



## **Parenting across Scotland response to the consultation on Out of School Care in Scotland**

### **General**

*Parenting across Scotland (PAS) is a partnership of family charities working together to put a focus on issues affecting families in Scotland. The partners are Aberlour; Children in Scotland; Contact; Families Outside; One Parent Families Scotland; Relationships Scotland; Scottish Adoption and Scottish Families Affected by Drugs and Alcohol.*

Parenting across Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to providing quality out of school care and recognises the vital role out of school care plays in providing essential childcare services for families. Help with reducing childcare costs, making childcare more flexible for parents and locating services where families live are important for the success of any service. High quality out of school care can provide a wide range of positive experiences for children including outdoor play.

We have used evidence, various research reports and 'Out of School Care – who uses it and why?' produced for Parenting across Scotland undertaken by a Q-Step student placement and from PAS partners experiences of supporting families who are struggling financially.

Out of school care has developed largely as a response to the needs of parents to participate in the labour market. It should be noted that the majority of out of school services are currently managed by parent committees and charitable/independent organisations<sup>1</sup> which has created a diverse, fragmented provision dependent on local support structures. While diversity and flexibility of provision are crucial to planning provision for communities to make sure services are fulfilling local needs, parents need to be able to access equivalent OSC no matter where they are in the country.

Given current Scottish Government policy priorities are addressing inequality and closing the attainment gap, this framework is timely and is an opportunity to make a difference.

PAS participated in the OSC Reference Group that contributed to this consultation document.

### **Questions**

#### **1. What range of services are needed:**

Regulated out of school care

Childminders

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[http://www.parliament.scot/S4\\_EducationandCultureCommittee/Children%20and%20Young%20People%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/ScottishOutofSchoolCareNetwork.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/S4_EducationandCultureCommittee/Children%20and%20Young%20People%20(Scotland)%20Bill/ScottishOutofSchoolCareNetwork.pdf)

Activity-based clubs and programmes (such as sports clubs, creative arts clubs, outdoor activities)

All of the above are required including breakfast clubs and holiday provision

### **Can you tell us why these services are important?**

These services are important both for parents and for children. They have a role to play in allowing parents to work or to study, and children to have access to play and other facilities.

Access to childcare in term time and school holidays is vital for supporting parents to work, train or study. Children also benefit from quality out of school care, reducing isolation, providing a safe place to play with friends and increased opportunities for learning and physical activity. However, some families encounter barriers to using out of school care, cost, availability and transport play a big part in determining if a family uses out of school care.

They also have a role to play in reducing child poverty. Work is often put forward as a route out of poverty. However, low wages and high childcare costs often mean that work is not a route out of poverty for many families: help with childcare costs is one of the ways to mitigate this<sup>2</sup>.

Additionally the attainment gap increases over the school holidays and OSC is one way that this might be reduced<sup>3</sup>.

Many children living in poverty do not have enough food on a daily basis, and breakfast clubs and holiday provision which provide food can be helpful. However, while this is helpful on a short-term basis it should not become the new normality with schools becoming food bank equivalents; instead parents need to have sufficient resources to be able to feed their children through work or social security and childcare should not become a substitute for this.

The Government's commitment to providing support for OSC is in line with its commitment to incorporate the UNCRC into Scots Law. The UNCRC states that the state should provide support for families to thrive stating that "Affording the family the necessary protection and assistance" ensuring that it has sufficient income and good enough housing, for example, to be able to "fully assume its responsibilities within the community" . Providing support for Out of School Care is another element of this support for families.

## **2. What can we do to support community-based approaches to delivering out of school care?**

At present, most models of funding for out of school care services are based on parents' ability to pay. Provision is likely to exist where there is demand and where there is capacity to develop services. This is reliant on the service being located in an area where most parents are in employment so can afford the charges. CHANGE childcare found that there was no out of school care provision in the Parkhead project area even though there were

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cas.org.uk/publications/work-poverty-parliamentary-briefing>

<sup>3</sup> <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/The-cost-of-school-holidays.pdf>

two primary schools located in the community<sup>4</sup>. Patterns of usage indicated by the research findings<sup>5</sup> suggest that there is a strong correlation between household income, out of school care use and service provision. It is crucial that services are designed with all parents in mind, including those who experience barriers to accessing services. We agree with the Children in Scotland response to this consultation question, which highlights the need for communities, parents and children to be involved in designing the service. Meaningful collaboration with communities can be time consuming but is essential if the service is going to be used and meets the needs of local area.

