

Welcome to our bumper Winter 2023 Newsletter

Scottish Out of School Care Network



Supporting children's rights
to play, care and learning



Grab a cuppa and browse your way on a journey that covers essential updates from the Scottish Government, SSSC and the Care Inspectorate and feedback on our recent and future activities and events.

See the latest statistics on school age childcare and research with parents, especially lone parents, as well as information resources to get them the help they need with childcare costs.

Even if your parents are in a higher income bracket, there is basically “free money” to help pay childcare costs, so make sure parents who use, or could use, your services know about it. We highlight changes to national insurance, coming up in January, and other news from the recent UK budget statement.

Hear from other services; from managing a huge service in Jordanhill, to a fully outdoor service operating on Forest school principles. “Children are super able” Gill Sisson, manager of Wild Woodland Learning, says, in Patrick’s interview with her, and, of course, we agree.

Children are also at the heart of the Scottish Government’s framework for school age childcare, in terms of their Children’s Charter, where children have clearly set out what principles they want in services: kindness, community, fairness, happiness, fun and choice, and these are demonstrated well in the featured service articles.

We look ahead to winter activities and the festive season with some great ideas on activities selected by Finlay, who also edits and designs this newsletter and I want to thank him and every contributor too for their articles and information.

Coming into December, everyone will be extra busy preparing for even more fun in the festive season, we wish you all the joy and happiness of the season!

Happy reading and, of course, feedback is always welcome.

Irene Audain, Chief Executive, SOSCN

[Download our annual review
2022-2023 here](#)

'Let's talk about school age childcare'- Local Networking Events

In November, for the first time since COVID, we ran a series of 6 local events across Scotland. Andrew and Patrick delivered sessions in Stirling, Aberdeen, Dundee, Saltcoats, Glasgow and Edinburgh which over 120 people attended. The sessions covered SOSCN's work, SSSC and Care Inspectorate updates and also information about the financial support available to parents to pay for childcare through Universal Credit, Upfront Childcare Costs, and Tax-free Childcare. We also considered how services can attract new people into the sector who perhaps don't have childcare qualifications and experience, yet have other skills and attributes which would be hugely beneficial.

Colleagues from the Scottish Government's School Age Childcare Team shared updates on work undertaken taken so far and future developments relating to the policy commitment to expand school age childcare provision.

It was great to reconnect with members in person and get a sense of what is happening across the country; of course, there are many common themes but there are also some area-specific ones.

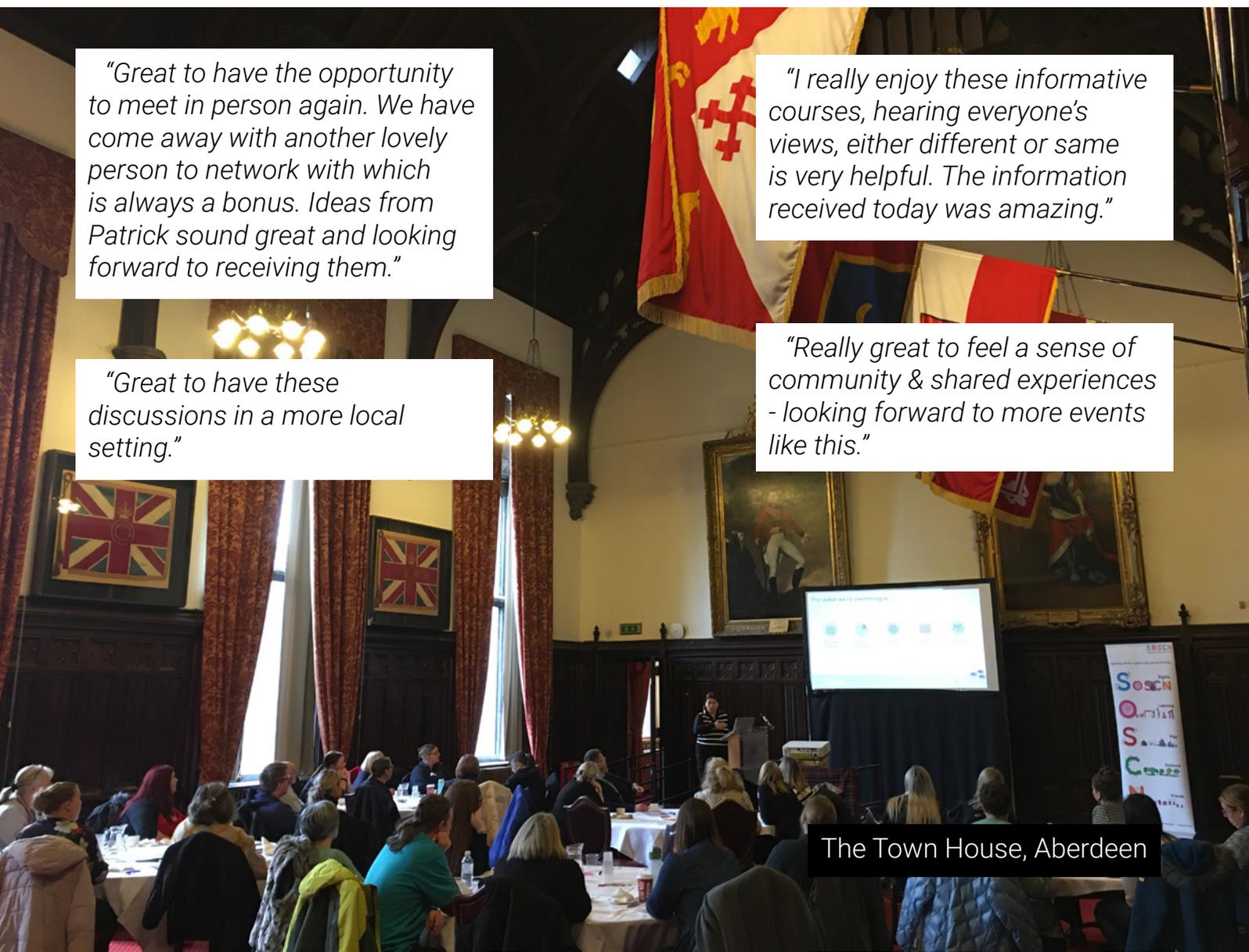
Many thanks to all of you who attended, to the Scottish Government for their input, and Aberdeen and North Ayrshire Councils for their additional support.

