

Membership Survey Summer 2022

August 2022

1. Background

SOSCN first undertook a recruitment and retention survey in 2019 as well as various financial sustainability surveys throughout the COVID 19 pandemic; with ongoing workforce recruitment and retention issues, and longer-term sector financial sustainability concerns, we decided to undertake a survey to gain current knowledge about these issues. We additionally asked services about the work of SOSCN in terms of our support to, and representation of, school age childcare services. (Past surveys: <https://soscn.org/policy/research>)

2. Methodology

The survey was open for 5 weeks from the start of June and could be completed online via freeonlinesurveys.com, all membership services were additionally provided with hardcopies of the survey which could either be scanned and returned by email or returned via post. Any completed surveys received by post or email were then inputted into the online system.

3. Overview

84 responses were received, which equates to 84 organisations operating a total of 152 school age childcare services; this approximately represents 15% of all OSC services in Scotland. Responses were received from services based in 25 different Scottish local authorities.

52 (62%) were voluntary sector organisations, 26 (31%) private, 1 (1%) was public, and 5 (6%) were unknown. 8 (10%) organisations were also registered providers of funded ELC places.

Services were appreciative of the support and information SOSCN provides, in particular during the pandemic. Some services said that that SOSCN is a necessary voice in representing the interests and needs of the school age childcare sector in Scotland.

14% of workers had full-time jobs in school age childcare, and overall, 50% of staff have to work split shifts which can create difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, as they are not necessarily desirable work patterns.

Nearly two-thirds of the workforce were reported as having the appropriate qualification with an even split of the remainder either in the process of undertaking a qualification or yet to start it.

70% of organisations reported staff losses within the past 6 months. For single service OSC the losses were mostly between 1 and 4, although one said that it had lost 10 members of staff. A small number of services reported losing between 4 and 8 members of staff but these were mostly multi-service organisations.

The most common reason for the staff losses was the individual 'getting another job' (75%), however, nearly a quarter (23%) related to 'personal reasons', 'moving away' (18%) or 'going

to college/university' (17%). The most common reasons for seeking a different job were 'more hours' (47%) and 'better pay' (22%).

Although there was a variety of jobs that people had moved into, the most common one was a job in an ELC setting (29%), followed by adult care (8%) or working in a job which related to the staff member's (non-childcare) qualification (8%).

63% of services said they had difficulty recruiting staff; 74% said they had difficulty recruiting appropriately qualified staff and 37% said that it takes them longer than 3 months to recruit staff. 80% said they had difficulty recruiting practitioners and 26% said they have difficulty recruiting Lead Practitioners.

Recruitment difficulties have a knock-on effect in terms of the delivery of the childcare- 44% said they are having to work on reduced capacity because they cannot deliver all the registered places; 42% said staff are having to work extra paid hours; 40% are unable to expand the service, and 39% said staff have been unable to take leave. In terms of impact on the overall service, staff morale was seen to be the biggest concern (27%).

In terms of access to qualifications and financial support, responses varied: the majority of services said that they were able to access training and some financial support. Some specifically mentioned SAAS as funding qualifications; some talked of funding through local authorities, and some highlighted that it was the service which funded all training and qualifications.

22% of services said they were running between 80 and 100% capacity (4% said they were running at 100% capacity), and 18% said they were running at less than 50% capacity; that said, 32% said that they were deliberately running below their registered capacity due to staffing or financial shortages. For those services which were running close to capacity, some highlighted that they had a waiting list and would like to expand but the main barriers to doing so were staffing shortages or a lack of suitable premises.

70% of services said that they had experienced a recent increase in families registering with them but this did vary from 'a little' to 'a lot'. Furthermore, some services pointed out that they would be losing children at the end of P7, so depending on the number of new P1s, their overall numbers might remain static or potentially drop again.

In terms of demand for holiday services, there was a very mixed response regards capacity- some services said they were potentially going to be busier than ever, others said that they were reaching pre-pandemic levels whilst others said that they anticipated that they would struggle to get sufficient numbers: 32% said they thought they would be running at less than 50% capacity.

58% of services said that they were currently covering costs. 63% said they didn't have debts as a result of COVID restriction but even although some services hadn't got into debt during the pandemic, in order to survive they had to use possibly all of their financial reserves. 21% said they had debts relating to the pandemic which ranged from £7,000 up to £70,000, and 3

services indicated they had taken out Bounce Back Loans. 49% of services said that they weren't currently able to build up financial reserves.

In terms of the top 3 biggest financial expenses that services face, nearly every organisation said 'staffing', followed by 'premises costs' and then 'utilities' or 'provision of activities'. A few services mentioned 'tax obligations'. The majority of services (38%) said they were quite positive about future long-term sustainability although 16% were either quite or very concerned about it.

