

Scottish Out of School Care Network Response to National Care Service proposals (By email 1 November 2021)

Introduction

The Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) is the national charity promoting children's rights to play care and learning in high quality, accessible and affordable school age childcare services which are breakfast clubs, after school services and all-day holiday services during school holidays. The UNCRC is embedded in our work and addressing inequalities, poverty and disadvantage is a core part of our overall aims and objectives. We welcome the opportunity to share our views on the proposals for a new National Care Service for Scotland, and we are pleased to see human rights of those being cared for are a core principle. Please see www.soscn.org for more information about us.

The registered out of school care sector is the largest provider of play, care and learning opportunities for school-aged children. There are 1014 school age childcare services in Scotland, for 748 this is their main service, there are 661 breakfast clubs and 472 holiday services. The number of children registered with the Care Inspectorate, with main service school age childcare is 53,600. Overall, more than 60,000 children access this care in Scotland.ⁱ Nearly 5,000 staff worked in the sector (2017), and all are professionally qualified with managers at degree level just the same as Early Learning and Childcare settings. 12% of staff are male, which is higher than the rest of the childcare sector but overall, it is still a female workforce, characterised often by part time, low paid work.ⁱⁱ Most are registered with the Scottish Social Services Council.

We are providing brief comments as overall our work expertise does not cover the many complexities of care provision for older people, those with other additional support needs and the many models of procurement, regulation, quality improvement and delivery in this wide field.

Comments:

Where we are concerned is with any proposed changes to the role of the regulators; the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Social Services Council, in that this would affect the school age childcare sector and the registered staff in it.

With considerable experience of policy development, we know that there are often unintended consequences of major shifts in policy and roles of regulatory and other agencies set up to oversee care, education, and professional development.

1. Currently under the Children Act (Scotland) 1995, there is a duty on local authorities to provide daycare for children of school age who are "in need", this can mean paid for places in registered before and after school care or all-day care during holidays. The proposed NCS presumably will include those children under the broader remit but does not include daycare of children and early learning and childcare.

2. Asking the Care Inspectorate to take on a fuller role in assessing financial viability of care homes, for example, could unintentionally increase this role to other regulated sectors not part of the NCS, such as daycare of children.
3. We also have concerns that with reform of Education Scotland also ongoing, we would not want to see their refreshed role include school age childcare, which is often put together with Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), despite not having the formal educational remit of ELC. The school age childcare sector is firmly for informal social learning and development through play and other leisure activities and not to be seen as an extension of the school day.
4. We welcome moves towards better pay, conditions, and professional development for the wider care workforce, however, already the school age childcare sector is experiencing difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff, not least due to the much better conditions in the public sector for ELC staff, and, as school age childcare staff require the same training and qualifications levels as in ELC, many have been lost through the 1140 hours expansion of ELC. With ELC and the wider care sector guaranteed e.g., the real living wage, this then leaves school age childcare amongst the lowest paid, with no public funding support to improve pay.

Irene Audain, Chief Executive

Scottish Out of School Care Network

Respondent Information attached to email

ⁱ<https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/5271/Early%20learning%20and%20childcare%20statistics%202018.pdf>

ⁱⁱhttps://data.sssc.uk.com/images/WDR/CSW/Childrens_Services_Workforce_2017.pdf