

SNAPSHOT FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY SURVEY OF THE SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE SECTOR

AUTUMN 2021



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BACKGROUND

Throughout the pandemic the Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) has conducted a number of financial sustainability surveys to understand how the sector is faring.

This survey was conducted in August/September 2021 and follows on from a Financial sustainability health check of the childcare sector in Scotland conducted by the Scottish Government earlier in the summer:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/financial-sustainability-health-check-childcare-sector-scotland/>

In the Scottish Government report it was highlighted that, “the largest decline in self-reported sustainability has been for school age childcare (SAC) only services. SAC only services and childminding services that are not delivering funded ELC were most likely to have considerable concerns over their current sustainability.” (p4, 2021)

Our survey findings also support this.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was only available for completion online (hosted by freeonlinesurveys.com) from the end of August to the end of September 2021. The survey was promoted to SOSCN members through direct email newsletters and social media posts.

RESPONSES

In total, 56 responses were received and as some of the businesses/organisations were multi-site services this totalled 107 separately registered out of school care sites, 14% of all main service school age childcare (according to pre-pandemic figures).

Responses were received from 22 Scottish local authority areas, with 55% in the voluntary/third sector and 34% in the private/independent sector.

Three quarters of responses were from businesses operating only one site. 3 responses were from organisations operating 7 or more sites, one of which operates 20.

KEY FINDINGS

- Prior to March 2020 88% of services said their income covered expenditure, however, compared to now, only 14% of services said their income currently covers costs- a drop of 74%.
- Overall, services reported an average 38% drop in children registered, although for some services this was higher.
- Two thirds of services indicated that the number of spaces filled now was circa 60% or less compared to pre-pandemic.
- Pre-pandemic, 70% of services said they had been able to create reserves and of this figure, 45% reported they now had none left and a further 6% had less than 50% remaining.
- Without additional financial help just over a fifth of services indicated they could survive indefinitely.
- Just under half of respondents believe that their service(s) will have to close down completely, or begin the process of doing so by the end of this year
- Workforce challenges with recruitment and retention of staff is an ongoing issue and can prevent offering enough places for financial sustainability
- While services welcome future plans to expand wraparound school age childcare, some warn we need to conserve the existing sector in order to build on this commitment

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Full detailed results can be found in the appendices, following is a summary of the main points.

Pre-March 2020 numbers of children registered

From 44 responses (79% of overall total) equating to 67 sites (63% of overall total), a total of 6,013 children were registered with services. The number range of children was from 29 (1 site service) – 1,500 (for a multi-site service.)

Pre-March 2020 numbers of families registered

These same responses showed a total of 4,890 families were registered with services. The number range of families was from 23 (1 site service) to 1,200 (for a multi-site service.)

Number of children currently registered

Of these same services, 3,755 children are now currently registered with them. The number range of children was from 0 (1 site service which has not been able to re-open) to 630 (for a multi-site service.)

Between March 2020 and now, this is an overall decrease of 2,258 children registered with services: a 38% decrease. For one large multi-site service this is a loss of 870 children: a 58% reduction.

Number of families currently registered

Of these same services, 3007 families are now registered with them. The number range of families was from 0 (1 site service which has not been able to re-open) to 504 (for a multi-site service.)

Between March 2020 and now, this is an overall decrease of 1,883 families: a 39% decrease. For the largest multi-site service this is a loss of 696 families: a 58% reduction.

Current % of filled places compared to pre-March 2020 levels

Only 7% of services said they were close to 100% capacity, however more significantly, two thirds (66%) indicated that they were circa 60% of previous capacity or lower.

- *“We are close to 80% of the pre-pandemic levels but I have taken the decision to reduce our capacity to 56 instead of 70 so that we will only be 1 bubble if we move back into level 0. We have a large waiting list Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.”*
- *“We are running at 67% of what we were running at Feb 2020 (and we were already running at below usual numbers).”*
- *“We have not opened as only around 30% required service 1-2 days per week.”*
- *“It would be around 35% as pre-March 2020 90% of the places were full-time i.e. 5days per week with holiday cover, now we have more children who are only here for part of the week.”*

Income and costs

Prior to March 2020, 88% of services said their income did cover costs.

- *“Term time costs were just about covered. We ran at a loss during the summer but had a cushion of reserve funds. We were also about to increase the fees.”*
- *“We rely on a grant from the local authority of about 25% of our costs.”*

However, if we compare that to current levels, only 14% of services said that currently their income covers costs; 73% of services said that current income doesn't cover costs which is decrease of 74%.

We asked about the reasons behind this reduction in sustainability: 75% said it was due to reduced numbers of children attending (and therefore reduced income through fees) which was caused either by parents/carers continuing to work from home (62%) or being made redundant (48%). In addition to the drop in income, costs have increased, mostly around staffing (46%), cleaning (42%) and also general consumables (23%). 11% of services also reported increases in lets/rents.

- *“Council budgets slashed so children's SDS packages cut.”*
- *“We were also not open long enough this year to build up enough advance income to cover the high costs (particularly wages) of the summer holidays.”*
- *“Children registered and using service but not at the same level as before - reduced days - previously it would have been full time (5 days a week) but now its 2/3 days. Also breakfast club attendance has dropped as parents are dropping children off due to working from home.”*

45% of services said they thought the end of the Job Retention Scheme would have an impact on their service.

- *“It has been a great safety net for us although we stopped using it at the end of June 2021.”*
- *“Yes Definitely: Currently running at a 3k loss per month (with furlough). This will increase to 6k when the furlough ends.”*
- *“We will run at a loss every month; however, we have a large amount of money in reserve at the moment. Which we can use.”*
- *“More loss we do not break even with the scheme.”*
- *“Currently we are trying to build our service back up. to do this we need staff in place to be able to take the children in so having staff on furlough helps us to do this. The challenge we have is if we make staff redundant will be able to recruit the quality and number of staff as the numbers of children start to increase as it is really difficult to get staff to work in the out of school sector due to the limited hours available. So currently we have more staff than we need but we will not be able to cover these costs for long.”*

FINANCIAL RESERVES

Pre-pandemic, 70% of services said that they were able to build up financial reserves, and 21% said they weren't able to.

