

28th February 2023 by email ash.regan.msp@parliament.scot

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Dear Ash Regan MSP,

Scottish Government Commitment to develop School Age Childcare

We are writing to you to ask about your plans, if elected as First Minister, to support the commitments already made in the Programme for Government to develop school age childcare in Scotland.

Considerable work has already undertaken towards this commitment, and we would like to be reassured that this work will continue with the resources promised. [School age childcare: progress report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/publications/2022/02/220202-school-age-childcare-progress-report/)

We also would like to hear your views on the workforce staff shortages across the childcare sector, which is felt more acutely in school age childcare, given that this is part time, low paid work, with a largely female workforce. These staff shortages, in turn affect the financial viability of services, leading to offering fewer childcare places, or in some cases, closing altogether.

Again, we would ask what are your plans to address these financial challenges in the sector?

Childcare for all ages of children is needed to help enable women to stay in or get into worthwhile careers, parents tell us of impossible challenges trying to get care before school, after school and all-day during holidays, childcare they need in order to work or train. Here are some quotes from our current ongoing survey with parents who need, but cannot access, school age childcare:

“Children spend more time alone/entertaining themselves e.g., toys, on devices “

“Having to work evenings and weekends to catch up on hours lost to school pick up and having child at home till end of the working day”.

“My child is disadvantaged by not having an after school childcare setting after hers closed. She used to enjoy interacting with different age groups. She is having to occupy herself for 1.5hrs each week as I cannot reduce my hours any further and my husband needs to maintain his in order to keep as much income as possible.”

“Not performing well at work as have to leave meetings/tasks early to get kids from school. Working late at night to make up time.”

“Having to use annual leave/unpaid leave when schools are off and holiday club is closed”.

“There is no before school club, or breakfast club at our school. As I am a teacher it means that I cannot work full time because I cannot get to work in time for the start of my school day. This is because my partner works away those days and we have no other option. Even a breakfast club from 7:45 or 8:00 would be a huge game changer for us. I could then access more work opportunities, work full time again, advance my career, and ultimately ensure our family is more financially secure.”

I work in a hospital and many shifts start before my child school day starts, this causes difficulty with rostering at work and puts strain on family and friends helping”.

And even when they do access school age childcare parents worry about not being able to do their essential work if the service closes:

Page | 2 “If our OOSC and holiday club couldn't run I would have to significantly cut my working hours or even leave my job as an NHS Consultant.”

“We have (just) managed to get enough but the threat of losing it may mean we work less (NHS workers)”

“having a negative impact on us and the health service I have good access to childcare after school hours, but do not have access to a breakfast club for before school hours”

The impact on parents, often essential public staff, is clearly illustrated in the above quotes, and parent's concerns for their children's wellbeing is also evident here.

We look forward to hearing your response to our questions on the ongoing commitment to developing school age childcare, and how you plan to address the current workforce and financial issues in the sector.

With best wishes,

Irene Audain MBE

Chief Executive, Scottish Out of School Care Network

Please note this is a public letter which will be published on our website.

The Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) is a Scottish registered charity (SC020520), established in 1991 and is the national infrastructure umbrella organisation providing support, mentoring, training, information and resources to the nearly 1,000 school-aged childcare services in Scotland, which provide childcare, play and learning to over 50,000 children.

All our work is underpinned by a commitment to supporting and promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Articles 31; the right to culture leisure, rest and play; Article 12, the right to consultation and Article 18; states 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 on 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).

We engage strategically at national and local levels to assist in the development and delivery of policies relating to childcare, children's rights and family support.

www.soscn.org

School Age Childcare

This is breakfast clubs, after school care services and all daycare during school holidays for mainly primary school children. Services are registered with the Care Inspectorate and staff are regulated by the Scottish Social Services Council. Staff in school age childcare are required to achieve the same qualifications and levels for their posts as staff in early learning and 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, 588 breakfast clubs and 482 holiday services. More than 50,000 children of school age are registered in childcare. (Care Inspectorate, 2021).