

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH OUT OF SCHOOL NETWORK

1. Biographical details:

Irene Audain MBE, MA (Hons), MEd, Advanced Diploma Child Development, Diploma Info. Science

With a varied work background in youth, community work, childcare and counselling, Irene set up and ran, (with others), the first, urban aid funded, voluntary sector out of school service in Scotland in the early 1980s, subsequently helping others develop similar services and the first network before going on to wider community work and further education. Returning to Out of School Care in 1993, Irene has now been the Chief Executive of the Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN), for nearly 20 years. She has helped the sector grow from around one hundred and fifty services across Scotland in 1993, to nearly a thousand services today. Irene has provided strategic expertise to the development of national policies relating to out of school care, such as “School’s Out- a framework for out of school care” in 2003, and has contributed to wider policy relating to children and young people; e.g. the Early Years Framework (2008) and the current Children and Young People Bill (2013), where she is on the Scottish Government’s early years, learning and childcare sub group. She has also published research and carried out international work in the field, and served on various boards, committees, national and international forums. Irene was also involved in developing the Scottish Government national care standards for childcare and the development of the Standard for Childhood Practice.

2. The Organisation

The Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) is the leading national organisation promoting the development of high quality out of school care in Scotland and celebrated its 21st Anniversary in 2012. The organisation operates both on a national strategic policy level, and a practice development level; representing out of school care on various related national forums (e.g. Health, Care Inspectorate, SSSC), providing a national forum for development staff who support their local services. SOSCN also provides a wide range of information, advice and practical resources for services providing before and after school care and all day care during holidays, including services for children with disabilities and additional support needs. SOSCN has always sought cross party support for out of school care; our national charter for out of school care back in 1997/8 was co-signed by CoSLA and politicians in leading roles, nationally and at council levels, from each of the main parties at that time.

SOSCN also delivers Aiming High Scotland quality assurance scheme for out of school care; and this is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). We provide mentoring and training on a range of topics relevant to out of school care and we also organise events; seminars, conferences and consultation

meetings; including receptions in the Scottish Parliament every few years or, before devolution, in the UK Parliament.

Out of school care has historically, from the 1980s, mainly been funded (when it is funded) with the aim of supporting parents to return to work or education; yet out of school care has always also been provided to children in need; primarily to help children access play, care and informal learning opportunities in their own communities; or to support families experiencing difficulties. There has, therefore, been a strong tradition in Scotland for social work sponsored places for children, within universal out of school care services, and for various charities or councils to support specialist summer holiday services for children with disabilities; or to provide summer play and care opportunities for children in deprived areas, while women's aid refuges also have usually provided school age childcare. A central aim of our organisation is the alleviation of poverty through the provision of out of school care; and we see this broadly, in yes developing services so parents can work or train, but also for services to care for children in need. We are a member of the End Child Poverty UK wide coalition and contribute to this debate.

This broader remit of out of school care has to be borne in mind, as it both relates to the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach within the Children and Young People Bill, and, when we look at the barriers for women to taking up work, it is even harder for them to do so, from a position of social exclusion, or when their children have additional support needs, or they have experienced domestic abuse, or if a child is the carer of a sick or disabled parent. SOSCN indeed is a member of the childcare sub group of For Scotland's Disabled Children , and our own membership includes very specialist services e.g. for ethnic minority families, with severely disabled children.

Our core funding has always related to our overarching strategic role, wider than provision of membership services or our role in representing their views; while the bulk of our membership are out of school care services across Scotland; local authorities (some of which are also providers), fellow charities and training and qualifications providers are also members . At different times, we have been funded to provide further specialist support. For example, in 2002- 2006 we managed a Scotland wide £ 1.3 million Funding Facilitators project, supported by the Scottish Government and funded through the Big Lottery, in order to help deliver the £30 million out of school childcare grant programme which created 48,000 new out of school care places in Scotland, and to provide training and support to these new and expanding services.

More recently, In January 2013 we held a small expert Out of School Care Symposium to look at the issues facing out of school care in Scotland and to examine how this sector contributes now and in the future towards the government's stated aim to make Scotland "the best place in the world for a child to grow up". The symposium included senior local authority staff, academics, policy experts,

representatives from three exemplary services, SOSCN and the Minister for Children and Young People (with a family policy civil servant).

