

Scottish Out of School Care Network Annual Review 2024-2025



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 nearly 1000 registered school age childcare services in Scotland, as well as around 500 breakfast clubs and over 400 holiday services. More than 50,000 children of school age are registered in childcare. (Care Inspectorate, 2023, 2024). 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.

Objectives and Activities

The objects of the charity are the advancement of the education and social welfare of children, by the development of daycare and recreational facilities for children. This is all school age childcare services, after school childcare, breakfast clubs and all daycare during school holidays.

We are committed to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), equality and inclusion, in particular Articles 31; the right to culture leisure, rest and play; Article 12, the right to consultation and Article 18; state parties to develop appropriate services to support families, including assistance with childcare for working parents. We also have a particular focus on children in need or in poverty (Article 22) and support the provision of care for children with disabilities (article 23). We are also committed to promoting and delivering the outcomes of Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

A Statement from the Board of Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) on the Retirement of Irene Audain MBE.

It is with deep gratitude and admiration that the Board of SOSCN marks the upcoming retirement, at the end of July, of our longstanding Chief Executive, Irene Audain MBE.

Irene has been at the heart of our organisation for decades, leading with vision, compassion, and an unwavering belief in the power of school-age childcare to transform lives. She has seen—and indeed shaped—the journey of our sector from a network of volunteer-led, community-based groups to a recognised pillar of national infrastructure, driven by a commitment to children's rights and quality.

Her leadership has been nothing short of extraordinary. She has championed the professionalism of the workforce, pushed tirelessly for sustainable investment in the sector, and upheld the values of inclusion, care, and respect in every conversation. She has been a steady voice for children, families, and the practitioners who support them—never losing sight of the bigger picture while always grounding her work in the realities of those we serve.

Irene leaves behind a legacy that is not only organisational but deeply personal to all who have worked alongside her. Her influence will be felt for many years to come, and while her retirement is richly deserved, her absence will be felt across our network and beyond.

Though she is stepping down, the principles she has championed—quality, sustainability, and children's rights—remain central to our mission. The work she began will continue with the same passion and purpose, inspired by her example.

On behalf of the Board, our staff, our members, and the wider sector, we thank Irene for her decades of service, leadership, and unwavering dedication. We wish her joy and fulfilment in the next chapter of her life.

With heartfelt thanks,

The Board of SOSCN

A message from Irene Audain MBE

I came into this post with strong principles as a feminist, as a supporter of equality and inclusion, and, especially, a staunch supporter of children and young people's rights.

The role, as it was at first, as Scottish Development Officer, matched those principles and the experiences I already had in setting up and developing the first urban aid funded service in Scotland, whilst supporting others to do the same. From day one, I was working for a cause I believe in; it is not just a job. It was then, and now, a privilege to be employed in this exciting new field, which I helped create in the first place, alongside many other early pioneers.

Back in the early 90s, our phones were landlines, and computers were huge and bulky, we did not have the internet or email yet... so work involved, right from the start, travelling on many journeys, across Scotland, meetings in London, as there was no Scottish Government or Parliament then, so policy work was with Westminster, and my first UK four nations meeting was in Belfast.

In the early days, everything was printed and posted, we created information resources and regular newsletters. As more people were employed by local authorities and Local Enterprise companies to support the development of new services, we created local networks of services and a forum for the development staff to meet and share ideas and to support each other.

We made a video on "What is out of school care?" and this was translated into many languages, although we only had one copy left to tidy up and share.

Back then, media work was not social media, but getting articles and letters into newspapers, and appearing on TV and being on Radio programmes. Of course, nothing goes without a hitch! I recall going for a radio interview, having to arrive at the studio at 7.30 am – only to be put in the wrong studio – and hearing the producer being told in another studio that I had not turned up! You can guess this still annoys me.

Now, of course, we have the internet, social media, online meetings, training, and resources, and this has again opened up connections across the country and internationally.

Right from the start and to the present day, the aspects of this role I have enjoyed most, is working directly with staff and children in services, and a lot of my early work was in supporting parent committees too. I am pleased when children are directly involved in our work, whether through presenting at events, responding to consultations and surveys or taking part in our projects. Great examples are the flags children designed for our 21st anniversary events, and all the amazing feedback from the STEM project, which was a great success.

Our involvement in the European Network for School Age Childcare has led to many international friendships, and again, joint research work internationally which meant getting to visit services and meet leaders from other nations in conferences and meetings across Europe, and indeed, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the USA, and Iceland.

