

# **Analysis of Consultation Responses for Out of School Care in Scotland: A Draft Framework 2019**

November 2020

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The Scottish Government ran a public consultation to invite feedback on the draft Out of School Care Framework. The consultation period ran for 14 weeks between 30<sup>th</sup> August and 6<sup>th</sup> December 2019. It asked 21 questions, consisting of three closed questions and 18 open questions.

A total of 1,270 usable responses were received, including 111 responses from organisations, 1,141 from individuals, and 18 event summaries. Most responses were provided by parents/carers (62%), followed by other individuals<sup>1</sup> (21%) and out of school care providers (10%).

The issues identified and discussed by respondents at each consultation question tended to be fairly consistent between the different respondent groups.

## Key Results

### National Policy Support

The consultation asked two questions designed to elicit views on how national policy could enhance and support out of school care.

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'?

A total of 912 (72%) respondents provided a substantive response to this question.

Many respondents (30%) felt that the term 'Out of School Care' was satisfactory and/or saw no reason to change it. It was generally felt that the term was well understood, that parents/carers and children were familiar with this, and that the terminology was suitably descriptive and accurate. A further 10% of respondents indicated that they were less concerned with what the service was called, and were more interested in ensuring sufficient, affordable provision of high quality services.

Alternative names/terminology was suggested by some respondents however, with most being more descriptive of the provision (e.g. breakfast clubs, after-school clubs, and holiday clubs), or to include the term 'wraparound' or 'play'. Others supported a change to allow a move away from references to 'school' and 'care'.

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

A total of 1,129 (89%) respondents provided a quantitative response at this question, with 705 (56%) respondents also providing qualitative comments.

Respondents were also overwhelmingly supportive of the three key aims outlined for a future out of school care framework, with 95% of those who answered the question indicating support for these. Providing accessible and affordable services was considered

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<sup>1</sup> This group mostly consisted individuals who did not provide any other information about their status, as well as a few who could not be grouped with other categories.

to be the most important aim, and was considered vital in supporting parents/carers to work, train or study. Respondents generally believed in the provision of high quality services, staffed by high quality staff who can provide a caring and nurturing environment. They were also supportive of services that can support children to try different activities, and develop life and social skills. Similarly, respondents were generally supportive of out of school services using/accessing community facilities and spaces so that children integrate with and feel part of the community. Having access to the outdoors was also considered important to promote health and wellbeing among children and young people. A common theme throughout, however, was that additional funding would be needed to allow the Scottish Government to achieve the specified aims.

The overwhelming support for the aims suggests that it would be appropriate for these to be retained and implemented.

### **Preferred Out of School Activities**

The consultation asked seven questions in relation to the type of out of school activities that families want or need:

What range of services are needed? Can you tell us why these services are important?

A total of 1,203 (95%) respondents provided a quantitative response at this question, with 1,184 (93%) respondents also providing qualitative comments.

Most respondents felt that regulated out of school care (92%) and activity based clubs and programmes (85%) were needed, and over half of all respondents (56%) suggested that childminders were needed. Indeed, a wide range of different provision was seen as necessary to meet the needs and preferences of parents/carers and children, as well as to offer choice to families.

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

A total of 1,162 (91%) respondents provided a response at this question.

Provision was considered necessary for a wide range of age groups, although the largest perceived demand appears to be for primary school aged children (52% of respondents identified this age group), as it was typically felt that older children would be more independent and more capable/trusted to be home alone. While secondary school provision seems less in demand, there was still a perceived need, particularly for those in S1 and S2 (26% of respondents identified a need for this age group) and a perceived shortage of current provision for this age group.

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

A total of 1,085 (85%) respondents provided a response at this question.

Considerable flexibility was identified as being required by families. This included accommodating various needs in timings and uptake of sessions, being able to access sessions/change bookings at short notice, access fairer payment terms, and the safe transportation of children between school, activities and care services. However, organisations suggested that providing this degree of flexibility could be challenging for service providers within their current models of delivery, and costly.

Flexibility was considered to be highly important for parents/carers as working patterns vary, childcare is needed for school holidays and other school closures. It was felt that shift workers, in particular, are currently poorly catered for because parents/carers often need to adapt to short notice changes to their schedules. Reliability was also highly valued by parents/carers who need to be certain that space(s) can be accessed when needed.

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

A total of 1,139 (90%) respondents provided a response at this question.

The preferred location for out of school care services were:

- co-located in/with schools (43% of those who gave an answer);
- to provide a mix/variety of venues (23% of those who gave an answer);
- anywhere with access to the outdoors (20% of those who gave an answer);
- near to schools (18% of those who gave an answer); and
- in community facilities (12% of those who gave an answer).

The preference for services to be in or co-located with schools was largely due to convenience (for children and parents/carers) and because these were considered to already have suitable facilities. Several, however, felt it was important for services to be located elsewhere so that children get a change of scene.

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

A total of 1,158 (91%) respondents provided a quantitative response at this question, with 1,089 (86%) respondents also providing qualitative comments.