4. Results

4.1. About SOSCN

4.1.1 We need a national organisation like SOSCN to campaign for us:

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Strongly agree	77	92%
Agree	7	8%
Neutral	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

4.1.2 We need the information and advice which SOSCN provides:

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Strongly agree	75	89%
Agree	9	11%
Neutral	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

4.1.3 We appreciate the support and networking which SOSCN provides:

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Strongly agree	73	87%
Agree	10	12%
Neutral	1	1%
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

4.1.4 Our children and families have benefitted from the support SOSCN provides to school age childcare services (indirectly):

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Strongly agree	56	67%
Agree	21	25%
Neutral	7	8%

Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

4.1.5 Examples of how SOSCN helped a service directly or indirectly:

- *Always there to answer questions and give us updates.*
- *As a brand-new service and with a manager new to the field, SOSCN were, and are, my go to people. They helped me with information on how holiday clubs are run during school holidays, they passed on the name of the contact person from my Local Authority and gave me the number of the local area OSC delegate for out of school care. All of these things, and more, has benefitted me in my drive to ensure that the service we provide is the best that it can be for the children who attend and their families.*
- *During COVID filtering out the information that directly affected out of school care was such a big help and saved so much time.*
- *During pandemic gave us honest straightforward reliable practical information.*
- *During the pandemic the advice I got from SOSCN was invaluable. They linked all the out of school services to the latest COVID updates from the Scottish Government and waded through the pages on our behalf and highlighted and explained the relevant information. We also had excellent support following on from a Care Inspection and Irene, Andrew and Finlay all provided support which helped us through. We would not have been in the good place we are now without them.*
- *Events, advice, information and support. Representation on national bodies, asking us about our experiences to inform their work.*
- *I was having trouble finding the appropriate funding the service I work for could apply for. SOSCN helped direct me and I was successful in our application. SOSCN kept us informed and helped breakdown information that was coming through from the government which meant that I was informing the families at our service correctly about the constant changes in regulations and restrictions.*
- *In particular throughout the pandemic, SOSCN's summaries of the updated guidance was so helpful in telling us the main things we needed to know, which therefore allowed us to adapt and communicate with parents quickly.*
- *In the height of COVID, I would have been lost without SOSCN keeping us right with the forever changing guidance. Their continuous support for a sector which goes unnoticed most of the time is second to none and I know that since working in this sector I would have struggled without them!*
- *Information about Tax Free childcare as a lot of my parents were not aware of this.*
- *Information sent out by email has helped my company immensely, I received easy read guidance and information regarding funding and updated guidance.*

- *Lobbying for emergency COVID funding.*
- *Receiving regular updates via email allows me to easily share information with other staff members and service users ensuring we have the most up to date information on school age childcare.*
- *SOSCN gave advice about an insurance issue I was having and helped me to ask the right questions.*
- *SOSCN has provided support to our organisation for many years, having been members since its inception. We take part annually in "in person" training sessions, attend conferences and receive regular advice via the website and regular emails. The information and support SOSCN have provided during COVID restrictions has been invaluable.*
- *SOSCN have provided training for new managers, resource kits for outdoor play and have made a real contribution in terms of how OOSC is perceived and delivered within our local authority.*
- *SOSCN helped us directly by championing the need to consider the additional support and funding required for all out-of-school childcare but also raised the profile of out-of-school childcare specifically directed to support children with complex additional support and learning needs.*
- *The most recent help that we got was during the Pandemic was SOSCN kept us up to date. This was a life saver, our guidance changing very frequently (sometimes twice in one week) SOSCN updated us daily if required. SOSCN do a fantastic Quality Assurance Scheme that is wholly for the After School Care sector. We started it at the end of 2019 then the pandemic hit and we need SOSCN to ensure that the quality assurance scheme gets funded. SOSCN has the knowledge and when you e-mail them with a question or query, they get back to you right away with the answer. They fight and fight to ensure that our sector does not sink. Their social media is fantastic - always right up to date. If SOSCN don't get funding to continue to support us then our sector is finished.*
- *The support we receive gives us confidence to provide our services. Grants from the government over the last couple of years which SOSCN campaigned for helped with our recovery i.e. loss of income.*
- *Their campaigning for our Clubs to be helped financially I think definitely prevented us from closing 2 if not all 3 of our clubs.*
- *They have been an invaluable source of support during the pandemic, I was able to speak with the team directly and get advice and support which offered reassurance in what was a hugely unsettling time for the service. My staff have benefitted from face to face training in play and support children with additional support needs. I have benefitted from the networking events, knowing I was not a lone voice in issues impacting service provision again offers reassurance.*
- *They helped me navigate through the copious amount of guidance issued through COVID lock down, they also helped us navigate our way through the legal paperwork that followed*

and the policy documents, they were also a sounding board and expert advice on the other end of the phone at all times.