Hosting the ENSAC conference in 1998, was an undoubted highlight of my career, it took two years of work to prepare, and it involved the whole staff team, board, and partners across the country and internationally. We had many events in the social programme, which were enjoyed by all of our guests.

Sam Galbraith, who was the first appointed Minister for Children in Scotland, opened the event, and this was an exciting time for Scotland, with our own new Parliament and Scottish Executive (later to be Scottish Government).

In the early 2000s, the years when we had the Funding Facilitators programme, and researchers employed, were when we were at our biggest and we moved to new premises to give us a whole floor for

this expanded staff team. Whilst I was always fundraising, this was the biggest grant ever I had raised for SOSCN a total of £1.3 million, and even with employing accountants to help, grant reporting had to be stringent and took a lot of time and energy.

During this time, I was also honoured to receive an MBE for work in developing school age childcare. It was a surprise, but I accepted it on behalf of the sector for all the work you do every day to make children's lives happier.

The internet and email transformed everyone's work, back when Andrew first joined us though, only one computer was shared by all to take turns in using the internet; he first joined us in an information role, and he got a crash course in learning about school age childcare, as we carried out audits of the sector in the Scottish Borders, Dumfries and Galloway and for other local authorities. We still maintain great connections with people we met on those journeys.

For our 21st anniversary our outdoor conference in a marquee in the Hidden Gardens in Glasgow, naturally, a semi-outdoor conference in June in Scotland was still a risk, and, of course, there was a thunder and lightning storm, and we all had to evacuate the marquee. Nevertheless, everyone had fun, although it is not an experiment, for some reason, that we have repeated.

In 2013 we invited Aileen Campbell to an expert symposium on out of school care, and it is from that meeting that she agreed to look into developing a policy for out of school care, with subsequent meetings with Irene and Andrew to discuss the potential for this. This led to the appointment, in 2018, of a Scottish Government Policy Officer to lead on developing a new policy framework for school age childcare. Today this school age childcare team has well over twenty-five staff and manages a number of strands of work for future development of school age childcare.

Of course, in leading the organisation there have been times of stress, frustration, and disappointment, whilst battling to get support for the sector, or indeed ensuring that the organisation survived under different political and funding regimes over the years. This has really not been an easy job, but it is always worthwhile. Where I am gladdest, we were able to support the sector in recent years, was undoubtedly, being there for you during and in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. We, each and every one of us, stepped up to the place for children and families, and I also know we have ensured that this will not be forgotten, as we provided in our evidence to the post Covid-19 Inquiry.

In the current climate, still recovering post covid, and with the cost of living crisis, it is still not easy for any of us. There is a policy framework in place to develop school age childcare in Scotland, with some progress, although perhaps not as much as we hoped for, given the UK financial crises over the last few years. So, once again, remember to use our campaigning guides and start lobbying across political parties in Scotland once they put up their candidates for the next Scottish elections in 2026. Use parent power and your links in the community. I am sure SOSCN will still be around to support you and will have a manifesto for you all to support and share.

I have been privileged to work in developing and supporting this sector for all of this time, ably supported by many wonderful staff and board members, but now, it is time for me to handover to others to take this amazing role into the future, while I start a new journey into the retirement years. I welcome and wish the best of luck to Audrey, my successor.

Thanks to you all across the sector, partners, supporters, funders and colleagues across the policy and statutory agencies, who have supported the work of SOSCN over many years. With the needs of children and families at the heart of what we do, I will always remain committed to and passionate about this wonderful sector!

With warm wishes, Irene Audain MBE

Policy representation and engagement

We attended over sixty policy meetings in terms of representation, engagement and partnership with the Scottish Government and a range of statutory agencies, including national forums such as the Care Inspectorate, Social Services Council, Playwork forum, and providing input to universities delivering the Childhood Practice level 9 qualification.

We provided our expertise and input to the development of national policy and the development of the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland joint Framework for Inspection. The outcomes of this are reflected in there now being a school age childcare specific section in the new joint framework and in ongoing shared partnership work with the Scottish Government School Age Childcare Team. For example, the Scottish Government team are working with the Care Inspectorate to conduct a feasibility study into the level of regulation that registered school age childcare services have to meet, which can affect their sustainability, and this is an issue we have raised on behalf of the sector.

We contributed to the development of the common core skills, national occupational standards and reviews of qualifications with the Scottish Social Services Council and the this ensures that the different training and qualifications needs of school age childcare staff are considered as all of these elements are revised and updated. We had up to twenty meetings with the school age childcare team; on a wide range of topics and also attended their School Age Childcare Strategic group (2) as well as meeting about the new breakfast clubs funding of £3 million "Bright Starts" where we have also been invited to be part of the official advisory group for this new programme of work. We represented school age childcare at the Scottish Government led Childcare sector working group at their quarterly meetings.