Most respondents felt that food should be provided as part of after-school and holiday clubs (81%), although there were mixed views as to who should provide this (the service or parents/carers). Service based food provision was seen as particularly important by many in tackling food insecurity for some families/children.

The main concerns over food provision were safety/risks for children with food allergies/intolerances and cost implications.

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

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

A total of 1,184 (93%) respondents provided a response to the first of these questions, while 925 (73%) respondents provided information at the second.

Many respondents agreed that what children and young people want from out of school care will differ by age, and therefore activities should be age and stage specific, and the type of provision should be different by age.

For younger children it was suggested that services should provide a 'fun' environment with nurturing and supportive staff and should offer a range of activities and spaces to facilitate structured activities, free play and quiet space.

Generally, it was agreed that older children would require a more informal service and hands-off approach from staff compared to younger children, while also allowing them to be more actively involved in shaping their 'care' experience. Some also felt that secondary school age pupils would prefer more diverse and tailored offerings that help with the development of life skills and support the focus on attainment. It should be noted, however, that there was a lack of identifiable responses from young people of secondary school age so it is difficult to be certain about what they would like.

## **Making Out of School Care Accessible**

The consultation asked five questions in order to elicit views on how to 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?

In total, 1,126 (89%) respondents provided a response at this question. Of these, 34% specifically mentioned the need for subsidised provision, 7% explicitly identified a need for help with upfront costs, 4% discussed barriers in accessing benefits, while a further 9% felt that all three of these would be required/helpful.

The provision of financial support was considered the most important issue (with this issue mentioned frequently throughout the consultation). This was discussed both in relation to providing subsidised or free child places, and to support services with costs (such as help with set-up costs, subsidised rent/free access to local authority facilities, help with staff costs, and grants to purchase equipment). There was little agreement, however, in relation to how any subsidies should be administered (e.g. available for the most vulnerable only, for those on benefits only, means tested, or universally available to all families).

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?

In total 1,177 (93%) respondents provided a response at this question.

The main issues identified as being important in ensuring all families have access included:

- increased capacity both within existing services and the creation of new services;
- affordability, with many again advocating for funding/subsidies;
- greater and more effective advertising of services so parents/carers are aware of what is available; and
- ensuring services are accessible for children and parents/carers.

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

A total of 833 (66%) respondents provided a substantive response at this question.

While transport provision was universally considered important in order to support the safe transition of children between school and other services, this issue was particularly acute in rural and remote areas and considered as essential to ensure that rural/remote areas can provide an effective service.

Other elements considered important in rural/remote services included:

- ensuring services are easily accessible, with many suggesting schools and local community facilities should be used for out of school care services;
- recruiting staff from the local community and allowing use of volunteers;
- encouraging and supporting local communities to set-up their own services; and
- supporting greater provision of childminders.

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

A total of 867 (68%) respondents provided a substantive response at this question.

The key elements that were suggested to ensure children with disabilities and additional support needs can access out of school care services included:

- the provision of accessible venues - this included ensuring they are physically accessible as well as provide suitable quiet and sensory spaces;
- providing trained staff - this included both general awareness training and specialist support;
- greater consultation with families to identify demand, needs and barriers; and
- that funding or subsidies would be needed to absorb the additional costs so that these are not passed on to families.

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

A total of 1,144 (90%) respondents provided a response at this question.

The key elements considered important to support community based approaches were similar to those required for rural/remote services and other issues outlined above. These included:

- the provision of funding and minimising the cost of rent;
- the provision of guidance, practical advice and support;
- encouragement/support to work in partnership with other local services; and
- that community facilities should be made available for out of school care.

### **Supporting the Out of School Care Workforce**

Four questions were asked in order to understand how best to support the out of school care workforce to deliver high quality services.

What qualifications, skills and experiences should the out of school care workforce have?  
What is most important and why?

A total of 1,072 (84%) respondents provided a response at this question.

Many felt that it was important to provide a range of qualifications, skills and experiences within and between out of school care services. Parents/carers and other individuals were reasonably evenly split on whether formal professional qualifications should be required, or whether experience, skills and personal attributes were more important. All others, however, were more likely to favour the need for qualifications. At the aggregate level, there was a slight preference for out of school care staff to have, or be working towards, formal qualifications.

A wide range of experience/skills, qualifications, training/certification and personal qualities were discussed by respondents as being key, along with potential consequences and negative impacts of requiring formal qualifications for all staff.

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 be the same or different? Why?

A total of 987 (78%) respondents provided a response to this question.

For most respondent groups there was a fairly even split between those who felt the same requirements should apply and those who felt that differences should be accepted. Among third sector/charity organisations however, more respondents felt that qualifications should be different, while more OSC providers felt that the qualifications should be the same across the sector.

Those who supported the same qualification requirements typically argued that services faced the same risks/issues, and needed to provide the same level of support to children. It was also felt this would allow greater mobility of staff between the different service provisions. Others, however, felt that the qualification requirements should be tailored to suit each of the different settings and to ensure a range of different staff (and volunteers) can contribute to the sector.