- *"A small amount."*
- *"We had about £2,000 in our contingency fund."*
- *"Not usually as we normally lose money during the holidays."*

Of those services which had financial reserves 45% now said they had none left, with a further 6% saying they had less than 50% remaining. Furthermore, 16% of services said they were currently in debt and this ranged from £4,000 to £75,000.

ONGOING SUSTAINABILITY

Without additional financial support and current levels of income/costs, a third of services said they would have to make staff redundancies or close down completely.

- *"We may need to close during school holidays as opening all day is draining our finances; we may need to reduce the schools we collect from."*
- *"We are looking to merge some clubs and reduce staff to the equivalent of a 4-day week we are unsure if this will be enough, but it will be a start."*
- *"I am personally subsidising the business but can't continue to do this long term."*
- *"Already closed 1 site."*
- *"We can manage on current levels of income, but I want to increase staff wages and we are spending quite a lot of money on visiting tutors and possibly might have to pay for additional space as we have lost access to space in the school due to council wanting to use our main space for citywide music sessions."*

Many services (38%) said that they could survive 6-12 months, a fifth thought they could survive indefinitely but just over a quarter (27%) thought they would survive less than 6 months.

To support services through this time 80% said that additional grant funding would help, nearly half said that sponsored paid-for places would be of use and 39% said free lets would also benefit.

We also asked services where they saw themselves in 4 months' time (at the end of this year) if the situation continued as present and without additional financial help: just under half of respondents believed their service(s) will have to close down completely, or begin the process of doing so, by the end of this year.

We grouped the results to the above question into three "traffic light" categories: green for the service(s) that can keep going, amber for maybe, but with concerns, and red for closing/winding down or similar situations. Out of 57 comments, 25 came into the "Red" closing or similar category, 16 in the "Amber" category and 16 in the "Green" category.

For full comments, please see appendix.

“Stressed and worried” comments were about the personal strain on managers, but also on other staff and children. There was a plea for more understanding of the work of planning, finances, dealing with outbreaks, lockdowns, and vastly increased workloads; administrative and extra cleaning, dealing with guidance and then new regulations coming in on top of all of this. There are anxieties about long term changes in terms of parents continuing to work from home, as well as colleges and universities remaining online for students.

The services which are “Just ticking over” know they are vulnerable if they lose more families, or close, through Covid health measures, or reduce further places. A few already have merged services, or not replaced staff who have left, and some mention premises costs as unsustainable. A suggestion was made that there should means tested grant support, like payments to student parents for childcare.

Services which need support right now are almost pleading, covering all the administration work without taking pay for it, putting their own money into keeping the service going, worrying about the vulnerable children and families in areas they serve, mentioning the many years their service has been there and strong relationships with families, and pleas to save these services for the future.

Those services that are still “Doing OK” are in areas of continued high demand, stayed open throughout as a key worker hub and may have their own premises. Those who are doing best had good reserves in place which they are still able to draw on.

While there is positive support for the new government commitments to build a system of wrap around school age childcare for the future, there are several warnings that the current sector needs to be included, there will be challenges for staff recruitment and retention in any expansion, and that services need to still exist in order to build up to this commitment.

Out of 45 comments considered here, the main themes emerging were those of being “stressed and worried” (10), “only just ticking over” (9), the future of school age childcare (6), “needing support right now” (6), further workforce challenges (5), or “Doing OK” (5), with the pandemic still affecting both every day and longer-term concerns (2).

Some comments fit across all those themes – there is continuing disruption due to staff isolating, and a lot of stress and worry with daily coping with health measures for the pandemic, as well as fears for the future.

- *“Can’t continue to run with such low attendance It has just been all too much. It is now becoming exhausting and non- enjoyable. Children and staff just want normality back and for the cleaning not to over weigh the fun in the settings. Just too much now.”*
- *“We are already eating into our reserves which are in place in case the service has to close. This means that if we do have to close in 6 months, we won’t have the money to pay staff redundancy pay. This is such a stressful situation for managers. I feel the weight of the business on my shoulders right now.”*

In terms of workforce challenges the issues were mainly recruitment and retention but also with an eye on the future:

- *“The future of out of school care is uncertain, whilst we talk about possibly having to consider reducing hours or redundancies. If the situation was to change and demand for places increased we would struggle to replace any staff we lose as recruitment of staff with the right qualifications , or experience wanting to work afternoons in out of school care is low as staff are looking for more hours and it can take months to replace a member of staff and since the increase in nursery hours and the recruitment of staff for this has reduce the pool of staff even more. “*

Again in looking to the future:

- *“We are part of Scotland's economic infrastructure and needed for its economic recovery. Without help in the short-term though, we will not be around to provide essential childcare. Also, if the Government is looking to increase the provision before and after school, our sector will be a key provider of this - IF we are still here!”*

And pleas for support now for those struggling to keep going:

- *“We desperately need additional government funding to cover additional costs, reduced numbers of families using the service due to redundancies or clients working from home has had a massive impact on our bottom line.*
- *“The government need to help ...even making redundancies the payments to staff are almost the same as keeping them on when we don't need them if we don't get more kids or help, we will not get to January”*
- *“Please help we have spent 15 years building this and I have been there since day one for 6 months now I am doing 20+ hours a week admin etc for free as we would have had to close if I had charged.”*

For those who are doing OK reasons include:

- *“We ran as a key worker childcare hub during the first lockdown and were financially supported to do so by the council, so this is a big contributor to why our business remained financially stable throughout the pandemic.”*
- *“We just need to keep the numbers of children coming in as they are at present. There is a really high demand for the service as there is a lot of new house building going on in our area.”*

Full analysis and reporting of the responses to the questions can be found in the Appendix.

