

Summer 2025 Newsletter

SOSCN
Supporting children's rights
to play, care and learning



Scottish Out of School Care Network

For some of you, the summer school holidays are the busiest time of year and for others, it is a time for rest. That said, we know that preparations will be needed for the start of the new school year, so perhaps 'rest' is not quite the correct word; would 'less busy' be more accurate? Either way, we hope that you can have some fun days and adventures, and please don't forget to share your activities with us.

In this edition we follow-on from the spring newsletter's focus on wellbeing with contributing articles from Education Scotland and Starcatchers. The articles consider how creativity and the arts can help build resilience, self-confidence and identity in children and young people. Although school age childcare services are not learning services per se we should always promote how children and young develop social, emotional and practical skills through good-quality play and activities.

As many of you will now know, Irene Audain is retiring after 32 years leading SOSCN, and that our new CEO, Audrey Anderson, will be starting mid-July. In addition to a reflective piece from Irene and an introduction from Audrey, we have produced a 'highlights' timeline of SOSCN and the sector from the early 90s. We hope you enjoy the journey through the past 3 decades.

We also have our usual updates on all our work.

Happy reading! And don't forget to wear sunscreen.

Andrew Shoolbread

Editor



Local Authority Premises Survey 2025 Results

Many thanks to the 65 services which completed our survey looking at letting costs charged to school age childcare services by local authorities for the use of council venues (mostly schools but also some community centres). We had responses from services in 23 local authority areas, of which, 9 continue to provide free lets for the use of local authority venues. Letting charges varied greatly across Scotland- reported charges ranged from £500 up to £40,000 per year.

It is evident that free or low-cost lets are clear ways in which local authorities can help support the financial sustainability of school age childcare services. We would also recommend that local authorities conduct full (economic and social) impact assessments on services, families and communities should they propose to increase letting charges since it is clear that many services would struggle to afford them in the current economic climate. Increased charges could cause closure of services or fee increases to parents at a time of wider financial struggles.

To read and download the full report, please visit:

soscn.org/downloads/reports/soscn-local-authority-premises-lets-survey-2025.pdf

Impact on OSC Services of Increase to Employer NI Contributions and National Living Wage - Results

This short survey had a low number of responses but we thank the 12 services which did complete it. Possibly it was difficult for services to answer, especially in terms of the impact of the increase in NI contributions, as this may only become clearer further into the financial year. Although it is not possible to draw any conclusions from this small sample of responses it would be fair to say that it is causing concern.

When asked about the increases to NI and National Living Wage and financial sustainability of services, 50% (6 services) said it would have "a significant impact- we will have to look at ways of cutting costs/generating more income but we should survive." And 50% said it would have "a huge impact – we are already financially struggling and fear that we will have to cut places and lose staff, or potentially close." One service did say that the increases would likely cause them to close.

The results from this survey have been shared with the SAC team within the Scottish government.

SOSCN Training Recap

From Beith to Dundee, we've been out and about in Scotland this Spring and Summer delivering training. Our most popular sessions have been Managing Distressed Behaviour with Trauma Informed Practice and Play in School Age Childcare.

It's always nice to see staff from all types of school age childcare services in attendance and a such a wide range of experience levels, from those just joining the workforce to those plying their playwork magic for decades.

Here's some feedback from our recent Play sessions:

"It was very interactive. Patrick did an amazing job at walking us through the session whilst making it enjoyable"

Stirling



"Very engaging and informative session. Information was presented well in an easy to understand and informative manner. Very enjoyable session!"

Edinburgh

"Really enjoyable activities. Good to hear the experiences and opinions of professionals from other clubs. Easy to understand slides. Good content. Patrick was great."

Glasgow

During the summer, we will be revamping our online training at SOSCN Learn, so keep a look out for new courses in the new term and we are hoping to begin delivering in-person and online Child Protection training sessions later in the year.



Interested in Our Training?



Be the first to find out about our in-person and online live training and events by [following us on Eventbrite](#)

We are also happy to travel and deliver training sessions to your service/groups of services/ local networking groups/or any other groups of staff! To get the ball rolling, fill out our short online [Training Interest Form](#), and we'll get back to you as soon as possible to get organising.

We currently have sessions available in:

- Managing Distressed Behaviour with Trauma Informed Practice
- Play in School Age Childcare
- GIRFEC & Personal Plans
- Medication Management
- Induction for New Staff to School Age Childcare



Next meeting

Tuesday 2nd September

10am (Online Zoom)



[click or scan for
more information](#)





Prizes in Play

a help or a hindrance?

One of the great things about in-person training is the natural discussion that occurs between participants. At one of our recent Play in School Age Childcare training sessions, while looking at Peter Gray's characteristics of play, the conversation veered toward a polarizing topic: rewarding children with prizes in play.

Characteristics of Play

According to Peter Gray, 'pure play' is activity where four characteristics are fully present:

1. Play is self-chosen and self-directed
2. Play is intrinsically motivated; means are more valued than ends
3. Play is guided by mental rules
4. Play is always creative and usually imaginative

The first two characteristics are echoed in Playwork Principle two which is used to help define play in the Play Strategy for Scotland:

"Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live."

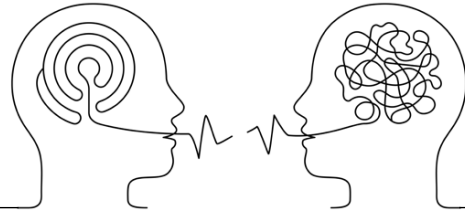
Play Is Intrinsically Motivated; Means Are More Valued Than Ends

What does this mean? Essentially, children (or adults!) choose to take part in play because they extract pleasure from the activity itself, not just the outcome. For example:

- With Lego, the fun often comes from problem-solving, designing, sifting through bricks to find the right one, and the satisfaction of clicking the parts together - not necessarily the final creation (which is often quickly dismantled to build something new!).
- When playing football, enjoyment can come from the physical movement and motions, the teamwork, the social interaction - not just from winning a match or trophy (a whole other debate: are competitive sports and play the same thing?).
- Climbing a tree might be fun because of the surrounding calm of nature, the thrill of being up high, figuring out where the foot goes next, and the jump back down - not necessarily just reaching the top.

Play might have an outcome, goal, or prize - but often, that's not the main motivator.

For or Against?



In our training sessions, many staff said they often offer prizes (like sweets or a toy from the prize box) for completing staff-facilitated activities such as scavenger hunts. There were mixed opinions: some staff were in favour of this approach, while others purposely avoided using rewards or prizes.

Arguments in Support of Using Prizes

1. Incentivises Participation

Prizes can encourage children to try something they otherwise might not, which might open the door to new interests or play types. Just like we're encouraged to eat a variety of foods for balanced nutrition, varied play offers different developmental and wellbeing benefits.

2. Adds Excitement

When activities are competitive, rewards often heighten excitement and engagement.

3. Keeps More Children Occupied

With more participation, there may be fewer behavioural issues, resulting in a calmer, more positive environment - for children and staff.

4. Staff Competition

Some admitted that staff would compete to run the "best" or most popular activity - prizes often helped boost participation numbers.

Staff noted that the final two points may reflect adult-led agendas, not the best interests of the children.

Arguments Against Using Prizes

1. Shifts Motivation

Children may become focused on the reward instead of enjoying the activity, which undermines intrinsic motivation.

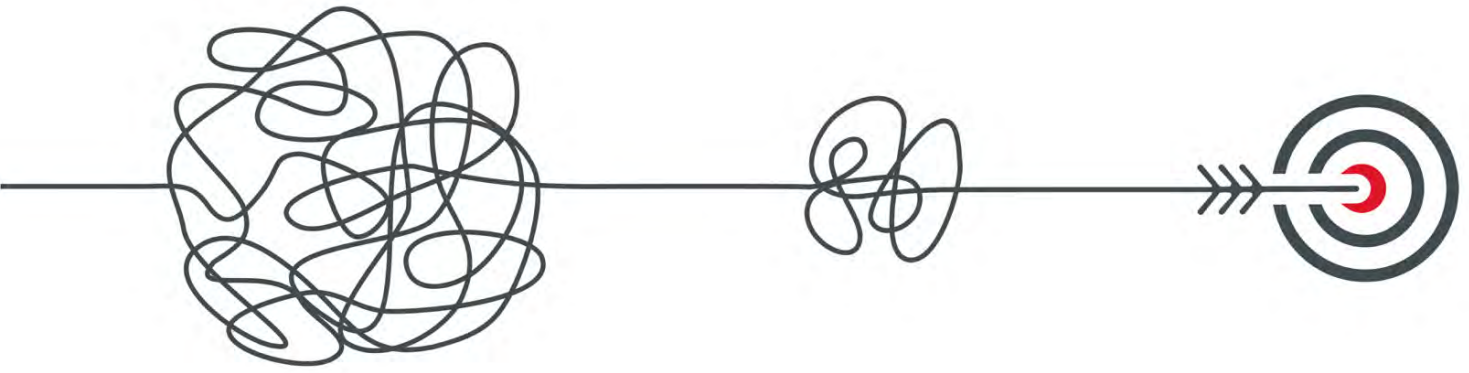
2. Increases Stress or Disappointment

When competitive, children can become anxious or upset about missing out on a prize, which may impact self-esteem or lead to distressing behaviour.