- *Throughout the pandemic I received support from SOSCN on an almost monthly basis. It is important to have organisations like SOSCN for a whole range of advice rates of pay, updated guidance, new initiatives etc*
- *We have been kept up to date with all government guidelines. SOSCN used virtual meetings and webinars to support our sector ie care inspectorate & business gateway*

4.1.6 Additional comments how the work of SOSCN and how we support the sector:

- *Brilliant service and we would be lost without it. They are the VOICE of our sector as without them there would be no one to advocate for us. The sector is not recognised for the good that it does and the benefits that it provides to families. We need a voice and we are glad that we have SOSCN.*
- *SOSCN are able to keep services up to date with new legislation and requirements, they are able to offer very welcome professional support and have an overview of what is happening across the country. Thank you for all your help.*
- *It's reassuring that the SOSCN understands the needs of service providers and they are vital in bridging information between governments and official services such as Care Inspectorate.*
- *The online information sessions provided by SOSCN over the past 3 years have been a lifeline and I know we have personally gained from them, not just for the content but for the opportunity to network and share ideas which in turn, helped us all through a very difficult time. I am looking forward to the SOSCN conference when we can once again network in person. I also use the SOSCN website at least once a week to help me with policy updating and to find out the latest updates from other organisations which have a direct impact on our sector. It is very reassuring to know that we have a national organisation looking out for us and promoting us at every opportunity.*
- *It is vital that such a fragile sector has high quality well-funded support and advocacy.*
- *Always on the other end of the phone or email for advice or to answer questions.*
- *SOSCN is always my first port of call for information regarding out of school care.*
- *SOSCN has been an excellent support to my establishment. An excellent service.*
- *SOSCN gives a voice to the many and varied out of school care organisations, both large and small. Without their advocacy, many organisations would be isolated within their own communities.*
- *Couldn't do without you, the only service of your kind so vitally important.*
- *Approachable, friendly and they are able to bring forward to Scot Gov pertinent issues that OSC are having working at the front line.*

- *We need this representation at strategic level to influence change and lobby the Scottish Government especially with the new reforms in childcare soon to be upon us. I fear without SOSCN we will become an unknown entity, you only have to look at the way local authority have conducted themselves with the Holiday fund money, any money that comes from Scottish Government will not find its way to Out of School cares if filtered through LA's. LA will devise a way of keeping it in house. As a non-statutory body I fear for our future if funding becomes available for school age child care. SOSCN is our voice.*
- *The training and updates SOSCN provide are excellent and when you have any queries or require support they are there to guide and help.*
- *I have been in childcare for 19 years and have used SOSCN throughout. They are at the end of the phone or an email and if they can't help you they will find someone who can.*
- *SOSCN as a new service that opened last August at the height of the pandemic the information from your website and social media pages have been over and above, all the information is displayed clearly.*
- *Thank you so much for all your support and work!*

5. Staffing & Recruitment

5.1.1 Overall, how many Lead Practitioners/Managers are employed in your service?

5.1.2 Overall, how many Practitioners are employed in your service?

5.1.3 Overall, how many Support Workers are employed in your service?

Response	Lead Practitioner	Practitioner	Support Worker
Total number	192	555	289
Overall % of workforce in 152 OSC services	19%	54%	28%

5.2 Overall, approximately how many staff work full time (35 hours)?

163, which equates to 14% of overall workforce (1199 people) in the 152 OSC services which completed this survey.

5.3.1 Are staff required to work split shifts?

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	42	50%
No	37	44%
Unknown	5	6%

5.3.2 Comments about split-shifts:

- *Only 3 staff work split shifts as with the introduction of free breakfast clubs in our schools we now only have 1 breakfast club. We have a morning shift and an afternoon shift.*
- *Most staff do the two shifts but we are flexible and accommodate staff who may only manage one shift per day (on occasion).*
- *Difficult to recruit to cover split shifts.*
- *It suits many people but uses up a full day for part time pay.*
- *We work with disabled adults as well in the evenings, so we cover day/evenings during school holidays.*
- *Our staff work weekends (2 shifts in a Sunday) and evening and shifts are further split over the school holiday periods when staff work day and evening shift*
- *Harder for the staff that live further away from the centre.*
- *At the moment I am not running a Breakfast Club as getting staff to work in After School is a nightmare and I have a nursery operating from the same building.*
- *Not desirable, many staff would like to work straight through.*
- *Split shifts can be required only where staffing issues arise.*
- *Voluntary not compulsory so staff volunteered to do early morning care (only suits staff who live local).*
- *Split shifts are worked during school holidays only.*

5.4.1 Overall, approximately what percentage of staff already have the appropriate qualification for their job?

5.4.2 Overall, approximately what percentage of staff are currently working towards the appropriate qualification for their job?

5.4.3 Overall, approximately what percentage of staff are yet to start the appropriate qualification for their job?

	Qualified	Working towards qualification	Yet to start qualification
Overall % from responses	65%	17%	16%

5.5 Overall, how many staff members have left in the past 6 months?

A total of 150 staff members have left from the 79 organisations which answered this question.