APPENDIX- IN-DEPTH RESULTS

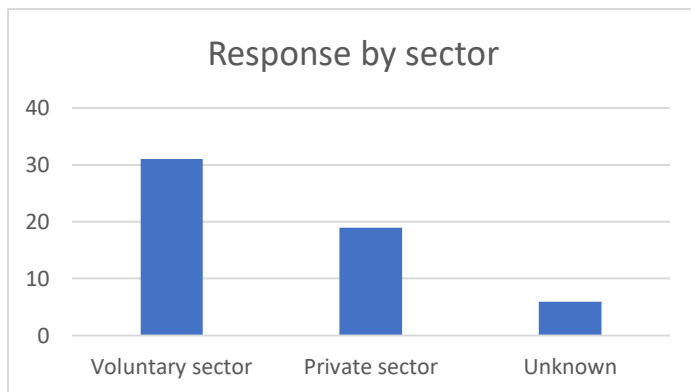
Total number of responses: 56 organisations

Total number of sites: 107

Total number of local authorities represented: 22 (Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen, Argyll & Bute, Angus, Dumfries & Galloway, Dundee, Edinburgh, East Dunbartonshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Glasgow, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth & Kinross, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and West Lothian)

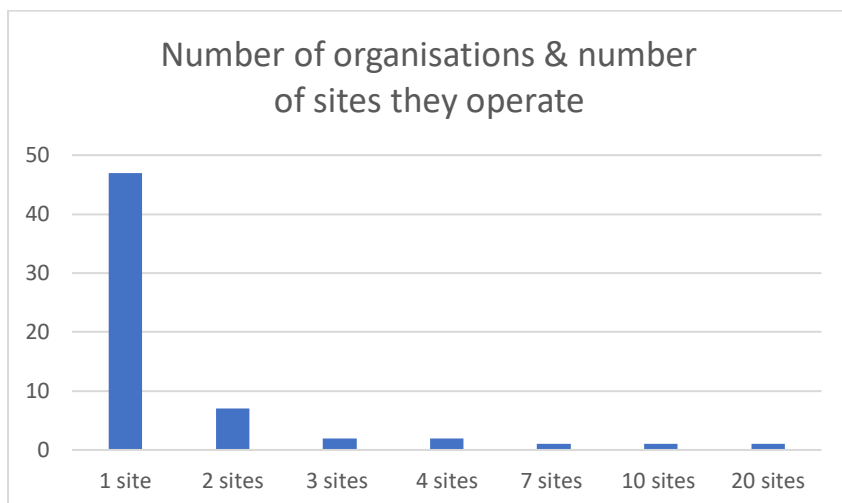
1. Service type

Voluntary sector	31 (55%)
Private sector	19 (34%)
Unknown	6 (11%)



2. How many sites do you operate?

1 site	47 organisations (75%)
2 sites	7 organisations (12%)
3 sites	2 organisations (4%)
4 sites	2 organisations (4%)
7 sites	1 organisations (2%)
10 sites	1 organisation (2%)
20 sites	1 organisation (2%)



For the following questions, if you operate multiple sites, we are looking for the totals of all sites combined e.g. total number of children registered with your organisation.

3. Pre-March 2020 how many children were registered with your service?

From 44 responses (79% of overall total) equating to 67 sites (63% of overall total), a total of 6,013 children were registered with services. The number range of children was from 29 (1 site service) – 1,500 (for a multi-site service.)

4. Pre-March 2020 how many families were registered with your service?

These same responses showed a total of 4,890 families were registered with services. The number range of families was from 23 (1 site service) to 1,200 (for a multi-site service.)

5. How many children are currently registered with your service?

Of these same services, 3,755 children are now currently registered with them. The number range of children was from 0 (1 site service which has not been able to re-open) to 630 (for a multi-site service.)

Between March 2020 and now, this is an overall decrease of 2,258 children: a 38% decrease. For one large multi-site service this is a loss of 870 children: a 58% reduction.

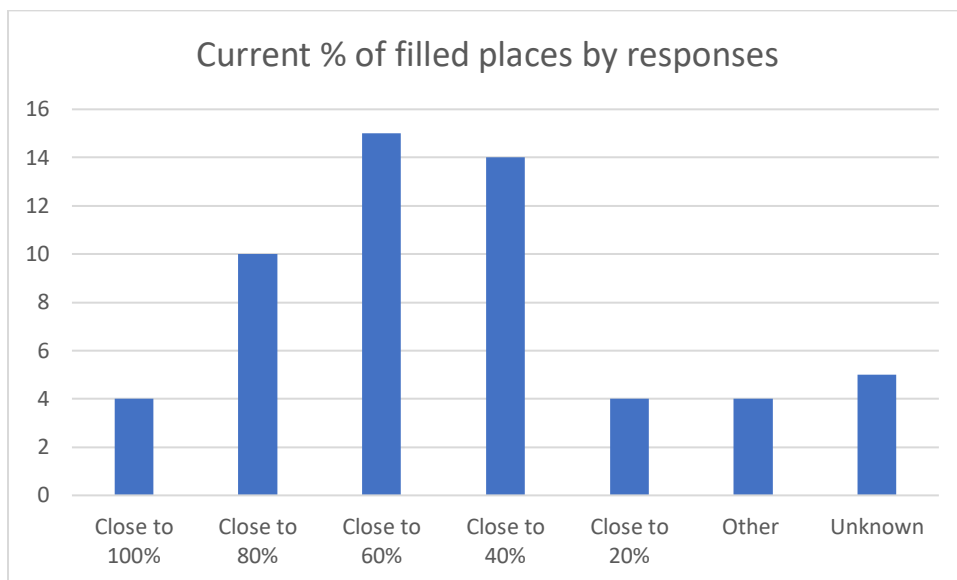
6. How many families are currently registered with your service?

Of these same services, 3,007 families are now registered with them. The number range of families was from 0 (1 site service which has not been able to re-open) to 504 (for a multi-site service.)

Between March 2020 and now, this is an overall decrease of 1,883 families: a 39% decrease. For the largest multi-site service this is a loss of 696 families: a 58% reduction.