3. Creates Expectation

Children may begin to expect prizes and become less likely to participate in activities unless a reward is offered.

These arguments, both for and against, came from practitioner experience. However, there is research to warn off using prizes or reward in play that backs up Gray's second characteristic.



What the Research Says

One study (Lepper et al., 1973) suggested making children aware of a reward for participating in an activity can reduce intrinsic motivation - the desire to engage in an activity for its own sake.

Researchers worked with children who already enjoyed drawing. All were told a visitor was coming. The children were then split into three groups:

1. Expected Reward Group

Told in advance they would receive a reward if they drew a picture for the visitor. They were then given the reward.

2. Unexpected Reward Group

Told they could draw a picture for the visitor if they wanted to. A reward was not mentioned, but they were surprised with one afterward.

3. No Reward Group

Also told they could draw a picture for the visitor. No reward was mentioned or given.

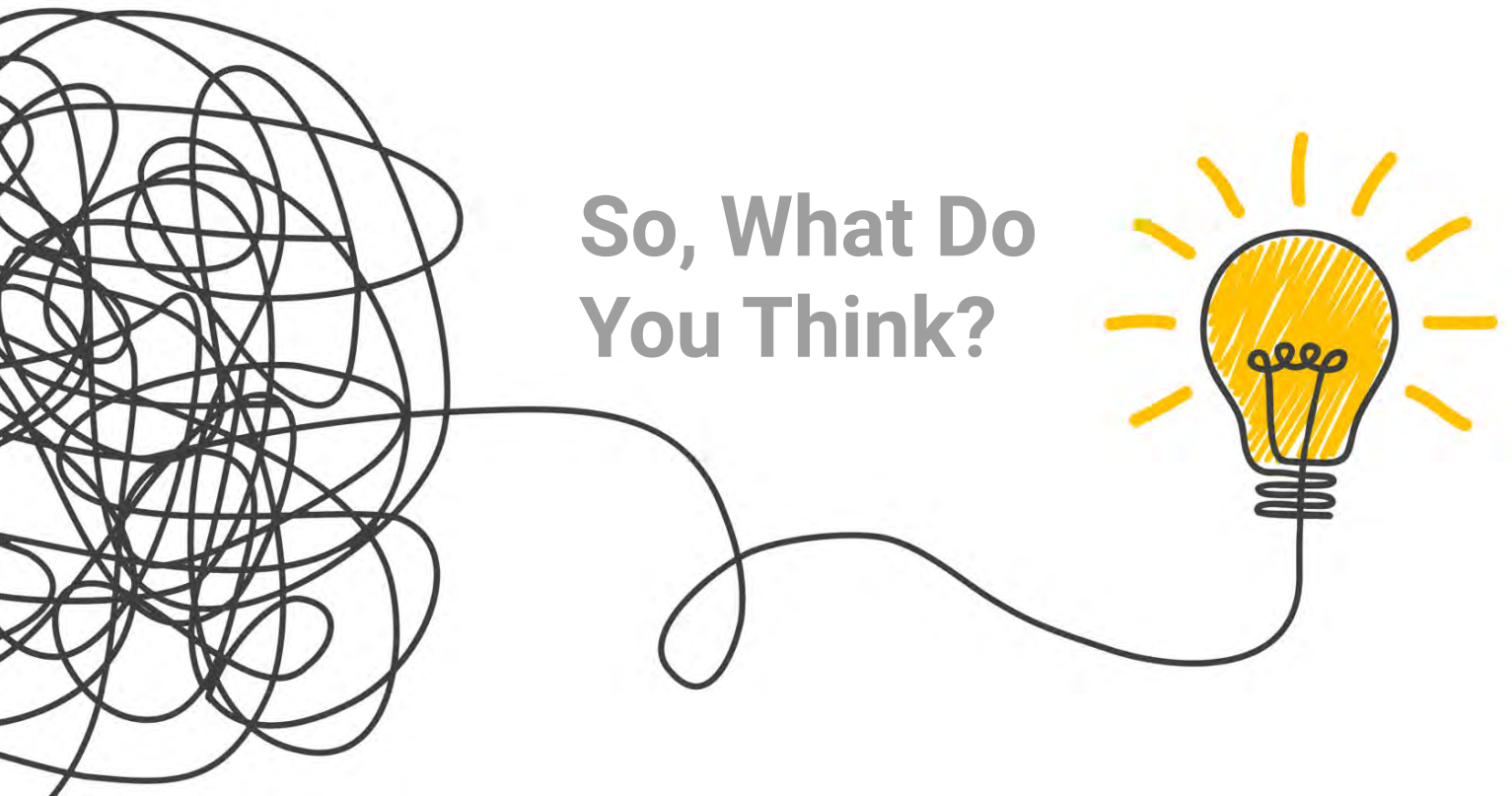
Two main findings emerged:

1. Quality of Drawing

The Expected Reward Group's pictures were judged to be of lower quality, appearing less creative and less carefully drawn than those in the other groups. This suggests their focus shifted from the joy of drawing to earning the reward.

2. Long-term Motivation

In free play time afterward, children in the Expected Reward Group chose to draw significantly less than those in the other two groups. This suggests that what was once a pleasurable activity became viewed more as work, only worthwhile if rewarded.



So, What Do You Think?

At your next staff meeting or training day, consider asking your team:

- Should we offer children prizes for taking part in play?
- Have we seen a positive or negative impact from using prizes?
- Do we think play has to be intrinsically motivated to truly be play?

Reflecting together can help build a shared understanding of why we do what we do - and how we can best support children's right to play.

Have you visited the soscn shop?

We have a range of sample policies and good practice toolkits available for School Age Childcare services to use.

Visit: soscn.org/shop

Changes Within SOSCN

After many years leading SOSCN and supporting the sector Irene is taking a well-earned retirement at the end of July, and whilst, she will be difficult to replace, we are excited to be starting a new chapter of SOSCN's development under the leadership of Audrey Anderson. School age childcare has been a lifelong passion for Irene, and as a young mother, she helped set up one of the first out of school care services in Scotland in the early 1980s. In short, she is an out of school care legend! She will be missed by staff, board members and of course, services, but I know we all thank her for her dedication to improving the life opportunities of school age children and their families across the whole of Scotland for many years.

An amazing journey!

I came into this post with strong principles as a feminist, as a supporter of equality and inclusion, and, especially, a staunch supporter of children and young people's rights.

The role, as it was at first, as Scottish Development Officer, matched those principles and the experiences I already had in setting up and developing the first urban aid funded service in Scotland, whilst supporting others to do the same. From day one, I was working for a cause I believe in; it is not just a job. It was then, and now, a privilege to be employed in this exciting new field, which I helped create in the first place, alongside many other early pioneers.

Back in the early 90s, our phones were landlines, and computers were huge and bulky, we did not have the internet or email yet... so work involved, right from the start, travelling on many journeys, across Scotland, meetings in London, as there was no Scottish Government or Parliament then, so policy work was with Westminster, and my first UK four nations meeting was in Belfast.

In the early days, everything was printed and posted, we created information resources and regular newsletters. As more people were employed by local authorities and Local Enterprise companies to support the development of new services, we created local networks of services and a forum for the development staff to meet and share ideas and to support each other.

We made a video on "What is out of school care?" and this was translated into many languages, although we only had one copy left to tidy up and share.

Back then, media work was not social media, but getting articles and letters into newspapers, and appearing on TV and being on Radio programmes. Of course, nothing goes





without a hitch! I recall going for a radio interview, having to arrive at the studio at 7.30 am – only to be put in the wrong studio – and hearing the producer being told in another studio that I had not turned up! You can guess this still annoys me.

Now, of course, we have the internet, social media, online meetings, training, and resources, and this has again opened up connections across the country and internationally.

