

Access to Childcare Fund

In 2020 grants were awarded to fifteen services and projects across Scotland who sought to address the challenges and barriers encountered around school aged childcare and allow parents and carers to have time around the school day and in holidays safe in the knowledge that their child(ren) is being looked after and given opportunities to take part in activities, play or youth work experiences.



Access to Childcare Fund

The aim was to make services more accessible and affordable for low-income families, particularly the six identified priority family groups most at risk from living in poverty and set out in the **Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan** these are:

- Lone parent families, the large majority of which are headed by women.
- Families which include a disabled adult or child.
- Larger families.
- Minority ethnic families.
- Families with a child under one year old.
- Families where the mother is under 25 years of age.



Number of children across all projects
Number of families across all projects

1479*
1001*

Group	Number*	% of all families*
Lone Parents	351	35%
Child or adult with ASN	349	35%
Larger Families	162	16%
Minority ethnic families	151	15%
Child under 1	37	4%
Mother under 25	47	5%



Access to Childcare Fund

Tests of change

- Does subsidised school aged childcare support families to gain, sustain or progress in employment or learning?
- Does targeted Family Support empower families to improve their quality of life and improved outcomes?
- Do working families require weekend/ holiday childcare?
- Can a referral scheme, subsidised childcare options and a family support function, support the longer-term sustainability of out of school care provision for older children and young people?
- Does flexibility of hours increase uptake?



Progress in phase 1

- Services met the needs of the families in the face of a global pandemic.
- Families report the mental health of their child/young person has improved.
- Strong impact demonstrated from whole family holistic support. For some individuals this will be a lengthy journey and that they will require support from the project over longer periods of time to help them make significant changes.
- Most projects linked in with CPP/ LPG / Local authority , some reported being linked in with their local poverty lead.
- Stronger partnership working reported.
- Strong responses from families.
- A significant number of child protection , domestic violence cases identified and referred.
- Significant increase in children and young people with additional support needs accessing services.
- Increased uptake with free/ subsidised and flexible places.
- Families were able to retain employment , or take up employment , training or respite opportunities.



Recommendations

1. The high costs of school-aged childcare mean that these services are not open to everyone. Funding must be available to subsidise the cost of childcare (and associated costs, such as transport) to support families on low incomes to access these services and obtain the associated benefits.
2. Longer funding periods are required for childcare services to enable them to develop, plan, deliver and evaluate their approaches. The Access to Childcare funded projects received their first payments of the fund in October and November 2020. They were then in various stages of lockdown and restrictions until June 2021. This has given them a very short period to demonstrate outcomes and sustainability as the project funding ended in March 2022.
3. Specialist services for children with additional support needs are particularly expensive because of the greater number of skilled staff required. Additional funding must be available across Scotland to ensure that children with ASN get equal access to school-aged childcare.



Recommendations

4. Support for targeted and specialist childcare providers must be given to help all families access these services. Targeted services for minority ethnic families for example, really help to foster inclusion.

5. Childcare, including school-aged childcare, can provide a valuable source of support for the whole family. Analysis of how investment into family support services is allocated is needed and this must be aligned to the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund. The evidence provided by the projects should be explored to demonstrate how incorporating whole family support into services throughout the child's journey, from early years to school age, can increase uptake of places and may empower families to improve their quality of life and enable sustained progression from poverty.

6. Childcare should be recognised as an important part of the wider children's services landscape, and childcare providers should be included in children's services planning processes.

7. Transport arrangements must be viewed as part of a holistic childcare offer. The provision of transport can help families overcome a number of barriers to childcare, including cost, lack of public or private transport options, and parents / carers work or study commitments.



Recommendations

8. Children and young people have had a lot of valuable things to say about their experiences of the childcare provided through this fund. Childcare providers should consider how they incorporate children's views into service design, delivery and evaluation. Scotland move towards incorporating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child will provide further impetus for this.

9. Projects have struggled at times to gather and present evidence from their services. Evaluation and reporting can be daunting, and further support should be given to help childcare providers to understand what to gather when, and how to report on it, to ensure the impact of their services is fully recognised. This includes building on pilot initiatives, such as St Mirin's use of the Glasgow Motivation and Wellbeing Profile.

Phase 2

In April 2022 the Scottish Government took the decision to continue to fund 8 of the ACF projects until February 2023 to enable them to continue to test their model over a longer period of time.



Access to Childcare Fund

Link to film

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARIT2aqAjdE&t=44s>

Link to report

https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ACF-Report_22_Final.pdf