7. What is the current % of filled places at your service compared to pre-March 2020 levels?

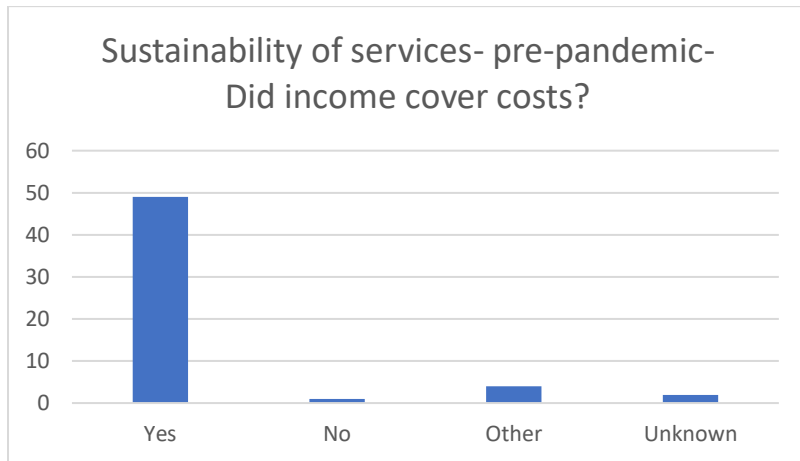
Close to 100%	4 (7%)
Close to 80%	10 (18%)
Close to 60%	15 (27%)
Close to 40%	14 (25%)
Close to 20%	4 (7%)
Other	4 (7%)
Unknown	5 (9%)



- *We are running at 67% of what we were running at Feb 2020 (and we were already running at below usual numbers).*
- *We have not opened as only around 30% required service 1-2 days per week*
- *It would be around 35% as pre-March 2020 90% of the places were full-time i.e. 5days per week with holiday cover, now we have more children who are only here for part of the week.*
- *We are close to 80% of the pre-pandemic levels but I have taken the decision to reduce our capacity to 56 instead of 70 so that we will only be 1 bubble if we move back into level 0. We have a large waiting list Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.*
- *100% with waiting lists.*

8. Before March 2020 did your income cover your costs?

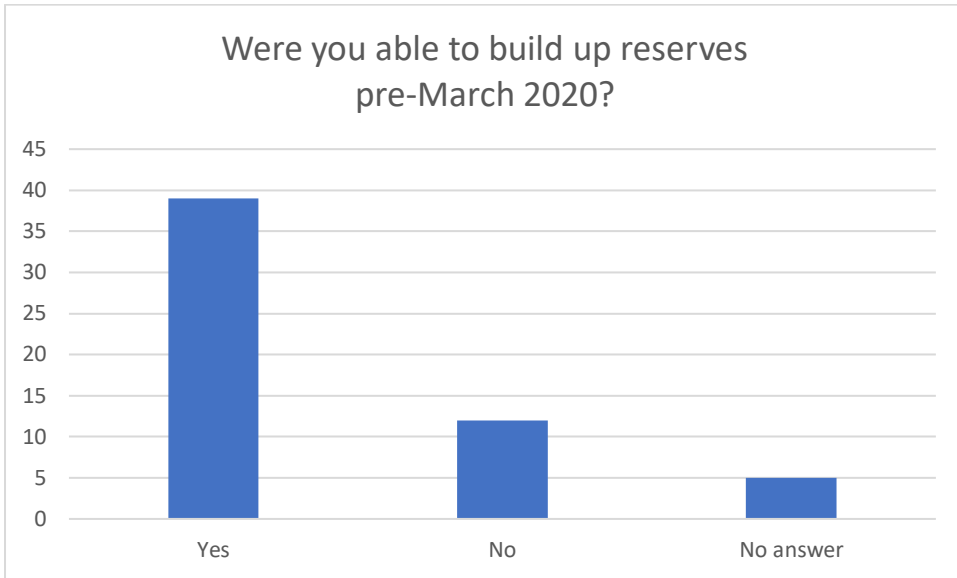
Yes	49 (88%)
No	1 (2%)
Other	4 (7%)
Unknown	2 (4%)



- *More or less.*
- *Term time costs were just about covered. We ran at a loss during the summer but had a cushion of reserve funds. We were also about to increase the fees.*
- *We rely on a grant from the local authority of about 25% of our costs.*

9. If you answered 'yes' to the above question, were you able to build-up reserves?

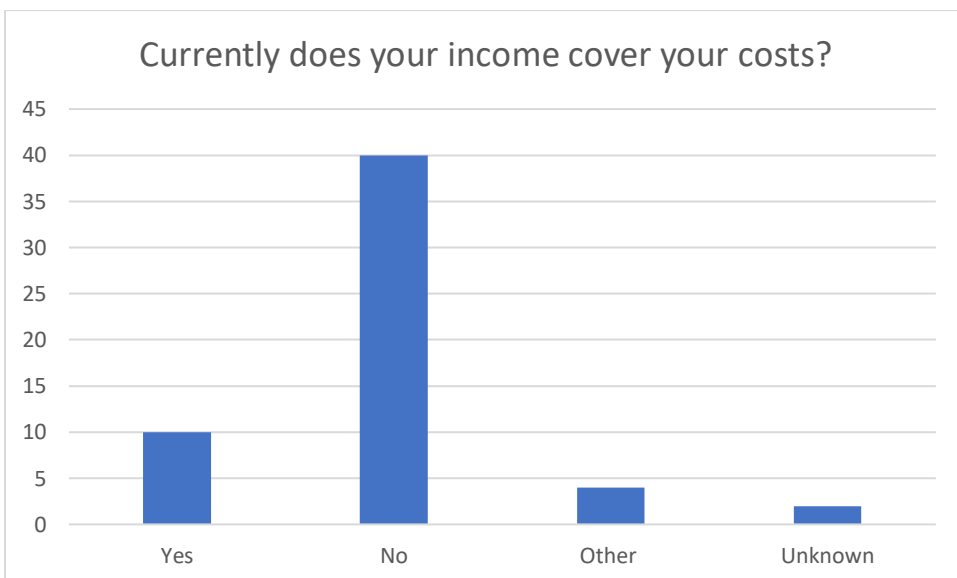
Yes	39 (70%)
No	12 (21%)
No answer	5 (10%)



- *A small amount.*
- *Not usually as we normally lose money during the holidays.*
- *We had about £2,000 in our contingency fund*

