



Out of School Care in Scotland

Scottish Government Draft Framework Consultation

One Parent Families Scotland Response

December 2019

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OPFS Response

Introduction

One Parent Families Scotland

One Parent Families Scotland is the leading organisation working with single parent families across Scotland. Building on seventy-five years of advocacy and service-delivery expertise, OPFS provides single parent tailored information, advice and support, along with training activities, employability programmes and flexible, affordable, high quality childcare. OPFS campaigns with parents to make their voices heard to change the systems, policies and attitudes that cause child poverty. Our vision is of a Scotland in which single parents and their children are valued and treated equally and fairly.

Single Parent Families

In Scotland single parent families are 29 % of families with dependent children (167,100 families) ¹The Poverty and Inequality Commission has highlighted that, 37% of all children in Scotland living in poverty are in a single parent family² and 94% are women. 27 % of single parent households have a disabled adult and 16% have at least one child with a disability.³ The number of single parent households are projected to rise by almost a fifth (19%) by 2041.⁴ The most current statistics **show poverty rates for children living in lone-parent families are at 54% almost twice as high as those living in couple families (28%)**. However, poverty rates for people living in different family types vary across the countries in the UK. By 2021 single parents and their children will lose a fifth of their income due to welfare reform - an average of £5,250 a year⁵. The **predicted increase in the UK child poverty rate for children in single parent households to over 62%** will have a devastating impact on the lives and prospects of so many children.

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¹ www.gov.uk/government/statistics/personal-tax-credits-2016-to-2017
www.gov.uk/government/statistics/take-up-rates-2016-to-2017

² <https://povertyinequality.scot/2018/02/Child-Poverty-Delivery-Plan-advice-February-2018.pdf>

³ www.gingerbread.org.uk/One-in-four-a-profile-of-single-parents-in-the-UK . page 4

⁴ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/rgar/2018/rgar18.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/cumulative-impact-assessment-report.pdf> p153

General Comments

OPFS very much welcomes the chance to respond to the Scottish Government's 'Out of School Care in Scotland - draft framework consultation'⁶. With the prediction of such a huge increase in child poverty in single parent families we believe it is vital that single parents can access the flexible, high quality, affordable early years and out of school care (OSC) they need to access paid work, training, education and to take part in society.

Childcare is important for both children's development and for parents to achieve their potential. For single parents, childcare is particularly important to help make employment possible. As both the main carer and main earner, single parents can't 'shift-parent' in the same way couple parents do in order to manage nursery and school pick-ups and drop-offs. Single parents tell us that the lack of affordable and flexible day and out of school care available locally, often prevents them from entering (or re-entering) work. Research shows that single parents are particularly likely to work more hours if they had access to good quality out of school care. Currently there is not enough affordable and accessible out of school care.

We are very pleased that, as we move to 2020, the Scottish Government recognises the important role out of school care plays in providing vital childcare services for families and enriching experiences for children. We agree that access to appropriate out of school care can support parents to access paid work, which in turn has the potential to reduce levels of child poverty. The jobs that single parents move into tend to be in the low paid sector often with unsocial hours so any reduction in the cost of out of school care will leave the family with more disposable income to be used for essential items such as fuel costs and food.

At OPFS we recognise the fact that families face a range of additional outgoings and pressures during the school holidays. These include the cost and availability of holiday childcare; financial pressures such as additional costs for food, fuel and activities and transport. We work to provide activities with food during long school breaks however these one-off funded initiatives are not intended to provide childcare for working parents. We therefore welcome the recognition that out of school care impacts on some key policy frameworks, not least Westminster's draconian welfare to work conditionality affecting single parents with school age children. We held a series of workshops in Glasgow to get feedback from parents on OSC and the following matters and concerns were raised;

Main Issues:

- Lack of communication about all types of childcare – lack of access to information on available childcare provisions.
- Availability problems i.e. childcare places – most after school care places do not take children after the age of 12.

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/out-school-care-scotland-draft-framework-2019/>

- The cost of breakfast clubs differ in local areas, parents on benefits can experience reduced financial support and a greater chance of families paying more money to receive a childcare place for their child.
- Inconsistent practices across all of Scotland.
- The problems of long waiting lists.
- The reliance on family members to cover childcare is problematic especially if they are older grand-parents - it is not sustainable. What preventions are in place to help?
- Financial Difficulties facing services - the shutting of after school and breakfast clubs.

