

Cross Party Group on Children and Young People

Challenges in the delivery of ELC and School Age Childcare

Wednesday 14th June 2023 13:00 – 14:00
Minutes

Chair: Meghan Gallacher MSP

Present

MSPs

Meghan Gallacher MSP

Jeremy Balfour MSP

Invited guests

Sharon Fairley, Scottish Private Nurseries Association

Caitlin Logan, One Parent Families Scotland

Non-MSP Group Members

Chris Ross, Children in Scotland

Arran Goodfellow, Children in Scotland

David Mackay, Children in Scotland

Julie Thomson, Children in Scotland

Sarah Paterson, YouthLink Scotland

Todd Henshaw, Flexible Childcare Services Scotland

Steffi Keir, Save the Children Scotland

Kirsten Shield, Salvesen Mindroom

Angus Maclean, Befriending Networks

Sarah Rogers, Families Outside

Leah Duncan-Karrim, Barnardos Scotland

Sophie Flemig, Cattanach

Lucinda Rivers, UNICEF UK

Andrew Shoolbread, Scottish Out of School Care Network

Finlay Allmond, Magic Breakfast

Georgiana Bugeag, United Nations House of Scotland

Elena Soper, The Young Women's Movement

Robyn Pattison, Forces Children Scotland

Jan Benvie, Peace & Justice (Scotland)

Anna Tulley, CCPS

Douglas Ross, Princes Trust

Zara Kitson, Princes Trust
Michael Gregori, Princes Trust
Kerry Reilly, YMCA
Ryan Bowie, Quarriers
Karen Freel, Perspectiva Consultants
Fatoumata Drammeh, UNICEF UK

Welcome from chair

Meghan Gallacher MSP welcomed members of the CPG to the fourth meeting of the new parliamentary term. Meghan informed the group that the meeting would revisit the topic of Early Learning Childcare (ELC) and school-aged childcare and the challenges facing parents, families, and the sector – which was discussed at the January meeting.

Meghan gave a summary of the key issues that were highlighted by members at the meeting in January, including workforce issues, funding cycles, inconsistent funding from councils, and certain groups facing more barriers to accessing childcare.

She informed members that they would hear from representatives of two member organisations, who would highlight the challenges they are experiencing in the delivery of childcare.

The panel included Sharon Fairley from Scottish Private Nurseries Association and Caitlin Logan from One Parent Families Scotland.

Following this, Meghan said the members would have the opportunity for more in-depth discussion on the delivery of ELC and school age childcare.

Members were informed that the information shared by all members would be collated alongside the notes from the January meeting to create a summary to send to the Cabinet Secretary and new Minister for Children and Young People. Included with the summary would be an invitation to attend another meeting to discuss the concerns raised.

Meghan ran through a range of housekeeping measures before moving onto official business.

CPG Business

a. Minutes

Meghan stated the secretariat had shared the previous minutes with members of the group. No issues were raised in relation to the minutes, and members were asked to confirm if they were happy to take the previous minutes as read.

This was approved by membership and the minutes were ratified.

b. New MSP members

Meghan explained Michael Marra MSP is intending to step down from the CPG due to the Scottish Labour Party Reshuffle. Pam Duncan Glancy MSP offered to take his place and members accepted Pam as a new member of the CPG.

Meghan then briefly introduced and handed over to the speakers to share their experiences regarding the challenges of ELC facing parents, families, and the sector.

Sharon Fairley, CEO, Scottish Private Nurseries Association

The Scottish Private Nurseries Association (SPNA) is a grass-roots membership organisation. They are run, managed, and funded by owners and managers of private, voluntary and independent nurseries, and they educate and advocate in a meaningful and positive approach on behalf of the sector and the children in Scotland.

Sharon highlighted the gaps in the Audit Scotland Report and called for more data to show the true cost of 1140 hours and benefits have been to children and young people. Sharon commented on 3 of the main challenges facing them:

- Councils being both the funder and competitor – no regulating body
- The care inspectorate and legislation
- Workforce and recruitment – too much pressure and low wages

Sharon commented on some of the solutions to the challenges which included showing value and respect to all workers with fair pay across the sector, constant reviews, a regulatory body holding councils accountable, and more infrastructure and financial support.

[Click here to see a summary of Sharon's points.](#)

Caitlin Logan, One Parent Families Scotland

One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) is the leading charity working with single parent families in Scotland. They provide expert advice, practical support and campaign with parents to make their voices heard to change the systems, policies and attitudes that disadvantage single parent families.

Caitlin highlighted many of the issues facing single parent families, including difficulties in accessing the labour market and high levels of poverty. The main points raised were as follows:

- 38% of children with one parent were found to be in poverty compared to 25% of all children in Scotland.
- Single parent families have a higher rate of in-work poverty.

- Research by OPFS found that over 20% said they would not afford childcare, a further 23% said they struggle to afford childcare, and single parents were twice as likely to struggle with childcare costs than dual parent families.
- Two thirds of single parents said childcare put them into debt (survey by Mumsnet)
- Women are still facing inequalities in the labour market.
- OPFS and Closing the Gap are creating a position paper in which they are highlighting the importance of childcare being seen as social infrastructure.
- The paper notes that more needs to be done to ensure child poverty targets are met.

Group Discussion Summary

Afterwards, the group had the opportunity to share thoughts on what they had heard. The main points raised were as follows:

- Charities are hindered by the workforce issues which need urgent resolving before work can be done on expansion.
- Care inspectorate issues seem more critical now than before the pandemic.
- Kinship carers – takes years to access child benefits or Scottish Child Payments. Parity between kinship care and fostering where child related benefits are being deducted from kinship carers
- Pay isn't the only aspect that is affecting the workforce – part time hours and temporary contracts are an issue.
- High level of responsibility for low wages – full time expectation for part time hours
- Many nurseries in private sector must charge parents more to stay open but they cannot afford to pay more, hence childcare providers closing.
- Childcare has outgrown the legislation – need to ensure legislation matches what people are doing on the ground.
- School aged childcare and 1140 hours did not exist when last legislation made – different environment and ambition in past.
- Need to change perception of childcare – encourage students who are not sure of career path to experience childcare.
- Impact of childcare to affecting women accessing the labour market – need to support the group who are willing to work and remove the barrier of childcare.
- Childcare providers that use students for supply work who do not have SVQ qualifications are not counted by the Care Inspectorate.

Close

Meghan thanked all attendees for their participation and for their patience with the technical issues.

Meghan advised the next meeting of the CPG would be in September, after the summer break. Following the meeting, it was agreed that a summary paper would be created from the two ELC meetings which would be shared with members and the Scottish Government. Invitations would also be sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Minister for Children and Young People to attend a future meeting.