependent on age?

As our various research with children, and the consultations for the framework demonstrate, children want freedom to play, be with friends, access a range of things to do, get outside, and want adults who are fun, caring and kind. They also like to learn new things and we found this in our STEM pilot project where children enjoyed learning new skills and sharing them with others. Children enjoy trips and outings especially in school holidays but want more of this in term time too.

We know high quality services often have secondary school young people popping in for a visit, and this age range may want or need specific clubs in secondary schools, not childcare as such, but for places to learn new skills in sports or arts, or to socialise.

As secondary schools are often now Hubs for feeder primary schools, we see no reason why the facilities on offer at larger campuses could not also incorporate school age childcare services for younger children who would benefit from the resources on offer.

A group which needs much more attention are young people up to 16 with disabilities, parents can still claim help with childcare costs for them, but there is rarely provision which meets their age group needs.

Question 7.

What different activities or provision might secondary school aged children want?

In our past research with older children we found that they wanted the following:

Their own space decorated how they choose with comfortable relaxing areas, and café type healthy snack provision, where they can chill out with others from their own age group attending. Location preferred was a community venue with walking distance and in rural areas transport issues need to be considered.

They felt they should have a say in directing the programme and have structured activities, learning music and the arts, making films and recording music, sports such as archery and outward- bound activities such as rock climbing and canoeing. They also value going out for activities, trips and places of interest, challenge, adventure and taking risks.

Staff should understand they are young adults and treat them equally and with respect, and the club should also be a source of useful information and advice.

https://soscn.org/downloads/research/your_time_your_club.pdf

https://soscn.org/downloads/research/whats_for_us.pdf

How can we make sure out of school care is an affordable option for more families? (e.g. subsidised provision, remove barriers in accessing benefits, help with upfront costs)

We believe that funding the direct provision of services including fully subsidised places for children in disadvantage, with disabilities, in remote and rural and island locations is the best way to ensure it is affordable and accessible to more families.

It is clear that parents find it hard to negotiate the complex divided social security system in the UK, and are not aware of help with upfront costs, or all the different conditions for universal credit, while we have no idea of the take up of the newer childcare subsidy “ More great Childcare” UK scheme, in Scotland. The “best start” grant available for some families before children start school could be used to pay upfront costs, if not, then perhaps there should be a

grant for services to access to cover costs for the first two months of parents making universal credit claims.

Question 9.

How can services be more effectively delivered in rural/remote areas to meet the needs of families

Page | 8

Services need to be subsidised a great deal including transport costs if pulling together children from a range of smaller schools into one of them for service provision. Integration of all ages care in remote and rural areas helps make it easier for families to access one stop childcare.

Childminders also have a clear role to play where it is not viable to provide group care in very remote areas.

Question 10.

How can we ensure that children with disabilities and additional support needs can access out of school care services?

- Subsidise service provision and support specialist schools to develop on site provision after school and in holiday periods – this is important for the access to resources and training required for children with more complex disabilities in specialist schools.
- Subside places and staffing, including training and development for staff so children with disabilities and additional support needs can have their needs met in mainstream provision
- Ensure parents know what help they can get with costs and resources
- Consider the needs of young teenagers with disabilities and how they can be supported either in specialist or integrated provision; use the expertise of disability organisations to help look at new models of support.
- Ensure the voices of children and young people with disabilities are listened to in terms of what they want

Question 11.

What flexibility do parents and carers need from out of school care services? Can you tell us why this flexibility is important

We know how much parents need and appreciate good quality out of school care, but that their working hours, or income, indeed things like zero hours contracts, getting information on working hours only days before etc. all impact on parents need for childcare outside the 9 to 5 old standard. It was also mentioned sometimes parents only need an hour, but they must pay for the whole session of 2.5 or 3 hours.

To understand this, from the provider's perspective they must put the staff on and pay them for the whole session, regardless of when the child is picked up. Also, if planning activities where children can engage fully and consistently take part, sometimes this needs the whole session hours, this is especially the case for all day trips out in school holidays, it is the quality of the

experience for the child that matters most. If services, and we think they do and should, also incorporate learning through arts and sports then children may want to be there long enough for this to make a difference and an hour is just enough for a snack and quick unwind, not much more.

Many services would expand to meet needs, this would be a good thing to give staff longer hours if paid at least the real living wage, but this means opening and accessing premises and outdoor spaces longer into the evening and over weekends. To do this we need strategic planned investment building on what we already have, as well as a creative look at how in-kind resources via school spaces and community facilities can be utilised.

Question 12.

What is important for parents and carers in terms of location of out of school care services? Should they be delivered in schools, community facilities, outdoors?

Parental needs vary, however most convenient for parents, especially those with more than one young child, is that they can drop off and pick up their children locally, close to or in their school and ELC, during term time, and with the same provider or those close to one another in holidays, again at least locally or on route from their place of work or study. Some parents might prefer to choose an outdoors based service if this was available, and others might choose free or low-cost breakfast clubs or activities and food provision in school holidays as they and their children need this extra support.

Question 13.

What ages of children do parents/carers need provision for?

Mostly primary school age. Currently the most take up of regulated provision is in the earlier primary school years; however, there is likely unmet need for provision for older children and especially children with disabilities, and we do not know how many children and of what ages currently access unregulated activities provision.