"Great to have the opportunity to meet in person again. We have come away with another lovely person to network with which is always a bonus. Ideas from Patrick sound great and looking forward to receiving them."

"Great to have these discussions in a more local setting."

"I really enjoy these informative courses, hearing everyone's views, either different or same is very helpful. The information received today was amazing."

"Really great to feel a sense of community & shared experiences - looking forward to more events like this."



The Town House, Aberdeen

SOSCN Events Coming Up



Autism: What does each child want you to know?

Online Learning Session

13th December 2023

£15.00, few places remaining

After delivering a very popular and well-received presentation at our last conference before COVID, we are pleased to welcome back autism expert, Jim Taylor who will be delivering an online learning session on Wednesday 13th December.

This session will explore how a more contemporary understanding of the learning styles and presentation of autistic children can have a positive impact in all types of settings. The session will acknowledge the pressures that may be encountered in meeting the needs of both autistic and non-autistic individuals in shared environments. The session will lead to a shared and more effective understanding of autism by exploring current thinking and will provide practical advice and guidelines that will lead to better outcomes for all.

Booking Link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/autism-what-does-each-child-want-you-to-know-tickets-754518724817>



Safer Staffing Legislation Webinar

Online Learning Session

15th January 2024

Free, few places remaining

Scottish Government will enact new staffing legislation on the 1 April 2024. The Health and Care (Staffing)(Scotland) Act 2019 aims to enable safe and high-quality care and improved outcomes for children through appropriate staffing. This needs the right people, in the right place, with the right skills, at the right time.

This is the first legislation in the UK to set out staffing requirements for both health and care services. It will effect changes to current legislation that guides the requirements of the services you currently provide.

The Care Inspectorate's safe staffing advisers, Joanne Duncan and Candice Aitken, are supporting daycare of children services to prepare for enactment and are facilitating this webinar where they will provide information and share best practices.

Booking Link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/safer-staffing-legislation-webinar-tickets-754540018507>



Share your work experiences and impact of COVID

Online information and discussion session

23rd January 2024

Free, places are limited

Everyone who was in Scotland between 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022, or was affected by decisions made in Scotland during this time, is being invited to share their experiences of the pandemic with Let's Be Heard. The project is keen to hear about what lessons should be learned and is asking for experiences to be submitted by 20 December 2023. Find out the ways that individuals and groups can take part in Let's Be Heard by visiting <https://lbh.covid19inquiry.scot>.

Let's Be Heard is the main way in which people can contribute to the Inquiry's investigations and help inform its reports and recommendations.

The 'Let's Be Heard' project is looking for individual's personal as well as professional experience and impact of COVID. However, we are keen to submit a school age sector specific response to the inquiry. We shall be hosting a free online discussion event about the COVID enquiry in partnership with the inquiry team on Tuesday 23rd January 2024, 10am - 11.30am on Zoom. Participants can find out more about the consultation and share their own experiences.

Booking Link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/covid-19-public-inquiry-discussion-event-tickets-764765312637>



SOSCN AGM

Online meeting

13th December 2023

The Scottish Out of School Care Network AGM will take place on Wednesday 13th December 2023 at 11:30am. Our AGM will be taking place virtually; online on the Zoom platform.

Please see the link below to book a place at the AGM. The formal business of the AGM will be taking place after our online event taking place earlier that morning. If you have already booked a place at the event beforehand, please could you still complete the short form below to let us know that you will be staying on for the AGM.

AGM Booking Link:

<https://freeonlinesurveys.com/s/7mHi5Wov>

Adverse Weather and Extreme Temperatures

SOSCN has a new factsheet all about adverse weather and extreme temperatures which may play a part this winter and result in your service needing to close. This factsheet lets you know about your obligations as an employer, or as a member of staff.

[Download the factsheet online here](#)



The Autumn Statement

Following the UK Government Autumn Statement on 22nd November, here are some of the headline announcements which may affect you, your family, and your service.

All wording is taken directly from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2023/autumn-statement-2023-html#executive-summary>

“National Insurance contributions (NICs) rates – The government will cut the main rate of Class 1 employee NICs from 12% to 10%. This will take effect from 6 January 2024. The government will also cut the main rate of Class 4 self-employed NICs from 9% to 8%. This will take effect from 6 April 2024.

From 6 April 2024 the government will also ensure that no one will be required to pay Class 2 self-employed NICs. Details of this change are:

- From 6 April 2024, self-employed people with profits above £12,570 will no longer be required to pay Class 2 NICs, but will continue to receive access to contributory benefits including the State Pension.
- Those with profits between £6,725 and £12,570 will continue to get access to contributory benefits including the State Pension through a National Insurance credit without paying NICs as they do currently.
- Those with profits under £6,725 and others who pay Class 2 NICs voluntarily to get access to contributory benefits including the State Pension, will continue to be able to do so.