10. Currently does your income cover your costs?

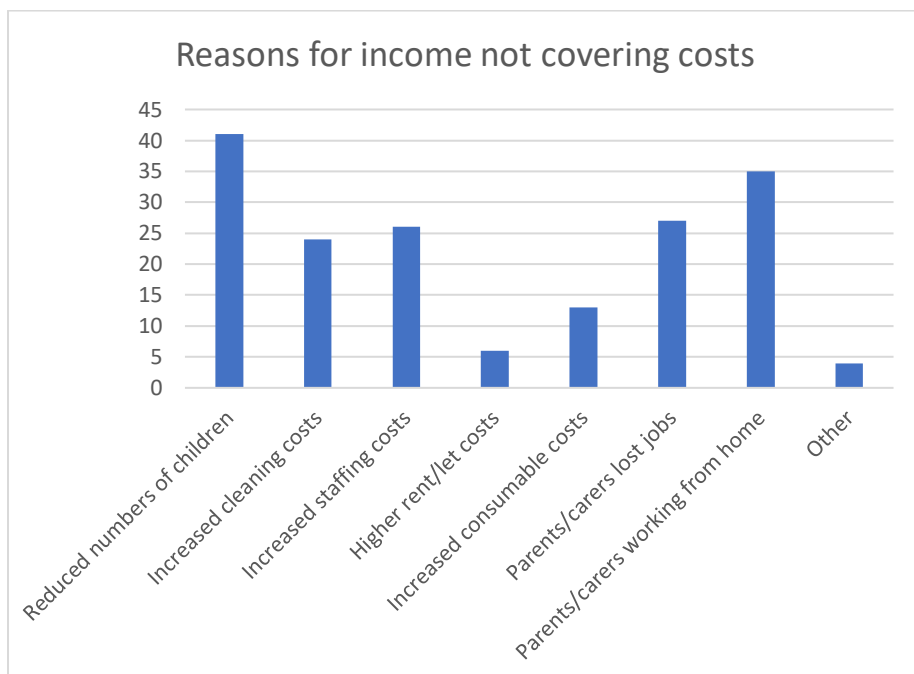
Yes	10 (14%)
No	40 (73%)
Other	4 (8%)
Unknown	2 (4%)



- *If we opened with current numbers, no.*
- *Due to a lot of parents/carers home working at the moment our spaces are not full, we are working at a bit of a loss.*

11. If income doesn't cover costs, why not? (Select all which apply)

Reduced numbers of children	41 (75%)
Increased cleaning costs	24 (42%)
Increased staffing costs	26 (46%)
Higher rent/let costs	6 (11%)
Increased consumable costs	13 (23%)
Parents/carers lost jobs	27 (48%)
Parents/carers working from home	35 (62%)
Other	4 (7%)

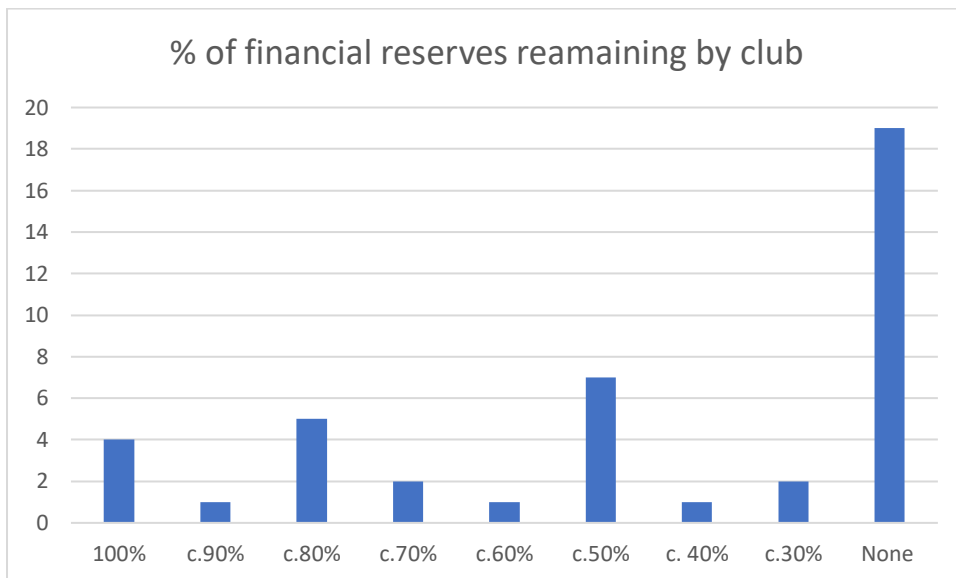


- *Council budgets slashed so children's SDS packages cut.*
- *We were also not open long enough this year to build up enough advance income to cover the high costs (particularly wages) of the summer holidays.*

- *Children registered and using service but not at the same level as before - reduced days - previously it would have been full time (5 days a week) but now its 2/3 days. Also breakfast club attendance has dropped as parents are dropping children off due to working from home.*

12. If you had financial reserves prior to March 2020, what percentage of this is left? If none, say none.

100%	4 (10%)	
c.90%	1 (2%)	
c.80%	5 (12%)	
c.70%	2 (5%)	
c.60%	1 (2%)	
c.50%	7 (17%)	
c. 40%	1 (2%)	
c.30%	2	(4%)
None	19 (45%)	



- *In March 2021 we had roughly the same in reserve. Currently we have roughly double that as our expenses are lower due to soft plays etc being closed.*
- *Full reserves are still available but we might require to start to use these if our numbers continue to drop.*

13. Is your service currently in debt?

Yes 9 (16%)

No 47 (84%)

If currently in debt, please specify the amount:

- £15,000
- £16,000
- £14,750- bounce back loan
- £16,000
- £4,000
- £75,000
- £26,000 to the local authority for lets and office rent
- £50,000
- £18,000 bounce back loan

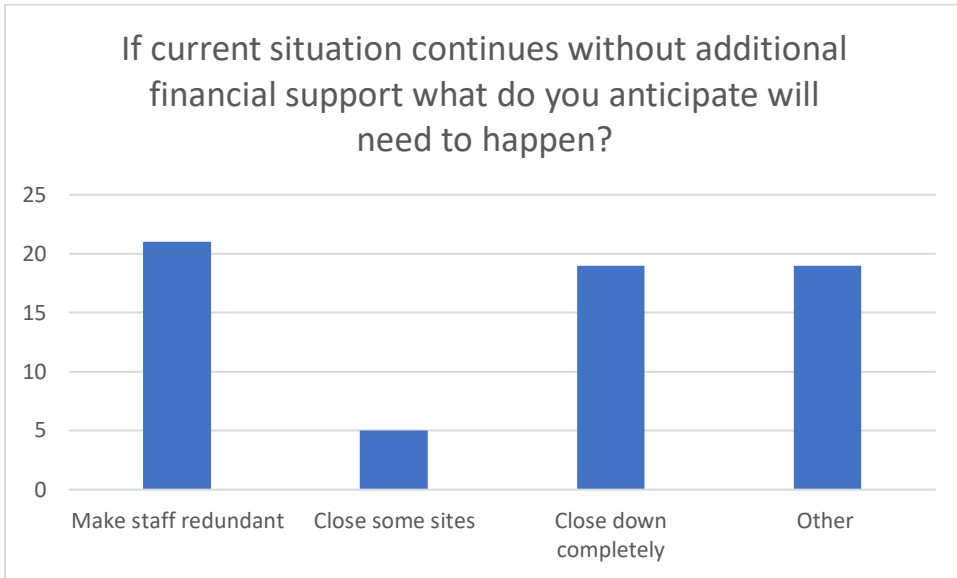
14. If the current situation continues without additional financial support, what do you anticipate will need to happen? (Please select all which apply)