We had at least sixteen meetings with the Care Inspectorate, mainly on the new joint framework, and on their safer staffing subgroup, Space to grow publication, and their Early Years Forum, again a mix of online or in person meetings. the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland joint Framework for Inspection. This was launched in January 2025, and a number of school age childcare services are part of the piloting of this new framework, which will be the standards to meet from the Autumn of 2025.

We worked with the Scottish Social Services Council on Future proofing, national occupational standards and the common core across eight meetings. And with qualifications provider such as the Childhood Practice forum and in individual meetings. We led on designing, delivering and analysing a survey of children and young people in order that their voices were included in this work.

We represented the school age childcare sector at three meetings to revise Playwork qualification and the this ensures that the different training and qualifications needs of school age childcare staff are considered as all of these elements are revised and updated.

Our Trustees during this year

Anne Dick (Chair)
Caitlin Logan Carter (resigned 17th October 2024)
Mairi Clare Ferris
Marie McQuade
Linda Pople (appointed 16th October 2024)
Lorna Popper (appointed 16th October 2024)

Our Staff

Irene Audain MBE, Chief Executive
Andrew Shoolbread, Policy and Research Manager
Finlay Wright, Information Officer
Patrick Morrison, Practice and Training Officer
Greig Cavanagh, Physical Activity Coordinator (part time)
Anne Marie Mackin, Sessional Quality Assurance Assessor

Policy Consultations

We provided various comments at different stages of the development of the joint inspection framework, and we submitted evidence to the Scottish Covid -19 Inquiry, as well as facilitating a meeting with the Inquiry and school age childcare services to share their experiences of the impact of the pandemic. This work will help ensure the school age childcare sector's work during the pandemic is included in the history and reflections on lesson learned during that period of time.

Pilot expert group – workforce reform: December 2024

On behalf of the Scottish Government School Age Childcare team, we selected a range of service managers, across different types of services in order to create a group to pilot and discuss workforce development and reform, with over a dozen participants selected, they contributed a wide range of views, and all said they were positive about being involved. It is expected that this group will reconvene as needed in the future. Participants were particularly interested in the potential for reform of required qualifications, as well as potential "lighter touch" regulation.

Policy campaigns

The CEO or SOSCN has been a co-signatory on letters campaigns UK or Scotland wide, all relating to child poverty.

Workforce Survey November 2024

There was a total of 283 responses, all of which were included in the analysis. 125 (44%) responses were completed by Lead Practitioners; 116 (41%) responses were completed by Practitioners and 42 (15%) by Support Workers.

This year we saw an overall increase in the number of responses since the last survey (up by 50).

Responses were received from OSC services located in 24 (out of 32) Scottish local authorities: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Edinburgh City, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee, East Dunbartonshire, East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, Inverclyde, Midlothian, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, and West Lothian.

Engagement Events

We held a networking event in May for services on the theme of sharing good practice ahead of providing holiday provision, in terms of activities, places to visit and working with other services locally. This had up to 80 participants and feedback was highly positive.

A joint event was held with the DWP and Child Poverty Action Group in June in order to promote take up of help with childcare costs, with nearly 80 participants and, again, very positive feedback.

SOSCN 2024 Conference – Reaching Out!

Wednesday 18th September at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Glasgow with 100 attendees.

Planning and preparations meetings were held across the summer to engage speakers and to make short video films of services who are good examples of being embedded in their community. We made films of St Mirins ASC & primary school (positive school relations); KLAS Care CiC (business/funding models); Hutchesons ASC (local networking).

At our 2024 conference The Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise opened with a keynote address and stalls from the Care Inspectorate, Child Poverty Action Group, Thrive Outdoors and the Scottish Social Services Council were kept busy during breaks.

We heard from school age childcare services which have built strong partnerships with their school and headteacher, the local business community, and developed communities of practice with other childcare services.

We also considered the role school age childcare can play as an essential infrastructure service by strengthening local economies and supporting strategies such as anti-poverty initiatives. Tips were also be shared about developing strong funding applications to develop your service.

The programme was a mixture of in-person and video presentations, and interactive discussions and activities with delegates having the opportunity to network with services from across Scotland.

Inspection Framework event

In November we held a joint online event with the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland with nearly 200 participants to discuss the new Framework for regulation. Participants contributed many positive comments in the chat, especially on having a section of regulation of school age childcare in itself.