### **3. 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'?**

We do not have a view on what the services should be called. The Scottish Out of School Care Network has suggested, in its response, that 'We like the fact that many services have their own unique names, perhaps chosen with the children, or relating to their locality or purpose. We think this could continue<sup>6</sup>. Communities, parents and children need to be clear about what the service offers, and the name should reflect this.

### **4. To enable us to realise our vision, we have identified three key aims that we will need to achieve -**

#### **4.1. High quality services which provide children with life-enhancing experiences**

High quality services are essential for children and their parents. Out of school care can have benefits for children and parents providing that the service is of high quality, offers a range of indoor and outdoor activities for children and is easily accessible. Children will want to attend high quality services that incorporate indoor and outdoor play and activities. Out of school care can offer opportunities for supporting children whose families are struggling on low incomes, inadequate or inappropriate housing and can offer a 'safe' space in which to play with friends. Out of School Care can provide some children with experience of activities which they otherwise might be unable to afford.

#### **4.2. Out of school care is accessible and affordable and meets the needs of children and young people, parents and carers and communities.**

Out of school care needs to be accessible and affordable. International research and studies from the rest of the UK, Bradshaw et al. (2012) showed that families from the highest socio-economic status category were more likely to use after-school clubs than families from the lowest socio-economic status category, 30% compared to 13%. Moreover, of those parents in the highest income group, 90% cited 'Childcare reasons' as the main reason why they use after-school clubs for their child, while those from lower socio-economic groups were significantly more likely to cite 'to socialise', 'homework' and for 'sports or activities' as reasons why they used after-school clubs for their child<sup>7</sup>. However, it should be noted that the use of breakfast clubs is more varied in terms of parental usage. In Scotland, Bradshaw et al. (2012) found that children from single-parent families use breakfast clubs more

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<sup>4</sup> <http://change-childcare.org/change-bulletin-23rd-august-2019/>

<sup>5</sup> Guthrie, A. (2019) Out of school care in Scotland: who uses it and why?

<sup>6</sup> [https://soscn.org/downloads/consultations/Consultation\\_on\\_the\\_Draft\\_National\\_Framework\\_for\\_Out\\_of\\_School\\_Care\\_SOSCN\\_Response.pdf](https://soscn.org/downloads/consultations/Consultation_on_the_Draft_National_Framework_for_Out_of_School_Care_SOSCN_Response.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Out of School Care in Scotland- who uses it and why? Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) 2018

frequently than children who grow up in two-parent families, 12% to 8% respectively. Breakfast clubs show a more even distribution of users from different socio-economic groups, at age seven, usage is greater in the 20% most deprived areas than in the 20% most affluent<sup>8</sup>.

#### **4.3. Out of school care services are embedded in communities and enable children and young people to access a range of spaces including the outdoors.**

As discussed in question 2, we agree that services should be embedded in communities. It is crucial that services are designed with all parents in mind, including those who experience barriers to accessing services. We refer to the Children in Scotland response to this consultation question, which highlights the need for communities, parents and children to be involved in designing the service

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

Yes

#### **Please explain your response.**

Childcare needs to be accessible and affordable so that it can be used by parents and enables them to work, train or study. It needs to be high quality because otherwise it will neither be effective in tackling the attainment gap nor will it be attractive to the children using it.

As discussed in previous questions any future out of school care framework has to take into account location, local need, costs, availability and quality.

#### **5. 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?**

The provision of out of school care places in Scotland is inconsistent<sup>9</sup>. Any new services should first be located in areas that at present have no provision but have an evidenced need. As discussed, services are mostly run by parent committees which is reliant on parents having time, knowledge and resources. Provision is more likely to be located in areas of higher socio-economic status, disadvantaging communities in less affluent areas where services are less likely to be situated. Design of services has to include provision for children who do not normally have access to out of school care services, for example, children with additional support needs.

#### **6. What do children and young people want from out of school care services and does this differ dependent on age?**

Due to their expertise and engagement with young people we refer to the Children in Scotland response to this question.

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<sup>8</sup> Out of School Care in Scotland- who uses it and why? Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) 2018

<sup>9</sup> <http://change-childcare.org/change-bulletin-23rd-august-2019/>

## **7. What different activities or provision might secondary school aged children want?**

The analysis of data<sup>10</sup> that we commissioned focused on out of school care for children aged five, seven and 11 years of age.

