



Scottish Out of School Care Network

Supporting children's rights to play, care and learning.

OSC Workforce Survey 2021 Overview

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BACKGROUND TO SURVEY

- Annual survey conducted since 2008 (all reports are available on our website: <https://soscn.org/policy/statistics>)
- Set questions around age, gender, pay, conditions, type of service etc.
- Responses broken down into Lead Practitioner, Practitioner & Support Worker categories
- 2021 survey asked additional questions relating to impact of COVID pandemic and also experiences and thoughts on registerable qualifications
- For today's meeting, focusing on the COVID and qualification responses from Lead Practitioners

2021 SURVEY

- Hard copies sent to members, could also be completed online. Open for 5 weeks from mid November 2021.
- 295 responses received but only 286 responses were sufficiently completed.
- 124 responses (43%) were completed by Lead Practitioners;
- 103 (36%) by Practitioners,
- and 59 (21%) by Support Workers.
- Responses came from 26 local authority areas in Scotland.

Job Categories Overview

	Lead Practitioner	Practitioner	Support Worker
Gender	Female 93% Male 7%	Female 90% Male 9%	Female 81% Male 19%
Age	Average 47 (22 – 68)	Average 43 (20 – 65)	Average 38 (15 – 64)
Salary	Average £14.10ph (£9 - £23ph)	Average £10.31 (£4.15 - £15ph)	Average £9.45 (£5 - £18.95ph)
OSC as a career	89% saw working in OSC as a career; 6% didn't, and 6% were unsure	73% saw working in OSC as a career; 12% didn't, and 14% were unsure.	49% saw working in OSC as a career; 15% didn't, and 34% were unsure.
Years working	Average 14 (less than a year – 38)	Average 9 (one year – 31)	Average 6 (less than a year – 26)
Service type	82% worked in services providing only OSC; 14% worked in ELC & OSC combined services	83% worked in services providing only OSC; 17% worked in ELC & OSC combined services	93% worked in services providing only OSC, and 7% worked in ELC & OSC combined services.
Job satisfaction	48% were very satisfied in their job; 40% were 'fairly satisfied'; 10% were 'not very satisfied' and less than 1% was dissatisfied.	54% were very satisfied in their job; 37% were 'fairly satisfied'; 4% were 'not very satisfied' and 3% were dissatisfied.	59% were very satisfied in their job; 39% were 'fairly satisfied'; none were 'not very satisfied' and 1% was dissatisfied.

'Best thing' & 'Biggest Challenge' Overview

	Lead Practitioner	Practitioner	Support Worker
Best thing about working in OSC?	CHILDREN	CHILDREN	CHILDREN
	Also building relationships & supporting families; colleagues; activities; fun times; & for some people the hours suit.		
Biggest challenges	Current difficulties of delivering childcare during the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic (financial concerns, reduced numbers of children attending, staff absences, recruitment, and additional paperwork); pay; lack of professional recognition and status; training and qualifications, and issues with premises.	Children's behaviour and engaging older children; financial issues/sustainability; paperwork; pay, conditions and hours of work; lack of space and shared premises; staffing issues, and more general issues around service delivery during the current pandemic.	Children's behaviour and managing behaviour.

Impact of COVID Overview

	Overall Responses	Lead Practitioner Responses
How stressed currently feel?	26% said 'not at all'; 45% said 'slightly stressed'; 14% said 'stressed'; 9% said 'very stressed', and 3% were 'at breaking point'.	14% said 'not at all'; 42% said 'slightly stressed'; 19% said 'stressed'; 18% said 'very stressed', and 7% were at 'breaking point'.
How physically tired currently feel?	19% said 'not at all tired'; 37% said 'slightly tired'; 24% said 'tired'; 15% said 'exhausted', and 4% said they were 'at breaking point'.	9% said 'not at all'; 30% said 'slightly tired'; 30% said 'tired'; 23% said 'exhausted', and 6% said they were at 'breaking point'.
How is mental health?	12% said 'great'; 40% said 'good'; 34% said 'OK'; 11% said 'not very good', and 2% said they were 'at breaking point'.	9% said 'great'; 35% said 'good'; 36% said 'OK'; 17% said 'not very good', and 2% said they were at 'breaking point'.
Issues arising	Staffing issues: staff shortages, staff leaving, recruitment issues and staff not always adhering to rules or guidance; financial difficulties; lack of resources; additional paperwork; insufficient paid hours to complete work; unclear or changing guidance, and concern for welfare and health of staff and children.	

Comments re experience of COVID

"I have worked throughout the pandemic managing a team of practitioners and supporting them with any issues they have had, including mental health issues. I think now, I am beginning to feel the effects from that. I only feel stressed in my work life as I have been pressured into a very poor work life balance."

"At work we try to find every opportunity to engage in exercises for our wellbeing but it's not that, that's been the issue- it's been the amount of change; the not knowing if the children will stay or if parents change pathways and no longer need us; it's the arguing for support from those we rent the building and space from, and most stressful is the amount of new information and changing guidance we're expected to keep on top of when it's not a full-time job like those in nurseries, especially the stress put on us by the Care Inspectorate."

REGISTRATION & QUALIFICATIONS

Do you have the appropriate qualification for your job?