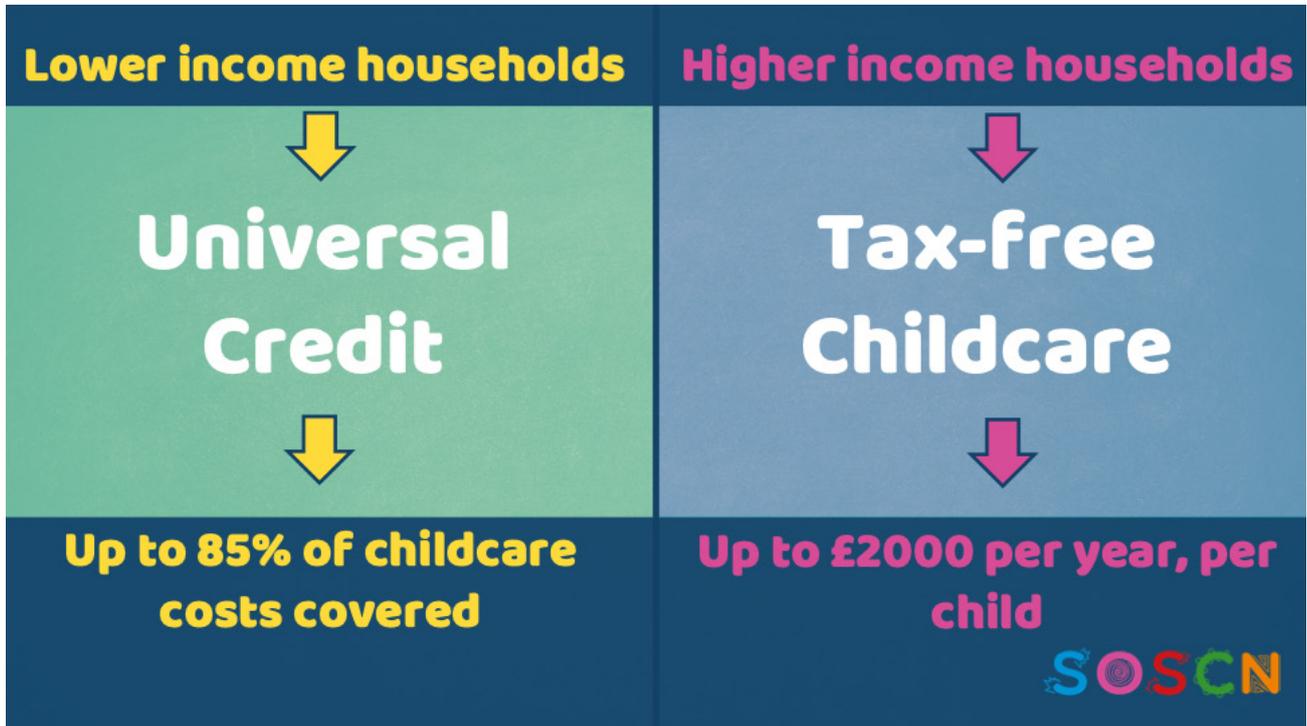
National Minimum & Living Wage Up-rating – From 1 April 2024, the National Living Wage (NLW) will increase by 9.8% to £11.44 an hour for eligible workers across the UK aged 21 and over.”

“Up-rating of benefits – The government is increasing working age benefits in line with inflation, measured by September CPI which is 6.7% this year. The government is also maintaining the Triple Lock. The basic State Pension, new State Pension and Pension Credit standard minimum guarantee will be up-rated in April 2024 in line with earnings growth. This is measured by the usual metric of annual earnings growth in May-July, which is 8.5% this year. Some disability benefits are devolved in Scotland, so it is for the Scottish Government (SG) to decide up-rating.”

Financial Support to Parents to Pay for Childcare

Did you know that a parent earning under £100,000 a year should be able to access some form of financial support to pay for childcare?

- Potentially a low-income parent accessing universal credit can get up to 85% of their childcare costs covered, and a higher-income parent, earning just under £100,000 can access 20% of costs up to £2,000 (tax free) per child.



Did you know that many parents are not accessing the childcare element of universal credit or their tax-free childcare entitlement?

- Many parents are not accessing either universal credit or tax-free childcare which they are entitled to perhaps because they don't know what is available to them, or they think they are not eligible. Both schemes are heavily undersubscribed.
- Parents accessing universal credit might also be able to receive a one-off childcare cost payment which can be used to pay for the first month of childcare or a deposit.
- If parents are accessing the tax-free childcare system and have a disabled child, they can access an additional £4,000 to help pay for childcare costs.

How can you help parents access this funding?

- Tell them about it, and give direct links to where they can find out more information.
- On your marketing materials, website, social media etc break down your fee costs to show how much support a parent might get if accessing universal credit or tax-free childcare, and how much they have to pay for by themselves.
- For example- "Our fees are £15 per session but if you access universal credit, up to 85% can be paid for (£12.75) meaning you will instead pay £2.25 from your own pocket. If you access tax-free childcare, 20% can be paid for (£3), meaning you will instead pay £12 from your own pocket."



- On a practical note, as a childcare provider you have to ensure you are registered for the tax-free childcare system with HM Revenue and Customs, and also promote this to parents.

Why is it important that you help parents access this funding?

- At present there is no direct funding to school age childcare services- the funding comes via support to parents to pay for childcare, so you need to ensure that parents are accessing this funding if they are not already doing so. This makes your service more affordable, and will make parents better off if they are already paying for childcare but not accessing either of these schemes.
- Parents often see childcare fees without knowing about additional financial support meaning your potential customers are put-off at the first hurdle. Help them over that hurdle by showing what financial support is available and the difference this will make to household finances.
- By making your service more affordable you are potentially increasing your financial sustainability since parents might be more likely to increase their usage either term-time or all-day during holidays.
- Any annual price increases become more manageable to parents if they are accessing additional financial support.

Remember, nearly every parent earning under £100,000 should be accessing financial support to pay for childcare and you can help them access this by telling them about it, and signposting them to further information. Make it as easy as possible for them to access financial support to help pay for the childcare you provide.

For further information on all the information above, please visit:

<https://soscn.org/downloads/news/financial-support-to-pay-for-childcare.pdf>

SOSCN Signs Joint Letter to First Minister

SOSCN stands with over 150 other organisations urging Humza Yousaf, First Minister to double down on investment to End Child Poverty in his first Budget. A first step? Deliver on his commitment to increase the Scottish child payment to £30.