In late March 2013, SOSCN as an active member of the “Richer Understanding of Article 31 Group”, and partner with a variety of other play, arts, rights and youth organisations, organised a conference: “A Richer Understanding of Article 31- What does this mean for Scotland’s children?”. The event celebrated the launch of the UN General Comment on article 31 of the UNCRC, the child’s right to culture, leisure, rest and play. An element of the conference included a presentation from out of school care children about what article 31 means to them, as well as highlighting any issues that prevent them from experiencing this right. SOSCN help facilitate this work. The children gave an excellent presentation of their views on their rights to play, arts, rest recreation and leisure, and submitted questions to the Minister for Children and Young People, and other speakers.

We would stress that while our specific role is *in supporting the rights of school age children* and their parents to accessible, available, affordable (or even free when required) high quality out of school care, we also support the need for childcare, play and learning services for every child and young person at any age, so we also contribute to broader policy initiatives or campaigns for children and young people. We have researched the needs for a different kind of out of school service for children as they move from primary education to secondary education, and while indeed a few services do also cater for this older age group there are not enough, yet many parents are unhappy at the idea of leaving this age group “home alone”.

These notes, we hope, give a fuller flavour of our role and our work but for further details of various aspects of out of school care in Scotland our website www.soscn.org has downloadable factsheets and links with the short film the benefits of out of school care at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIDMi4u5k3Q>

3. Points to consider specifically in relation to women and work;

- There are enough evaluation reports relating both to the “out of school care initiative” funding delivered by Local Enterprise Companies back in the early 1990s, to the impact of the £30 million lottery funding in the early 2000s, to show the positive labour market impact for parents (mainly women) in accessing out of school care (SOSCN can supply links to this, if required). What is interesting looking back in the earlier reports is how important “peace of mind” is for parents; parents care that their children are happy in their childcare, therefore, if they have doubts about the quality of a service, or little choice on what service to use, this can add to their stress at work and, especially when women are made to feel guilty if they work and use childcare, further stress in their parenting role.
- We believe childcare, play and learning services for school age children should therefore be seen as part of the economic infrastructure of Scotland.

- There is a great deal of intensive activity around the delivery of the early years collaborative, which is very much based on Getting it Right for Every Child; strategically there has to be a next stage; where this work for the earliest years is built on to include school age children; recognising the role of out of school care in supporting children in need of extra support, as well as enabling their parents to work or train. We need to sustain support to vulnerable children, not cut off any extra help when they reach school age.
- Good quality childcare comes at a cost; a cost often born by the mainly women who really enjoy their work and are committed to careers in out of school care, but have low pay, part time work, with hardly enough time for them to fit in training and qualifications they legally need to stay working in childcare.
- 53% of OSC providers (first main service) are managed by volunteers, usually charity trustees; often (but not always) women, giving up their spare time in order to ensure they and other parents in their community access the childcare they need. So this is another way in which Out of School Care is subsidised and does not reflect the true costs of delivering quality local out of school care
- Many services are located in schools, but no school manages services and is unlikely to want to either. Parents often think services are run by schools, but SOSCN is quite clear that even when local authorities provide out of school care it is right it is managed separately as a play and care, leisure, arts and recreation service for children and a childcare service for parents.
- Where we do see opportunities in the future is for collaboration between schools and out of school care is in sharing space, resources and professional specialist staff; for example, the play and care professionals could help the school support children's need for play and help resource the school play grounds; while specialist arts, music and sports tutors could help both the school and out of school deliver such activities to children.
- With PPI/ PFI contracts even where LAs are supportive and want to provide free or low cost access to school premises for out of school care, they may not be able to do so without higher costs or control over the contract. The provision of in kind support like free or low cost access to premises is often the only thing which helps services stay afloat. There are also still subsidies in some areas to support the inclusion of children with additional support needs, to develop quality (both Scottish Borders and North Lanarkshire Council subsidise access to SOSCN's Aiming High quality assurance scheme), and to support qualifications. Generally however, as pressures on council budgets get harder, out of school care as a non statutory service, is hardly subsidised.
- Supply side funding is urgently required so we retain the services set up through huge investments ten years ago, as for now, to find that level of start up funding again will not be easy in this different economic climate.

