

Cross Party Group on Children and Young People

Challenges in the delivery of ELC and School Age Childcare

**Monday 30th January 2023 10:00 – 11:30
Minutes**

Chair: Meghan Gallacher MSP

Present

MSPs

Karen Adams MSP

Meghan Gallacher MSP

Invited guests

Jane Brumpton, Early Years Scotland

Andrew Shoolbread, Scottish out of School Care Network (SOSCN)

Alison Hay, Access to Childcare Fund

Nicola Kelly, SupERkids

Non-MSP Group Members

Chris Ross, Children in Scotland

David Mackay, Children in Scotland

Dana Vreeswijk, Children in Scotland

Arran Goodfellow, Children in Scotland

Lizz Curley, Children in Scotland

Leah Duncan-Karrim, Children in Scotland

Katherine Anderson, Children in Scotland

Sarah Paterson, YouthLink Scotland

Sarah Robinson Galloway, YouthLink Scotland

Marielle Bruce, YouthLink Scotland

Angus Maclean, Befriending Networks

Helen Forrest, Children's Health Scotland

Jessica Smith, Children's Parliament

Brian Magee, Confederation of Scottish Counselling Agencies (COSCA)

Sue Palmer, Upstart Scotland

David Ashford

Kelly Munro, Carers Trust Scotland

Kirsty McKechnie, Child Poverty Action Group

Lorna Kettles, Early Years Scotland
Toni Valbonesi, One Parent Families Scotland
Todd Henshaw, Flexible Childcare Services Scotland
Steffi Keir, Save the Children Scotland
Marguerite Hunter Blair, Play Scotland
Megan Farr, The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland
Ruairidh Smith, Generations Working Together
Susan McGhee, Flexible Childcare Services Scotland
Gemma Richardson, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Florence Burke, BBC Children in Need
Joan Mowat, University of Strathclyde
Lynne Gilmour, University of Stirling
Sarah McClarey, Mindroom Centre
Mili Shukla, Skills Development Scotland
Ryan Bowie, Quarriers
Sameeha Rehman, Ubuntu Scotland
Cat Malone, With Kids
Jacinta Sheerin, Early Childhood Ireland

Welcome from chair

Meghan Gallacher MSP welcomed members of the CPG to the second meeting of the new parliamentary term. Meghan informed the group that the meeting would focus on Early Learning Childcare (ELC) and school-aged childcare, highlighting challenges facing parents, families, and the sector – a topic of high importance.

She said the meeting would include presentations by representatives from four member organisations. The presentations would highlight the challenges and successes in the delivery of childcare, the impact on capacity in the ELC and school-age childcare, and the barriers facing parents/guardians to access appropriate care and support for their children. The panel included Jane Brumpton from Early Years Scotland, Andrew Shoolbread from the Scottish Out of Schools Care Network (SOSCN), Nicola Kelly from SupERkids, and Alison Hay who reflected on the Access to Childcare Fund.

Following this, Meghan said the members would have the opportunity for more in-depth discussion on the delivery of ELC and school age childcare in breakout rooms facilitated by members of the secretariat.

Members were informed that the information from the presentations, and responses from other CPG members during the meeting would be used by the secretariat to create a summary to send to the Cabinet Secretary. Included with the summary would be an invitation to attend another meeting to discuss the concerns raised.

Meghan updated the members of the group of the debates being had in parliament. She discussed the debate being had in parliament regarding the expansion of early learning and childcare (1140 hours policy), and how they were looking at examples of where things are working, and where there needs rethought.

Meghan ran through a range of housekeeping measures and reminded all attendees that the chat function was available for questions and comments.

CPG Business

a. Minutes

Meghan stated the secretariat had shared the previous minutes with members of the group. No issues were raised in relation to the minutes, and members were asked to confirm if they were happy to take the previous minutes as read.

This was approved by membership and the minutes were ratified.

b. Actions

Meghan, handed over to Chris Ross, Children in Scotland to provide an update on the actions from our last meeting.

- Chris informed the group that the paperwork for the previous meeting (which also acted as the AGM) had been submitted.
- The survey on the cost-of-living crisis which had been sent to CPG members after the last meeting had low up-take. The survey would be available for another week to see if more evidence could be gathered.

Meghan then briefly introduced and handed over to the speakers to share their presentations with the group regarding the challenges of ELC facing parents, families, and the sector.

Jane Brumpton, Chief Executive – Early Years Scotland

Early Years Scotland is a specialist organisation who support children from birth to 5 years of age. They work directly with children and their families to deliver unique Stay Play and Learn sessions, and work in areas where children and families will benefit most from their service.

You can find out more about Early Years Scotland and their work on their website: <https://earlyyearsscotland.org/>

Jane's presentation highlighted the commitment shown by the Scottish Government regarding the 1140 hours policy which has supported parents and children nationally. Jane then introduced the three main challenges which restrict the policy, which included the staffing crisis, a lacking clear and independent approach to ELC, and the sustainability of funding challenges facing private and third sector ELC settings.