Read our joint letter:

https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/letter_to_first_minister/

SSSC Updates- Significant Changes From April 2024

As part of their Future Proofing Programme, the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) are implementing a number of changes from April 2024 which will have a direct impact on school age childcare services. Below are the main changes:

- The number of Register parts will reduce from 23 to four: social workers, social work students, social care workforce and children and young people workforce. This means childcare workers will be in the 4th register.
- Staff will have to apply for registration within three months of starting a new role (instead of six months) and be fully registered within six months.
- Main benchmark qualifications will be accepted for additional Register parts with the same SCQF level requirements, to allow more flexibility. For example, adult social care qualifications will be registerable in childcare services and vice-versa, and it will be the responsibility of the childcare service to decide what additional (if any) training an adult-social care qualified worker should undertake.
- The time given to achieve a required qualification is reducing from five years to three years, with a few exceptions. However, this is only for new registrants from April 2024- for those already registered pre-April 2024 with a 5-year condition to achieve a qualification, this will remain.
- There will be a new model of continuous professional learning (CPL) in consultation with the sector, which will include mandatory skills and knowledge.



Further information:

<https://news.sssc.uk.com/news/next-steps-for-register-for-the-future>

Are you ready for the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act?

Scottish Government will enact new staffing legislation on the 1 April 2024. The Health and Care (Staffing)(Scotland) Act 2019 aims to enable safe and high-quality care and improved outcomes for children through appropriate staffing. This needs the right people, in the right place, with the right skills, at the right time.

The Scottish Government commissioned the Care Inspectorate's Safe Staffing Programme to support care services to prepare for the introduction of the Act. This is the first legislation in the UK to set out staffing requirements for both health and care services. It will effect changes to current legislation that guides the requirements of the services you currently provide.

The Care Inspectorate's safe staffing advisers, Joanne Duncan and Candice Aitken, are supporting daycare of children services to prepare for enactment. They are holding a variety of events and webinars where they will provide information and share best practices.

Join the safe staffing mailing list to keep up to date about the work they are doing. Email safestaffingprogramme@careinspectorate.gov.scot and visit The Hub to find out more about the programme: <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/improvement-programmes-and-topics/safe-staffing-programme/>

A message from the Care Inspectorate about annual returns

Each year, we ask services to complete an annual return. This gives us important information that helps us plan, inform and carry out our inspections and improvement work. We also share some of the information with other organisations, such as the Scottish Social Services Council and the Scottish Government, and we use it to produce several statistical publications that you can view on our website.

The data we gather helps us target our improvement activity and support within social care. It is a valuable source of baseline data across a variety of health and wellbeing indicators which we use to identify, drive and track improvement, for example infection control, nutrition and the recruitment and retention of staff. The data helps us to identify trends and topics by both geographical area or service type, so that we can see where best to focus our improvement support work, for example, improvement workshops or new resources and guidance for care services across the sector.

Annual returns open online at eforms.careinspectorate.com on 8 January 2024 and will close on 18 February 2024.



Our website [careinspectorate.com](https://www.careinspectorate.com) has important information about the annual returns and answers to frequently asked questions under 'Annual returns' in the 'Professionals' section. If an answer to a question can't be found there, services can call the Care Inspectorate's contact centre on 0345 600 9527.

All services registered before 1 October 2023 must complete an annual return. If your service registered on or after 1 October 2023, you should still try to complete an annual return this year. Although it's not mandatory, we will still be able to use any information supplied. The information you put in will automatically appear in the next annual return and you will then only need to enter any information that has changed.

Please note that even if a service is inactive, they must submit an annual return.

All service types must complete their annual return electronically, using our eForms system. Services can log into their Care Inspectorate eForms account from any computer connected to the internet. It is important that services regularly check their eForms account to make sure that their email address is up to date, and that only authorised people have access to their account. All services should check their eForms email address now to ensure they are notified when the annual returns go live. You can do that here.

If services they need help accessing their annual return, they can call the Care Inspectorate's contact centre on 0345 600 9527.

School Age Childcare Statistics – number of services, registered places and children attending

Each year the Care Inspectorate publishes statistics relating to the number of early learning and childcare services, school age childcare services and childminders. The most recent were published in October 2023, and related to December 2022. The full report can be found here:

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/7342/Early%20learning%20and%20childcare%20statistics%202022.pdf>

The first table shows that school age childcare services are closing: between 2021 and 2022, there has been an overall loss of 29 services. That said, although there has been an overall loss, it should be recognised this figure does not show how many pre-existing services have closed, and how many new ones have opened. With the closures of course there has been a corresponding loss in the number of total registered spaces. However, despite there being more services in 2014 (703) there were fewer spaces, so we see that the average capacity has increased significantly in an 8-year period- from 40.6 to 46.4.

Table 1: Number of services, total number of registered places and average capacity per service

Year	No. of SAC Services	Total Capacity	Average capacity
(2014)	(703)	(28, 8150)	(40.6)
2021	711	32,470	45.7
2022	682	31,640	46.4
12-month change	-29 (-4%)	-830 (-3%)	+0.7

In terms of children registered we see that pre-COVID more than 53,000 children were registered with school age childcare services and this then dropped by 27% during the COVID pandemic. Since coming out of COVID we can see that the number of children attending is steadily increasing, and although nowhere near pre-pandemic numbers they are up 9% from pandemic figures.