- SOSCN is very concerned about forthcoming changes to childcare tax credits and the childcare voucher system. In 2015 when the UK government's proposed new childcare voucher scheme comes in, it will only cover costs of care up to school age. This means that unless parents are already in an existing employer voucher scheme for their school age children they will not access this help for some years.
- In terms of the new universal benefit system operating childcare tax credits on a monthly monitoring basis, we are quite unclear how this is to be delivered without creating extra work for parents in claiming every month, and indeed have concerns that many low income families might fail to qualify for either childcare tax credits or the new voucher scheme.

Summing up:

We want investment in OSC in the supply side and that is a consistent policy of SOSCN but we also want to work towards a transformational change in childcare and support for children and families overall, in a specifically Scottish approach and context, drawing on the best of international practice, but recognising Scotland's already distinct and unique approaches to education, wellbeing and welfare of children

Historically a strong advocate for women, children and young people's rights, SOSCN also supports more inclusion of men in workforce caring roles, recognising their important roles as fathers and their need to also be involved in their children's lives. We are also supportive of wider policies which help parents balance work and family life, such as flexible working, time off to take care of a sick dependent and, indeed, financial help for a stay at home parent to look after children themselves. We believe the provision of high quality childcare is a partnership with parents to help them in their role of supporting their families.

Irene Audain MBE
Chief Executive
Scottish Out of School Care Network
29 April 2013

Appendix

1. National Childcare Statistics 2011 (Source: Care Inspectorate, 2012).

In November 2012 the Care Inspectorate published statistics relating to registered childcare services in 2011. According to these statistics there are 712 which primarily identify themselves as out of school care services and 282 other services which also provide out of school care but is not their main service. This makes a total of 994 out of school care services in Scotland, providing places for a total of 45,620 children and this means out of school care is still the 2nd largest of childcare provision in Scotland, behind nurseries which provide places for 134,270 children. Childminding provides places for 30,490 children; which also includes school age children, crèches provide places for 20,390 children, and playgroups provide places for 10,490 children.

Of the 712 out of school care services, 284 also operate a breakfast club, 1 also operates a children/family centre, 10 also operate crèches, 369 also operate a holiday play scheme, 5 also operate nurseries and 3 also operate playgroups. Of the 712 out of school care services, 53% is provided by the voluntary sector, 24% is provided by the private sector and 13% is provided by the public sector.

This is the first time in nearly ten years that the overall no. of services had dropped below 1,000, however the number of places is higher than the previous year suggesting some consolidation of services (merging or re-organising structures).

2. SOSCN Workforce Survey Results 2012

Now in its fifth year, SOSCN conducted the annual workforce survey over the summer. The full report is available from www.soscn.org

Overview

55% of returns were from the voluntary sector, 35% private sector, 3% public sector, and 7% were un-known. 92% of returns were from female respondents and 8% male. 2% of all respondents had a registered disability. 88% identified themselves as either Scottish or British and 3% belonged to another ethnic background.

Lead Practitioner Profile

The average. lead practitioner is 43 years old, employed for 27 hours (term-time) and 34 hours (holiday-time), earning £10.74 per hour and has been employed in out of school care for 10 years. 95% are currently registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). 90% see out of school care as a career, 95% are either very or fairly satisfied with their job. 77% are qualified to SVQ 4 or and higher, and 10% are qualified to BA degree level.

Practitioner Profile

The average practitioner is 34 years old, employed for 20 hours (term-time) and 26 hours (holiday-time), earning £7.88 per hour and has been employed in out of school care for 6.25 years. 95% are currently registered with the Scottish Social Services Council. 83% see out of school care as a career, and 95% are either very or fairly satisfied with their job. 86% are qualified to SVQ 3 and higher, and 9% are qualified to SVQ 4 and higher.

Support Worker Profile

The average support worker is 33 years old, employed for 15 hours (term-time) and 28.5 hours (holiday-time), earning £7.12 per hour and has been employed in out of school care for 3.5 years. 34% are currently registered with the Scottish Social Services Council. 70% see out of school care as a career, 100% are either very or fairly satisfied with their job. 51% are qualified to SVQ 2 and higher, and 32% are qualified to SVQ 3 and higher