

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH OUT OF SCHOOL CARE NETWORK

Introduction

The Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) is a Scottish registered charity (SC020520), established in 1991 and is the only national infrastructure umbrella organisation providing support, mentoring, training, information and resources to the nearly 1,000 school-aged childcare services in Scotland, which provide childcare, play and learning to over 45,000 children. SOSCN makes a strong strategic contribution to the development of national policy supporting children and the families and communities which support them, through our intermediary role between our sector, government and key national agencies. All our work is underpinned by a commitment to supporting and promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), in particular Articles 31; the right to play, cultural and leisure; Article 12, the right to consultation and Article 18; states parties to develop appropriate services to support families, **including assistance with childcare for working parents.**

The out of school care sector (OSC) is **the second largest provider of childcare** within Scotland and is a vital resource for parents (of school-age children) who are in employment, training or looking to return to the workforce. Currently there are a total of 994 out of school care services in Scotland, providing places for a total of 45,620 children, nurseries provide places for 134,270 children. Child minding provides places for 30,490 children; crèches provide places for 20,390 children, and playgroups provide places for 10,490 children (Care Inspectorate, 2012).

It is safe to estimate that at least 40,000 women, and many of their partners, rely on out of school care as part of **the infrastructure** of support they need to stay in work or training. However in 2012 the overall number of services are below 1,000 for the first time in 12 years; while numbers of places are slightly up. This points towards merging and rationalisation of smaller services into larger ones; to meet sustainability requirements; but is also a warning about services closing down.

As a general introduction: our Benefits of Out of School Care Video 2011

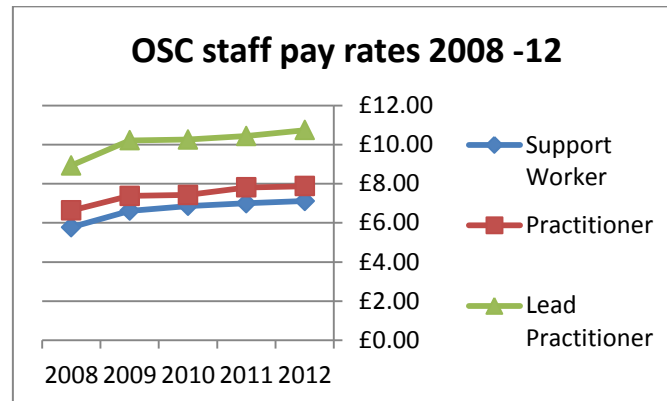
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIDMi4u5k3Q> includes parent's views on both the economic and social support they receive; as well as, of course, children's voices. We have fathers as well as mothers speaking up, from two services in contrasting socio-economic areas. This 12 minute internet-based film was produced and filmed by SOSCN on a shoe-string budget. The committee might enjoy watching this as part of our evidence submitted, as it brings "to life" our points below.

1. Workforce issues and occupational segregation:

Childcare is an extremely gendered occupation in Scotland, with 97% female and 3% male in the daycare workforce (SSSC, 2012, p 28); although out of school care has always had a slightly higher percentage of male staff, e.g.: our annual workforce survey, (carried out since 2007) shows 8% of returns from male staff and also 2% from staff with a disability (SOSCN, 2012). We have evidence both of generally low pay and stagnation of pay levels over the past five years in the out of school care workforce: Responses are divided into categories of staff; lead practitioners are the managers of services expected to hold or be working towards degree level

qualifications; practitioners are the staff providing informed care and are expected to at least hold SVQ3; while support workers assist them and are expected to hold SVQ2.

Chart 1: Rates of pay progression in five years



In the 2008 to 2009 period, just before the recession hit severely, pay went up more sharply than in any subsequent year, where levels have only moved very slowly upwards.

Average pay from SOSCEN Annual Workforce Survey 2012

- £10.74 an hour is the current average lead practitioner pay
- £7.88 an hour is the current average practitioner pay
- £7.12 an hour is the current average support worker pay (below living wage of £7.45)

The current provisional data from the Office of National Statistics, (ONS, November 2012), shows median weekly full time pay for Scotland is just under £500 a week. If we assume a 37 hour week that is around £13.50 per hour. (As they classify 30 hours or more as FT this hourly rate could be higher). So generally the sector is lower paid than the average wages in Scotland, and much lower paid at the practitioner and support worker level.

There is a **Scotland wide gender gap in pay**; with men at £533 a week, around £14.40 an hour, and women at £438 a week (ONS, November, 2012); around £11.80 an hour, therefore the pay level of the workforce reflects both the **gender stratification in pay and the lower status of childcare work**, even when compared to the average for female pay.

