



Supporting School Age Childcare in Scotland

2026 Scottish Parliament Election Manifesto

Our 5 Key Asks for School Age Childcare (SACC)

1

Introduce a long-term funding package for SACC

2

Ensure SACC is affordable and accessible to all families

3

Invest in the SACC workforce

4

Guarantee access to suitable premises

5

Establish a clear legal definition of SACC



School Age Childcare in Scotland

The school age childcare (SACC) sector is the largest provider of play, activities and care for school-aged children. There are over 850 providers of this essential service to well over 50,000 children in Scotland.

SACC was the only type of 'daycare of children service' that saw an increase in registered service users in the latest published statistics (Care Inspectorate, 2025), highlighting the growing need for high quality, regulated SACC.

The Scottish Out of School Care Network calls on the next Scottish Government to commit to our five key asks outlined in this manifesto.

1

Introduce a long-term funding package

that supports the sustainability, expansion and continuous improvement of high-quality, registered SACC across all rural and urban areas of Scotland.

Why?

A long-term and multi-year funding settlement will provide stability for SACC services, reducing closures and enabling sustainable growth, particularly in rural and underserved communities. It will give providers the confidence to plan, invest in quality, and expand provision to meet rising demand.



2

Ensure registered SACC is affordable and accessible to all families

by providing increased financial support to parents and families, including those in the six priority groups (Scottish Government, 2025).

Why?

Improving affordability and access to SACC has direct benefits for families, children, and the wider economy (Scottish Government, 2023).

For families, this means more reliable, consistent childcare that supports parents, especially women, to enter and remain in work, education, and training.

For children, it ensures continued access to safe, high-quality environments that support their wellbeing, development, and lawful right to play (UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024).



3 Invest in the SACC workforce

by funding Playwork training and qualifications, pay of at least the real Living Wage, and supporting the recruitment of a diverse and skilled workforce.

Why?

Investing in the SACC workforce will improve recruitment and retention, reduce staff turnover, and create a more stable sector (SOSCN, 2024a). Investment in Playwork qualifications would also support the recognition of the Playwork profession.

Children will benefit from consistent relationships with skilled professionals, while improved pay and career pathways will raise the status of SACC and help attract a diverse and high-quality workforce.

We need to aim for comparable pay with equivalent roles across childcare and education.



4 Guarantee access to suitable premises

by providing free use of schools and financial support for community venues for SACC services.

Why?

Guaranteeing access to suitable premises will remove one of the biggest barriers to establishing and sustaining SACC services.

It will enable providers to expand provision in local communities, including rural and remote areas, making better use of existing school buildings and community spaces.

For families, this means increased availability of childcare in the places they live and work, improving accessibility and reducing travel and logistical challenges.

5 Establish a clear legal definition of School Age Childcare



within the Public Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 to ensure regulation is proportionate, relevant, and maintains high standards of safety and quality.

Why?

A clear legal definition of school age childcare will bring consistency and clarity across the sector by ensuring that all services are appropriately regulated, and moreover reduce any unnecessary administrative burden inherent in the current framework (Scottish Government & Care Inspectorate, 2025).



Why does all this matter?

Every day across Scotland, children arrive at breakfast clubs, after school clubs or holiday clubs where they are welcomed, known and valued, and where their care is of the highest priority. These are the spaces where friendships are built, confidence grows, and children have the freedom to play, explore and simply be themselves outwith the school day.

For most families, these services are not optional. They are essential to allow parents to work, train, and provide for their children (SOSCN, 2024b).

Without these services, children miss out, pressure is piled on parents, and the economy takes a hit (Scottish Government, 2023).

Yet despite increasing demand for school age childcare (Care Inspectorate, 2024), many registered services are struggling. Providers report ongoing challenges with securing suitable premises, recruiting and retaining staff, maintaining fair pay, and sustaining occupancy levels.

Increasingly, services are losing children to activity clubs that can offer lower-cost alternatives but are not subject to the same level of regulation or inspection checks.

The registered sector exudes passion and a sense of professionalism. However, too often, these high-quality services are operating in uncertainty with limited access to funding, while staff work tirelessly to maintain standards in the face of these pressures.

With the right support to our five key asks, SACC can continue to transform lives, strengthen communities, and help ensure Scotland really is the best place in the world for a child to grow up.



Sources

Care Inspectorate (2025). Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2024.

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Scottish Government (2023). School Age Childcare Delivery Framework.

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Scottish Government & Care Inspectorate (2025). School Age Childcare Programme: Review of Regulation – Feasibility Study Final Options Appraisal.

SOSCN (2024a). Out of School Care Workforce Survey Results 2024.

SOSCN (2024b). What's it Like in a Rural Setting? Muthill Kiddy Club [Video].

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

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