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

A total of 995 (78%) respondents provided a response to the question.

The key elements considered important to promoting the sector as a more attractive career included:

- more attractive salaries and employment terms and conditions;
- supporting/funding staff to gain qualifications and provide high quality training;
- clear career progression routes; and
- greater promotion of the sector both for recruitment purposes and to increase recognition/value of the sector.

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

A total of 648 (51%) respondents provided a response to this question.

The main issues discussed by respondents focused on:

- the barriers created by the current salary and employment terms and conditions, and the need to improve both of these;
- placing less emphasis on formal qualification or recognising a wider range of qualifications and transferable skills/experience; and
- wider promotion of the sector, including encouragement to see this as a career, and to specifically promote diversity within the workforce.

## **Conclusions**

Overall, the consultation achieved a high response rate, both in general and for each question posed. A high number of service users and providers responded, as well as a wide range of other stakeholder groups. There was also significant consistency in the range of issues discussed, both between respondent groups and questions.

The consultation provided valuable feedback to assist the Scottish Government in taking forward the Out of School Care in Scotland Framework. However, it may be necessary to further explore the needs/wants/experiences of a range of groups who risk being under-represented within the consultation responses, including:

- secondary school pupils;
- children with disabilities and additional support needs;
- those living in remote/rural areas;
- families with children with disabilities or additional support needs;
- parents/carers from deprived areas;
- parents/carers not currently accessing out of school care services;
- childminders; and
- activity club providers.

Alternative approaches may be required to get feedback from these groups.

# Introduction

## Background to the Research

The 2017-18 Programme for Government requires the Scottish Government to publish a framework for after-school and holiday childcare by the end of this parliamentary term<sup>2</sup>. In addition, one of the 15 actions specified in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan<sup>3</sup> is to provide new support for after-school and holiday childcare to help low income families reduce childcare costs, work more flexibly, and increase their incomes.

Following the collaborative approach promoted by the National Performance Framework<sup>4</sup>, a draft Out of School Care Framework was developed by the Scottish Government in partnership with children, families, providers of out of school care and organisations with an interest in children's outcomes. To better understand the needs of families and current out of school care provision, the Scottish Government liaised extensively with these key stakeholders, establishing a Reference Group and conducting a range of research activities such as surveys, interviews and events/workshops with parents/carers, children, the out of school care sector and others. This work led to the co-creation of a vision for out of school care in Scotland, which is *"a rights based dynamic offer for all children and young people which supports choice and growth, enabling families and communities to reach their full potential"*.

The Scottish Government then undertook a public consultation to seek feedback on the draft Framework. This focused on four broad questions, as follows:

- How can national policy support and enhance out of school care?
- What sort of out of school care activities do families want/need?
- How can we make out of school care accessible to all families and children?
- How can we support the out of school care workforce to deliver high quality services?

The results from this consultation are presented here.

## The Consultation Process

The consultation ran for 14 weeks, opening on the 30<sup>th</sup> August 2019 and closing on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2019. It asked 21 questions, consisting of 3 closed questions (i.e. yes/no responses or multiple choice options), and 18 open questions (i.e. free text response options).

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<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government (2017) *A Nation with Ambition: The Government's Programme for Scotland 2017-2018*. Accessed at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/nation-ambition-governments-programme-scotland-2017-18/>

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government (2018) *Every Child, Every Chance: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-2022*. Accessed at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/>

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Government National Performance Framework, Accessible at <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

The questions followed the structure of the draft Framework, with questions designed to elicit views on each of the four key areas above.

As a public consultation, views were sought from both individuals and organisations. Various consultation methods were used, including hosting the consultation document and seeking views via Citizen Space (the Scottish Government's online consultation platform), parent packs being provided to various organisations to encourage discussion and participation among parents/carers, and a series of consultation events held with professionals working in the sector, parents/carers, and children.

## Response Profile

A total of 1,273 responses were received, however, two responses were removed from the analysis as they were blank/contained no information relevant to the consultation. One duplicate response was also removed. As such, the final number of substantive responses included in the analysis was **1,270**. This included **111** responses from organisations, **1,141** from individuals (including 38 parent pack responses), and **18** event summaries.

Responses were classified by 'type' based on Respondent Information Forms (RIFs) submitted by participants and by information contained within the consultation responses. The consultation document initially did not ask respondents to classify themselves beyond being either an individual or an organisation, although the RIF was later amended to request further details. All responses where further details were not specified were examined by the research team and recoded where they explicitly detailed a respondent's 'type'. This resulted in 172 respondents being recoded from 'not specified' to 'parent/carer', 13 to 'out of school care provider', and one as an 'other' individual.

The table below shows the final profile of respondents by sector<sup>5</sup>. This shows that most responses were provided by parents/carers (62%), followed by other individuals (21%), and out of school care (OSC) providers (10%).

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<sup>5</sup> Note: Sector based disaggregation collate both individual and organisational responses, where relevant.

