



Scottish Out of School Care Network

supporting children's rights to
play, care and learning



Annual Review 2020-2021



The Scottish Out of School Care Network

Established in 1991, we provide a voice for school age childcare services and the children and families who rely on it. We influence national policies and provide a range of practical resources, events, information, advice, quality assurance and training to support them.

We advocate for the sector, carry out research, and help develop national and local strategies to support and grow the sector. We are passionate about children's rights to the play, care, learning, friendship and fun that good quality services provide.

School Age Childcare

The school age care childcare sector is the largest provider of play, care, and informal learning opportunities for school-aged children. There are 1,014 registered school age childcare services in Scotland, 661 breakfast clubs and 472 holiday services. Up to 80,000 children of school age are registered in childcare. (Care Inspectorate, 2019).

Daycare of children is defined by the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 as a service that provides care for children on non-domestic premises for a total of more than two hours a day and on at least six days per year.

Impact of the pandemic

Since February 2020, with the public health measures to stop Covid-19 virus transmission, we deliver all our work online. We are a key link between national government and the school age childcare sector, and we work intensely to support services and staff as they grapple with new rules and challenges.

Our sector assisted some of the most vulnerable children and supported the children of keyworkers, during various stages of full lockdown, partial, then full re-opening. We captured the innovation, courage, and commitment of some of these services in our [Stories from the Frontline project](#). After the long winter lockdown, in March 2021 services again re-opened and they again reported that children were happy.

Chairperson message

I thank our staff team, fellow board members and every service in Scotland for being innovative and adaptive in the current, challenging times, for us all.

Our policy of building up reserves has been a bulwark this year, with few income generating activities possible. Staff worked hard to influence policy, get guidance and support to the sector, and delivered a successful cross-party campaign for better financial support to school age childcare. Considering this is all done online from home (with Andrew and Finlay often also having childcare responsibilities), the events, policy work, research, and communications, covered in this review are impressive.

We are grateful for the core funding from the Scottish Government through the Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund, administered by Corra, which was carried over flexibly to reduce the pressures on organisations like ours, vital to the recovery of the childcare sector.

Anne Dick, SOSCN Chair



Chief Executive message

I am so proud to help represent the school age childcare sector in Scotland, as I know you all give your best, while living through an international pandemic, despite the worry and stress about the health of loved ones, and the effects of lockdowns.

My thanks and appreciation to colleagues across the Scottish Government, the voluntary sector, and national institutions, for partnership working to ensure support and guidance is there. I am grateful to the politicians who listened, and those of you who helped with our campaign for better financial support to the sector, this made a big difference for every service in Scotland. We would not exist without the dedication of our trustees, and I want to thank them for being there for us, especially during this time of change and disruption.

Children's rights to play, care and informal learning, provided by school age childcare, are especially important to help them deal with the effects of the pandemic, so I expect better policy support for school age childcare in the future. There are manifesto commitments for school age childcare by the winning party in the Scottish Parliament and we at SOSCN will work hard to make sure these commitments are honoured.

All of us at SOSCN are amazed and admire what services achieve, despite the pandemic, and we give our heartfelt thanks to all the services and staff across Scotland who deliver these much needed care, play, friendship, and fun opportunities for children.

Irene Audain MBE, Chief Executive





Policy Development

Our policy activities throughout the year have focused on responding to the needs of the sector, in terms of the impact of the pandemic, and supporting the production of Scottish Government, sector specific, operating guidance and financial support packages.

In terms of the policy framework for school age childcare, the Scottish Government produced a progress report in March 2021, with reassurances for future work on developing and supporting the sector. This includes the Access to Childcare Fund, which is piloting new work with a range of inclusive organisations for Black and Minority Ethnic families, family support organisations, very rural and island services and in low-income communities. We are on the programme board for this fund.

Campaigning for Scotland's School Age Childcare Sector

We discovered that many services were struggling financially through lack of income in lockdowns, or fewer places taken up, and this could close services permanently. We therefore campaigned for specific financial support to the school age childcare sector.