	Lead Practitioner	Practitioner	Support Worker
Yes	77 (62%)	79 (77%)	30 (51%)
No	8 (6%)	7 (7%)	6 (10%)
No but working towards it	26 (21%)	13 (13%)	12 (20%)
No and not working towards it	7 (6%)	2 (2%)	5 (8%)
Unknown	6 (5%)	2 (2%)	6 (10%)

What impact has the learning from the required qualification (completed or underway) had/is having on your practice?

- Responses to this question were mixed.
- Some respondents said that undertaking the qualification has had a positive impact on their practice- it has given them more skills, boosted self-confidence and enabled them to be better managers.
- Other respondents however said they did not find the qualification a positive experience and felt that it was a 'tick box' exercise to keep their job.
- Some commented that the qualification contents were not relevant for school age childcare and too early years focussed, and that it was very time consuming at the expense of work and family life.

What impact has the learning from the required qualification (completed or underway) had/is having on your practice?

Lead Practitioner

- Responses to this question were mixed.
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Practitioner

- Most of the responses were positive and described how it has built confidence in their day-to-day practice, and it helps with completing paperwork and developing/understanding policies and procedures

Support Worker

- Most of the responses were positive.

Selection of quotes from Lead Practitioners

- *“Has helped develop a better understanding of my role and leadership.”*
- *“It was a game changer. I felt totally different in terms of how I viewed the role after completing the course.”*
- *“I have enjoyed going from a ELC background to playwork. Now I am completing my BA it’s extremely education focused again but I am enjoying learning about leadership and trying to take that forward into my practice.”*
- *“PDA childhood studies has had a huge impact on my professional practices and that of my setting.”*
- *“I found the BA in Childhood Practice has not impacted greatly on my practice. Much of it I found irrelevant to my job, with an overwhelming focus on leadership and management styles and practices that do not take into consideration the challenges of OSC.”*

Is there anything missing from the qualification which you think would be beneficial to know?

Lead Practitioner

- Approximately a quarter of respondents to this question said that nothing was missing from the qualifications.
- The other respondents said that there needs to be more of a focus on school-age children and that they would like to see content around managing and marketing a small business, HR, finance and fundraising.
- They would also like content around supporting children with ASN and mental health issues.

Practitioner

- The majority of respondents to this question said that 'nothing' was missing from the qualifications. Others however said they would like qualifications to cover attachment theory; conflict resolution, and also specific information around supporting children with ASN including autism, Aspergers and dyspraxia. A number of respondents also mentioned they would like to be able to better support children and staff around mental/emotional health issues; one respondent described this like 'mental health first aid'.

Support Worker

- No complete answer to this apart from *"I feel like getting out there and learning as you go is best. Nothing can prepare you."*

Selection of quotes from Lead Practitioners

- *“Yes, it’s too early years based. Not enough for older children development. For example young people’s health and mental well-being, anorexia, autism, ADHD, looked after / care young people. Plus, business module would be helpful too. Policies. Leading and managing staff.”*
- *“Skills to do with managing/leading a staff team (employment law; disciplinary procedures; financial skills for running the accounts).”*
- *“I don't think any of the available qualifications are appropriate for my post. There is nothing in them that develops strategic business thinking, equips managers to apply for funding or even keep financial records. There is nothing in any of the qualifications that would have helped our organisation stay in business during lockdown.”*

Through your completion or current undertaking of a qualification, and aside from any professional development, has the qualification had any impact (positive/negative) on your personal life/development?

Lead Practitioner

- Most of the respondents talked about the negative impact it had on their work/life/family life balance, although for some there was a positive impact in terms of new skills gained and increased self-confidence.
- Some viewed it as a real personal achievement.

Practitioner

Although the majority of respondents said that undertaking the qualification had been positive not only in their OSC practice but also in their wider family relationships, about a third said that it had either had no impact or a negative one on their life. In these instances, most indicated that it was hard to balance work, study and family life, and in some instances the pressures were too great meaning people discontinued with the qualification.

Support Worker

Roughly half of those who responded to this question found it a positive experience whilst half found it a negative one. On the positive, respondents said it has boosted their self-confidence and self-esteem but those who have found it to be negative highlighted the difficulty in balancing work, life and study, and in addition, questioned the relevance of the qualifications.

Selection of quotes from Lead Practitioners

- *“At the time I was working towards my degree, my personal life was greatly impacted by the work required, and my mental health suffered greatly.”*
- *“At the time it was once a week in the evening, it was an issue as I'm a single parent to 2 boys (1 with ASD). But after qualifying just the small raise in pay was also disappointing, less than £1 difference to a playworker to a manager.”*
- *“Having achieved my BA, it gave me a great reminder of what I am capable of and a nice boost.”*
- *“I do feel more confident knowing that I have completed my BA. Makes me feel like the responsibility of my job is more recognised.”*

Do you have other qualifications which are not currently acceptable for registration but you think should be?

Some overall suggestions included:

- Youth Work qualifications
- Community Education qualifications
- Child & Youth Studies
- Playwork (currently recognised only with additional units)
- Educational Studies
- Sports qualifications
- Arts qualifications
- Management qualifications

Workforce Survey Publication

<https://soscn.org/downloads/research/osc-workforce-survey-results-2021.pdf>