## Sample Profile

	Number	Percentage
Parents/Carers	788	62%
Other Individuals <sup>1</sup>	269	21%
Out of school care providers	125	10%
Third Sector/Charities	28	2%
Education Providers	14	1%
Young People	12	1%
Early Years Practitioners	11	1%
Local Authorities	11	1%
Other Public and Regulatory Bodies	7	1%
Youth Workers	4	<1%
Total	1269 <sup>2</sup>	100%

<sup>1</sup> Including those that did not specify beyond being an 'individual' (n=249) and those classified as 'other' (n=20) and reflect a wide range of different professions/roles.

<sup>2</sup> One further response represents an event which included both parents/carers and out of school care providers and so could not be allocated to one respondent 'type' only.

The majority of responses (n=1,184; 93%) were submitted directly via Citizen Space. A further 68 (5%) responses were submitted by post or email, in addition to the 18 event summaries provided to the research team via email (2%).

Most responses followed the standard format although several were received which did not answer the specific consultation questions, but instead discussed their views in relation to the four sections of the consultation more generally, or offered generic observations or feedback on the draft Framework as a whole. There was no word limit for free text responses and the length and level of detail provided in responses varied considerably (with responses from individuals typically being shorter than those from organisations).

Not all questions were relevant to all respondents, and so the parent packs and events focused on the questions that were most relevant to each group. Therefore, some respondents did not answer every question.

Several respondents referenced external sources of evidence within their responses. These were not analysed here but a full list of these references was provided separately to the Scottish Government for consideration.

## Analytical Approach

All responses were logged into a database and screened to ensure that they were appropriate/valid. Feedback was then analysed and is presented under the appropriate sections below.

Closed question responses were quantified and the number of respondents who agreed/disagreed with each response option is reported below. Non-responses are also shown. Comments given at each open question were examined to identify the main themes and issues being discussed, with analysis conducted to identify any differences in views between the respondent groups. The main themes to emerge across the consultation were also recorded and verbatim quotes extracted in some cases to highlight the dominant views that were expressed.

All respondents were asked if they were willing for their response to be published. Two thirds (n=840, 66%) wanted only their response to be published, without their name, while 18% (n=234) were content for their response to be published with their name. The remaining respondents (n=196, 16%) either did not wish their response to be published or did not answer the question, and so were treated as wishing to remain anonymous.

Only extracts where the respondent indicated that they were content for their response to be published have been included in this report. A decision was made to anonymise all responses as part of the reporting process.

## **Report Presentation and Caveats**

Findings are presented as they relate to each question in the consultation. The report is structured, however, around the four overarching questions outlined in the consultation, with questions clustered under each heading as appropriate (as detailed in the chart overleaf). As such, the questions are not presented here in numerical order, or in the same order in which they appeared in the consultation documents, i.e. some of the questions asked at the outset of the consultation are presented later in this report. It should also be noted that the order in which questions were asked varied between the different administration methods, (i.e. between the Citizen Space, parent pack and event formats), and this may have had an impact on the level and nature of detail given at individual questions between response methods (with many respondents providing more detailed responses at earlier questions, but which often covered material more relevant to later questions).

The tables in the following chapters show the difference in views expressed by the respondent group as a whole, and are split by individuals and organisations for each of the closed questions (further disaggregation is provided at Appendix A). Responses from the events have been counted as a single response, although they were attended by multiple respondents. Similarly, several organisations collated/presented the views of multiple service users and, again, these have been counted as one response. As such, the actual number of contributors will be higher than stated overall. Further, a few respondents identified themselves as belonging to more than one respondent typology (e.g. as a parent/carer and an education provider). In these instances, respondents have been analysed based on their initial typology.

Where individual respondents offered views that differed significantly from those submitted by organisations at the open questions, this is picked up narratively in the report, as are any differences between the different respondent groups.

In several sections throughout this report bullet point lists are provided to summarise issues discussed by respondents. The order of the points typically denotes the frequency with which they were discussed, i.e. those at the top of the list were mentioned most frequently, while those at the bottom were mentioned less frequently, unless otherwise stated.

Finally, there was a notable bias in the overall sample, with parents/carers making up a large proportion of responses. However, despite the large numbers of parents/carers taking part, it is not possible to determine any additional demographic or geographic information about the respondents and so it is not possible to determine the representativeness of this group. There were also very few responses from childminders and those involved with other activity clubs in comparison to those representing the out of school care sector. This means that there will be an inherent bias in the findings from the consultation, with views skewed towards the interests of those who responded. The findings presented here should not, therefore, be taken as representative of the wide range of stakeholders invited to respond to this consultation, nor should they be generalised too broadly. Rather, they reflect only the views of those individuals and organisations who chose to respond.