In early December 2020, [a public letter](#) from the Chief Executive was sent to the Minister for Children and Young People and the Deputy First Minister. We conveyed strong concerns to the Ministers about financial issues, and we supported the sector in raising awareness locally and nationally, using their own parents and leaders, via our campaign pack to use across all political parties.

As a result, questions were asked on behalf of services in the Scottish Parliament about financial support for School Age Childcare services from Dec - March; MSPs wrote to the Minister, additional funding was secured for the field (£3 million, Round 3 of Temporary Restrictions Fund) and support for school-age childcare was specifically mentioned by the First Minister.

At our last meeting with the Minister for Children and Young People, we asked for a "summer of play" for children, which other national organisations have been also calling for, a £20 million fund for a summer of play, creative and sports activities was subsequently announced on 24th March.

We received many appreciative comments on our school age childcare campaign:

"Thank you very much for all your hard work and dedication to our sector, it helps us to continue the belief that our sector is worthwhile even though these situations make us feel like we are not important enough... We will keep fighting and come out the other side stronger! Thank you again for everything you are doing."

"Just a wee note to say thank you for writing such an excellent letter to Maree Todd and John Swinney on behalf of the OSC sector."

"Thank you to Irene for fighting our corner and sending this much needed letter. We are all in a very precarious state now and cannot continue much longer unless there is much needed change."

Other Policy Campaigning

We are part of several UK or Scotland wide campaigns for free meals for children, keeping the £20 universal credit top up, improving support to young lone parents, and children's rights in all these circumstances.

We are members of the "Together" campaign to have full incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of The Child into Scotland's policy framework, which was achieved in 2021.

In March we published our own [Manifesto for School Age Childcare](#), calling for free food for children in schools and during school holidays, free school age childcare places, especially for those unable to access it due to cost, and to open more spaces indoors and outdoors to expand services.

Representation

Regular meetings with the Government School Age Childcare team and Sector Recovery Group, frequency is dependent on the intensity of work on guidance and support packages. We also are on various other Government led groups e.g., Getting it Right for Every Child. We really appreciate the close contact and access to Government that having a dedicated team for school age childcare brings, and this helps us liaise well on support to the sector.

We had four meetings with Maree Todd, Minister for Children and Young People over the year, she was appreciative and thanked the sector, and us, for all we are doing. We had many other meetings with CHANGE Childcare, Care Inspectorate, North Ayrshire Council OSC Recovery Group, CORRA Foundation and Local Authority contacts. We also presented at a National Parent Forum of Scotland Seminar and a Glasgow Citywide seminar.

Consultations

Scottish Parliament – Education and Skills Committee call for views on youth work recovery, Equality and Human Rights Committee – call for views on Scottish Government – budget monitoring 2021/2022.





Research and Surveys

[Looking towards the “new normal”: collating views on mitigations when re-opening](#)

[Collecting case studies, videos, photos, and advice from Critical Childcare providers in the Stories from The Frontline project](#)

[Survey on Service running costs to inform Scottish Government](#)

[Workforce survey results 2019](#) and [Blog discussing the results](#)

[Re-opening Survey Results October 2020 \(November 2020\)](#)

[In-depth OSC Financial Sustainability Report \(January 2021\)](#)

[Workforce Survey 2020 Results \(March 2021\)](#)

[Workforce Survey 2020 - COVID 19 Questions Results \(March 2021\)](#)

[Local Authority Letting Charges \(March 2021\)](#)

Our surveys captured information on the experience of staff and services, children, and families, throughout this year of lockdowns and re-opening, closing again, and measures to operate safely in terms of everyone’s health and wellbeing.

We found both good and poor practice by local authorities – nearly half continued to provide free access to school or community premises, many waived charges during lockdowns, but 8 local authorities, with high charges, continued to charge even when services could not open.