Table 2: Number of children registered

Year	Number of children registered
December 2019 (Pre-COVID)	53,260
December 2020 (COVID)	38,810 (-14,450 / -27% from 2019 figures)
December 2021 (COVID & recovery)	40,480
December 2022 (Post COVID)	43,340
12-month change	+2,860
24-month change	+4,530 (+9% from 2020 figures)

These statistics show that whilst there is an increasing demand for places, services are closing, and potentially there will be insufficient childcare to cover the needs of families; we already know that this is happening in some areas. Anecdotally we know that services are closing due to some of the following factors:

- Lack of workforce- significant problems with recruitment and retention
- Disproportionate Care Inspectorate expectations- full-time expectations on a part-time workforce/service
- Costs and general financial difficulties
- Voluntary management committees collapsing

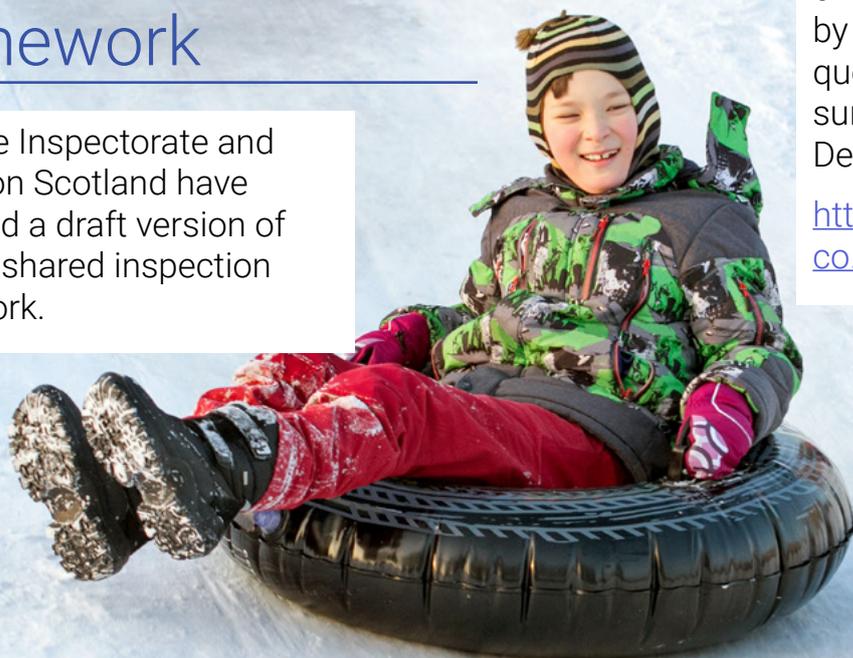
This is a very concerning trend since parents need school age childcare now, and any future expansion plans need to build on the already existing sector. We shall continue to raise concerns and needs for additional support at local and national levels.

Shared Inspection Framework

The Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland have published a draft version of the new shared inspection framework.

You can provide feedback on this new framework by answering 12 short questions in this online survey which closes on 22 December 2023:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SIFCSurvey/>



Juggling numbers in a large service - a typical day at Jordanhill Out of School Service (JOSS)

By Anne Dick, SOSCN Chair



JOSS runs from a church hall in the west end of Glasgow and only provides term-time after school care. There are 280 children registered with the service, 18 staff and a voluntary management committee. It is registered for 90 children on a daily basis making it double the average size.

What does an average day look like?

So, for example, on a Thursday at 2.30pm we collect 74, P1s and P2s and then at 3.30pm we collect 95, P3-P7s.

Yes, in total we will have 169 children attending but only 90 places, so how is this possible?

Well, at 3.45pm 24 of the children go to tennis – this includes 7, P2s and the rest are P3-P6. At 3.45pm, 20 of the P1s will go to Spanish and 30 of the P1s and P2s will be collected by parents/carers by 3.45pm. There is also hockey on after school so we don't collect 5 of the older children until 4.45pm.

Are you all doing your maths just now to see if we are within our 90 at any session quota?

We use spreadsheets to work this all out and thankfully it does.

Once in the building the children hang up their coats and bags then wash hands, go for snack or straight to play. We have 4 rooms within JOSS including a quiet area for book reading, chatting and generally chilling, a craft room which includes an organised activity each day plus lots of scope for free art projects, a construction and games area where Plus Plus is the favourite toy. There are also jigsaws, dolls houses, puppet theatre, chess, and many other games in this area. The last area has 3 sections, the activity area for football, tennis, hula hoops, tig, dodge ball and the snack area where children can come for snack from 2.45-5pm. There is a rotating menu of wraps, toast, bagels and pitta bread and lots of fruit and veg and water to drink. The final section in the main hall is the stage area which is reserved for our P6s and 7s. They have their own activities which includes electronics.



Recently we started a Warhammer Club and the cookery/baking class which we try to do each week is probably their favourite activity. Young people are always hungry when they come out of school and the chance to make quesadillas or pizza is right up their street.

The staff team work on a weekly rota so they can be responsible for snack one week, then be in the quiet area followed by the craft room and so on. This works really well for us as it means all the staff members can operate in any area so if we have absences we can move staff around easily.

Tuesdays and Wednesdays are equally as busy as Thursdays but Mondays are quieter – we have 131 children throughout the day and again we escort many of them to tennis and Spanish plus a number go to band or orchestra straight from school and we collect them at 4.30pm.

Friday is our chill day as we only have 86 and there are no clubs or lessons to escort them to.

I hope that gives you a flavour of JOSS. If anyone is interested in doing an exchange staff visit, please email me at info@josskids.org.

Anne, JOSS Manager





Importance Of School Age Childcare In Supporting Lone Parents

School age childcare is a key support for lone parents; back in the early 80s when the sector was growing it was often single mothers who were the driving force setting up services. Lone parents are also one of the target families in the Scottish Government's commitment to expanding school age childcare.

Earlier this year we conducted a survey with parents about their ability (or lack thereof) to access school age childcare, and the impact that this has on them and their families. Lone parents in particular highlighted their need for (and reliance on) school age childcare:

"Children and I would be pushed into poverty (without school age childcare)."

"As a single working parent, having after school care abruptly taken away from school has caused me a lot of stress. I really struggle to manage my working hours and juggle childcare. Family help when they can but that is very very limited."