<p>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'? (Q3)</p>	<p>What sort of out of school activities do families want/need?</p>	<p>How can we make out of school care accessible to all families and children?</p>	<p>How can we support the out of school care workforce to deliver high quality services?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you agree with our 3 key aims for a future out of school care framework? (Q4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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? Can you tell us why these services are important? (Q1)</li> <li>What ages of children do parents/carers need provision for? (Q13)</li> <li>What flexibility do parents and carers need from out of school care services? Can you tell us why this flexibility is important? (Q11)</li> <li>What is important for parents and carers in terms of location of out of school care services? Should they be delivered in school, community facilities, outdoors? (Q12)</li> <li>Do parents/carers need food provision as part of after-school and holiday clubs? (Q14)</li> <li>What do children and young people want from out of school care services and does this differ depending on age? (Q6)</li> <li>What different activities or provision might secondary school aged children want? (Q7)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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). (Q8)</li> <li>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? (Q5)</li> <li>How can services be more effectively delivered in rural/remote areas to meet the needs of families? (Q9)</li> <li>How can we ensure that children with disabilities and additional support needs can access out of school care services? (Q10)</li> <li>What can we do to support community based approaches to delivering out of school care? (Q2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What qualifications, skills and experience should the out of school care workforce have? What is most important and why? (Q15)</li> <li>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? (Q16)</li> <li>How can we promote working in the out of school care sector as a more attractive career choice? (Q17)</li> <li>How can we increase diversity across the out of school care workforce? (Q18)</li> </ul>

# National Policy Support

The consultation sought to identify how national policy could enhance and support out of school care. To address this, views were invited on the name and terminology that should be used to describe the sector and feedback on the three key aims for out of school care provision.

## Terminology

Q3. 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'?

A total of 912 (72%) respondents provided a substantive response in relation to the name/terminology that should be used to describe the range of out of school care services.

Many respondents (n=277, 30%) felt that the term 'Out of School Care' was satisfactory and/or saw no reason to change it. It was generally felt that the term was well understood, that parents/carers and children were familiar with this, and that the terminology was suitably descriptive and accurate. A further 90 respondents (10%) indicated that they were less concerned with what the service was called (and therefore felt that rebranding was unnecessary/not the main priority), and were more interested in there being sufficient, affordable provision of high quality services.

Several felt the term 'Out of School Care', and particularly the inclusion of the word 'care' allowed the sector to highlight its professionalism, the fact that it is regulated, and set apart from other activity clubs, etc. A few suggested that it would be important to maintain this presentation of professionalism should the terminology be changed:

*"I don't like the term club, it removes the professionalism we have."  
(Event, OSC Provider)*

*"A new name that clearly defines the sector as one of its own, not an add-on to statutory services would help with driving forward public perception of the sector as one delivered by professionals and support the work force to feel valued and recognised for the work they do." (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

Alternative or new names were, however, suggested by 246 respondents (27%) (with some providing multiple suggestions), although, in most cases respondents did not make clear whether they supported the need for such a change or were simply suggesting alternatives because they had been asked. The most common suggestions included terminology such as:

- Breakfast clubs, before and after-school clubs and holiday clubs - although alternatives to 'club' were also suggested, including care/activities/programmes/services/café/fun/youth hubs/activity dens/zone/etc. (mentioned by 161 respondents);
- Wraparound care/childcare/clubs/activities/etc. (mentioned by 53 respondents); and

- To include the word ‘play’, for example, play academy/play and learn/active play/etc. (mentioned by 18 respondents).

Other options suggested by a few respondents included kids club, school’s out, terminology related to health and wellbeing, being active, extended learning/day clubs/care, and the Scandinavian model of Leisure Time.

Arguments provided in support of making a change to the name included a need to move away from references and links with ‘school’ and ‘care’, particularly for older children and young carers, and to place more emphasis on the child, promote inclusion for both children and the range of providers involved, focus on the activities undertaken, and include words such as ‘play’, ‘activities’ and ‘clubs’ in the name. Some respondents (both individuals and organisations) indicated that they were happy with the ‘out of school’ element of the term but felt that ‘care’ should be changed, typically to ‘activities’ or ‘club’, to be more inclusive, supportive and engender belonging.

A few also indicated that they would like to include the word ‘learning’ or ‘education’ within the terminology, while others felt it was important to prioritise fun and play.

A few respondents also felt that there was confusion over the current term and what provision was included. For example, respondents were unsure whether nursery provision for pre-school children was applicable, whether this referred only to services which are located away from school buildings, whether weekend provision was included, whether this referred to only regulated services or included unregulated services as well. As such, they felt the terminology needed to be clearer.

## Aims for a Future Out of School Framework

Q4. Do you agree with our 3 key aims for a future out of school framework?

The consultation document set out the three key aims which would need to be met in order to realise the vision for out of school care. These were:

1. High quality services which provide children with life-enhancing experiences.
2. Out of school care is accessible and affordable and meets the needs of children and young people, parents and carers and communities.
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.

The table below shows that most (95%) respondents who provided a response (including both individuals (95%) and organisations (97%)) agreed with the 3 key aims.