Make staff redundant 21 (37%)

Close some sites 5 (9%)

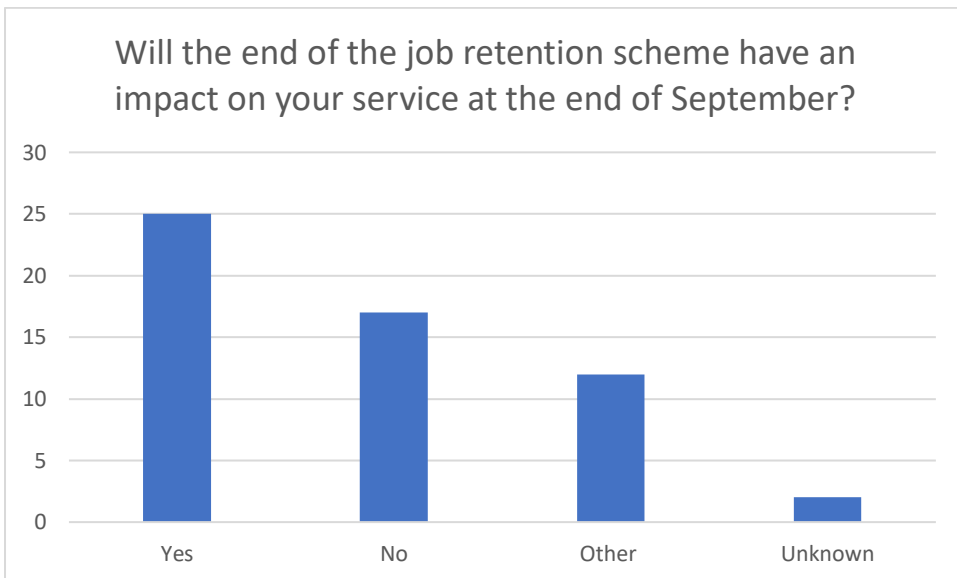
Close down completely 19 (34%)

Other 19 (34%)



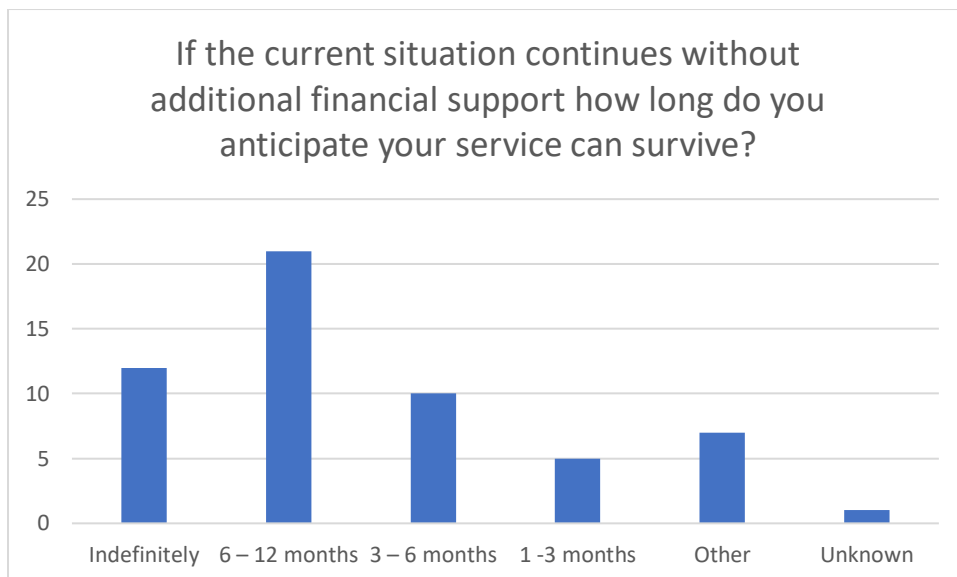
15. Will the end of the job retention scheme have an impact on your service at the end of September? If 'yes', please use the other column to give more details if you wish.

Yes	25 (45%)
No	17 (30%)
Other	12 (21%)
Unknown	2 (4%)



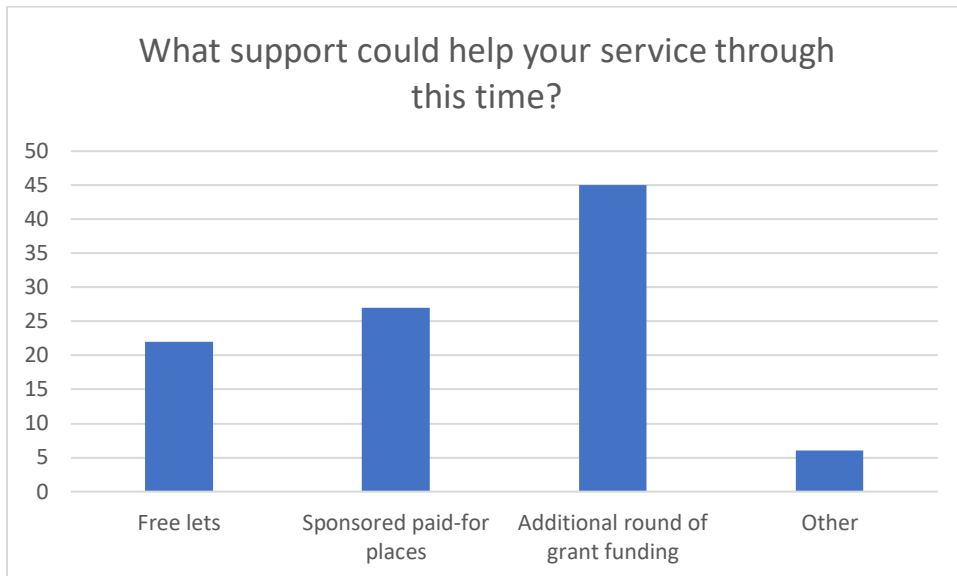
16. If the current situation continues without additional financial support how long do you anticipate your service can survive?