Awareness raising re need for additional financial support for OSC/need for OSC services to be able to re-open

- Re-opening & financial sustainability survey results shared with membership and Scottish Government.
- Specific financial sustainability case studies shared with Scottish Government.

Scottish Government Analytic Exchange Programme

We were successful in a bid to this programme where an experienced government researcher donates some time and skills to a voluntary sector organisation. Research is on impact on the economy of investing in school age childcare.

Training and Events



Online Networking Events

- We facilitated over 20 online events, from small specialist discussions to 100 at training seminars.
- School Age Childcare Local Authority representatives
- Services supporting children with Additional support needs.
- 6 geographical clusters networking events in September 2020
- 2 general networking events.
- AGM and networking discussion.

Training Seminars

- Outdoor Play Seminar – December- 100 delegates
- Conversation with the Care Inspectorate- January. 40 delegates

The events provided networking opportunities and expert speakers.

- Physical Activity and Wellbeing e-learning module, produced with CALA, and featuring our physical activity and wellbeing co-ordinator, was used by 300 people a month during lockdown periods, and hundreds used it when sector opened again.

SOSCN & Scottish Government School Age Childcare Team Events

We set up and facilitated 8 online meetings between sector representatives and the team:

- The Way Forward – 2nd June, Current Critical Childcare Providers -3rd June, Local Authority Representatives – 9th June
- 5 additional events were held in the autumn to consider the National Framework for School Age Childcare.

International/UK work

We presented at the International Journal of Playwork Practice Seminar and facilitated the re-establishment of a 4 Nations group of organisations, supporting school age childcare across the UK. We are in touch with international contacts on a regular basis.

All of our events had positive feedback, often with follow up thanks.

For our online event for specialist services children with Additional Support Needs:

"Really enjoyed it thank you and was such a benefit to my service..."

For the physical activity training selected quotes:

"This course a great fresher on a course I attended in person a few years ago".

"Insightful content"

"I enjoyed the training; I will take back ideas to my service".

"Simple ideas that will benefit the children in my service".



We are on

facebook

twitter

instagram



Communications

We focused on an enhanced communications strategy which was vital to ensure the sector had accurate and timely information to keep children, staff, and families safe and healthy.

The website has a dedicated Covid-19 page with links to all essential guidance, health protection, funding support, business support grants, guides to furlough, and online training resources for staff on furlough. Information and advice are shared via email and social media, telephone, and video meetings, and we produce practical resources such as risk assessment guidance.

Our social media output and direct email advice for individual services or development officers has increased; the website, Facebook and Twitter usage and followers have tripled since the start of the pandemic. We phone development staff in local authorities on a regular basis and share information and good practice with Inspiring Scotland, Starcatchers, Children in Scotland, and local out of school care forums.

We report on research and provide reflective commentary in our Blogs. An audio-visual December holiday message of hope for the future, and positive messages to the sector were shared widely on social media, as well as ongoing essential advice and guidance.

Blogs and audio-visual

April 2020 - [Reflections on our journey and the way ahead](#), this was a call for ideas for future mitigations on re-opening.

September 2020 - [Re-opening services and keeping staff inside](#), this was about consulting staff about re-opening.

September 2020 - [Low pay and limited hours have a push and pull effect](#)... this was a discussion on workforce survey results.