Number of staff who have left in past 6 months	Number of organisations	Percentage of organisations
0	24	30%
1	20	25%
2	11	14%
3	6	8%
4	9*	11%
5	6	8%
6	1	1%
8	1	1%
10	1	1%

*Apart from one organisation which reported a loss of 10 staff in their sole service, the maximum number of staff losses that single-service organisations reported was 4- a few multi-site services (with 2/3 sites) reported losses of 4 or less. Losses of between 4 & 8 were reported in multi-site organisations, one of which had 22 services.

5.6 Do you know why staff have left? If known, please select all reasons which apply (figures based upon the 60 organisations which have experienced loss of staff):

Response	Number of responses	% of responses
Got another job	44	73%
Retired	5	8%
Illness	7	12%
Redundancy	1	2%
Dismissed	6	10%
Moved Away	11	18%
Went to college/university	10	17%
Personal reasons	14	23%
Don't know	0	0

Other reasons:

- *Stress of the job.*
- *Didn't want to complete the qualification and wanted better hours.*
- *Working term time only- no long hours.*

- *Pregnancy.*
- *Sector not what they thought it was.*

5.7 If they got another job, why did they leave? If known, please select all reasons which apply. (Figures based upon 51 responses)

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Better pay	11	22%
Wanted more hours	24	47%
Can't compete with council pay & conditions	1	2%
Closer to home	3	6%
More hours	1	2%
Needed to work morning to save on childcare costs	1	2%
New job doesn't require undertaking a qualification	1	2%
Offered full time work	1	2%
Unhappy working split shifts	2	4%
Wanted a change	3	6%
Don't know	3	6%

5.8 If they got another job, where is it? If known, please select all which apply. (Figures based upon 51 responses)

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Working in an ELC setting	15	29%
Working in a different OSC	1	2%
Working in hospital administration	1	2%
Working in hospitality	1	2%
Working in retail	1	2%
Working in children's own homes (respite)	1	2%
Adult care	4	8%
Adult learning support	1	2%
Working in NHS	1	2%
Cleaning position	1	2%
Private sector office work	1	2%
Working for Social Security Scotland	1	2%
Teaching English in university	1	2%
Working from home- doing admin	1	2%

Working in a job which relate to (non-childcare) qualifications	4	8%
Working in a support/development officer role	3	6%
Working in a youth service	2	4%
Don't know	6	12%

5.9 Currently do you have difficulty recruiting staff?

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	53	63%
No	23	27%
Unknown	8	10%

5.10. Currently do you have difficulty recruiting appropriately experienced staff?

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	62	74%
No	16	19%
Unknown	6	7%

5.11 On average, how long is it taking to fill vacancies? (Figures based upon 73 responses.)

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Less than a month	10	14%
1 – 2 months	21	29%
2 -3 months	15	21%
Longer than 3 months	27	37%

5.12 Please indicate for which job levels you have difficulty recruiting- please select all which apply. (Figures based upon 66 responses.)

	Lead Practitioner	Practitioner	Support Worker
Overall number of responses	17	53	19
Overall % of responses	26%	80%	29%

5.13 How do any recruitment difficulties affect your service? Please select all which apply. (Figures based upon 62 responses)

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Unable to expand the service	25	40%
Unable to provide all registered places (reduced capacity)	27	44%
Unable to operate (temporary closure)	6	10%

Staff unable to take leave	24	39%
Staff working extra hours (paid)	26	42%
Staff working extra hours (unpaid)	9	15%
More unqualified than qualified staff	19	31%
Use temporary agency staff	6	10%

Other:

- *Owner working as manager due to lack of demand for child spaces, therefore lack of income to pay a manager.*

5.14. Thinking about quality, staff and children's wellbeing, demand for places etc what impact do any staff shortages have on the service overall?

There was a variety of answers, however, some of the more common issues became apparent. (Figures come from 51 responses.)

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Manager having to do different roles	2	4%
Limits activities services can offer	5	10%
Unable to meet demand	7	14%
Lack of consistency for children & families	3	6%
Impacts staff & their morale	14	27%
Impacts on everything	4	8%

- *We are currently looking for 2 staff members and had offered jobs to 2 people but one turned it down as she then got offered longer hours in a nursery and the other has not responded to the offer. I now need to find 2 staff members before we return in August otherwise we may have to reduce the numbers of children we can accommodate.*
- *Staff shortages puts a lot of pressure on the other staff and the service is not capable of having all areas open as we don't have the staff to cover the areas thus impacting in the experience for the children.*
- *Makes us look unreliable- occasions when we have had to close at short notice because of a COVID case and because short-staffed- we have no cover.*
- *I think the quality of service suffers. Having less staff, or certainly less experienced staff, often leaves the more experienced staff overwhelmed as children have better relationships with them with higher degree of trust, so go to those members of staff with their issues. It also results in incidents being missed when there are less staff available, and requires management to be on the floor most of the day to ensure ratios are being met.*