Right from the start and to the present day, the aspects of this role I have enjoyed most, is working directly with staff and children in services, and a lot of my early work was in supporting parent committees too. I am pleased when children are directly involved in our work, whether through presenting at events, responding to consultations and surveys or taking part in our projects. Great examples are the flags children designed for our 21st anniversary events, and all the amazing feedback from the STEM project, which was a great success.

Our involvement in the European Network for School Age Childcare has led to many international friendships, and again, joint research work internationally which meant getting to visit services and meet leaders from other nations in conferences and meetings across Europe, and indeed, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the USA, and Iceland.

Hosting the ENSAC conference in 1998, was an undoubted highlight of my career, it took two years of work to prepare, and it involved the whole staff team, board, and partners across the country and internationally. We had many events in the social programme, which were enjoyed by all of our guests.

Sam Galbraith, who was the first appointed Minister for Children in Scotland, opened the event, and this was an exciting time for Scotland, with our own new Parliament and Scottish Executive (later to be Scottish Government).

In the early 2000s, the years when we had the Funding Facilitators programme, and researchers employed, were when we were at our biggest and we moved to new premises to give us a whole floor for this expanded staff team. Whilst I was always fundraising, this was the biggest grant ever I had raised for SOSCN a total of £1.3 million, and even with employing accountants to help, grant reporting had to be stringent and took a lot of time and energy.

During this time, I was also honoured to receive an MBE for work in developing school age childcare. It was a surprise, but I accepted it on behalf of the sector for all the work you do every day to make children's lives happier.

The internet and email transformed everyone's work, back when Andrew first joined us though, only one computer was shared by all to take turns in using the internet; he first joined us in an information role, and he got a crash course in learning about school age

childcare, as we carried out audits of the sector in the Scottish Borders, Dumfries and Galloway and for other local authorities. We still maintain great connections with people we met on those journeys.

For our 21st anniversary our outdoor conference in a marquee in the Hidden Gardens in Glasgow, naturally, a semi-outdoor conference in June in Scotland was still a risk, and, of course, there was a thunder and lightning storm, and we all had to evacuate the marquee. Nevertheless, everyone had fun, although it is not an experiment, for some reason, that we have repeated.

In 2013 we invited Aileen Campbell to an expert symposium on out of school care, and it is from that meeting that she agreed to look into developing a policy for out of school care, with subsequent meetings with Irene and Andrew to discuss the potential for this.

This led to the appointment, in 2018, of a Scottish Government Policy Officer to lead on developing a new policy framework for school age childcare. Today this school age childcare team has well over twenty-five staff and manages a number of strands of work for future development of school age childcare.

Of course, in leading the organisation there have been times of stress, frustration, and disappointment, whilst battling to get support for the sector, or indeed ensuring that the organisation survived under different political and funding regimes over the years. This has really not been an easy job, but it is always worthwhile.

Where I am gladdest, we were able to support the sector in recent years, was undoubtedly, being there for you during and in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. We, each and every one of us, stepped up to the place for children and families, and I also know we have ensured that this will not be forgotten, as we provided in our evidence to the post Covid-19 Inquiry.

In the current climate, still recovering post covid, and with the cost of living crisis, it is still not easy for any of us. There is a policy framework in place to develop school age childcare in Scotland, with some progress, although perhaps not as much as we hoped for, given the UK financial crises over the last few years. So, once again, remember to use our campaigning guides and start lobbying across political parties in Scotland once they put up their candidates for the next Scottish elections in 2026. Use parent power and your links in the community. I am sure SOSCN will still be around to support you and will have a manifesto for you all to support and share.

I have been privileged to work in developing and supporting this sector for all of this time, ably supported by many wonderful staff and board members, but now, it is time for me to handover to others to take this amazing role into the future, while I start a new journey into the retirement years. I welcome and wish the best of luck to Audrey, my successor.

Thanks to you all across the sector, partners, supporters, funders and colleagues across the policy and statutory agencies, who have supported the work of SOSCN over many years.

With the needs of children and families at the heart of what we do, I will always remain committed to and passionate about this wonderful sector!

With warm wishes, Irene Audain MBE

A few words of Introduction from Audrey Anderson, incoming SOSCN CEO



I am delighted to introduce myself as soon to be new CEO for SOSCN and am very much looking forward to carrying on the incredible work of Irene over the last 30+ years and developing this further at this exciting time for the sector.

My first role in the voluntary sector was Head of Establishment (Manager) for a Partnership Early Learning and Childcare setting in Glasgow after switching careers from the hospitality and events sector. I realised then that I had a real passion for working in this field and took over from the Head of Establishment when she retired. I was in this role for 10 years and led the setting through a period of change from 480 to 600 hrs of funded ELC Provision and changes from the 3-5 Curriculum to Curriculum for Excellence. During this period, the Early Years sector was becoming more regulated and focussed on staff training - as the School Aged Children sector is now - and was amongst the first cohorts in Scotland when I undertook by BA in Childhood Practice at this point.

I later moved to Early Years Scotland as Service Manager which I was in post for a hugely enjoyable 5+ years as part of the leadership team there. This gave me great experience of working within a membership organisation and developing policy and guidance for members, securing funding as well as lobbying and helping agree policy with Government and other stakeholders.

To fill in a gap in my experience – that of working within a local authority – I have most recently been with West Lothian Council for nearly 7 years as Early Learning and Childcare Area Support Manager. Whilst loving the direct operational aspects of this role around Quality Assurance, Inspection Preparation, Management of staff and supporting the children and families using the service, it is now time for me to move on and take on this exciting new challenge.

For over 8 years I have been a Panel Manager and Chair for Children's Hearings Scotland, a very rewarding role where the decisions made support the best interests for the child and can make a positive difference to their wellbeing and development.

The role of CEO is such an exciting opportunity for me – my heart lies within the Third Sector and I am sure the skills and knowledge with I have gained over the years will put me in a great position to lead SOSCN to the next stage at this exciting time of development.

I have had the privilege of being able to spend some time already with Irene and the rest of the Team in SOSCN and will continue to work closely with them and the Board. I am very much looking forward to getting out and about to visit settings, make and refresh contacts within local authorities and Scottish Government and to continue to support the School Age Childcare Sector to develop and grow.

From the Beginning

- a brief history of SOSCN

Over the years SOSCN has employed more than 30 different staff members- starting with 1.5 staff members, SOSCN grew at one point to employ 17 people. We are currently fairly lean but that does not hold us back in terms of what we can deliver.

Irene is currently the longest serving member of staff at 32 years; she is followed by Andrew with (nearly) 24 years' service, Finlay on (nearly) 18 years and then Greig on 11. Patrick has a bit of catching up to do- he has (nearly) 2 years' service. Although Anne Marie Mackin now works only free-lance for us, she has worked with us in varying capacities for 23 years.

The following timeline does not detail all our work but highlights some of our major achievements since Irene started in 1993.

"How it Started

The Scottish Out of School Care Network started in 1989 as an informal grouping of agencies involved in daycare and playcare services for school age children. The existence of a Scottish-wide out of school care network would, it was felt, not only raise the profile of out of school care, but would also ensure high quality and consistent standards of care. The decision to establish the Scottish Out of School Care Network formally was made at the "School's Out" conference in Glasgow in March 1991. The organisation was formally constituted in March 1992 and operated as a steering committee until funding from the Scottish Office and Scottish Enterprise enabled the appointment of a Scottish Development Worker and a part-time administrative secretary late in 1993, based in Glasgow."

(SOSCN First Annual Review, 1993-1994)

1993

Irene Audain employed as Scottish Development worker.

1993 Annual Membership Fees:

Local Authority	£100
Local Enterprise Company	£100
Voluntary Organisation	
- funding/income over £30,000	£30
- funding/income over £20,000	£20
- funding/income over £10,000	£10
- funding/income under £10,000	£5
individuals	£5

1995

Our video "What is Out of School Care?" formally launched by Lorraine Kelly. The video was supported by Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Video Launch

The Network video *What is Out of School Care?* was formally launched by television personality Lorraine Kelly in November 1995. Lorraine is an enthusiastic supporter of out of school care, donating both her time and travel at no cost to the Network. Lorraine paid tribute to the dedication of all those working in the field, represented at the launch by the committee and other guests. Strathclyde Regional Council kindly sponsored the launch itself.