Indefinitely	12 (21%)
6 – 12 months	21 (38%)
3 – 6 months	10 (18%)
1 -3 months	5 (9%)
Other	7 (12%)
Unknown	1 (2%)



17. What support could help your service through this time? Choose all that apply.

Free lets	22 (39%)
Sponsored paid-for places	27 (48%)
Additional round of grant funding	45 (80%)
Other	6 (11%)



Red – closing or winding down

1. Breaking point
2. Redundancies for staff, which would mean taking fewer children to fit Ratios. SO would not work.
3. Struggling to survive
4. Using up all reserves by April.
5. in a very difficult situation
6. In critical condition with the threat of closure
7. Out of business
8. Staff redundancy, possible closure
9. Closed indefinitely
10. Closed
11. close to closing
12. We may still be operational but if nothing changes by the start of the year, we could be winding down our business
13. giving closure notices to parents and looking at redundancy packages
14. Probably with minimal reserves and no staff as they want job security!
15. Heading for closure unless parents return to work and numbers rise.
16. With no reserves

17. Staying closed
18. We will definitely have to consider closing the service if numbers don't improve. We had to move to new premises as the pandemic hit, increasing our capacity but our rent increased my 5 times. We are now paying extortionate rent with not enough children.
19. Closing
20. In debt
21. Struggling
22. Looking to close and refer families to other services if any in the area (mainly nursery services with add on after school facility)
23. Closed
24. potentially closed
25. Closed

Amber – still open but with concerns

1. We will struggle to maintain levels of service.
2. Reducing staff
3. reduced staff and reduces schools we service
4. We will continue to try to adapt and thrive. We are currently applying for additional funding's to ensure our service delivery is unchanged. However, the fear of staff absences, outbreaks and lockdowns make it difficult to plan financially and the stress of the uncertain future, in addition to the added work duties, makes working life a very anxious one at times. Difficult for people to imagine the scale of change, increase in stress, duties. At least furlough offered an assurance that you could continue to pay staff and afford to start others.
5. Unfortunately, we would have to start by making staff redundant or worse possible scenario we close all 3 services.
6. We will be able to continue to 2022. However, with the current Covid spike our numbers are fluctuating wildly and so is our income
7. Better than it is now.
8. Less staff, reduced hours
9. We will still be providing the same service, the worry is if schools close again, we are lucky to have a building we own but the 2nd service will lose in line with schools as it's housed there.
10. We will have to look at reducing staff hours or redundancies
11. Not sure

12. reduced service and staff on 4-day week
13. We are currently trying to restructure the service/staffing but the reduction in staff hours will have an impact on both the number of children we would be able to care for and the quality of the service as a whole
14. Hopefully on the road to being financially stable again.
15. Still operational but may need to lose staff
16. We will struggle to maintain levels of service.

Green – Services confident they will still be a going concern in 4 months' time:

1. No change to our service within that timescale.
2. Continuing to recover - hopefully able to increase numbers
3. still sustainable still operating normally
4. Still operating
5. We should be ok unless we lose more children. There may be an option to move into one of the schools we collect from. The service there is no longer operating. We have not really looked into it yet.
6. open
7. still going
8. If we retain more families, we should struggle through. Everyone is in the same boat, no one knows what is going to happen - we have seen a slight increase in families looking for care, hopefully this will continue.
9. Less reserves but still operational
10. we should be ok in that timescale - our issues will be in July/August 2022 when we have to have enough money in reserves to pay wages and rent during our closed time.
11. Using our reserves
12. We'd be doing ok, I think
13. Continuing to operate
14. We would continue to operate
15. We would hope to still be ok, but our reserves may be dried up
16. Indefinitely, holding an AGM and will put fees up from 10.50 to 11

Additional Comments:

Stressed and Worried (10)

1. "Can't continue to run with such low attendance It has just been all too much. It is now becoming exhausting and non- enjoyable. Children and staff just want normality back and for the cleaning not to over weigh the fun in the settings. Just too much now."
2. "We are already eating into our reserves which are in place in case the service has to close. This means that if we do have to close in 6 months, we won't have the money to pay staff redundancy pay. This is such a stressful situation for managers. I feel the weight of the business on my shoulders right now."
3. "However, the fear of staff absences, outbreaks and lockdowns make it difficult to plan financially and the stress of the uncertain future, in addition to the added work duties, makes working life a very anxious one at times. "
4. "Difficult for people to imagine the scale of change, increase in stress, duties. At least furlough offered an assurance that you could continue to pay staff and afford to start others"
5. "With increased rent, more paperwork and administration, people looking for secure jobs and people getting overworked and stressed, the future does not look very promising. The local councils are not helping and despite being a key service in the community, we are always and consistently overlooked and not communicated with, it is frustrating and soul destroying."
6. "This is a really worrying time for (our) Out of School built up a very good relationship with parents and children over this time, it would be heart breaking to have to close due to the situation we are in at the moment. Since returning back in August we have an average between 2 and 11 children per day, pre covid we had between 20-40 kids per day, so you can see the huge impact the low numbers have on our services. The job retention scheme has been a great help but after this finishes, we are worried the number of children don't pick up and we have to make staff redundant or potentially close our services if we don't get any help financially."
7. "Never mind the health concerns and mixed messaging coming from government regarding our safety in work. Additionally, and perhaps randomly. I think it's incredibly unfair to impose or implement changed and increased regulations at this time. It is easy to see the organisations that have been working from home during this time, developing new ideas, with very little consideration or practicable knowledge of the pressures still on services now. Regulation should be high around our service- however, does the care inspectorate really appreciate what we're all still coping with in regard to practically delivering a safe service? I'm sure there is more that they could offer in terms of support and information. Our services have had to learn and constantly adapt throughout this last year at an epic speed. we need more empathy and less boxes to tick!"
8. "In over 25 years supporting the poorest areas, we would be sad if we had to close our Drumchapel services. We would be hitting the most vulnerable and limiting this community the opportunity to take up employment/further education and make a difference, not only financially but whole ethos of being a working family and the role model this brings for these family's children."
9. It is worrying that you hear on the media that Businesses are considering having staff continue to work from home as output seems to be either the same or better?
10. Parents continuing to work from home and college/university being online has had a huge impact on the number of children no longer needing 5 days of after school care, we are currently at the bare

minimum of places filled in the short term, we will run at a loss during the school holidays and unfortunately the financial impact of this will have an effect on whether we remain open or not in January 2022.