### Q4 Do you agree with our 3 key aims for a future out of school care framework?

	Total Sample	Individuals <sup>1</sup>	Organisations
Yes	1129 (95%)	1041 (95%)	88 (97%)
No	57 (5%)	54 (5%)	3 (3%)

<sup>1</sup> This includes data from individuals, groups of young people and events where this question was discussed.

<sup>2</sup> 84 respondents either were not asked or did not provide an answer to this question.

Of those who indicated at the closed element of the question that they agreed with the 3 key aims, 705 (62%) also provided comments to explain their answer.

Respondents typically agreed with the overall aims, supporting the need for affordable and accessible care, which utilises a range of spaces including the outdoors, and provides a range of opportunities - albeit that a few acknowledged these were aspirational and challenging aims to achieve (particularly in relation to affordability). Many felt that all three aims were important:

*“I feel it is important to have all three of these aspects to ensure all children have access and to support parents and carers to continue to learn and/or work.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Encouragingly, some respondents noted that services they were aware of already achieved all three aims, while others highlighted that work would be required to ensure all services met these aims:

*“This is the ethos that most out of school [services] already work with.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

### **Providing Children with Life-Enhancing Experiences**

In relation to providing children with life-enhancing experiences, respondents typically related this to the provision of high quality care, with high quality staff providing a caring and nurturing environment. They also aligned it with allowing children to try different activities, develop life and social skills, and develop bonds with the care staff. It was felt that this aim was important in ensuring the service is not simply seen as ‘babysitting’, and to tackle some of the perceived poor/low quality provision that currently exists for both out of school care and holiday clubs:

*“I believe that the first area is beneficial in ensuring that children are given the opportunity to mix in a social setting with peers. This is of particular benefit to children who have limited opportunity for other out of school activities such as sports, outside play, clubs, etc.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Several respondents also felt that this aim was important in ensuring that all children were given equal opportunities and that those from more deprived socio-economic areas/families are provided the opportunity to experience activities and situations they may otherwise not have access to:

*“Giving an explicit guarantee to ensure all children receive the same life-enhancing experiences is crucial to safeguard against the problems of ongoing austerity and poverty for many families across Scotland.” (Organisation, Third Sector/Charity)*

## **Accessible and Affordable**

Accessibility and affordability appeared to be the most important and the most commonly discussed aim. This was seen as critical to allow parents/carers to work, undertake training or study and have affordable childcare which supported their working patterns. Examples were given where the majority of parents'/carers' salaries were needed to pay the childcare costs, and where parents/carers had to reduce their working hours in order to reduce childcare costs and better manage their finances:

*"...as a family it would cost us £70 a day to send our 3 kids morning and afterschool, that's more than a day's wage, so I can't get back to work." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*"Accessible and affordable out of school care is essential for parents, without affordability the care would not be used and would cease to be a provision." (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

Respondents typically considered that 'accessible' referred to a service's location to ensure it was geographically accessible for families and schools, being accessible for children with additional support needs, and that there was sufficient capacity/availability of spaces to meet demand:

*"It needs to be accessible i.e. sufficient places available if you should find yourself needing one. At present if you aren't lucky enough to get a requested place at the start of the term, it is unlikely one will become available due to high demand for a low number of places." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

## **Embedded in Communities/Access to a Range of Spaces**

The location of services was also seen as key, and should be easily accessible to pupils before/after school - although a few suggested that locating the out of school care service in a school was not necessarily desirable for children that have been at school all day. Support was also expressed for the use of/access to community facilities and spaces to support out of hours care. This was considered important to ensure that children integrate with and feel part of the community. It was also suggested by a few respondents that such an aim could help to generate links between out of school care services and other local services:

*"Communities are fundamental and children need to know they are valued by their community and mix with different members of the community so that other members of the community feel valued by the children - creating a sense of community, sharing of life skills." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

The aim of providing access to outdoor spaces was also considered to be important by many respondents, and links were made between the use of outdoor space and the benefits of outdoor learning, being more active and thus tackling obesity, tackling mental health issues, and providing children with different opportunities:

*"Given the issues of childhood obesity and poor mental health, outdoor spaces have become more important than ever." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

## **Aligned with Other Policies**

A few respondents (largely organisations) also noted and welcomed the parallels between the draft aims for out of school care and early learning and childcare (ELC) and associated Blueprint 2020<sup>6</sup> policy. Others (again, largely organisations) highlighted that these aims would be consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards<sup>7</sup>, the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) principles, and Children's Rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

## **Reasons for Disagreeing with Aims/Caveats to Support**

Of those who indicated that they disagreed with the three key aims, most (n=55) provided their reasons for this. Others who agreed with the aims also provided caveats/qualifications to their support. Both groups raised similar issues, including:

- the need for funding in order to make the aims achievable;
- that the aims should include 'flexibility' and consistency in provision;
- that the aims should more specifically include *all* children/families, including children with disabilities/additional support needs, covering all geographic areas, all families regardless of income, older children, and ensure there are enough spaces for all children/families who need them;
- that the aims should specifically mention the word 'safe'/'safety', or 'play'/'fun';
- questions or concern over the meaning and implications of terms, such as 'life-enhancing experiences', 'embedded in communities', and 'affordable';
- a need for experiences to be suitable for the cultural and religious backgrounds of children from black and minority ethnic (BME) families;
- a need for all services to be regulated to provide a consistent standard; and
- that the aims were 'vague' or lacked clarity about how they could be achieved.