[Click here to view the presentation by Jane Brumpton \(Early Years Scotland\).](#)

Andrew Shoolbread, Policy and Research Officer - Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN)

The Scottish Out of School Care Network works to promote and support the development and maintenance of high-quality school-aged childcare in Scotland before and after school during term-time, and all-day during school holidays.

Their vision is for all children in Scotland to have access to high quality play, care and learning opportunities which meet individual needs, ensuring their rights are fulfilled according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

You can find out more about SOSCN and their work on their website:

<https://soscnc.org>

Andrew's presentation gave a good introduction to the sector in terms of the growth in demand for childcare, and how services have been reduced since the COVID-19 pandemic. Andrew highlighted similar challenges to Jane, noting workforce retention and recruitment, and the financial sustainability as some of the key drivers behind ELC issues. He highlighted a collective response was needed to the situation and suitable regulation which does not compromise quality to children's wellbeing and safeguarding.

[Click here to view the presentation by Andrew Shoolbread \(SOSCN\).](#)

Alison Hay, Access to Childcare Fund Lead, and Nicola Kelly, SupERkids

The Access to Childcare Fund supports childcare solutions that enable more accessible and affordable childcare for families and to help reduce the barriers parents and carers experience in accessing childcare.

You can find out more about the Access to Childcare Fund and their work here:

<https://childreninscotland.org.uk/acf-fund/>

SupERkids provides children in East Renfrewshire with additional support needs with weekly club activities, for social interaction, independence and learning new skills. The object of their clubs and activities also helps families to have small periods of respite.

You can find out more about SupERkids and their work on their website:

<https://superkids.org.uk/>

Alison introduced the Access to Childcare Fund and discussed how the fund had helped a range of projects, including SupERkids. Nicola then discussed the vital role the fund played to provide support and care for families with children with additional support needs, and how the fund created stability around funding – allowing the charity to organise support in place of lacking provisions for ASN children.

[Click here to view the presentation by Alison Hay and Nicola Kelly.](#)

Comments from membership

Further discussion took place in the chat due to time restrictions on the meeting, with material also shared by different members. Members echoed the concerns raised by the speakers, sharing how the challenges impacted the different roles held by group members. Many raised the issue of local authority governance over the delivery of 1140 hours, stating it was causing huge challenges for the sector.

Another common topic raised was the affordability for families, particularly those with children with additional support needs, and single parents. High costs to access child care can prove a barrier to access for these groups.

Some members also shared resources in the chat including:

- [Playing Together Report 2016](#)

Breakout rooms discussion summaries

Following the presentations, members were placed into breakout rooms facilitated by members of the secretariat. Questions discussed are as follows:

- I. Are there other challenges in the delivery of ELC and childcare that we need to highlight as CPG? What impact are you seeing this have on the children, young people, and families you support? (This could be either from your perspective as a professional, or as a parent or carer.)
- II. Panel members raised the particular challenge parents with children with ASN face accessing appropriate services, are there other families or communities who face additional barriers to services?
- III. Are there any solutions or ways forward we can identify?

The main points raised by the groups were as follows:

- Ongoing issues relating to funding and the workforce that affect the experiences of children and young people as well as their families.
- Flexibility of services that was meant to be part of 1140 hours is not always realised – this affects ability of parents to get into employment.
- The delivery model of childcare is extremely complex – there are lots of people involved in delivery and that can make for a messy landscape
- There needs to be consideration of national independent body to distribute funding and to manage the service delivery landscape.
- After school care needs to be treated as separate from education
- Extra barriers facing certain groups to accessing childcare – disabilities, cultural needs, rural facilities and services, single parents
 - There can be a lack of available appropriate services for children who require additional support
 - Cost can restrict some families from accessing school age child care
- The current system of regulation and qualification can affect the delivery of childcare as it can be hard to get staff qualified at the right level. In some cases the level of pay does not warrant the work required to become formally qualified. Staff need to be paid more

- The group were keen to meet again to discuss this issue and to hold Scottish Government to account

Close

Meghan thanked attendees for attending and announced the date of the next meeting will be announced shortly. Meghan also asked members if they would like the option to have another meeting to discuss upcoming legislation in the Scottish Parliament (e.g. Youth Transition Bill, Residential Outdoor Education Bill, and Education Reform) and get MSPs involved who are supporting bills.

Chris Ross stated that the notes taken, and information shared at the meeting would be summarised and sent to the Cabinet Secretary and COSLA, along with an invitation to a future meeting. Chris also reminded members of the cost-of-living crisis survey that would be re-sent to members.

Supporting resources

A number of resources were shared with members to give a better understanding of the topic.

Podcast: [Nothing short of transformational](#): how Access to Childcare funding has improved the lives of children and families across Scotland

Flexible Childcare Services Scotland:

- <https://vimeo.com/793380149>
- <https://vimeo.com/793379403>
- <https://vimeo.com/793296698>