

Becoming a Fair Work Nation

Scottish Out of School Care Network Response

<https://consult.gov.scot/fair-work-employability-and-skills/fair-work-nation/>

Consultation questions

Fair Work In Your Sector

1. What is the main sector you work in or represent?

[Drop Down List]

[Answer Required]

Sector

Please select main sector

- Accommodation and food service activities
- Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies
- Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services-producing activities of households for own use
- Administrative and support service activities
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Construction
- Education
- Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
- Financial and insurance activities
- Human health and social work activities
- Information and communication

- Mining and quarrying
- Other service activities
- Professional, scientific and technical activities
- Public administration and defence; compulsory social security
- Real estate activities
- Sewerage, waste management and remediation activities
- Transport and storage
- Water supply
- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles

2. What are the main opportunities for adopting fair work practices in your sector?

For Q1 above we had to choose "other" because you have not included "care" or "voluntary sector" we could have applied in terms of the school age childcare sector we represent. This, in itself, shows how caring work is made invisible.

Prior to the pandemic the school age childcare sector numbered over a thousand services catering for up to 80,000 children (through breakfast and afterschool services and holiday clubs during school breaks). This sector in itself is an important lever in terms of giving parents, especially women and lone parents, the opportunity to work or train for work, and to work a full day.

Currently there are very limited opportunities to fulfil fair work practices in the school age childcare sector in Scotland, while some strive to do so through the real living wage, which we promote, the pandemic has caused a great deal of financial insecurity to this sector, with a number of services going under very soon if there is no support forthcoming.

<https://soscn.org/downloads/research/snapshot-financial-sustainability-survey-of-the-school-age-childcare-sector.pdf>

- Without additional financial help just over a fifth of services indicated they could survive indefinitely.

- Just under half of respondents believe that their service(s) will have to close down completely, or begin the process of doing so by the end of this year
- Workforce challenges with recruitment and retention of staff is an ongoing issue and can prevent offering enough places for financial sustainability
- While services welcome future plans to expand wraparound school age childcare, some warn we need to conserve the existing sector in order to build on this commitment

The work during term time is part time hours, but all-day during school holidays. The workforce is mainly female. We have conducted annual workforce surveys for many years and the findings of last year's survey demonstrate that the average pay for managers is just over £13 an hour, 93% female, for practitioners, £9.97 per hour, 87% female, and support workers, £9.27 per hour, 87% female. [osc-workforce-survey-results-2020.pdf \(soscn.org\)](https://www.soscn.org/osc-workforce-survey-results-2020.pdf)

3. Please explain how you think these opportunities can be maximised in your sector?

The only way fair work opportunities can be maximised in the school age childcare service is through direct investment in services themselves which, in line with all other government funding, e.g., for Early Learning and Childcare for younger children, has the condition of paying the real living wage and other fair work practices attached to the funding.

As an organisation we are an accredited living wage employer and we have consistently promoted this to the sector, prior to the pandemic better off services followed this where they could now so many are struggling to deliver a service and retain and train staff.

4. What are the main challenges to adopting fair work practices in your sector?

Childcare and caring work in general is highly gendered although staff in the school age childcare sector have to go through a lot of training and must gain professional qualifications it is too often seen as work which is just like "babysitting." Instead, those professionals support children and

families, some with highly complex needs, as well as having to manage themselves and others and, given that more than half are in the voluntary sector, more than a third in the private sector, they also have to do the business planning and financial management work.

Another barrier in this field is that there is a limit to what parents can pay for childcare and if, in the voluntary sector, parent committees decide on pay rates and to put them up means they pay more for childcare. Also parents are often not aware of the help they can get with childcare costs through tax free childcare or universal credit. [financial-support-to-pay-for-childcare.pdf \(soscn.org\)](https://www.soscn.org/financial-support-to-pay-for-childcare.pdf)

5. Please explain how you think these challenges might be overcome, including your ideas on any specific interventions and support needed in your sector?

The school age childcare sector needs to be permanently and well-funded to enable fairer work practice and the real living wage for staff. This should include support for raising managers and senior staff pay to much higher levels than that in light of degree level qualifications and the large responsibilities they carry.