Just about ticking over... (9)

1. "I am cautiously optimistic that things will improve for us. Families still need childcare but as previously stated the school holidays are draining us financially. There is not enough money coming in at the moment to contribute to the higher cost of running the service over the holidays."
2. "Our main issue is lack of demand compared to pre Covid levels especially for holiday clubs which means paying staff wages with no income. We have increased fees to try and build up some reserves."
"
3. "We are taking a responsive approach and trying to plan responsibly despite the uncertainty ahead. Will redundancies affect our numbers? Will more not require service due to working from home?"
4. "Our service has three settings - one of which we already subsidise. If things continue to improve it will be fine, but if we were to face closures again, I'm not so sure we could sustain the service."
5. A lot depends on what happens with the pandemic. If the service had to close for 10 days because staff were ill/ self-isolating etc, we could suddenly go from having a comfortable contingency to little or no contingency. It's the uncertainty that is the problem. Also, we need to buy a new minibus just now so that will have an effect on our reserves.
6. There is the demand for the service, but staff costs and rent are crippling for a private business
7. I am doing my best to keep the service going the support from the government was fantastic and really helped me and the return of college and university is allowing me to keep going for the moment, the biggest percentage of children's parents are studying this will help us until June 22 after that if parents have not returned to work I don't think I could keep the service running with the small amount of working families I do have.
8. Have merged 2 services lost 2 members of staff did not replace 2 staff members that left.
9. we need to build up our families attending out of school care.

Future of School Age Childcare (6)

1. "It is great to see such positive moves from the Scot Gov over the next 2 years for the OSC sector. Please ensure that the existing sector is there to provide this with all its experience in providing quality care provision. For all these wonderful plans going forward, please put safeguards in place to ensure that existing provision is not wiped out through unintended consequences and lack of collaborative support via LAs (e.g., XX Council where collaborative work with the OSC is non-existent)"
2. "Scot Gov need to do something to subsidise services so the quality services that have developed over the last few years are still operational when they realise their commitment to providing SAC for all children"
3. "Roll out of government childcare for school age children needs to include our sectors and not just local authority to ensure our survival"

4. "It's worrying for everyone right now with Covid effects. However, with the current manifesto pledge regarding out of school care, I fear without immediate support there will be no services left to actually provide this government commitment long term. And if existing third sector organisations close due to the costs and time required to set up OSC services. It will become a private sector only field as only businesses with collateral and financial backing will be in a position to open, expand and grow. Either that or it will be placed entirely on the LA and I'm not sure they have capacity for such a feat!"
5. "We are part of Scotland's economic infrastructure and needed for its economic recovery. Without help in the short-term though, we will not be around to provide essential childcare. Also, if the Government is looking to increase the provision before and after school, our sector will be a key provider of this - IF we are still here!"

Need for support now (6)

1. "We desperately need additional government funding to cover additional costs, reduced numbers of families using the service due to redundancies or clients working from home has had a massive impact on our bottom line.
2. "The government need to help ...even making redundancies the payments to staff are almost the same as keeping them on when we don't need them if we don't get more kids or help, we will not get to January"
3. "Third sector is always a stormy ride be good not to always be worrying where next pot of grants funding comes from..."
4. "Please help we have spent 15 years building this and I have been there since day one for 6 months now I am doing 20+ hours a week admin etc for free as we would have had to close if I had charged."
5. "We have introduced a retainer fee which goes against our wishes. We are also taking on contract work from the Council which is more about family support but again it's to keep the company afloat. We need to be able to access a fund that can support both parents and us together a bit like the college and university childcare fund which is means tested and they pay for what is needed for the family to improve their live chances it's not just a handout."
6. we are having to pay out for training for staff, so any help with training costs might also be beneficial for our service. IE First Aid, Infection Control, Fire Safety, Child Protection, Food and Hygiene

Workforce challenges, there are additional comments in Q17 and Q 18 on this (5)

1. "We are currently finding it difficult to recruit new staff to fill upcoming vacancies. This means we cannot take on new children and is contributing to our reduced income."
2. "Not only on the funding front, but the staff who gain qualifications are then poached by local authorities who continue to use our sectors staff on salaries and pensions we cannot compete with. discussion on the long-term effects of this trend would be welcomed."
3. "Recruitment of staff is a big issue."
4. "Staffing is the current challenge with a shortage of applicants."
5. We can manage on current levels of income, but I want to increase staff wages and we are spending quite a lot of money on visiting tutors and possibly might have to pay for additional space as we have

lost access to space in the school due to DCC wanting to use our main space for citywide music sessions.

Doing OK now (5)

1. We are receiving more requests as another local Out of School Care has closed, not due to covid but they have extended their nursery provision.
2. We have a free let and are open to all local primaries due to lack of provision in the area. As long as we are able to provide a blended placement, we will hopefully be able to continue to provide our service.
3. We ran as a key worker childcare hub during the first lockdown and were financially supported to do so by the council, so this is a big contributor to why our business remained financially stable throughout the pandemic.
4. Although lots of parents have signed up to services for this year, many are now dropping out of morning club and some afternoons, but we have a lot of new P1s looking for extended (till 6pm) places so they are taking up any available spaces.
5. We just need to keep the numbers of children coming in as they are at present. There is a really high demand for the service as there is a lot of new house building going on in our area.

Continued impact of Covid (2)

1. "Children & staff isolating or attending with members of family with Covid is impacting - higher transmission"
2. "During the lockdown we accessed job retention scheme, Transitional support, small business support grant and service interruption grant which has given us a cushion. Covid numbers are currently rising in all classes in the school and parents are keeping children off After School Care. We saw a rise at the end of last week 10th September, but it is quite erratic."

SNAPSHOT FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY SURVEY OF THE SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE SECTOR

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