Very few posts in out of school care are full time, except during all day care periods covering school holidays and in service days. Lead practitioners have the most hours, employed for 27 hours (term-time) and 34 hours (holiday-time) yet 34% of lead practitioners require/would like more hours in their job. The most common reasons were financial or to give them more time to study and to complete their workloads. 24% have a secondary job; of this figure, 80% have another childcare job (SOSCEN, 2012). 90% see OSC as a career and 96% are happy/fairly happy in their work (SOSCEN, 2012b).

The “average” practitioner is employed for 20 hours (term-time) and 26 hours (holiday-time), 48% of practitioners require/would like more hours in their job. The most common reasons were: financial, or that they simply would like a full-time position. However many stated that they would like to gain more experience or have more time to prepare. 37% have a secondary job; of this figure, 64% have another childcare job. 83% see OSC as a career and 96% are happy/fairly happy in their work. Data on support workers shows similar trends (SOSCN, 2012b).

There are a number of factors relating to this low pay and status; the majority of out of school care is provided by the third sector; 53%, then the private sector; 33.7%, with the public sector lagging far behind; 13.2 % (Care Inspectorate, 2012) in recent years some local authorities have withdrawn all or some of their own direct provision of out of school care; with parent committees trying to take over the management of services to keep them going.

Out of school care is not a statutory right therefore, where councils need to make savings, it is vulnerable to cuts in direct provision or development support and grant aid. In many areas now there is no direct grant support to out of school care and charges for school lets have been increased. Sometimes this is because of PFI contracts impacting on the use of premises outside school hours (SOSCN, 2013b).

SOSCN provides a forum nationally for development officers for out of school care employed by LAs and many of them have either lost their posts or being redeployed away from this work; in five years the number has gone from 18 down to 11 of those who actively attended this forum.

Despite the need for and benefits for **this support to working women, it is often left to the same working women to manage childcare** in their communities by being the part time unpaid volunteer management committees, on top of their day jobs, to ensure they have childcare they need; before and after school and during the school holidays.

SOSCN also has evidence that taking up degree level qualifications, while not often improving pay and conditions, does assist managers in terms of confidence in and valuing their professional role, especially in relationship to other professionals in health, education, justice and social work, under the need to jointly support children and families at risk or in need of extra support (SOSCN, 2013a and 2013b). Most staff value training on play, child development and developing their professional skills (SOSCN, 2012c). Although a few have indeed objected to degree level qualifications, once undertaken, the degree level work results often in increased confidence and better professional practice (SOSCN 2012c, SOSCN, 2013b).

In general, pay, status and public perception of their role still needs to catch up with the various policy drivers centred, rightly, on quality care for children (EFILWC, 2006). This includes parental perception of the high costs of quality childcare (see point 4 below). SOSCN has fully supported the degree level qualification as one lever to improve quality for children, staff and parents, but we also need the following additional levers for quality, accessibility and affordability:

- Statutory requirement to supply school age childcare

- Better pay and conditions linked to qualifications and quality (and improved confidence)
- Direct investment in services as economic and social infrastructure, including in kind support locally (access to free school premises)
- Linking with the wider workforce for career progression, flexibility and status
- Professional managers who perform all operational work of services leaving parent committees to take on a less stressed overseeing role

2. Labour Market impact – infrastructure support to equality and anti-poverty

The provision of out of school care has undoubted positive impact on women's employment, training and education opportunities, peace of mind as parents and signposting other in depth parental support. It also contributes to anti-poverty and wider economic strategies; providing more tax revenue from the pay of working parents; and improving the overall quality of life and connectivity of communities (EHRC, 2010, EFILWC, 2006). It is especially support to lone parents and, while there is not enough of either, contributes respite care for families of disabled children and those in need of extra support in other ways (social work placements) (SOSCN,2013a).

- “The effect on the labour market is strong. Parents, especially lone parents, can take up employment opportunities or increase working hours. Parents benefit from childcare that is available when their child starts school.
- OSC breaks the cycle of deprivation in some areas, not only in allowing parents to go back to work but also in reaching out to children. OSC services are employing and training unemployed people from economically disadvantaged areas.
- OSC services are, in effect, small businesses operating in communities.
- Women's earnings are important in reducing a family's vulnerability to poverty.
- There has been a reduction in recruitment costs, better retention rates, reduced staff absenteeism and a wider pool of potential recruits for jobs (childcare generally).” (School's Out, p30)

In the final evaluation of the NOF Out of School Hours Childcare Programme, the impact of out of school care and subsequent outcomes on families and communities were great, especially from a socio-economic perspective:

- “Between 26-50% of parents experience a positive labour market impact as a result of using out of school childcare. Labour market impact increases over time.
- Since using the service, between 6-22% of users have entered employment, and 6- 25% have entered training/ education. Between 21% and 50% of users have been able to increase the number of hours in employment. One third of families report increased earnings.
- These labour market impacts are most significant among lone parents, and families with low incomes.