- *Ratios can't be met. School runs are more difficult as many schools won't embrace keeping children after 3pm while we are trying to collect from 12 schools (1site) understaffed.*
- *Staff don't have sufficient time to spend with each and every individual child. This means we are failing cater for the needs and ultimately NOT Getting It Right For Every Child.*
- *We require our General Manager and our Operation Manager to be on the floor at all times which means they are working at home to catch up on the essential administration required and they have no time to train / upskill current staff. If the recruitment difficulty continues we are also at risk of having to reduce the sessions we offer.*
- *We have had to call in committee to cover 3 shifts for collecting the children due to the vast area to collect from.*
- *Being able to deliver quality service, not able to make developments within service, continuity of care affected, low morale of staff, tiredness and lack of motivation.*
- *Unable to operate a full service as not enough staff to meet demand. Difficulties retaining staff so can't increase numbers. Staff that remain have become overwhelmed with all tasks including cleaning and this is exasperated with lack of ability to take annual leave due to ratios.*
- *Staffing is tight, makes for reduced service places when staff are on annual leave*
- *Staff constantly stretched and not able to give as much attention to aspects of their role like planning, evaluating, children's plans as we would like or is necessary.*
- *With less experienced staff it puts pressure on already qualified and longer serving staff as they are constantly "training and inducting" new staff members, whom have little or no experience in childcare. It has seemed for the past year/2 years that we have constantly had staff leave from 3 months after starting to just under 1 year of being in post, which is incredibly frustrating. Not only that but people are leaving in multiples so at present I have 2 staff leaving so now need an additional 3 staff to meet the demand of children requiring the service. The impact is minimal on the children's wellbeing as it is newer staff that are leaving, however the constant staff changes impacts on the children as they form relationships with staff members but then they leave!*

5.15. Are staff able to access training/qualifications locally and is there financial support available to pay for this?

Responses varied- the majority of services said that they were able to access training and some financial support. Some specifically mentioned SAAS as funding qualifications, whereas some highlighted that it was the service which funded all training and qualifications.

- *Local training is available but we will have to support the trainee to pay towards the course. The staff member is starting an evening class in August - PDA Education Support Assistant at SCQF level 6 before advancing to the HNC in Childhood Practice. The only funding available for the PDA is ILA of £200. Our organisation will have to pay the remaining £700 towards this course.*
- *Qualifications are limited due to rural island setting. Training apart from core child protection, food hygiene and first aid is very poor for school aged childcare workers as training is always geared towards ELC workers.*
- *It has been more difficult than one could imagine to find a way into training for qualifications. I know that staff can apply through SAAS for funding and I have not heard that the local authority may pay something towards qualifications too.*
- *Trying to source Playwork SVQs. Not clear about financial support for learning around epilepsy, autism, behaviour that challenges, first aid, REHIS.*
- *Due to the recruitment challenge we have no time for staff to attend anything other than essential training (even when we have the funding).*
- *SAAS Funding and previously Local Authority helped with funding where SAAS couldn't fund.*
- *The local forum has supported all forum members to access training over the past 12 months. The council financed almost all of the training through their Career Long Professional Learning funding programme.*

5.16 Is there anything else you would like to share about recruitment and retention of staff?

- *Councils offering flexible working hours for early years workers who also work in out of school care - e.g. earlier finish times so that they are able to keep both jobs if they wish. For example, two staff have left us in the past year to work in council nurseries. They were unable to keep their jobs with us (although they would have liked to) as their finishing times are 3pm. Councils offering more morning only positions so that out of school care staff can gain additional hours in council nurseries and still keep their out of school care jobs.*

- *Impact from unregulated services is having an impact on registered services especially over holiday clubs. Scottish Government/ Care Inspectorate need to address rise in holiday club activity sessions now on offer who now offer extended hours and not just sports activity. Having major impact on existing services that need to meet the needs of care inspectorate but these services do not have these requirements.*
- *The best solution would be to change the qualification levels. There are more important relevant courses my staff should be doing rather than SVQ's that have little relevance to staff's day to day duties.*
- *SSSC need to support the Playwork qualification. Bring this back as we work with school aged children. We do use volunteers, mostly 17 and 18 year olds that want to become primary/secondary school teachers. The children seem to enjoy the volunteers as they are nearer the children's ages. Unfortunately, I cannot think of any other solutions. We need to be qualified but some staff - over 60s shouldn't be made to do a qualification as they have so much life experience. Most children look at them as like their grandparents.*
- *School relief workers should be more readily available for school aged childcare settings. As these workers are relief in school and do not have contracts that state compulsory holidays.*
- *I would like the process of gaining a place at college to undergo study towards appropriate qualifications to be easier and more straightforward than it is just now. I also think the prior learning/experience and certification (even from different fields) should be recognised. Transferable skills and prior learning doesn't appear to count.*
- *That outside agencies, schools, Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Government recognise it as a profession and promote it more. Out of school care is paid less than early years but requires the same qualification so more money should be available for the sector.*
- *As soon as COVID hit we moved from employing lots of students to employing permanent staff. This has made a big difference. We have football/sports workers and an arts worker to ring the changes for the children in the same way that the students used to do.*
- *People unwilling to take on manager's role due to qualification expectations from SSSC. Solution= lower the qualification for OSCs!*
- *With the lack of hours, it is difficult to entice staff. We have often relied on students at local university and colleges, where the after school working hours suit their studies. However, this comes with its own issues, such as time table changes*