Photo : Lorraine Kelly at the launch of the Network video

1996

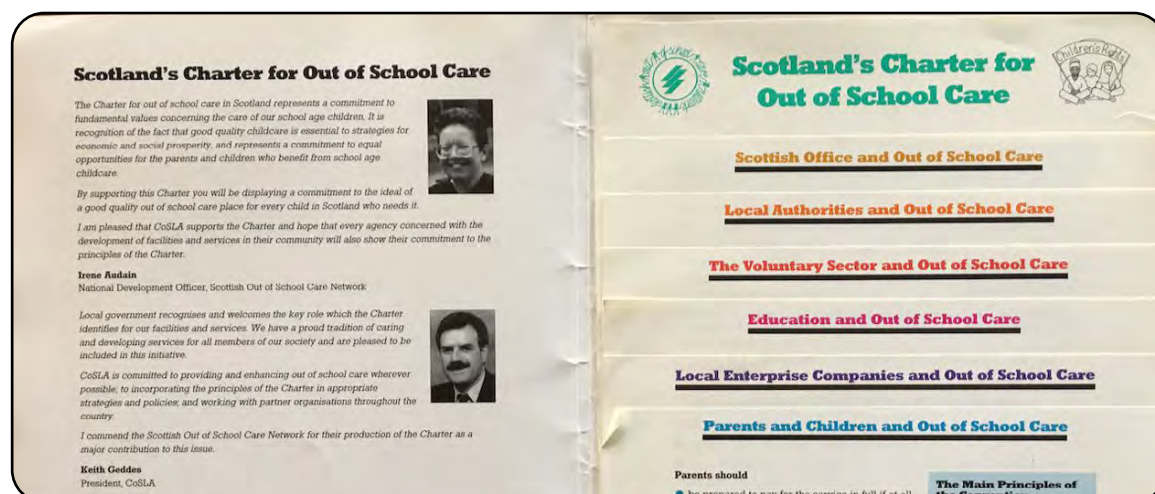
Our publication "The Next Step in Scotland" was launched- this set out the economic, social and equality arguments for out of school care in Scotland, including a costed section which showed the positive return on investment in out of school care places, to the Treasury, in terms of income tax by enabling parents to work.

We were successful in gaining funding for research project: "Making Childcare Work in Scotland 1996"

In partnership with Pearl Assurance we delivered grants of £10,000 to over 30 services in a 24 month period.

1997

We launched "Scotland's Charter for Out of School Care"



1998

We got our first email address.

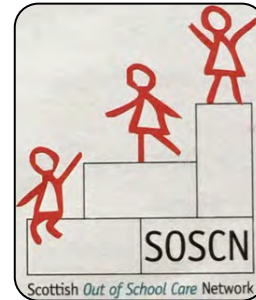
We helped organise a Scottish Summit in June to launch the new Scottish Childcare Strategy.

We organised the first of many six-month OSC placements for Danish students; this successful programme ran for over 10 years.

We organised and hosted the European Network for School Age Childcare (ENSAC) international conference "The Future of the Child" in Edinburgh, bringing together 400 school age providers, academics and development staff from 17 different countries over five days.

1999

We got our first website and revamped our logo.



We held 8 seminars across the country on behalf of the new Scottish Government in partnership with COSLA to deliver the blueprint for new childcare partnerships, information services and New Opportunities Fund (Lottery) funding for OSC.

We took part in the "Peace Education in Out of School Care" international research project, funded by the EU, and as part of this we delivered Respect Training in OSC to services across Scotland.

2000

Launch of Aiming High Scotland, our Quality Assurance Scheme for OSC in Scotland.

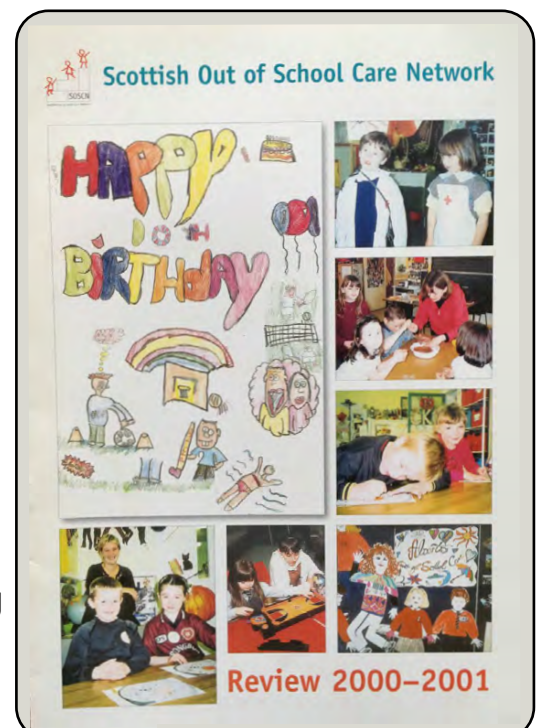
We were involved in the working group which created the new "Care Standards for Childcare" for the newly created Care Commission.

2001

Andrew Shoolbread joined SOSCN.

We continued to promote NOF funding, tax credits, AHS and we also offered a wide range of practical training courses, as well as Childcare Strategy Seminars and Policy Newsletters.

We facilitated a joint projects group of national childcare and play organisations and led two research projects culminating in the publications of "Is it child's play?" and, "Working with local enterprise companies: Childcare Staff & Business Development Guide" in 2002.



2002

We were invited to apply for a specially created NOF £1 million 3-year grant, through which we created the Scottish Funding Facilitators project. This ran from 2002 – 2005 and helped deliver £28 million pounds funding for 48,000 new OSC places, and £14.5 million for quality childcare and training for over 4,000 participants.

Funding facilitators programme


The Funding Facilitators Programme 2003–2004

With the end of the New Opportunity Fund's (the Fund) Out of School Hours Childcare (OOSH) Programme in June 2003, the Funding Facilitators team was able to focus on supporting applications to Round 2 of the Fund's Quality Childcare Programme and at the same time develop a comprehensive programme of free training to childcare workers and committee members.

New Opportunities for success

In the Scottish Executive's Pre-school and Childcare Statistics 2004, a huge increase was found in the amount of money accessed through the Fund's childcare programmes between 2003 and 2002, a direct result of the support provided by the Funding Facilitators Programme. In 2003, local authorities across Scotland accessed £15,344,693 of Fund money, compared with only £3,001,154 in 2002.


Supported by



Courses

- Assertiveness
- Business Planning
- Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit
- Committee Skills
- Debt Control and Management
- Funding Application
- Marketing
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Policies and Procedures
- Recruitment and Retention of Staff
- Service Level Agreements
- Supervision and Appraisal
- Time Management
- Delivery

Although much of the training has been provided to a number of groups in one session as either a full or half day's training, there have been requests from groups for individual training. The development team have responded to this and have provided one-to-one mentoring support and training.




Scottish Out of School Care Network

TRAINING

In the 2nd year of the Funding Facilitators Programme the emphasis has been on providing childcare groups with the skills and knowledge to become more financially sustainable. As many groups will have benefited in previous years from awards through the OOSH programme and looking towards expansion, it was recognised that they may need additional assistance in financial planning and running a small business. With this in mind, 13 training courses were developed for delivery across Scotland; this training has been delivered free of charge.

TRAINING STATISTICS

A total of 482 people have attended the training courses since February 2004, as of June 2004.



Total number of training attendees

FOCUS ON SUPPORT

A great number of OSC groups have benefited from the support provided by the Development Officers; one such group is Radnor Park Out of School Care in Clydebank.

SOSCN's West Dunbartonshire Funding Development Officer, Maureen Moran, was contacted by Ena Williamson, a Clydebank resident keen to set up an OSC service in the Radnor Park/ North Kilbowie area of the town. After the results of a parent survey showed a large demand for local out of school care provision Ena contacted Maureen for funding advice and information on setting up an OSC group.

A hall belonging to Radnor Park Church had already been identified as being a suitable location for the OSC due to its close proximity to and the church's association with, Kilbowie Primary School. After recruiting the Minister and church treasurer onto the fledgling group's committee, a lease was signed and the group's use of the hall was secured.

Ena approached Maureen for support in completing a grant application to the New Opportunities Fund's Out of School Hours Childcare Programme; the completed application was submitted in April 03. 3 years funding to create 72 new childcare places, providing before school, after school and holiday provision was requested. The group were understandably delighted when confirmation of the application's success was received in August 2003.

A £4000 capital grant included in the NOF application came in useful, as the church needed to be fitted with appropriate smoke detection and secure door entry systems. After recruiting a supervisor and 2 childcare workers, the group were well on their way to opening. A few days after being registered by the Care Commission in February 2004, the group opened their doors to many eager children. Local MSP Des McNulty attended an official opening.

The project has now been in operation for 6 months with 15 children using the service per day; already the group has achieved great success and has expanded to collect children from St Euan's, a neighbouring school.