- Out of school childcare provides peace of mind, and reduces the need for unplanned absences in the workplace. Parents also report increased concentration, job satisfaction.
- **Labour Market additionality is high.** Two thirds of parents stated that the positive labour market impact would not have occurred without out of school childcare. Up to 54% of parents anticipate a negative labour market impact if their club were to close
- Out of school childcare also supports parents, by providing respite care for children, and enabling parents to carry out other responsibilities.
- Children generally enjoy out of school childcare. Benefits to children include providing valuable opportunities for social stimulation and play in safe environment. The service also contributes to the educational, social and emotional development of children.
- Although parents are often involved in the establishment of clubs, few are directly involved in day to day management of schemes. Those that are involved have high levels of commitment.
- Most clubs are seen to build relationships in communities, and can improve relationships between schools and communities.” (p22) (New Opportunities Fund, 2004)

SOSCN (2012a) has also asked parents about out of school care and what would happen without it:

Why do you use OSC?	What would happen without OSC?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“To allow me to work.”</i> • <i>“To allow me to attend further education.”</i> • <i>“I know my child is safe.”</i> • <i>“To promote social relationships.”</i> • <i>“Because my child is an only child and lives in a rural area.”</i> • <i>“Children interact and make new friends.”</i> • <i>“My child’s happiness is important and they enjoy the club.”</i> • <i>“Children experience a real variety of life experiences.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I would have no childcare and would have to give up work.”</i> • <i>“Would have to give up further education.”</i> • <i>“Would be complicated to take turns with other families and would mean less quality family time.”</i> • <i>“Would cause stress- unsettle our children.”</i> • <i>“Kids would have to go home by themselves.”</i>

Therefore, just a sample of parental views and previously published research show the positive need for out of school childcare to be part of the economic and social

infrastructure supporting equality across gender, rural and urban, socio-economic disadvantage and inclusion (see also EHRC,2010,EFILWC,2007).

3. Women into business

While there is currently small business start-up advice available (Small Business Gateway), there are no current sources of start-up funding (unless a business angel invests). SOSCN encourages women entrepreneurs to set up out of school care; and we provide resources to help with this, however it is rarely a source of enough profit on its own; there either needs to be a combination with nursery care, or for the venture to be large scale and replicated over a number of sites. Employers support for out of school childcare hinges mainly on childcare vouchers to staff; rather than workplace crèche provision. These vouchers are under threat in proposed UK changes to support for childcare.

4. Welfare reform/costs of childcare

This is one of the biggest threats to the sector and workforce as cuts or removal of childcare tax credits and childcare vouchers would affect both the parent's ability to pay for childcare and, subsequently, the sustainability of the services themselves. Even a few parents withdrawing their children are enough to close smaller services down.

There is not much direct financial support to OSC (as it is non-statutory), often the only subsidies they have from the public purse are via childcare tax credits, or placements for children in need. However, there is value of in kind support such as free or low costs access to premises; which can make or break a service, and help with costs of qualifications is sometimes available. With lone parents expected to find work once their child starts school, the need for out of school childcare will increase while at the same time there is a danger the supply will not be there to meet this demand.

Wages are kept low; which is a hidden subsidy of the true costs of childcare, yet costs are high in the UK. Our membership database reveals that the average fees for out of school care in Scotland are £46 per week term time and £100 per week for holiday care:

Table 1: Average session charges 2009 - 2012

	2012	2011	2010	2009
Term Time	£9.10	£8.61	£8.30	£8.06
Holiday	£20.02	£19.14	£18.36	£16.77

Source SOSCN: Membership Database, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012

Cutting childcare tax credits and voucher support and moving to tax relief for childcare costs (as currently mooted by the UK government) benefits only those who pay tax. This would also affect the low paid OSC workforce in terms of their own childcare costs. SOSCN has consistently called for government spending on

childcare to be invested in the supply side instead of overly complex and costly tax systems which only help some parents.

Whilst accepting the limitations of the Scottish Parliament in terms of influencing the tax and benefits system; we believe we have provided some evidence for the provision of out of school care to be seen as investment in the economic and social structure of our country; as an investment in the human rights of children and parents; especially women, and an investment in community assets.

We also accept there is a need for further research into all of these benefits, and we would be happy to assist the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament in carrying out such work, in fact, we would like such research to be a priority in terms of the equality and rights of women, men and children in Scotland. We would be pleased to present this evidence in person to the committee, and all SOSCN publications below are available on request or go to our website, address below.

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