Social Issues:

Some parents highlighted that limited funding is the problem and affects children in finding the support that they require – vandalism issues and youth problems are resulting in closure of activities and programmes in some areas.

Additional problems:

- Financial costs – limits activities and programmes which families can attend during the Summer.
- Access problems e.g. local services like swimming pools closed off to the public during holidays for competitions.
- Transport problems e.g. expensive and lack of concrete infrastructure.
- Lack of staffing and limited financial resources.

Some parents discussed personal experience of using breakfast clubs and highlighted that many clubs can be attended ad hoc depending on what the families' needs are. However, some concerns were raised including,

- Lack of consistent practices for food and access.
- Not clear on who runs them?
- Why are there inconsistent practices?

Some parents raised their own negative experiences of using external childcare provision for example childminding services. Parents felt there was an attraction in using these care providers as they focus on child-centred care which is crucial in helping to alleviate pressures on parents when trying to juggle childcare and working opportunities. However, some felt this is not always beneficial for productive learning.

The 3 main things that could be considered include :

1. **Affordability** – most childcare and out of school care needed 2 weeks in advance
2. **Availability – flexibility** in hours - the Flexible Childcare Services in Scotland (FCSS) good model for this.
3. **Welfare Support** – Universal Credit and childcare payments – upfront costs and then having to claim back later.

If these issues are not taken into consideration at either a local or national level, then stress and tension on single parents will only increase and cause more problems.

OPFS Flexible Childcare Model

If you are a single parent on a zero-hours contract how can you get reliable childcare when you need it, and which doesn't leave you worse off? How do you pay for childcare in order to retrain for work or for better work? What if you need childcare? by the hour and not by the session? Or occasionally but not regularly?

The availability of childcare to help parents into paid work and training is vital in tackling child poverty. But affordability and flexibility are major barriers facing single parents who want to take up work or get qualifications, with the quality of childcare an associated concern. These three features – affordability and flexibility and quality - have shaped the design of our sister childcare community company Flexible Childcare Services Scotland (FCSS), a unique childcare service which provides home-based care, daycare, out-of-school care, and crèche. By responding directly to parents, particularly single parents, who are living on low incomes, our service is improving parents' prospects as well as those of their children. The daycare element is supplemented by other care to cover evening working patterns and includes home-based care.

OPFS has developed a truly flexible childcare model in Dundee which is demonstrating measurable benefits, both economic and social, for individuals and for communities. A social impact report ⁷ for the service showed:

- Private benefits to the people using the service (which they pay towards in fees)
- Economic/fiscal benefits of people paying income tax because they are in work rather than claiming welfare benefits because they can't work
- Health and social benefits of parents who are supported to work and train
- Long-term benefits for children in reducing poverty and improving educational attainment and life chances

It is possible to quantify some of the social return arising from this. We estimate (conservatively) that the savings to the public purse for the year 2017/18 were £253,438.

OPFS believes out of school care - affordable, high-quality and responsive to parents' needs - is vital to enable single (and couple) parents to make genuine choices on work and care. We think investment in out of school care should be seen as part and parcel of investing in infrastructure - it helps life chances, employment and the economy. We particularly believe that government support for early years and out of school care costs should be targeted at those most in need, particularly those on low incomes. Lastly, the role of out of school care should be considered at a more structural level, including how it can support parents in training, transitioning into work and in insecure work.

⁷ <https://www.opfs.org.uk/policy-doc/social-impact-reports/>

What can the Scottish Government do to ensure that out of school care better meets the needs of children and families in Scotland?

What name should we use for the range of out of school services and activities? Is there a better term than 'Out of School Care'?

As the Framework mentions there is no single formal definition of out of school care in the UK. There is a general consensus that out of school care is care provided to school-aged children outside of usual school hours and that this care includes child-minding, after-school clubs, holiday clubs, breakfast clubs and we would add 'childcare at home'. To change the overall definition of services provided before and after school and during school holidays would require the terms of definition used by the Care Inspectorate that relate to "daycare of children of school age" as mentioned in the Children Act (Scotland), 1989 to be redefined as currently they are "Out of School Care" or "Holiday playschemes".

Services, although categorised as above do generally have their own individuality expressed through their names that relate to the activities or the locality, or a name that is chosen by children attending. No all-encompassing name is going to reflect the diversity of provisions available, or that could be available, to children of school age.

Do you agree with our 3 key aims for a future out of school care framework?