Radnor Park are setting their sights high and are already planning to take part in SOSCN's Aiming High Scotland Quality Assurance Scheme.

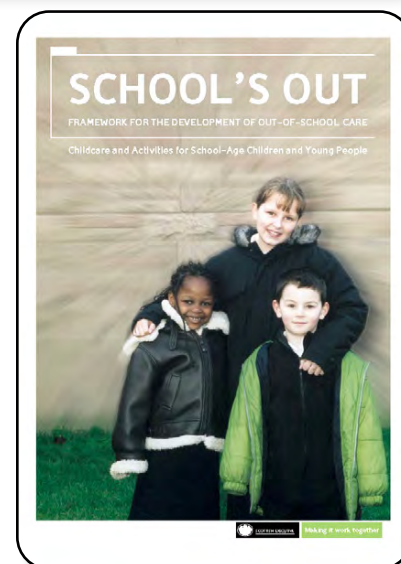
Annual Review 2003–2004

2003

We played a key role in the development of the Scottish Executive's publication, "School's Out: A Framework for the Development of OSC in Scotland".

We conducted OSC audits for West Lothian, Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway Councils.

With funding from the Scottish Executive Health department and a team of experts we started delivering the British Heart Foundation Active Clubs packs and physical activities training to hundreds of services across Scotland.



2004

We were invited to deliver two local OSC development posts: one in Dumfries and Galloway (2004 – 2007), and one in Glasgow (2004 – 2011).

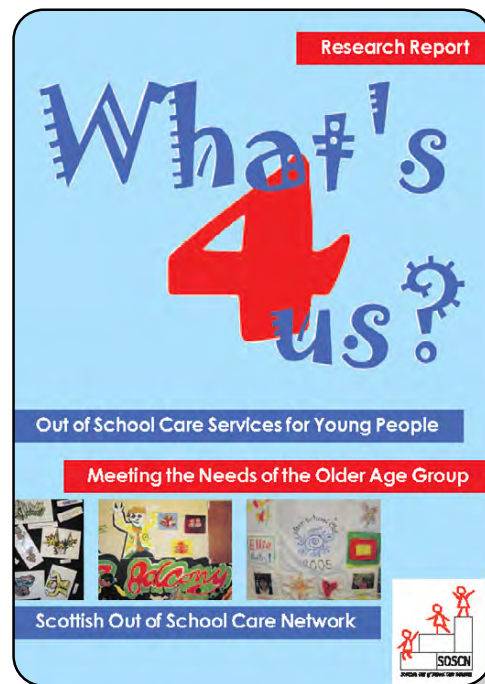
We gained funding from the Laidlaw Foundation to fund places and conduct research into OSC for older children.

2005

We held a successful two day rural conference in Peebles, supported by Scottish Borders Council.

We published "What's for us? Out of school care services for young people. Meeting the needs of older children", the report and DVD from the Laidlaw Foundation-funded project and "Your Time, Your Club", from the Dumfries and Galloway research.

We published results from our "Rural Out of School Care Survey".



2006

We reached the end of the Funding Facilitators funding but we continued to create new resources, training, events and support to the sector.

2007

Finlay Wright joined SOSCN.

We produced a manifesto for the Scottish Parliament election which we launched at a Parliamentary Reception.

Thanks to funding from 'FutureBuilders Scotland' we wrote and produced 4 publications: "Different but Equal", "Inspired Healthy Eating Choices", "Keeping Track: Improve the Running of Your Out of School Care", and "Staff and Employer Handbook for Out of School Care."



2008

The first time we conducted our annual [OSC Workforce Survey](#).

We conducted research into children's food choices at lunchtime and we delivered seminars on healthy eating.

We helped with mapping the needs of disabled children in North Lanarkshire and started research in Edinburgh with older children on what they did, and wanted to do, after school.

2009

North Lanarkshire council was presented with the first Quality Assured Aiming High Local Authority Award in recognition of the commitment and support which resulted in nearly every out of school care in the area being Aiming High Quality Assured.

2010

We produced low cost training events to help services with sustainability and management issues and we delivered free anti-bullying training in partnership with RespectMe.

2011

In 2011 we held a successful Parliamentary Reception where we launched the 'Benefits of Out of School Care' video, the event was well attended with speakers from four political parties.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlDmi4u5k3Q>

2012

We held a 21st Anniversary Conference/Garden Party.



2013

We held an expert symposium with the Minister for Children, Aileen Campbell, on the overall benefits of out of school care to children, families, women in particular, and the overall economic benefits. This led to the Minister agreeing to develop a new policy for out of school care.

We started to deliver free physical activity and active play training through our paid internship.

2014

Greig Cavanagh joined SOSCN.

We changed our logo.



Scottish Out of School Care Network

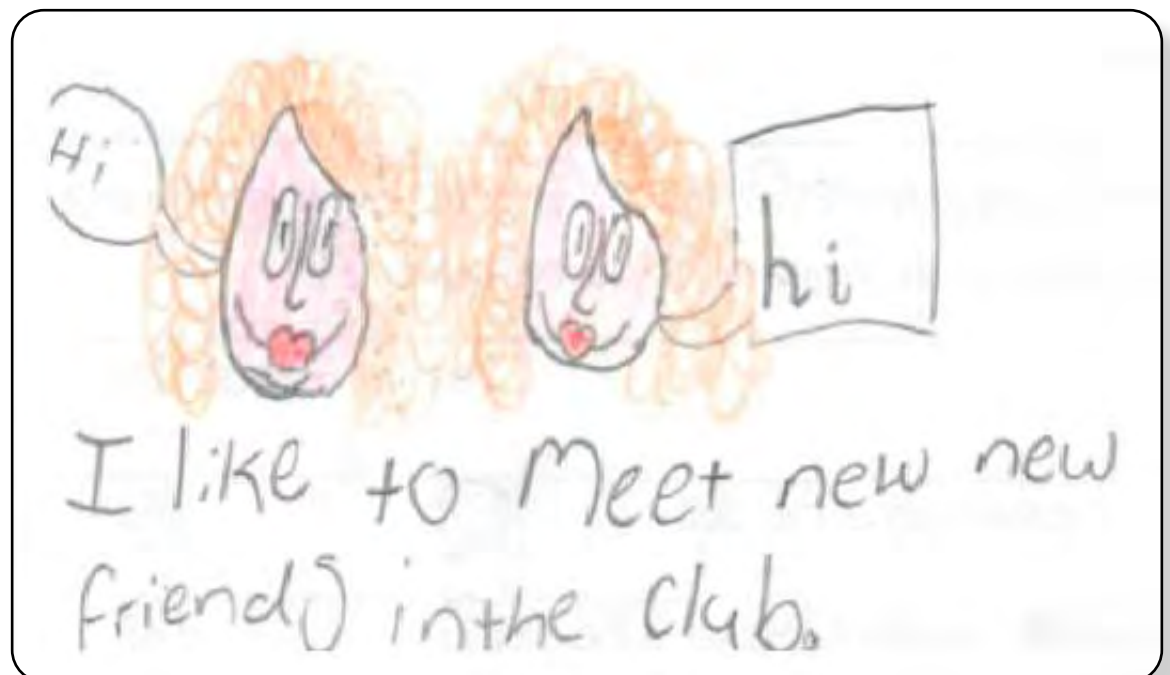
supporting children's
rights to play, care
and learning

2015

With the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring OSC become a priority area of work, we worked intensively with Scottish Government to produce a work plan to inform the development of a new national policy for out of school care.

2016

We published new e-publications: "Out of School Care Views from the Field" and a "Children's Holiday Survey".




On behalf of the Scottish Government and Play Strategy we undertook in-depth research about the coverage and content of play in qualifications- this resulted in the publication of "Learning about Play".

We published our Manifesto for Out of School Care for the Scottish Parliament election.



2017

We applied for and were awarded Scottish Government project grant funding two years to deliver a pilot “STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths): play with a purpose project”, which involved offering free intensive training to selected practitioners to carry out monitored and evaluated STEM activities with children.