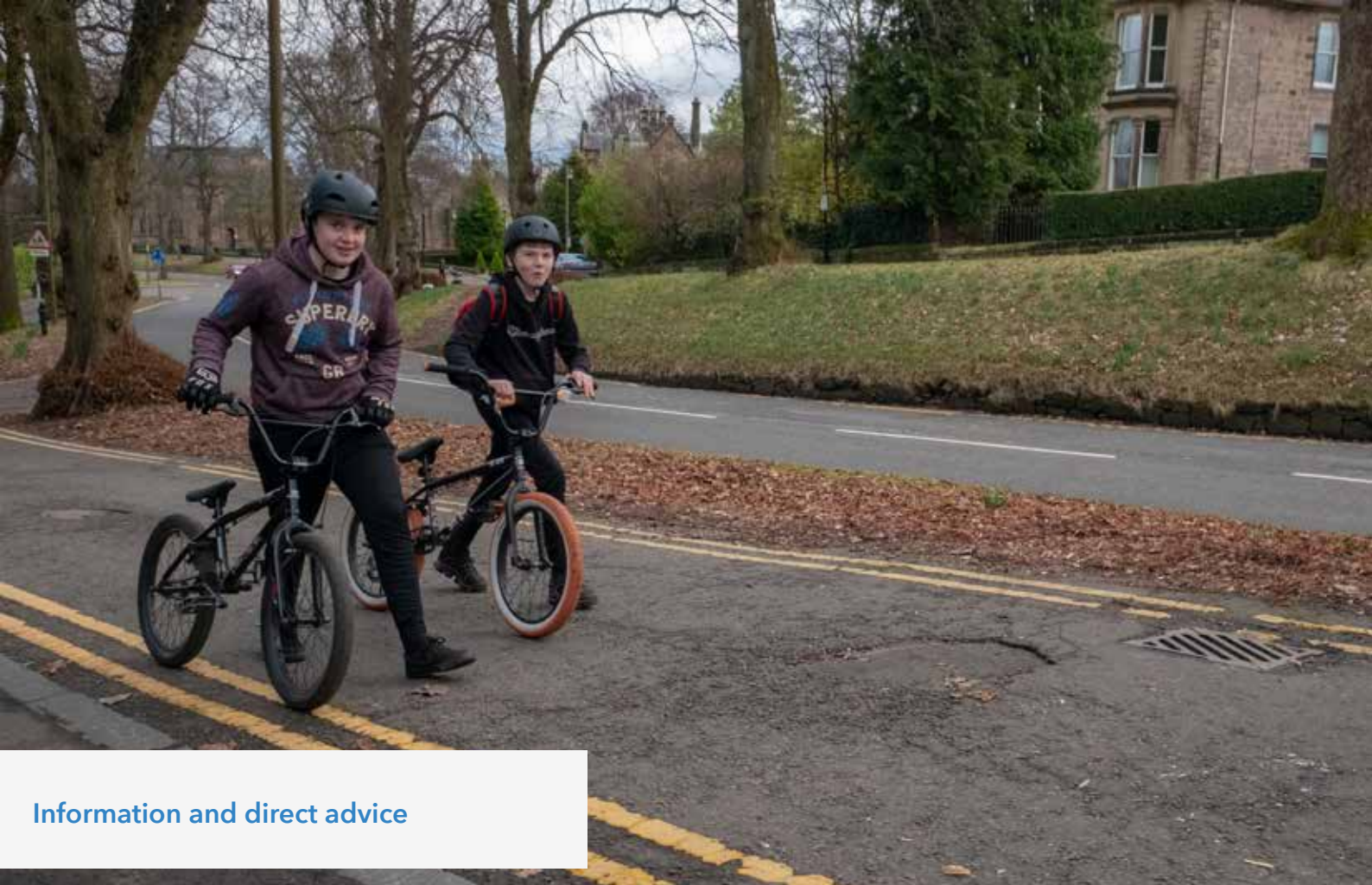
November 2020 - [Reflections on the week](#), this was about moving into level 4 and near lock-down.

December 2020 - Audio -Visual- [Holiday message of thanks](#) and hope from Irene to the sector.

February 2021 - [The Finnish Way to a happier childhood](#) - putting children first.

March 2021 - [The Longest Year -A Reflection](#) - on the pandemic year everyone had just gone through.