Question 14.

Do parents/carers need food provision as part of after-school and holiday clubs?

Currently in terms of after school provision many services only have the facilities to provide snacks rather than meals, in the early evenings, and many parents will want their children to have their evening meal with them at home. However, for the many families encountering food insecurity in Scotland, the provision of free or low-cost breakfast clubs, free school lunches, and lunches and snacks provided through holiday clubs or food clubs with activities, are needed.

To expand such services, and we see this as an ongoing need to address child poverty, we need to open school and community kitchens, provide nutrition and cookery training and resources and help the already existing services expand. All of which should be delivered in non - stigmatic and inclusive ways. There are already many examples of this is in the projects funded through Scottish Government to address food insecurity during school holidays.

Question 15.

What qualifications, skills and experience should the out of school care workforce have? What is most important and why?

The regulated workforce includes a wide range of views on this. There are staff who have worked for years for higher and more rigorous qualification requirements and who welcomed the insights and knowledge gained through degree level and higher, to help them deliver a better quality service. Then there are those who consider, especially given pay conditions and hours of work, that this is too high a cost of time and energy, especially of just one of two or three staff serving 16 children at most.

We have supported professional inclusion of the out of school workforce in the wider early learning and childcare and social care regulatory frameworks. However, at the inception of the Childhood Practice standards, a very wide range of qualifications were acknowledged. Over the years there has been a gradual narrowing and winnowing of the qualifications previously recognised and counted to the extent that it is now seems easier for a graduate to train as a teacher, than as a childhood practice manager.

Practitioner qualifications are narrow too. We found in previous research (Learning about Play, 2015) that some of the now phased out qualifications had requirements for child development to be a core module, but that is no longer the case in the current and fewer range of qualifications allowed.

https://soscn.org/downloads/reports/Learning_About_Play_in_Scotland_Summary_Overview.pdf

With the expansion of ELC there has already been a negative effect on staff recruitment and retention in the out of school care sector, and this is forecasted to continue, given the better pay and career progression ELC may offer. Radical change is needed to build up a diverse and suitable workforce for out of school care and we suggest it does not necessarily need to be uniform with ELC settings.

Managers of larger settings could continue to meet and hold the degree level qualifications required, but we should be open to graduates or HNC/HND level qualifications in a much wider range of topics and interests. Rather than also expecting them to complete another SVQ 3 practice qualification, we suggest a common core for out of school care, a practice certificate which covers child development, child protection, play and GIRFEC, UNCRC, trauma informed practice and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), diversity and inclusion.

People with past or current qualifications and experience in the arts, sports, physical activities, youth work, science, forest rangers, play therapists, craftspeople, should be positively welcomed into the field. In Iceland, for example, most services have core staff with child development training but who employ students from the university and colleges to work with the children and share their own expertise and learning, we know of at least one service here, which regularly employs students from the local university and this is a high quality and interesting service.

Another service manager, who had listened to our suggestions to look more widely for staff not necessarily from the childcare field, has recently employed people with qualifications in the arts and sports; she has reported they have delivered great work and also raised the bar for the other childcare staff, thus improving the service all round for the children.

We know through our own work when we had vacancies for the physical activity co-ordinator training post we received a large number of applications for people qualified in sports and physical activities, to degree level, who were currently working as part time swimming pool attendants, or in fast food franchises, or on zero hours delivery jobs, many of them would be well suited for work in out of school care.

Question 16.

Thinking about the full range of provision - regulated out of school care, childminders, holiday programmes and other activities - should qualification requirements for staff working across these provisions be the same or different? Why?

If we look at our suggestions for expanding the range of skills and qualifications outlined in question 15, this brings a way to also bring in this overarching core skills certificate, covering the absolute basics everyone must know.

We do not believe the SSSC would have the capacity, or the Care Inspectorate, to bring on to their registers, all these other providers or either care (Childminders) or the wide range of unknown activities providers. Some like breakfast clubs, under two hours and run by schools are presumably part of the overall inspection framework there, others may be part of larger charities with safeguarding in place and training etc.

For those not run by schools or charities already with safeguarding etc. in place, we suggest that local authorities could operate a licensing scheme linked to requirements such as the core skills certificate. This is needed for the "grey area" of the unknown number of unregistered activities schemes as is basic child protection training and enhanced disclosure checks. If there is no oversight of basic quality and safety issues, including guidance to parents on what they must check before using such provision for their children, then children may be put at risk and we do not think this is acceptable.

Question 17.

How can we promote working in the out of school care sector as a more attractive career choice?

As outlined in the previous two questions we need to be able to welcome people with a much wider range of qualifications, skills and experience. We need to invest in the sector to ensure the real living wage is paid and to expand provision to provide more hours of work which in turn gives parents more flexibility.

We need to ensure that careers information is more widely available, and we suggest that children could provide their list of attributes of who they want to come and work with them in out of school care.

Question 18.

How can we increase diversity across the out of school care workforce?

The measures on improving pay and conditions we have outlined in previous questions could create a more diverse workforce. There are 12% men in out of school and although that is higher than the ELC workforce we need more involved. If we widen the skills and qualifications allowed this may help. We should also use the existing workforce in terms of current diversity of staff to promote men, ethnic minorities, different ages, and people of different sexual identities, disabilities etc. in recruitment campaigns.