

SOSCN Consultation response – February 2018

Safe and Effective Staffing in Health and Social Care

SOSCN responded to only one question in this consultation:

7a What risks or unintended consequences might arise as a result of the proposed legislation and potential requirements?

As the national infrastructure organisation representing out of school care (OSC) in Scotland, the Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) would like to highlight that the workforce is already under a significant strain due to funding issues, legislation requirements and the 1140 hour expansion of early learning and childcare. Whilst we too want the best quality services providing the best possible outcomes for children and young people, we believe that any future developments relating to the workforce must take into account the current (and potential future) economic and political landscapes. Aspiration and legislative requirements must be based upon realistic and achievable actions which truly support and strengthen the sector and do not put at risk that which already exists.

There are now over 1,000 out of school care services in Scotland and they exist without any form of statutory requirement at national or local levels- for many their survival is a fragile one.

SOSCN is currently undertaking a survey of local authorities and the support that out of school care services receive; we are finding that this varies enormously. In some areas, OSC services receive free or low-cost lets on premises, some form of financial support and workforce development resources, such as free or low-cost training and financial support towards qualifications, and in other areas they receive nothing.

Nearly half of all OSC services in Scotland have a voluntary management committee. Many services are surviving solely on the fees paid by parents, and often the parent-users are also members of the committee of the voluntary-run service. This means that there may be a reluctance to raise fees (which may already appear high) to provide staff with improved pay and conditions or hours additional to those working directly with the children, in order to develop staff, their practice and the service as a whole. Slim financial margins mean that services often are unable to fully to develop because quite simply they do not have the resources (money, premises, time) available to them- the willingness is there but the resources may not allow it.

OSC services and the workforce must meet the same legal requirements as other early learning and childcare services, meaning that as of 2011, Lead Practitioners have had to be qualified to (or working towards) a degree-level qualification. What we haven't seen is the same level of support for OSC services to achieve this- our experience is that often funding to meet legislative and regulatory requirements is first directed to statutory services and then if anything remains, this is directed to the non-statutory services; this is despite having

to meet the same requirements. So, the already under-resourced sector is further under-resourced yet has to meet the same requirements as the well-resourced one, thus a two-tier system is created and maintained. OSC is often referred to as a 'Cinderella service' within local authorities.

To meet the increased need for services due to the commitment to the delivery of the 1140 hours of early learning and childcare services we are seeing a skills' drain from the OSC sector as staff are moving to full-time employment opportunities with better pay, conditions and career prospects. Furthermore, the Scottish Government has committed to provide additional funding so that partner providers of ELC can pay the living wage. This means that potentially a three-tier workforce will be created with the best pay and conditions available to those in local authority posts, followed by partner providers and then 'all other childcare services' after this. Those positions within the sectors which have the worst pay and conditions will see the greatest turnover of staff which makes workforce development challenging. A quality service is one which nurtures and develops staff but this is only possible if you have continuity of staff which in turn is only achievable if you are able to provide attractive employment and career prospects, which quite simply costs.

When considering safe and effective staffing within social care services it should not be a case of creating additional systems, toolkits and requirements without looking to see what the sector can realistically cope with to ensure that it survives in the face of some significant challenges. Changes and developments nationally must be resourced appropriately to ensure their success for ALL childcare services, which of course includes out of school care. Out of school care is a social care service but because it is not a statutory one, all too often is not considered or remembered about when developing broader strategies for mostly statutory services.