Introduction to Creative Computing for Out of School Care Staff

An ongoing collaboration between West College Scotland and The Scottish Out of School Care Network

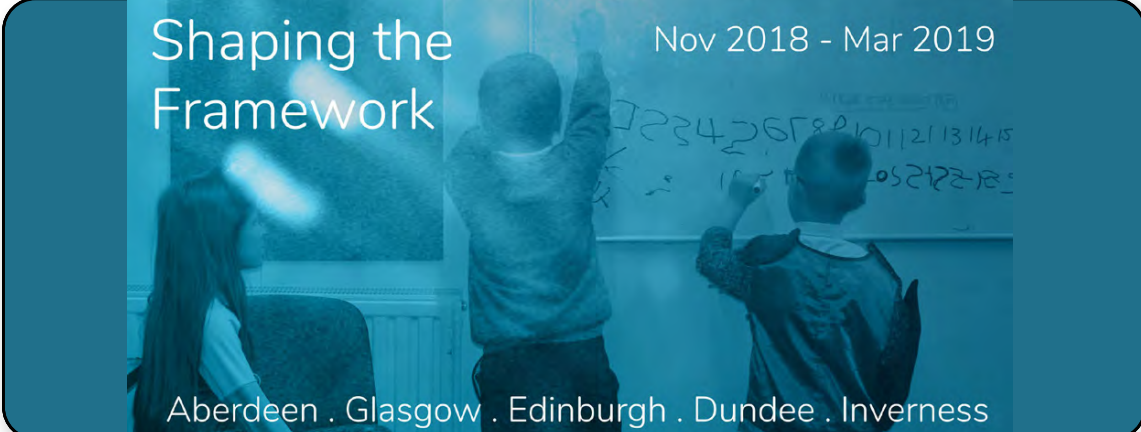
2018

The appointment of a policy lead for out of school care in Scottish Government was a welcome development. We worked on a number of policy related reports, with input from the out of school care sector; this included case studies of good or innovative practice, and gathering the views of children and parents.

2019

We took part in many activities around the development of the government’s new policy, including providing our expertise, research, contacts and views to the Scottish Government Out of School Care Team.

We held seven regional Shaping the Framework events in partnership with the Scottish Government.



Shaping the Framework

Nov 2018 - Mar 2019

Aberdeen . Glasgow . Edinburgh . Dundee . Inverness

Our events and training, from the Orkney Isles to the Scottish Borders, focused on children’s wellbeing, including supporting children with autism and additional support needs, and those facing Adverse Childhood Experiences. From across the country, feedback on this training was consistently high, while we celebrated a close partnership with CALA in delivering our ongoing physical activity training across the Highlands.

This period also saw the fruition of Glasgow City Council’s investment to support the quality improvement of Glasgow services by investing in SOSCN’s Achieving Quality Scotland (AQS) Quality Improvement Framework. Through this funding a total of 22 services achieved AQS Gold Award.

2020 –
2022

COVID was a hard time for everyone, however, we maintained contact with services through various online opportunities, newsletters, surveys, events, and social media posts. We worked hard to represent the sector at meetings hosted by government, health agencies, and the regulators. We also successfully campaigned for additional funding from government to minimise the impact of enforced closure and increased costs for services.

Our “[Stories from the Frontline](#)” documented service’s experiences of providing quality services for children and families during this time.



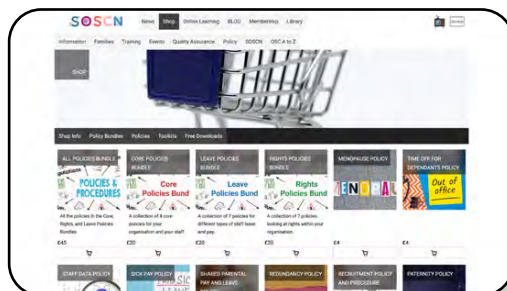
We resumed in-person events around the country including a conference. Patrick Morrison joined SOSCN.

Launch of "Practice Focus" round ups and relaunch of our newsletters.



2024

Launch of in-person and online training, and online shop.



Wellbeing Focus

—

Creativity and The Arts



Good play opportunities and creativity are intrinsically linked, in fact, when we create, we play and when we are immersed in (or should that be absorbed by?) play we create.

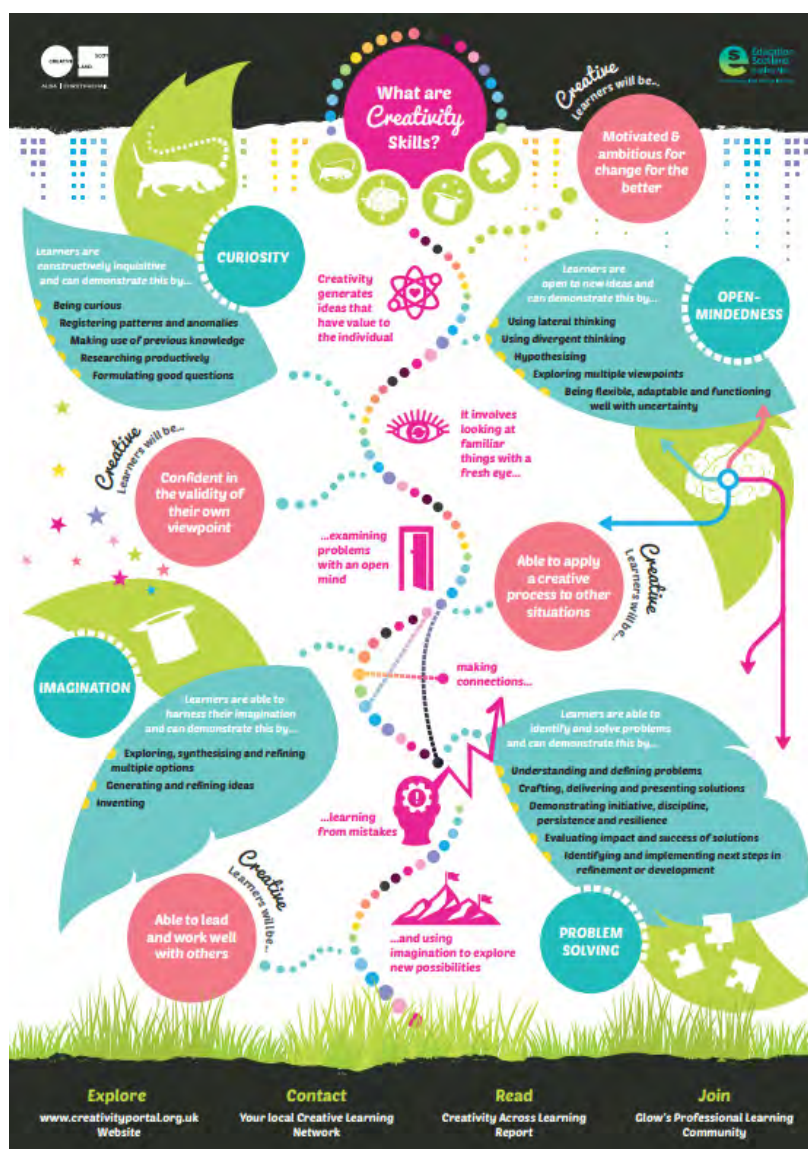
We often talk of free-play but do we talk of free-art, free-dance, free-music, or free-drama? The space and opportunity to express ourselves without judgement purely for the fun and enjoyment of doing it can bring so many benefits. And when talking of 'we' I am consciously talking about all of us- adults and children alike- it is only through exploring and experimenting that we discover what we can do by, and for, ourselves.

Our two guest contributors are Julia Fenby, Education Officer, Creativity, Education Scotland and Heather Armstrong, Co-Chief Executive Starcatchers, both of whom are skilled arts practitioners and have many years' experience working with children and young people. In both articles they talk about how creativity and the arts can develop and support children's wellbeing and learning.

Julia Fenby, Education Officer, Creativity, Education Scotland

There are so many wonderful stories where creative learning experiences have been transformational for learners and practitioners, like when a secondary learner said the Daydream Believers project Solarpunk Island had given them 'a chance to breathe' – a chance to think and share ideas without worrying about making mistakes. Creative approaches often provide a hook which engages learners, allows them to follow their own interests and explore what is relevant and meaningful to them, and providing a means through which their voices can be heard.

The arts are a natural home for creativity as they lend themselves so well to exploration, ideas generation, experimentation and self-expression. However, creativity is not just about the arts, it is a way of thinking, being and doing – it is about being curious, open-minded, imaginative and seeking out opportunities to solve problems – and most importantly, it is about having agency – confidence in your own ideas and ability to effect change in the world around you. Creativity is important for all of us, whatever our interests and strengths - it is an essential skill which enables us to thrive as human beings, in learning, life, work and in relationships with people, society, the environment and culture.



Nurturing Creativity

Children are naturally curious and by supporting their capacity to be creative we can help them to grow and flourish. Research tells us that creative learning opportunities can develop the executive functions of the brain which are needed for self-control and managing behaviours. This can help children and young people with their learning and attainment and importantly, it also fosters happiness, well-being and motivation.