The aims are beneficial to children who have the right to services that support their wellbeing and development, and parents who need services that are sustainable, accessible, flexible and affordable in order to work, study, support their wellbeing and inclusion.

- 1. High quality services which provide children with life-enhancing experiences** - Every child should receive high quality services where they experience activities and have relationships with their peers and adults that contribute to their ongoing development. Parents should have trust in the services, knowing that they are safe and cared for by suitably experienced, trained and vetted quality staff.
- 2. Out of school care is accessible and affordable and meets the needs of children and young people, parents and carers and communities**
In order for all children to access services, no matter the reason they chose to attend, each part of this aim should be in place and the services available seen as a key component in the community.
- 3. Out of school care services are embedded in communities and enable children and young people to access a range of spaces including the outdoors.**
Every community, in the same way as education, should have out of school care available. This should not take away from the diversity of the provisions that could be available but reflect the community through the activities provided and the locations utilised.

To meet the needs of parents in paid work, out of school care should also be flexible as well as affordable and accessible.

What range of services are needed: regulated out of school care, childminders, activity-based clubs and programmes such as sports clubs, creative arts clubs, outdoor activities, other types of activities? Why these services are important?

OSC services should enable children to broaden their interests by encouraging activities beyond the curriculum; enable parents, particularly mothers, to work knowing their child is in a safe and nurturing environment; provide nourishing food before and after school and in school holidays. There should be a wide range of care services available that reflect the different care needs and preferences of children, including those with disabilities, in order to ensure their rights as detailed in UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are met.

- Article 18 point 3 - Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible
- Article 31: the right to culture, leisure, rest and play
- Article 12: the right to consultation
- Article 22: Children in need or in poverty
- Article 23: support the provision of care for children with disabilities

What ages of children do parents/carers need provision for?

Take up of OSC services is traditionally used by primary school age, with most regulated services catering for this age group, however, there is no collated data on unmet need for older children or children with disabilities. Children are also accessing unregulated activities for the purposes of OSC. Although there will be a lesser take up of services for older children, there should still be availability.

What flexibility do parents and carers need from out of school care services? Can you tell us why this flexibility is important?

This will vary by location and the families accessing services however services should have the flexibility to care for children at times when their parents are working or studying and should also be available on an ad hoc basis to cater for those working variable shifts, or for children who chose not to attend every day. There should also be flexibility in charging systems to reflect this so parents pay for the care provided when required. Flexible, pay by the hour out of school provision is important for parents who work in jobs which have irregular shift patterns . Flexibility makes childcare affordable and accessible to many parents for whom the cost would otherwise be a barrier.

What is important in terms of location of out of school care services? Should they be delivered in school, community facilities, outdoors?

The facilities utilised can depend on the availability locally but should make use of a range of premises and outdoor areas. They should be accessible by public transport and by car, with convenient safe collection and drop off points. If away from the child's

education facility, the setting should be within a reasonable distance for walking or have suitable transport arrangements available.

A diversity of settings are needed, connected and shared with the community where possible. Need to exploit vacant space within community buildings.

Do parents/carers need food provision as part of after-school and holiday clubs?

Currently, many services will provide a snack as children are assumed to be having their evening meal with their parents. However, given the extent of food insecurity in Scotland provision of free, or low cost, breakfast tea time clubs and meal provision linked to holiday playschemes, along with an expansion of free school meal provision, has the potential to expand the access children have access to food without stigma attached.

What do children and young people want from out of school care services and does this differ depending on age?

All children are different with individual needs and preferences, which, broadly could be incorporated in to OSC development. Children want to have fun, socialise with their peers and experience a range of activities that cater for their needs and abilities, while giving them the opportunity to expand their skills and knowledge, supported by caring adults who have the knowledge and experience to deliver these services. It may differ in terms of the skills the children and young people gain, and this should be reflected in the services available.

What different activities or provision might secondary school aged children want?

Again, children are individuals, but it may be that more provision specific to an area of interest i.e. sports, music, gaming, art, cooking etc. rather than the traditional wide range of activities is more attractive to older children.

How can we make out of school care accessible to all families and children?

How can we make sure out of school care is an affordable option for more families? (e.g. subsidised provision, remove barriers in accessing benefits, help with the upfront costs)

Funding the direct provision of services, fully subsidised places for disadvantaged children, including those with disabilities, and in areas in more rural areas where it would be impossible to sustain a service otherwise would ensure affordability and accessibility for all families. Out of school care needs to dovetail with early learning and childcare provision to ensure the required flexible services are supportive of the Scottish Governments Employability Framework. There should be support for parents with the cost of deposits/up-front fees.