The Indi Youth service in Castlemilk<sup>11</sup>, Glasgow launched in 2012 provides services for P7s to 16 year-olds. When the youth service launched they asked children and young people what they wanted from the service, the service has continued to engage with young people and include them in all aspects of the project.

## **8. 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 upfront costs)**

The data analysis suggests that cost is still one of the biggest barriers for parents accessing after school care, unlike ELC there are no funded hours for parents. While almost 100% of four year olds take up a funded pre-school place, only 25% of five year olds use formal out of school care. Participation in sports clubs and other physical activities seem to reflect a general pattern of inequality. Aged seven, almost half of all children in the lowest socio-economic groups were not involved in any of these clubs, compared with just 19% in the highest socio-economic groups<sup>12</sup>. Free and subsidised services would enable children and young people whose families are on low incomes to participate during school time and holidays, reducing stigma, seeing friends and increasing opportunities for all.

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

Easily accessible, affordable transport is key to providing services in rural communities. Providing pick up and drop off points within local communities would make a big difference in attendance.

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

Shared Care Scotland has commissioned Simon Jaquet Consultancy Services Ltd (SJCS) to undertake a research study to help better understand the scale, nature, and delivery of holiday activity provision for disabled children and young people across Scotland. This report will be useful in informing how best to improve services for children with additional support needs.

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

While it is difficult to provide a truly flexible service, examples of good practice can be found. Flexible Childcare Services Scotland model demonstrates how flexibility can be successful:

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<sup>10</sup> Out of School Care in Scotland- who uses it and why? Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) 2018

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.indigogrp.com/indiyouth.html>

<sup>12</sup> Out of School Care in Scotland- who uses it and why? Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) 2018

using a week by week booking service, parents only pay for the childcare that they need with no deposit, no upfront fees and no retainers or holiday fees. Information to parents about services has to be honest and accurate to manage expectations.

## **12. What is important for parents and carers in terms of location of out of school care services? Should they be delivered in schools, community facilities, outdoors?**

There is a direct correlation between service location and usage. Parents who cannot access a service are disadvantaged and opportunities to work, train or study are greatly diminished. The advantage to school-based provision is that it is likely to be near to home, provide in kind contributions, for example free or reduced costs for premises and facilities will be of a high quality. However, for children and young people this option may be the least attractive especially during the school holidays, children may prefer community or outdoor based activities to get a break from school.

## **13. What ages of children do parents/carers need provision for?**

Provision is traditionally targeted toward primary school age children. However, we believe that young people in the early years of high school should also have access to out of school care services especially during the holidays. To encourage young people to access the services it is vital that they have a say in the planning, design and opportunities available.

It is also necessary to ensure that there is OSC provision for children with disabilities up until the age of 18.

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

Yes, child poverty in Scotland is rising with almost one in four children in Scotland (24,000) living in poverty in 2019<sup>13</sup>.

Families who rely on free school meals during term time struggle to feed their children over the holidays when this provision is no longer available. The Trussell Trust reported that in Scotland they saw an increase of 21% in families accessing the food bank during the 2018 summer holidays compared to the previous year<sup>14</sup>. The Children in Scotland Food, Families, Futures (FFF) programme was created specifically in response to schools reporting that many families within their communities were experiencing difficulties in accessing high quality nutritious food during holiday periods<sup>15</sup>. Many local authorities have recognised the problem and are providing holiday food programmes in their local areas. However, provision is patchy and there will be families who have no access to these services within their local areas.

While it is important that breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday provision provide food for children where this is needed, we do not believe that this should be a long-term solution with schools being normalised as places for food provision rather than education in a similar way to food banks have become normalised in society. Rather we believe that

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/IncomePoverty>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.trusselltrust.org/2019/06/27/new-figures-released-trussell-trust-reveal-21-increase-emergency-food-parcels-children-scotland-last-summer/>

<sup>15</sup> [https://childreninScotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Future-Food-Inquiry\\_Final.pdf](https://childreninScotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Future-Food-Inquiry_Final.pdf)

parents should be given the agency and resources they need to feed their children through adequately paid work or social security benefits.

**15. What qualifications, skills and experience should the out of school care workforce have? What is most important and why?**

No response to this question.

**16. 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?**

No response to this question.

**17. How can we promote working in the out of school care sector as a more attractive career choice?**

No response to this question.

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

No response to this question.

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Name: Alison Clancy

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Yes