Quotes from "Limited or lack of local school age childcare. Parent and carer impact survey":

<https://soscn.org/downloads/reports/limited-or-lack-of-sac-parent-carer-impact-survey.pdf>

Our results were reflected in a survey undertaken by One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS), and in the following article, Caitlin Logan, Policy Research and Influencing Lead in OPFS highlights some of the work they are doing to raise the profile of lone parents' childcare needs, and also how OPFS's services can support lone parents.

School-age childcare and single parent families – One Parent Families Scotland

By Caitlin Logan, Policy Research and Influencing Lead. OPFS

Access to high quality, flexible, affordable childcare has the power to transform the lives of single parents and their children. At the moment, barriers to accessing childcare – from the cost to a lack of provision or available places to meet families' needs – is one of the key factors limiting the labour market participation of single parents (90% of whom are women). With 39% of children in single parent families living in poverty, the significance of this cannot be underestimated.



One Parent Families Scotland
changing lives, challenging poverty

Last year, One Parent Families Scotland published a report, [Living Without a Lifeline](#), based on a survey of single parents – mostly mums – on their experiences of the cost of living crisis. More than one in five participants said they can no longer afford to pay for childcare (21.2%) at all, while a further 22.9% said childcare had become “extremely difficult” to afford. This is reflected in national findings from [Coram’s Childcare Survey in 2023](#) found that across the UK the cost of childcare was rising.

“Childcare stops age 11 but I can’t leave him all day over the holidays. He’s still too wee. Any provision there is are activity camps and mega expensive.” – Single parent, Living Without a Lifeline report

A recurring theme in the survey was that school-age childcare was a particular challenge which greatly restricts single parents’ job prospects. Coram’s survey also found that there is a major gap in provision in school-age childcare.

“There are not enough places in the breakfast clubs or after school care clubs, my work must fit in with school times as I couldn’t get a place in either.” – Single parent, Living Without a Lifeline report

Childcare services beyond the early years are especially vital for the parents we support because of their sole caring responsibilities.

“Not enough childcare for primary age children in holiday periods – particularly for lone parents like myself when you only get 5 weeks annual leave but have to cover 13 weeks school holidays with no other parent involved.” – Single parent, Living Without a Lifeline report

The concerns we heard from single parents led us to work alongside Close the Gap to create a [position paper](#) on our vision for a childcare system that would work for children and parents. One of our core calls is for the Scottish Government to accelerate progress towards its commitment to create a system of funded school-age childcare. We also believe that commitments made so far should be seen as the start of the journey, not the end of the road.

A well-functioning childcare infrastructure is essential to lifting children out of poverty, as well as supporting women’s economic equality. As such, this should be a top priority for political leaders and for all those working to advance equality in Scotland.



Find out about One Parent Families Scotland’s [local services here](#).

Get advice on issues impacting single parent families via our [Lone Parent Helpline here](#).

WILD Woodland Learning Interview

By Patrick Morrison, SOSCN and Gill and Linda, W.I.L.D. Co-Creators

During the October Week, I had the pleasure of visiting WILD Woodland Learning as they delivered one of their holiday club sessions. Based in Linn Park in Glasgow, WILD is a fully outdoor provider of after school care, holiday club sessions and forest school sessions.

Below, you can read my interview with Gill and Linda, W.I.L.D. Co-Creators as they answered my questions on what it's like to run an outdoor service.

PM: Why did you decide to open an outdoor setting as opposed to a typical, indoor based service?

GS: W.I.L.D. was born out of a love of nature and by observing the incredible experiences children have whilst in a natural environment. Being in the woods allows children boundless benefits including space, connection with the natural world (and therefore self), choice, freedom, endless stimulation, natural loose parts, STEAM learning, gross motor development, emotional regulation and increased empathy with peers. W.I.L.D. follows the ethos of Forest School and is fully outdoors. There was no need to make a decision on being outside rather than indoors as that just wasn't an option, why be indoors when you can be in the woods?





PM: Did you encounter any challenges setting up an outdoor service that you think indoor based services wouldn't have had?

GS: As with all new ventures we have experienced challenges along the way. All challenges are great learning opportunities, in the true sense of forest school.

Finding suitable green space is the first challenge. It's important to have a good knowledge of which areas are good and legal to use for play. This knowledge should include, legal use, woodland management, ecological protection of flora and fauna, rotation to protect the land, safe use for play including tree health.

Each local authority in Scotland will have their own system for managing use of land. In Glasgow, Permission to Use permits must be approved before using Glasgow City Council land long term. Glasgow City Council is introducing a charge for use from April 2023 which will present new challenges.

We operate on a Leave No Trace basis which means all of the equipment, tarps, tents, toilets, water, activities, lights, EVERYTHING has to be transported, set up/down before and after every session. A committed workforce is essential for this physical work which is often in rain, wind and during the winter darkness!

PM: There's lots of studies that show the benefits outdoor play can offer children. From your experience, what are the main benefits you see your children having from attending an outdoor setting?

GS: Where do you want me to start? The list is endless, fascinating and alarmingly pertinent for a society becoming increasingly disconnected from nature.