How can we help to ensure that all families have access to an out of school care place for their child/ren if they want it?

Investment has to be made in the delivery of services that are affordable and flexible including infrastructure and staffing, training and resources and subsidised places for those that need them. In addition, rural areas and other services, such as those for children with disabilities, should have this reflected in funding levels. Start-up grants should be provided to give seed funding for new services.

How can services be more effectively delivered in rural/remote areas to meet the needs of families?

Services in rural areas should be funded at a higher level per place to ensure they are sustained, including transport costs. Schools could be opened up more often to out of school services and drop offs/pick up services are vital.

How can we ensure that children with disabilities and additional support needs can access out of school care services?

Listen to the children who would be accessing the services and their parents. Enhanced levels of funding reflecting the need for a higher staff to child ratio and the requirements for additional staff training. Access to specialist staff and training as required. Support with costs will be necessary to support increased inclusion.

What can we do to support community based approaches to delivering out of school care?

It will be important to consult local parents and involve them in any new developments. Consideration should be given to blended models with childminders and setting based services. Local networks are also vital in developing a community-based report.

- Secure funding investment that recognises the diversity of provisions required and the children accessing the services.
- Infrastructure support at provision, local and national levels that ensure skill sharing and support for staff.
- Expansion of existing provision and the development of new services where there are none.
- Utilising available community space, indoor and outdoor, that are currently underutilised at no, or low cost to the provision.
- Workforce development to meet SSSC qualifications and CPD requirements as well as to continually improve the settings through investment in staff delivering services.

How can we support the out of school care workforce to deliver high quality services? What qualifications, skills and experience should the out of school care workforce have? What is most important and why?

Core competencies for staff plus the support, skills and training to deliver a quality service in their provision whatever that may be. Doesn't need to be childcare based qualifications, could be music, sports, or outdoor activities, depending on the service being provided. Core competencies that keep children safe, cared for and develop

trust in staff should be for all staff, others specific to activities. Staff need to be able to communicate with children and young people, to care, to offer support as needed.

Thinking about the full range of provision - regulated out of school care, childminders, holiday programmes and other activities - should qualification requirements for staff working across these provisions be the same or different? Why?

Core competencies plus different specialisms that would be variable. Core would include first aid, food hygiene infection control, with age specific elements.

How can we promote working in the out of school sector as a more attractive career?

Recognition of the role of OSC and the workforce through adequate pay and conditions so it is seen as a realistic career option. Professional development opportunities through infrastructure support of the OSC in Scotland. The provision of blended models of service delivery . The challenge remains that OSC offers mainly part time work so for anyone wanting full time hours they need to combine with another part-time job and support is needed to ensure this results in sustainable models for parents.

How can we increase diversity across the out of school care workforce?

Improve pay, conditions and professional recognition and development opportunities. Widen the qualifications required to include activity specific areas as current requirements are focussed on childcare, which may not be applicable for secondary age children, activity based settings or children with disabilities. Diversity across the out of school care workforce should be a major priority. The first step is to acknowledge the issue and what are the goals and where do you to start. Acknowledging that childcare services see diversity as an ongoing issue is a good first step.

All services should have a diversity mission with internal goals they'd like to meet. Like any set of goals which are realistic. Diversity is a long-term goal. Enlist help from organisations with expertise such as Inclusion Scotland and BME organisations.

Conclusion

Single parent families are predominately woman with dependent children which means that there is just one potential earner in the family, that earner is limited in the hours they can work by caring responsibilities, their hourly earnings are likely to be lower because of the gender pay gap and they face higher outgoings than single adult households because of the costs of children. Out of school care is a crucial part of the jigsaw in support single parents into good employment which is sustainable. We would like to see:

- increased provision of high quality funded childcare outside of school term-time
- increased provision of high quality funded childminding and out of school care, targeted to low income families and in deprived areas

- ensuring that local childcare providers are well-informed and supported to deal with Universal Credit's approach to childcare costs

Addressing child poverty for single parent families requires action that recognises the barriers in a systemic way: providing not just individual-level support, but making structural changes in the availability of flexible, affordable childcare and flexible, accessible employment, which together will allow single parents to balance caring responsibilities and fair work that lifts them out of poverty. Out of school care has a key role in rising to this challenge.

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