throughout the year meaning staff availability changes, as well as many staff asking for leave during exam periods. It is a difficult one to find solutions to. However, we have noticed that since the pandemic, maybe because some courses are still being carried out online, that we have far less engagement with our job adverts.

- *Forming a focus group of childcare services (or SOSCN could lead) to work together to recruit staff - sharing the resource and cost may be a potential solution. Staff who wanted could have more hours and organisations would have access to a wide range of staff and skills.*
- *The time it is taking for PVGS is horrendous.*
- *The qualifications put potential staff off. In my experience some people would like to work in After School but the hrs are either not enough even if they are on universal credit and they do not want to complete a qualification. After School has become so accountable whereas years ago it was about play.*
- *The job isn't what it used to be. Instead of working with children you feel like you are box ticking (1. Have the played outside today? 2. Have they all washed their hands? 3. Has paperwork been completed?) I completely understand the staff shortage, the job is no longer a desirable one, especially after the last two years.*
- *It is still an issue that staff tend to get qualified and then leave for full time hours elsewhere. I'm not sure whether there is a solution to this but I think that there should be less of a requirement for a formal qualification if staff are only working, for example, 10 hours per week*
- *Relief staff, in my opinion should not require to be qualified and registered with SSSC if it is for short term/sickness cover and to help avoid services closing. Perhaps a limit in a year as to how many absence periods they could cover would be useful in order to avoid doing a qualification and registering. The pay scales and hours in private and voluntary OSC cannot match the local authority pay and benefits in ELC and so a lot of staff have been lost to the ELC expansion- making recruitment- particularly in rural and small-town provision, almost impossible at times. I have had adverts running for months with no candidates-let alone qualified applicants.*
- *The issue is the increasing costs of fuel and inadequate public transport where we are based. If you live further than 15 miles from where we are based, due to travelling to and from work twice each day - the fuel costs eat into wages and it is not cost-effective. I feel if we had a building of our own and had access, this would dramatically improve retention as there would be less pressure on staff - cleaning, paperwork etc could be done when children were not present.*

6. Financial sustainability

6.1 On a weekly average, what % of capacity are you running at? (e.g. 40 registered daily places= 200 weekly places, of which 150 are taken = running at 75% weekly capacity)

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
100%	3	4%
91 – 100%	7	10%
81 – 90%	6	8%
71 – 80%	16	21%
61 – 70%	14	18%
50 – 60%	17	22%
Less than 50%	14	18%
Unknown	7	10%

6.2 Are you currently deliberately running under registered capacity? (e.g. although you are registered for 40 daily places you only offer 30 places and staff accordingly)

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	27	32%
No	42	50%
Not yet but potentially	1	1%
Unknown	14	17%

6.3 If yes, as per question above, what % of (reduced) weekly capacity are you running at? (Figures based upon 33 responses.)

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
91 – 100%	3	9%
81 – 90%	6	18%
71 – 80%	5	15%
61 – 70%	4	12%
50 – 60%	10	30%
Less than 50%	5	15%

6.4 If you are running at 100% (or nearly), do you have a waiting list and would you like to expand? If you would like to expand is there anything preventing you from doing so?

For those services which said they would like to expand the most common issue preventing them from doing so were: staffing issues, limited space/unsuitable premises, and money restrictions.

- *Huge demand for expansion. No larger premises available. Waiting list at an all-time high. Lack of funds don't help.*

- *I have been approached to expand to another rural school but cannot due to difficulty getting appropriate staff.*
- *Prevention: Staffing - not enough, funding to subsidise places to keep it affordable for families. the high cost of providing one sometimes two to one care for children with disabilities.*
- *We had a waiting list last year. At one point we had 20+ children on the list for one of the days. When we were running at full capacity, we were taking children out on trips every day using 2 minibuses ie 15 children might have been at soft play while 13 were at the park etc. The cost of these trips has gone through the roof and we cannot afford to be out anywhere near as much. Also, we don't have an outdoor space as such so, if the weather is bad we could potentially have 70 children in the hall which is absolutely unmanageable.*

6.5 In the past 3 months, have you seen an increase in families registering with your service and an increase in children attending?

