



# School Age Childcare

## Policy Update December 2020

### Thank you

2020 has been a year like no other. We know that the Covid-19 pandemic has had profound impacts on the out of school care sector, just as it has for all organisations, services, families and individuals. We recognise that out of school care providers have been faced with many challenges over the past months, having to make difficult decisions in times of great uncertainty. We would like to thank you for all you have done this year to keep children safe and families supported in the most challenging of circumstances.

It is crucial that we continue to suppress the virus to the lowest possible level and restrictions remain an important part of our lives at work and at home. Things have not yet returned to normal.

That being said, this year has shown the vital role childcare plays in our society supporting the wellbeing of children and families as well as employers and the economy more broadly. We are looking forward as we continue our work to develop a national framework for school age childcare in Scotland.

focussing on the Access to Childcare Fund. Collectively, we are working on policy development with an immediate focus on the next iteration of the framework, which is still due to be published in Spring next year, as well as ongoing work as part of the national Covid-19 response.



**School Age Childcare Team**

*Gillian Munro, Christian Barry, Heather Morris, Michelle Fisher, Eilidh Henry*

### Access to Childcare Fund

This £3 million fund is an important part of the future of School Age Childcare policy. Funded projects are testing new models of school age childcare that will be affordable, accessible and flexible for low income families. We are working closely with Children in Scotland, who manage the fund, to get a good understanding of the services and the positive outcomes they can have for families. We want to share learning from these projects and think about how they might be scaled to other parts of Scotland in the future.

We know that innovative work is happening to support low income families right across the sector, and is by no means limited to these projects. We're very interested to learn about service models that align with the fund's objectives and to hear about your experiences. If you'd like to share, please get in touch with us.



### Team changes

Our School Age Childcare Policy team has also changed over this year—we are now a team of five. Gillian Munro joined in September and took up the role of team leader for School Age Childcare policy. Christian Barry also returned to the team and is

## Consultation findings

After a delay due to the pandemic, we have now published the [consultation analysis](#) for the draft framework on out of school care.

We received a total of 1,270 responses, with the majority of these coming from parents and carers.

Respondents were overwhelmingly supportive of the vision and the three key aims outlined in the draft framework, with 95% of those who answered the question indicating support for these.

The majority of respondents felt that regulated out of school care services are needed, and findings show that a wide range of different provision is important to meet the needs of parents, carers and children.

Flexibility and affordability of services were highlighted as key issues for both parents and providers. While these elements are valued and by parents and carers they can be challenging for providers, creating barriers to access for some. There was also wide agreement that there is a need to promote and value the school age childcare sector, recognising the vital service you provide for families and the positive outcomes you deliver for children.

On some issues, there was not a clear consensus among respondents, for example, there was a split in opinion about the need for qualifications and the most appropriate qualifications and experience for those working in this sector.

There are still some important groups whose views we haven't heard enough from, including childminders, teenagers and low income families, and we will be working to learn more about their needs and aspirations for school age childcare as we continue our work on the framework.

## Next steps

Lots has changed since we published the draft framework and just as the pandemic has impacted the out of school care sector, it has disrupted our progress on the framework. We are working to develop the school age childcare framework alongside on-going work to support children, families and the childcare sector as part of the response to Covid-19.

### Future policy development



We remain committed to publishing a framework on school age childcare by Spring 2021. This will be a way-point, rather than an end point, as we continue to work towards realising the vision we want to see for this sector and the children and families you support.

### Effects of COVID-19



We need to acknowledge the impact the pandemic has had and understand the implications this has for the childcare sector and families across Scotland. We are engaging with stakeholders now, including through online events organised by SOSCN, to hear about the changes and challenges you have faced, as well as the learning and resilience.

### Learning and collaboration



We are committed to working together and learning from those who know school age childcare best, as well as those who stand to benefit from it the most. We will carry this ethos forward and seek to bring ideas together collaboratively in the framework.

## Contact Us

If you would like any further information, have something to share, or any questions, please get in touch with us:



[outofschoolcare@gov.scot](mailto:outofschoolcare@gov.scot)



Images courtesy of Highland Fling, Portobello