We can support children and young people's creativity by providing positive, safe environments that stimulate joyful, engaging learning and give them the freedom to explore.

Play is hugely important in developing creativity skills such as imagination and problem solving – it also helps with language, observation, memory and concentration. Children use play to test their theories, make sense of the world and their place in it.

Children's natural curiosity often leads them to ask questions, providing us with an opportunity to engage with and be co-discoverers with them. Being inquisitive and asking good questions is part of being creative so when we empower children to ask questions, look for answers, and make connections, we are supporting them to be confident in their own creativity.

There are so many reasons why it is important to nurture children and young people's creativity:

Children's Rights

'Children and young people have a right to learning that allows them to express themselves freely and develop their talents to the full.'

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

In partnership with e-Sgoil, five learning settings and six creative partners, Education Scotland recently worked with learners who are perhaps most at risk of not having their rights met. These included young people who are care-experienced, displaced, or in secure and residential care. Using creative approaches, they explored what they most need in order to be in the best place to learn, and we learned so much from them in the process. Creative practitioners took time to sit alongside them, to allow trust to develop and to really listen. It was only when they felt truly seen and understood that the young people began to communicate more freely. Their voice often came through the creative activities they were engaged with, which included animations, drawings and photographs.



Fidget toys help with focus, self-regulation and emotional expression. Through making their own, learners were able to reflect on and talk about what a safe and kind learning environment looks and feels like to them.

You can find out more about the project here: [Our Learning: Creative Voices in Education](#).

Wellbeing



Community Play Space, Grange Primary School, Angus

The Covid-19 pandemic brought to the fore the need for us to be creative in order to adapt to unexpected. As we know only too well, it also had a hugely negative impact on many of our children and young people. In partnership with Creative Scotland, we established a Creative Wellbeing project, in which creative practitioners worked with learners in five different settings to help them find ways to wellbeing through creativity.

"Creative Writing helps me clear my head", secondary learner, East Renfrewshire

"It's amazing! Now I have lots of confidence!", primary learner, West Lothian

Children's confidence grew through being agents in their learning. The project affirmed that creativity can have a profoundly positive impact on health and wellbeing:

- It builds confidence in personal efficacy and helps develop resilience.
- Using creativity skills helps us to realise our potential and develop a positive mindset.
- Creativity skills such as open-mindedness and curiosity encourage compassion and respect for self and others.
- Creative approaches support the wellbeing of educators as well as learners!

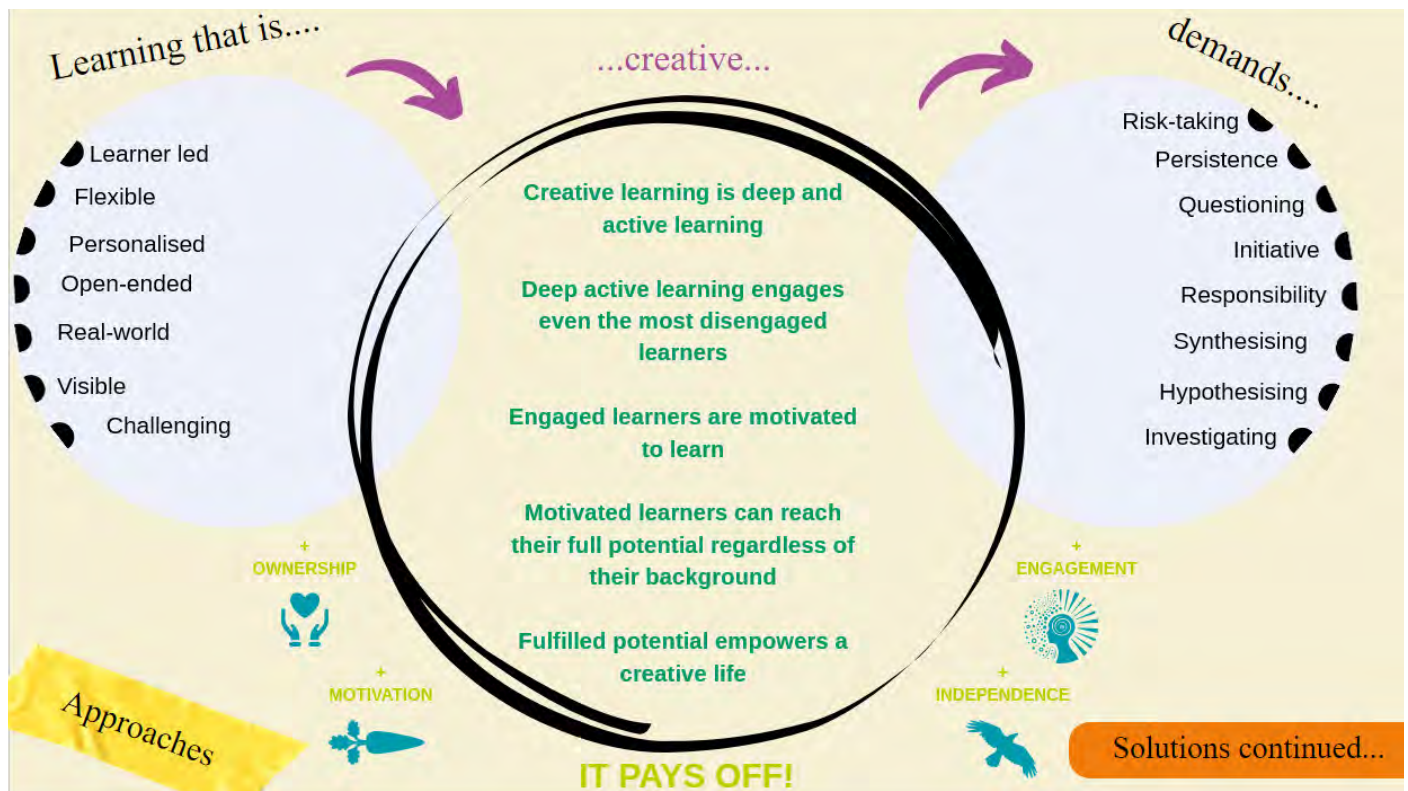
You can find out more about the project here: [Creative Wellbeing](#)

An essential skill for life

As well as being inextricably linked with self-confidence and wellbeing, creativity is an essential life skill, important in all relationships and looked for by employers.

Being creative involves risk taking, builds a growth mindset and supports deeper learning. In

a creative environment, learners are motivated and confident, they make connections and can lead and work well with others.



This infographic shows why creative learning helps all children to reach their full potential, from: Why are Creativity Skills Important for Attainment?

In recent months, as part of the Curriculum Improvement Cycle, I have had the pleasure of working with learners, practitioners and partners from across Scotland who are passionate about creativity. There has been widespread consensus about the importance of creativity in making learning more engaging for everyone and ensuring it is a core part of young people's learning. I will conclude by sharing the rationale for creativity created by the group, which says everything that needs saying about why it is so important that we make it a priority.

- Creativity is a uniquely human attribute which enables us to flourish as individuals and in our relationships with people, society, nature, culture and politics.
- The creative process encourages learners to question, make connections, and develop a strong sense of agency by engaging in learning that is motivating, meaningful, purposeful, joyful and fun.
- By habitually using their creativity skills, learners develop essential skills for life including curiosity, critical thinking, sense making and an ability to challenge and solve problems.
- Creative learners are innovators and changemakers – not only engaging with and navigating the changing world around them, but also constructively influencing its shape.

Andrew – thinking of finishing with a reflective question? – what do you think would work best?

How can you/I bring more creativity into your/my practice and setting?

Do you/we recognise, talk about and celebrate creativity skills with learners/children in my setting?

Resources you might find useful

[Creativity Toy Box](#) - these fast-paced creative challenges can be used for warm-up activities to get learners thinking creatively. They can be adapted for any group in any setting.

[Creativity Toolbox](#) – thirteen three-minute films to help you find new ways of looking at your priorities and challenges and generate original, innovative ideas and new possibilities.