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	59	70%*
No	14	17%
Unknown	11	13%

*Of the 59 positive responses, some were more specific:

Slight increase 24 (29%) of overall positive responses

Big increase 4 (5%) of overall positive responses

- *Yes, but it's evened up by children leaving. Parents/Carers can no longer afford the fees. Most of our families have reduced the days that they attend or handed in their notice to leave the service.*
- *No, many families are still working from home therefore making a saving not to use childcare.*
- *Yes - huge increase - we have waiting lists up to 2027 with 2 babies on it who haven't even been born yet! Parents are exploring ways to share childcare among themselves as they know that spaces are unavailable and the waiting list is massive.*
- *Increase in parents with ASN children requiring support over the summer.*
- *No, a decrease in children attending.*
- *Over the past 3 months our numbers have stayed quite static. We will lose 5 x P 7s at the end of the summer holidays. We still have a few parents who are working from home and hopefully they return to our service but nothing has been confirmed.*

6.6. If you intend to provide summer holiday care, what do you think weekly average demand will be as a % of your capacity?

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
100%	6	7%
91 – 100%	4	5%
81 – 90%	6	7%
71 – 80%	4	5%
61 – 70%	10	12%
50 – 60%	13	15%
Less than 50%	27	32%
Unknown	14	17%

6.7 Is this less than previous summers or does this always vary?

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Varies	24	29%
Yes, less	15	18%
A little less	2	2%
A lot less	2	2%
Always busy	9	11%
More	5	6%
Similar	3	4%
Don't know – first summer	3	4%
Unknown	21	25%

- *It is below our normal capacity over previous summers but we have seen an increase since last summer.*
- *This is more than previous years. We have had a lot of children applying this time which has made it more problematical from a staffing point of view. We have also received summer funding for the play and food fund so we are providing some places for this.*
- *Yes - this is our last year of a summer holiday programme as we have been undercut by unregulated holiday provision and even with cutting our fee we can't match the unregulated services and haven't even been able to cover costs.*
- *Our holiday club numbers were closer to normal figures during the Spring Holiday. Currently, we are looking to hit an average of 40-44 children per day, which would be very close to pre-pandemic numbers.*

- *Yes, very much so. The management committee, agreed to lower the minimum amount of children required in order to become operational from 5 to 4 so we could not only provide a service to families and remain relevant with the community but also to provide hours to staff, keeping them employed. This will impact the services already depleted reserve funds.*
- *No - we always reach full capacity and cannot fulfil all requests for places.*
- *Yes, numbers are decreasing year on year due to the number of other activities on offer in the town during the summer months.*
- *Far less, we are usually at least 70%.*
- *We normally support a local respite company during the school holidays, they buy places from us for vulnerable families. They have not received their funding for this part of their service. Normally the money we receive from them offsets some of the staff's overtime during this period. Last summer they bought 7 places from us.*

6.8. Currently does your income cover your expenditure?

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	49	58%
No	20	24%
Don't know	5	6%
Unknown	10	12%

6.9 Do you have debts to repay due to COVID pandemic?

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	18	21%
No	53	63%
Don't know	3	4%
Unknown	10	12%

6.10 If in debt, how much is this?

This ranged from £7,000 up to £70,000; 3 services indicated they had taken out Bounce Back Loans.

6.11 At present, are you able to build up financial reserves?

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	24	29%
No	41	49%
Don't know	8	10%
Unknown	11	13%

6.11 What are the 3 biggest expenses you currently face, and what is the impact of these on the financial sustainability of your service?

Nearly every response said 'staffing', followed by 'premises costs' and then 'utilities' or 'provision of activities'. A few services mentioned 'tax obligations'.

6.12 Currently, how positive do you feel about the long-term sustainability of your service?

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Very positive	10	12%
Quite positive	32	38%
Unsure	19	23%
Concerned	7	8%
Very concerned	7	8%
Unknown	9	11%

Thoughts shared about services' sustainability:

- *I am more worried about recruitment than finances. More job opportunities are opening up in nurseries due to funding for extended hours. I am no longer sure what we can offer applicants to make us a more attractive employer when the main criteria for applicants is a wage they can live on.*
- *We need to be listened to. If we've to have qualified staff and quality service yet pay large rent, it can't work long term.*
- *I was going to semi retire in June 2021. I have not done that as I need to ensure that the monies are coming in. I think you find this with Managers, it's hard to walk away when the service is having long-term sustainability issues. I won't be the only Manager doing this.*
- *With the steady growth and the very positive comments from both parents and children (via questionnaires) we feel that we will continue to grow and establish ourselves as a positive service to the local community. We have excellent relationships with families and schools and it has been evident that word of mouth, has made for more registrations.*
- *As the owner I have used all of my personal savings and have had to take out personal loans to keep the business going to this point.*
- *Our service will fail for one reason only and that is staffing - our management team and staff are stretched to their limit.*