Fair Work In The Current Economic Context

6. What do you believe are the barriers to delivering Fair Work given the current economic challenges in Scotland?

One of the biggest things we should all have learned throughout this pandemic is that a large proportion of the most essential workers needed to keep the infrastructure going are those who have to go out to work to care for others, keep the lights on, the bins emptied and retail of essential goods, as well as health workers, cleaners, and support staff yet they are often amongst the lowest paid. The barrier here is “class” based, from a historical lineage that showed up starkly in the pandemic.

Without some of the school age childcare services stepping up to provide critical childcare many of those workers, as well as those at all levels in the NHS and education, would not have been able to do their jobs. We need a

reset in what work is valued, and fair pay and conditions should be an automatic right no matter what work you do.

The impact of the pandemic on women with childcare responsibilities also highlights the need to make childcare part of the critical infrastructure and be funded.

Close the Gap and Engender found in March 2021 that:

“The survey data reinforces pre-existing evidence that women’s employment has been disproportionately impacted by additional caring responsibilities over the course of the crisis, and women have been particularly affected by rising financial precarity and anxiety as a result of the social and economic consequences of the crisis. The data also highlights that Black and minority ethnic (BME) 3 women and disabled women have been particularly impacted by the social, economic, and labour market implications of the pandemic.”

[Close-the-Gap-and-Engender-Joint-Briefing-on-the-impact-of-COVID-19-on-women-with-childcare-responsibilities-in-Scotland.pdf](#)

The briefing concludes with a number of recommendations not least is that investment to make childcare widely available is essential to address inequalities.

Given the economic challenges, to achieve Fair Work, may mean those who are very well rewarded, or own significant assets in Scotland, contribute more back in terms of taxation and clamping down of tax evasion.

7. What do you believe are the opportunities for delivering Fair Work in the current economic climate in Scotland?

Right now, as we see an unsupported but vital part of the infrastructure needed now and more in the longer-term future as we fight our way out of this pandemic, basically many school age childcare services may close altogether, we have little confidence in new opportunities for fair work in the short term.

However, we currently are running another workforce survey which is also asking about mental health and wellbeing and their views on current qualification requirements.

Longer term as we rebuild, this particular sector will need a lot of investment and new ways of regulating, supporting, and a wider pool of staff.

Further Actions To Deliver Fair Work

8. Please set out any further actions you think the Scottish Government should take to deliver Fair Work for everyone. This may include for example any further support you think is needed.

As we have said immediate and longer-term investment in school age childcare services and indeed all the essential work carried out by lower paid and unrecognised essential workers.

Also, publicity campaigns to educate the public about the value and improve the status of essential workers, especially women and those with other barriers to equality.

9. Please set out any other actions you think are required to deliver Fair Work for everyone, including who should take this action.

All those who procure work in Scotland should ensure rates payable ensure fair work practices...and then check that this is happening consistently.

There should be higher support for apprenticeships for all ages as people will need to move to new jobs as many sectors are going under right now.

Fair Work And Employment Powers

10. If Scotland had full control over employment law, which issues would you like to see addressed as a priority in order to deliver fairer work in Scotland?

Providing school age childcare to address inequality, especially for parents facing barriers to employment or education.

At the moment help with childcare costs is to parents from UK schemes, if this considerable funding was also devolved or under the control of the Scottish Parliament and Government, then we would suggest it is used to

fund childcare services directly, instead of complicated processes for parents.

Further Ideas

11. What is the most important thing that you or your organisation can do to help Scotland become a Fair Work Nation?

We promote fair work practices generally; we continue to collect valuable data on the school age childcare workforce and advocate for them at all levels. We are an accredited living wage employer, with flexible work and stringent equality policies.

12. Please use the box below to tell us about anything else relevant to Scotland becoming a Fair Work Nation and any further ideas you might have on the action that will be needed to achieve this.

I am an older woman with disabilities, the fair work practice of my organisation, later backed by legislation, has ensured that I can use my professional abilities to the full in supporting a sector which I am proud to represent, given that they care for children and families so well, and have stepped up to do so throughout this pandemic.

I passionately believe everyone should be able to use their abilities to the full in work that is rewarding and well rewarded.

Of course we need a strong economy to be able to create jobs with good terms of employment, however, a national priority as one day we come out of this pandemic should be to look to become a wellbeing nation, where fair work practice underpins every job role and where those who provide vital infrastructure, but are currently not valued enough, such as the childcare field, are raised up in public esteem and be better rewarded for what they do.

Irene Audain, Scottish Out of School Care Network, 21st December 2021