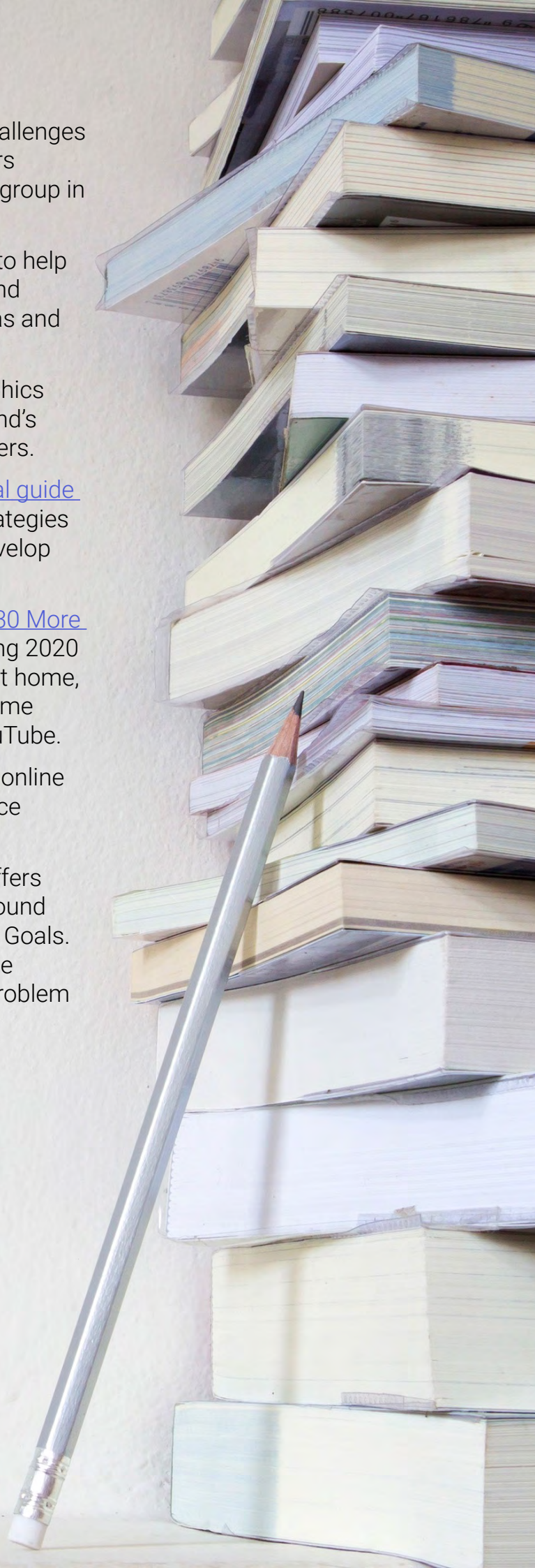
[Creativity Infographics](#) - A suite of eight infographics which explain why creativity is integral to Scotland's Curriculum and improves outcomes for all learners.

[Creativity in learning and teaching: a professional guide for teachers](#) - valuable insights and practical strategies for embedding creativity in your practice and develop learners' creativity skills.

Glasgow CREATE ran [30 Days of Creativity](#) and [30 More Days of Creativity](#) in partnership with Apple during 2020 when children and young people were learning at home, often with their parents and carers. There are some great ideas for creative learning available on YouTube.

[Daydream Believers](#) have created a bank of free online resources suitable for anyone looking to introduce creativity into their learning space.

[The Futures Institute of Dollar Academy](#) (fida) offers students aged 16-18 a range of projects built around the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. These open-access Global Challenges encourage students to apply critical thinking and creative problem solving to tackle real-world issues.





Creativity and Wellbeing

Heather Armstrong, Co-Chief Executive Starcatchers

It's no secret that the last five years has been difficult for everyone working in education and childcare – the impact of the pandemic followed by the costs of living crisis has led to a workforce at risk of burn out trying to support children with ever more complex needs. In the spirit of making sure we fit our own oxygen masks before helping others, we need to think about our own emotional wellbeing.

Non-clinical interventions like yoga and meditation have been studied and proven to be effective, but they don't work for everyone. As an arts organisation, over the past five years Starcatchers has become increasingly more interested in the ways creativity can help support the emotional wellbeing of young children AND the adults who care for them.

In the midst of Covid restrictions in 2021-22, Starcatchers delivered a groundbreaking pilot project Wee People, Big Feelings, exploring the links between creative activity and emotional literacy. The learning from that work has shaped the way we deliver training for early years professionals, how we design future projects, and the ways we think about creativity and wellbeing as an organisation.

There were three main things we learned during Wee People Big Feelings: two appear in all the resources and reports, and the third has developed over time.

1. Our emotions often start as sensations in our bodies – we often feel them before we consciously recognise how we're feeling. Stomachs churn, heads spin, we may feel light headed or bone weary. Movement artist Skye Reynolds explored ways we could move our bodies that helped everyone tune into their bodies, and in turn regulate their emotions. By the end of the year-long artist residency, children in the nursery were observed engaging in big movement play as a way of processing difficult emotions, working through how they felt, and co-regulating with staff.
2. Imaginative play is a powerful tool for learning about, naming and expressing emotions. Through play, children can "practice" expressing difficult emotions again and again, without risking overwhelm. This is particularly important for young children who may not have the vocabulary to talk about how they feel.

3. As professionals and caregivers, we need to think about our own emotional literacy and wellbeing if we're going to support wellbeing in children who rely on us.

In our most recent Wee People, Big Feelings resources developed through our work in Helensburgh, we explore how proven wellbeing techniques work for adults and how they can be applied creatively for children. For the full resources, head to <https://starcatchers.org.uk/work/wee-people-big-feelings-helensburgh/> but here are some of the main ideas we've been exploring.

Grounding is a technique (for adults or older children) that helps shift your focus into the present moment – it can be useful when you feel overwhelmed by symptoms of anxiety or stress, and has even been used to successfully treat PTSD.

The 5,4,3,2,1 method of grounding involves taking a deep breath and tuning into each of these in turn:

5 things you can see

4 things you can touch

3 things you can hear

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste

You don't need to wait until you're experiencing high levels of distress – the more you practice grounding in calmer moments, the easier it will be to do in moments of crisis.

Young children can be observed engaging in versions of this, self-soothing by stroking or cuddling a favourite toy or blanket, or becoming absorbed in water play.



Our Grounding Resource (in the link above) has lots of creative ways to engage your senses – although the ideas have been written for younger children, there are lots of ideas that will work with all ages, things like playing with dough or edible spa day potions can be fun to explore at any age.

Glimmers

Glimmers are micro moments of joy that help us feel calm or peaceful – they are the opposite of triggers. Where triggers switch on the “fight or flight” response of our nervous system, glimmers tell our brains and our bodies that everything is safe.

We sometimes play Glimmer Bingo as a team – split a piece of paper into four sections, four different glimmers, then walk round the room chatting to people and seeing if anyone has drawn the same thing as you. The first to find all four matches wins. It’s fascinating seeing what people draw, and what we have in common – anything from a love of friends and family, a campfire, fresh bedsheets, or even the joy a cold drink on a summer’s day! Once you know about glimmers, it can change the way you look at your life – we can’t take away every source of stress and worry, but we all can take a few moments each day to cherish the little things that make us really happy, and give our bodies a break from the stress of modern life.

Creative Flow

If you struggle with traditional meditation, then creative flow may be your answer. Creative flow is like a form of active meditation: it’s a state of intense focus, where you are completely present and fully immersed in a task – sometimes referred to as being “in the zone”.

Positive psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi described flow state as “characterised by simultaneous absorption, concentration and enjoyment”. You’re so focused everything else





seems to disappear You lose track of time passing You let go of worries and problems.

Creative flow emerges when the mind is both challenged and absorbed – the task has to be challenging enough to be engaging, but not so difficult you give up. For example, watching TV or scrolling the internet is mostly a passive activity whereas colouring books for adults that became popular a few years ago are more active – their intricate designs give some adults the right level of challenge to enter into a flow state.

Starcatchers resources have loads of creative ideas that will help young children enter a state of creative flow, but it's a very personal thing. You might find yours through movement, or music or visual art, while other may find they are "in the zone" when they're cooking, or working in the garden, even just doodling on the back of an envelope. For a deeper dive, check out this excellent podcast where visual artist Pearl Kinnear talks more about creative flow:

<https://starcatchers.org.uk/work/creative-skills-online-podcast/the-creative-skills-podcast-series-4/creative-flow/>

None of this is a magic wand – but I hope this inspires you to prioritize even one of two changes that will help support your own wellbeing as you take on the important job of supporting Scotland's babies, children and young people. Find a moment to tune in to your own body. Prioritise finding small ways to express yourself. Tap into your own creative flow. And find your glimmers that make life worthwhile.

Heather Armstrong is Co-Chief Executive of Starcatchers, Scotland's arts and early years organisation. For hundreds of free, practical resources for working creatively with babies and young children, head to www.starcatchers.org.uk

Thank you for reading.
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if you have any
comments or would
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about anything in this
newsletter.



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