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<sup>6</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/blueprint-2020-expansion-early-learning-childcare-scotland-2017-18-action/>

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-social-care-standards-support-life/>

# Preferred Out of School Activities

The consultation sought feedback in relation to the sort of out of school activities that families want or need. A total of seven questions were asked, including:

- Q1. What range of services are needed? Can you tell us why these services are important?
- Q13. What ages of children do parents/carers need provision for?
- Q11. What flexibility do parents and carers need from out of school care services? Can you tell us why this flexibility is important?
- Q12. What is important for parents and carers in terms of location of out of school care services? Should they be delivered in school, community facilities, outdoors?
- Q14. Do parents/carers need food provision as part of after-school and holiday clubs?
- Q6. What do children and young people want from out of school care services and does this differ depending on age?
- Q7. What different activities or provision might secondary school age children want?

## Range of Services Needed

Q1. What range of services are needed? Why are these important?

Respondents were asked to select those services they felt were needed from a pre-coded list. A total of 1,203 (95%) respondents answered the question and the results are detailed in the table below. Most of those who provided a response highlighted a need for regulated out of school care (92%), followed by activity-based clubs and programmes (85%), and childminders (56%).

### Q1 What Range of Services are Needed?

	Total Sample	Individuals <sup>1</sup>	Organisations
Regulated out of school care	1107 (92%)	1022 (92%)	85 (96%)
Activity-based clubs and programmes (such as sports clubs, creative arts clubs, outdoor activities)	1020 (85%)	955 (86%)	65 (73%)
Childminders	678 (56%)	615 (55%)	63 (71%)
Other	126 (10%)	111 (10%)	15 (17%)
Base <sup>2</sup>	1203	1114	89

<sup>1</sup> This includes data from individuals, groups of young people and events where this question was discussed.

<sup>2</sup> 67 respondents either were not asked or did not provide an answer to this question.

It should be noted that multiple responses were possible for this question and, indeed, many respondents (n=1,017, 85%) identified a need for more than one service type.

Other services which were described as being necessary by more than one respondent each included:

- services that can accept children with disabilities and additional support needs (both in mainstream and specialist services);
- wrap-around care, or care for specific times, such as breakfast/morning clubs, after-school clubs, holiday clubs, and bank holiday, in-service day, and Election Day clubs/care<sup>8</sup>;
- different types of provision, including outdoor forest schools/outdoor provision, youth/social clubs, homework clubs, childcare agencies/sitter services, and irregular/drop-in provision;
- clubs held in the school grounds/facilities;
- options for a wider range of age groups, including pre-school age children/under 5s attending school nursery, and secondary school age children;
- services offering Gaelic and foreign languages and/or which cater for other cultures and children from BME backgrounds; and
- alternative solutions such as family and friends providing care, and encouraging flexible working among employers and parents/carers.

### **Reasons Services are Considered Important**

In total, 1,184 respondents (93% of all respondents) provided feedback on why they considered these services important. Responses broadly followed two themes, focusing either on the needs of the parent(s) or the needs of the child(ren).

In relation to parents/carers, out of school care was considered by many respondents as important or essential to allow parents/carers to take up and maintain employment, training or educational opportunities, or to have some respite. It was noted that school hours and holidays are not consistent with current working hours, with a few noting that current societal norms and the cost of living means that both parents/carers often need to work, and thus out of school care is essential:

*“All parents acknowledged the importance of out of school care in impacting their ability to take up and maintain employment.” (Event, Parents/Carers)*

Availability of a wide range of different service types was seen as important in meeting the needs of parents/carers; fitting around different work patterns and care needs; being suitable for the different ages, stages, and preferences of the children (including those in secondary school); and to provide choice. It was also suggested that a range of services was required to ensure suitable services were available for children with additional support needs and for those with caring responsibilities:

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that many respondents are likely to have included such services within the pre-coded options provided in addition to those who mentioned them specifically within the 'other' category.