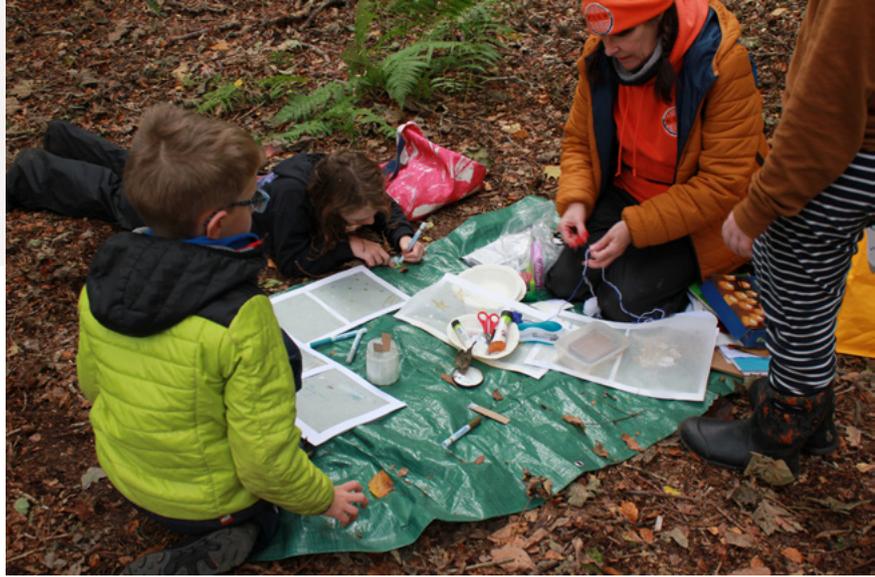
Outdoor play benefits children in many physical and physiological ways. I would argue that Forest School or outdoor play in a natural environment takes those benefits to a whole new level. Add another layer of caring, conscientious and compassionate forest school leaders and you have a community dedicated to the wellbeing of the children.

In the woods the children have complete agency over their play. They make decisions, create, discuss, strategise, democratise and empathise without adult intervention. When given time, space, support and agency they think for themselves, help each other, accept each other and are a complete wonder. This is only one of the highlights of working with children through forest school, there are many many more. The whole experience is one of wonder for children and practitioners alike.



PM: Are the children more likely to be reluctant to attend in the colder, wetter, darker months? If so, how do you approach this reluctance?

GS: Participants attend throughout the year, some have done so for 4 years. Long term Forest School programmes allow participants to transition through all 4 seasons. Change like this make the sessions memorable and special all year. We work hard from the outset to give advice on appropriate clothing/ layering so that participants are always comfortable to get the most out of their time with us. Participants bring additional spare clothing as does W.I.L.D.



We work together to create a fun, welcoming, nurturing, environment to come out to. A sheltered base camp area and various other shelters are used as required. We also have permission for campfires, where warming food is cooked each session. Wearing headtorches and hi-viz for the darker nights is such a fun part of the adventure. Everyone looks forward to these magical twilight experiences. Knowing they have the skills to do it the children take it in their stride.

PM: Are there skills you look for in staff that you maybe wouldn't consider as much if you ran an indoor service?

GS: W.I.L.D. staff all have a love of nature & passion to share this with everyone that attends. Forest School or outdoor learning training in addition to childcare qualifications. Knowledge of the ethos and 6 principles of best practice of Forest school that W.I.L.D. follows. They are resilient, out supporting participants and each other in all weathers. Experience of Woodland Risk Assessing, dynamic risk & risk/benefit assessments for outdoor activities. Knowledge of woodland management & conservation of outdoor spaces. W.I.L.D. staff are practical and knowledgeable but see themselves as learners too, and are always up for getting muddy and having good fun!





PM: Are there any tips you'd give to indoor based services that may be reluctant to use the outdoors, particularly in the winter months?

GS: Start off in small easy steps ensuring you set yourself and the participants up to succeed regarding do-able activities, clothing, weather and above all everyone's safety. Set realistic expectations so that parents and participants know they will be going out for a small amount of time and then build that time up. It's really important for staff to look after themselves first and foremost, making sure they are comfortable to be out so they in turn can look after the participants.

Getting forest school or outdoor learning training is invaluable, not only for the ethos but especially for learning how to make best use of outdoor kit, the fire/tools training and how to preserve your outdoor space. Build up sets of spare waterproofs, layers of clothes and basic outdoor kit. Find out which staff actively want to go out, embrace their interest and let them share that with the children and other staff. Be open to learning from the children as they are super able!



SOSCN Engagement Sessions

During November, the School Age Childcare team have been attending SOSCN's Local Networking and Information Sessions - from Saltcoats to Aberdeen!

We have enjoyed seeing providers in person after a busy period, and sharing recent progress and plans for the future. It's been helpful to hear everyone's thoughts about our work, including our [Delivery Framework](#) and [Children's charter](#).

We are also looking forward to more detailed engagement with providers in the New Year. We'll be building on the current sessions and will begin co-design with providers in line with our people-centred approach. In the early part of the 2024, we will be hosting a series of sessions with providers to discuss in more depth the specific topics which you have told us are important. This will build on the wider design work with children and families which has been ongoing over the last year. Keep your eyes peeled for information about these sessions, and how to sign up.

Programme for Government commitments

The [Programme for Government 2023 to 2024](#) was published in September 2023 and includes commitments to expand high quality, affordable and accessible childcare.

Delivery Framework

In October 2023, we published our [School Age Childcare Delivery Framework](#), which sets out our commitment to deliver a system of affordable and accessible school age childcare which will be funded for those families who need it most.

The Delivery Framework sets out our action areas for the next 2 to 3 years and outlines our people-centred and place-based approach which will be applied to designing and building a new system of school age childcare.

Access to Childcare Fund evaluation

During 2020-22, we supported 15 projects through the Access to Childcare Fund, worth more than £2 million to test innovative models of school age childcare for families most at risk of poverty.

Across 2020-23, funding amounted to £3 million with the continuation of 10 projects, including two of the additional pilot projects, to deliver a range of activities, childcare, food and family support for children. These services have provided low cost or free childcare for families on low incomes.

The research company Ipsos conducted research to evaluate Phase 2 of the Access to Childcare Fund between January 2023 and May 2023 and the [Access to Childcare Fund: phase 2 - evaluation report](#) was published in October 2023.

The evaluation found that every project had positively contributed to parents being able to start, maintain or progress their career or engage in training. Families explained that, without access to the funded projects, they would not have been able to work or study as easily or for as many hours, if at all. Some Access to Childcare Fund projects also include additional support focused on training or employment, and this was seen to enhance parents ability to start, maintain or progress their career or engage in training.