- *I am concerned that our service is in danger of becoming a term-time only service because of the current availability of unregulated summer clubs and post COVID in general.*
- *Funding models need to be looked at and what I have been hearing regarding the wrap-around care plans I have major concerns, we have fought to be recognised and we still are not treated the same as EYC we totally overlooked, local authorities do NOT represent us please talk to the groups on the ground.*
- *Worrying times ahead I feel. After School only generates an income for 3 hrs per day, we lose money every holiday due to the drop in our income. Costs are rising for all families we have noticed an increase in arrears for fees.*
- *The government aims to provide free wraparound care is a worry. This could be turned into a positive but so many local authorities have too much control without direct instruction of funds. Councils have different agendas and manipulate funds for their own gain. We know of multiple organisations still waiting on Omicron Funds that should have been paid in March whilst councils hold on to this money. There needs to be a clear and robust framework illustrating what councils need to spend the funds on which are promised to our sector.*
- *I have noticed a huge decrease in applications for jobs, more people not turning up for interviews, leaving the job within months and those that get jobs seem unmotivated | (some of them anyway) There are pressures from school/local authority as we use their area and have nowhere else to go so HAVE to pay rent (even though the area wouldn't be used by anyone else anyway) we cannot have anything permanent done to the areas, little storage and we could lose the area we use if it is turned into a classroom - as the school roll is increasing considerably due to building of houses in local area. I can't see how we can manage to provide a service with continued uncertainty around accommodation/increases in rent every year etc as this will drive the price up to a point where people will not be able to afford to pay for the service!*

6.13 Have you actively marketed your service to new families, and if so, have you highlighted financial support to parents through universal credit and the tax-free childcare system?

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	60	72%
No- have a waiting list	7	8%
No- always busy	4	5%
Unknown	13	15%

- *We cannot actively advertise to new families as we do not have staff for spaces every day. We give parents information regarding Care Inspectorate numbers and*

addresses in case they wish to do universal credit and are willing to write letter to support.

- *Yes, we have been in schools handing out leaflets for new starts, and sharing out centre on Facebook, also held an opening evening for all to attend.*
- *Only P 1 parents. Families joining the schools find out about us and we get requests for places most weeks. I have only recently become aware that not all parents know about the support available and have been promoting this.*
- *Yes, had flyers created for schools to put out electronically to all pupils, highlighted support.*
- *Very rarely have to market the service as families come to us through recommendations. I always signpost parents to help with childcare costs, most have not heard of new childcare funding.*

6.14 Would you like some business support- please select all which apply. (Figures based upon the 36 responses to this question.)

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Business planning	5	14%
No	9	9%
Don't know	12	33%
Unknown	9	25%

7. Additional comments

Is there anything else you would like to share about any aspect of your service or out of school care in general?

- *Things feel a bit up in the air just now as our General Manager has just retired and has not yet been replaced. I'm aware that myself and other members of management are close to burn out after dealing with the pandemic and now a lot of uncertainty over the direction the club may go in. However, I remain positive that once a new GM is in place, things will settle down and hopefully we will have a new leader with fresh ideas who is able to guide us in the right direction.*
- *I think that all out of school care, sac- school aged childcare- should come under the umbrella of social care, or children services, never under education. Out of school should be play based within social care, not play within education based. I think ELC management, or quality improvement management is not the right division at all. As those division do not have the appropriate background.*

- *For many of our parents ASC us a lifeline it is needed for parents to work not a luxury at the end of the school day.*
- *Life experience for managers should be considered.*
- *Too deflated to think about it.*
- *Areas with high unemployment need support to exist.*
- *I feel as if I'm being pessimistic but I think without SOSCN fighting for our Sector - it'll be gone. Look at the SSSC for example, I feel that they couldn't care less if our sector fell to the wayside but they will still take annual fees from us though.*
- *It has become a struggle especially as we are still playing catch up after the pandemic. We lost a lot of our reserves and staff being furloughed and the difficulty in recruiting new staff has meant that we are struggling and playing catch up all the time. We were graded excellent prior to the pandemic but don't see that as a possibility now. The Care Inspectorate have high expectations of what we should be able to do although we don't have the back up that ELC has. It is also very annoying that sometimes we are lumped in with ELC and sometimes not. Also with the SSSC sometimes we are social care workers but other times we are not included. We should be recognised as a different entity.*
- *We are extremely undervalued and the qualifications that are required do not suit OSC and are putting people off.*
- *A wonderful job that doesn't get enough credit.*
- *I did do the social media and financial training sessions offered and benefitted from them. I am looking forward to the restart of Achieving Quality Scotland as I think it will give us all a much-needed boost.*
- *I would like to offer summer care but the rent and staff wages are so high that this reflects the price charged to the parent, which would make the service affordable to select families.*
- *Rated excellent by Care Inspectorate however, not appreciated by LA or government.*