Information and direct advice

Over 50 important membership updates emails and 6 fuller newsletters were sent out, and we responded to over 450 direct email enquiries, sometimes with an online follow up meeting where advice was complex. COVID-19 was the topic most covered, furlough, business support, grants, guidance, risk assessments and premises were also frequent topics. At the beginning of the pandemic and later, when financial problems accumulated for the sector, we supported people with stress, anxieties, and fears for the future; therefore, we also have links to wellbeing resources on the website.

We received hundreds of thank you emails and messages for support, updates, and newsletters.

"Just want to let you know you are all amazing, this is a difficult time for the sector, and you are doing a fantastic job lobbying on our behalf and keeping us informed. Keep well and stay connected".

"Can I take this opportunity to say thank you to you all for all your help and guidance over the last year. You have been a lifeline for Out of School Care establishments like ours."

"Thanks for all your emails, it is so useful to have the facts to hand and even nicer to have that human interaction with someone in a similar situation."

"Hope you are well, can I thank you for keeping the OSC's up to date this is very much appreciated."

"Really appreciate the help and support" all the ACC OOSC Team

"Hi to all at SOSCN. Thank you very much for all the fabulous updates throughout this time."

"Hi! I hope you are all doing well. You have all been stars at keeping us updated through all of this."

"Thank you for all your support, input & guidance to date! It is invaluable."

"Thank you for the updates they have been crucial for my small social enterprise child-care team xx".

"We can't thank you all enough for your help and support. You have been absolutely amazing throughout. Thank you"

About Us

Staff

Irene Audain MBE, Chief Executive
Andrew Shoolbread, Policy and Research Manager
Finlay Wright, Information Officer
Greig Cavanagh, Physical Activity Coordinator
Anne-Marie Mackin (freelance AQS assessor)

Trustees

Anne Dick (Chair)
Margaret Graham (Vice-Chair)
Ann McKenzie (Treasurer)
Sharon Gibson (to November 2020)
Stuart Patterson

Professional Advisors

Independent Examiner: Alexander Sloan & Co., 180 St Vincent Street, Glasgow
Bank: Bank of Scotland, Argyle Street, Glasgow

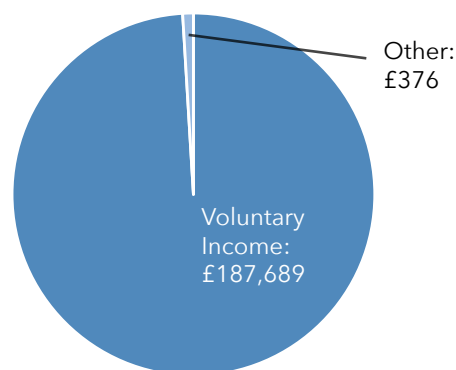
The Scottish Out of School Care Network is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status and is a Scottish registered charity, Charity Number: SC020520.

Company Number: SC200662.

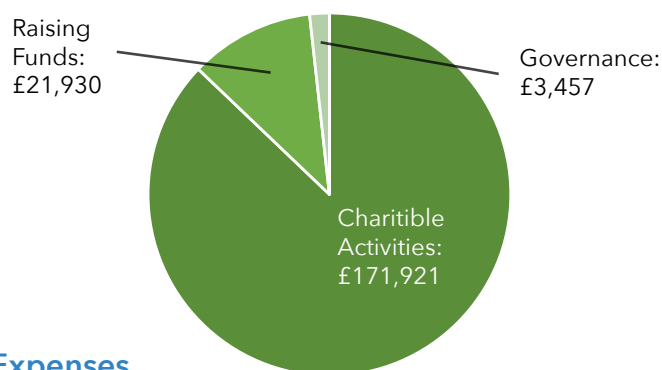
Registered Address: 4th Floor, 41 St Vincent Place, Glasgow G1 2ER Tel: 0141 564 1284 | Web: soscn.org | Email: info@soscn.org

Financial Report

Extracted from examined accounts 2020-2021, prepared by Alexander Sloan & Co.



Income



Expenses



CYPFEIF core grant administered by CORRA Foundation



SOSCN is a Living Wage Employer