Children's Charter

In October 2023, we launched The [National Children's Charter for School Age Childcare](#) which was co-designed by A Place in Childhood (APiC), Scottish Government, and children from five schools and one young carers group in Dingwall, Dundee, Alloa, Mid Yell, and Aberdeen.



In total, 125 children between the ages of 4 and 12 took part, from a range of family backgrounds. With the support of schools, the involvement of children from the six priority family types outlined in the Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026 was prioritised.

The National Children's Charter sets out the children's views about why we need school age childcare, how school age childcare should be run and by whom, where it should take place, and what activities should be on offer. It also sets out six principles which the children agreed should be respected in school age childcare settings. These are kindness, community, fairness, happiness, fun and choice.

Parent Club updates

We have recently made updates to [Parent Club](#) to help families access up to date information on childcare.

The [School age childcare Parent Club page](#) contains useful information on family care, paying for school age childcare, Care Inspectorate, school clubs and activities, childminders and childcare in the holidays.

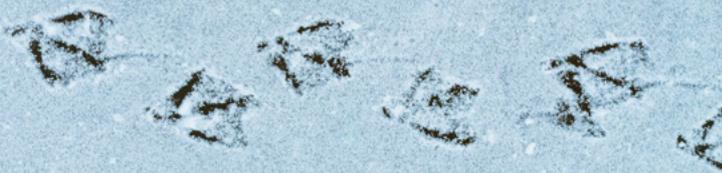
The [childcare costs and benefits Parent Club page](#) highlights links to finding out what funding or support families are eligible for, information on funded hours, tax free childcare, universal credit, tax credits and help with childcare costs if parents/carers are looking for a job or studying.

We would encourage you to continue to make parents and carers who are looking for more information on childcare to visit the Parent Club pages.

Practical Activities Ideas



Animal Detectives



If the weather is not too bad, then you could take the children outside to look for animal tracks. You could find these in muddy places, sandy areas, or in the snow if it snows. You can also look for feathers or other markings. Try and identify the animal from their footprints or the colour and size of their feather to guess what type of animal it is from.

There are plenty of places on the internet where you can find template printouts for a winter scavenger hunt – a few of these are linked below. However, you could also make your own and ask the children to help you do this. With the children you could come up with several things to find outside and then draw a picture of these and pin them all on the wall. Things on the list could include things to spot like a squirrel, pinecone, icicle, snowman etc. Some templates can be found at the these links (SOSCN has no association with the following and takes no responsibility for the content of external websites):

<https://teachingmama.org/winter-scavenger-hunt/>

<https://www.printablesfairy.com/winter-scavenger-hunt/>

<https://thepracticalforestschool.com/outdoors-winter-scavenger-hunt-printable/>

Winter Scavenger Hunt



Colourful ice globes

If the weather gets really cold, then you could make some colourful frozen globes. For this activity, simply add some food colouring to the water in a water balloon and then let them freeze outside – you might need to find a place where this can be done overnight. Once frozen, you can pop the balloon and you are left with an ice globe. Further information on this activity can be found here: <https://www.raisinghooks.com/colorful-ice-globes/>

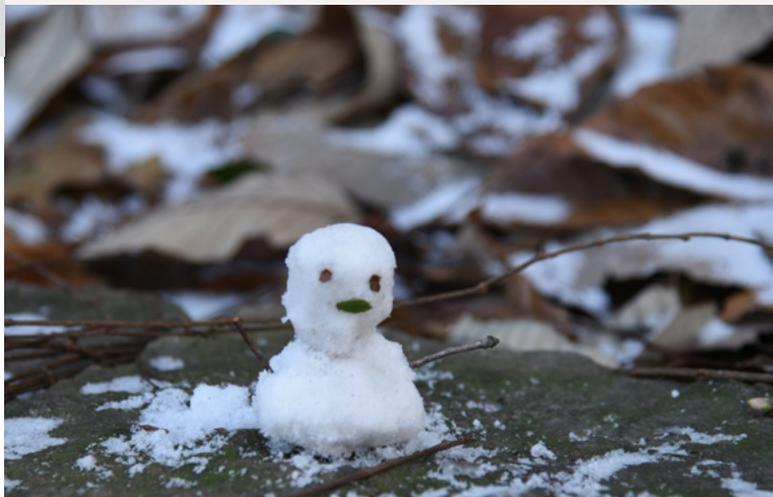


DIY Nature Confetti

If you can still find lots of leaves on the ground, then it is very easy to make some nature confetti. All you will need is some colourful leaves – these are best left to dry out – and a hole punch to punch out the little pieces. You can then tie these up in tissue paper or stick them to some card.

Snowman treasure hunt

If we see snow this winter, you could try organising a quick snowman treasure hunt. If somebody is able to nip outside to an outside area and make a few miniature snowmen about the place, then the children can be let out to run around and find them all. You could use a few items from the service to make the snowmen's noses or hats that the children then have to bring back.



Frozen Bubbles

If it get really cold this winter, you could try and make some frozen bubbles. The temperatures will need to get really low for this (below zero degrees), but fortunately this is always likely in Scotland. Further information for this can be found here:

<https://runwildmychild.com/frozen-bubbles/>



Christmas decorations hunt

You might find that there are some Christmas decorations already up in streets and houses in your area. If you know of some, or have a good idea of where some might be, you could take the children out on a walk to spot some. Take a note of how many Christmas trees snowmen, roof-Santas, door wreaths etc that you can find.

Natural Decorations

Again, there are plenty resources to be found on the internet for these using some classic Christmas crafting items, such as pinecones, twigs and berries that can be transformed into wonderful decorations for windows or trees. To find out more please see this link:

<https://www.sitters.co.uk/blog/15-christmas-decorations-to-make-with-children.aspx>



Thank you for reading. Please get in touch if you have any comments or would like to find out more about anything in this newsletter.



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