Physical Activity Training (in person)

Over 400 children participated in football coaching sessions run by our part time physical activity co-ordinator, over the Easter break, in the summer holiday period and the October week break.

He also delivered a training session on play and resilience to 20 practitioners from a range of services to help understanding of the importance of play to supporting children's wellbeing in coping with adversity in their lives. All feedback was positive.

Additional Support Needs Training

In June we also held another follow up training session with Jim Taylor, an expert on children with additional support needs, due to further demand for his in depth expertise and 17 delegates attended this session specifically requested by them.

Practice and Training Officer (in person and online training)

Our Practice and Training Officer has delivered and developed online training and in person training courses, as well as essential toolkits for sale in the online shop.

In person training

Play training was delivered in Falkirk in May and Medication Management training was delivered to Gingerbread, a school age childcare service in Edinburgh in August.

Induction for New Workers to School Age Childcare training was delivered in Glasgow to staff from a variety of services in August.

Seven Managing Distressed Behaviour with Trauma Informed Practice training sessions have been delivered across Scotland (including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Dundee). Across these 7 sessions, there were 136 participants and feedback was highly positive.

Two GIRFEC training sessions have been delivered. Across these two sessions, there were 33 attendees with positive feedback.

Two Anti-Sectarianism Awareness training sessions were delivered in partnership with Nil by Mouth (Glasgow and Aberdeen).

We have a management consultancy project with a multi- site service which is to support new managers in posts.

Online Training

We have courses online on:

- Staff Induction
- Play
- Medication Management

A trial of "Trauma informed Practice" for future development especially for access for more rural services to online training.

The first SOSCN Professional Development Book Club meeting was held in January. The first book discussed was The Attachment Aware Classroom by Rebecca Brooks, this is a free networking event.

Achieving Quality Scotland

This is our quality improvement resource, and we held ten or more mentoring training sessions to groups and individual services to help them get to submit evidence towards their award.

We awarded Gold Achieving Quality Scotland to Jordanhill After School Service and there are others in submission for assessment.

New Online Shop

We released three toolkits on essential topics such as medication management, recruitment, personal plan, and a self-evaluation & development plan toolkit, ranging in price from £10 to £17. We have also purchasable themed policy bundles with discounts for bulk purchases or available individually, ranging from £4 for one policy to £45 for them all or £20 for bundles.

Practice Focus

This is a regular multimedia production of good practice guidance by the Practice and Training Officer: This included an accompanying short Inspection Round-Up video, published on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and the website.

Topics covered:

- Health & Safety
- Snack time.
- Communication and Engagement with Parents and Carers
- Outdoor play in winter
- Experiences for older children
- Environment
- Quality

Information for our members

We regularly sent out email updates and the website and social media were well used in this period.

We sent out seasonal bumper newsletters, as well as a summer activities guide, and a customisable fact sheet and poster on help with childcare costs.

We provided publications and information support over 70 email updates and over 220,000 pages views on the website. Our Facebook has nearly 1600 followers.

Fair Work and Real Living Wage

We continue to be an accredited living wage employer, and we have consulted staff and published a Fair work statement on our website. We review all of our policies annually and every employee accesses rights to, for example, flexible work practices, from the first day of employment. Staff induction training includes informing them of their rights to fair work. Contracts of employment include their right to join a union, time off for dependents, childcare and reasonable adjustments for any additional support needs. We invest in training and staff development, and all staff have contributed to the organisation's development plans and receive regular opportunities to receive feedback on their work, both from line management and each other. We also recognise staff rights to switch off outside work hours and cover for them while on any type of leave.

Professional Advisers

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

Funders

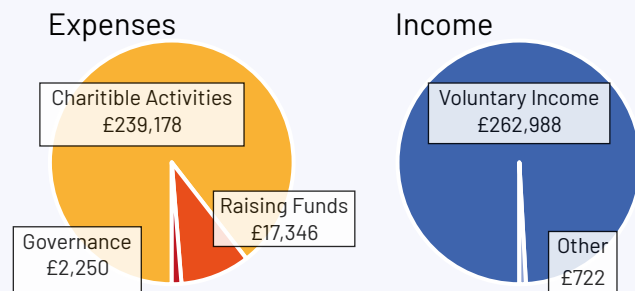
Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund core grant administered by CORRA Foundation

Scottish Government Childcare Sector Representation and Sustainability Fund



Financial Report

Extracted from examined accounts 2024-2025, prepared by Alexander Sloan & Co.



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.

SOSCN is a Living Wage Employer.

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