*“A range of services are required so that families can select what works best for them and their working patterns.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“All parents needs are different, some need after-school care due to work/ training commitments, others only want activity based services as childcare [is] not required, and some wish for their child to be in a smaller setting e.g. childminder.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

Other issues/factors that were considered important included:

- the flexibility, affordability, reliability, and accountability of services;
- that services provide a fun and safe environment;
- that services provide a range of opportunities and keep children active;
- that services support children’s development;
- that services contribute to food security;
- that holiday clubs could alleviate boredom and avoid an over-reliance on screens (i.e. tablets, computers and smartphones); and
- the potential benefits for children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, such as reducing levels of child poverty, closing the attainment gap, and providing equality in access to opportunities:

*“A flexible, affordable number of options for children before and after school and on holidays and in-service days is essential for parents to be able to get and hold down a job.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“They support the wellbeing of the child to grow and develop and play outside of school.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“OSC contributes to raising families out of poverty by giving parents greater opportunity to participate in the workforce, and giving children equality of opportunity which may reduce inequalities later in life.” (Organisation, Public Body)*

## **Regulated Out of School Care**

Regulated out of school care services were praised for offering children the opportunity to try a range of different activities, to spend time with friends, and to be active/burn off energy. The fact that services were regulated was seen as important in providing assurances over the quality of the care being provided:

*“I feel that regulated out of school care is extremely important... so that there is a safe and secure environment for a child to attend... A child who attends regulated out of school care is not only safe and secure but are cared for within a nurtured environment that provides a variety of learning experiences and play activities that can help develop a child's physical, social, cognitive, linguistic and emotional development.” (Individual, Not Specified)*

## Childminders

The need for childminders was considered important as they provide local services, often undertaking the school run and providing longer/more flexible hours, and provide a nurturing home based environment for children to be cared in. They were also considered to benefit from providing lower child to adult ratios compared to other clubs and care settings:

*“Childminders are particularly important because being able to leave school and relax in a home setting is the ideal after-school experience for a tired child.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

A few respondents across the consultation, however, identified a shortage of childminders in their local areas.

## Activity Based Clubs and Programmes

Activity based clubs were seen as a welcome option within the range of services on offer. They were generally considered to be particularly useful for encouraging children to be active and to allow them to pursue their interests. These were also seen as a helpful option where after-school clubs were perceived to be over-subscribed or to have large waiting lists, and they were considered more accessible by a few respondents as (some activities at least) were free or low cost options:

*“Families have told us that these sessions are more accessible to them than registered childcare as they are almost always free or very low-cost and they usually take place close to where families live.” (Organisation, Third Sector/Charity)*

*“Activity based clubs also benefit children where childcare is not needed but allow the children to participate in activities that are of interest to them. This also supports their social development and allows them to develop abilities out of school hours in their own communities.” (Individual, Early Years Practitioner)*

It was noted by some, however, that many activity based clubs did not offer any form of school pick-up which made them less viable as an out of school care option for some.

## Age Range for Provision

Q13. What ages of children do parents/carers need provision for?

A total of 1,162 (91%) respondents provided substantive feedback in relation to the ages of children that provision is needed for, with a wide range of responses given. This included some respondents who simply indicated the age of their own child(ren) who currently use after-school care, and those who indicated specific age ranges, as well as others who provided more general narrative responses (without specifying ages/age ranges).

The table below details the various age ranges given by respondents. Again, this records multiple responses, so where a respondent indicated that provision was required from birth to age 14, both age limits are recorded below.

## Age Ranges for Provision

	Number	%
All ages	95	8%
From under 1	112	10%
From age 1-2	44	4%
From Nursery/Pre-School age or aged 3-4 <sup>1</sup>	228	20%
Age 5+	65	6%
Primary school age	515	44%
Up to age 12	22	2%
Up to S1/age 13	96	8%
Up to S2/age 14	210	18%
Up to age 15 or 16	218	19%
Up to age 17 or 18	62	5%
To include teenagers <sup>2</sup> (no specified age)	50	4%

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that a large number of respondents said from age 4 without qualifying if this was those at school or in their pre-school nursery year.

<sup>2</sup> Respondents typically indicated children needed out of school care until early secondary school, early to mid-teens, or stated it was necessary into secondary school without specifying a cut off age/year group.

This highlights that the largest perceived demand for out of school care was for primary school aged children, although there was also a notable perceived demand for services to cover the nursery/pre-school age group as well as for those in their first few years at secondary school.

While many respondents did not provide any reasons for their chosen age groups, some did provide additional detail. It was suggested by several respondents that primary age children would be the main users of out of school care as older children and young people would be considered more capable of looking after themselves and/or be less likely to want to attend any form of care setting or other activities, while younger age groups would have access to nursery/ELC provision.

Some explained that young people should be able to access out of school care until the age of 16 as this was the limit of parental responsibility, or 18 as this matched school provision, while others were more flexible and indicated out of school care was needed until the child was responsible enough to go home alone (with some suggesting this was around the time they went to secondary school and others suggesting this was between the ages of 13 and 15):

*“0 to 18 just like education, although it is more of a need up to age 14 young people over that age still need guidance and something productive to do.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Several suggested that, while parents/carers may be happy for secondary school age pupils to be home alone for a short period before/after school, some were not comfortable leaving them alone for the whole day. As such, it was felt necessary that holiday clubs should be provided for this age group.

Several respondents who suggested that out of school care was required mainly for primary school children or for those up to ages 13/14 highlighted that additional provision would be required for older children with disabilities and additional support needs, with ages up to 16, 18 or 21 all being mentioned specifically.

Particular gaps were also identified in the current provision, including for those at high school, and for those aged under three. For high school pupils, it was suggested that more informal and less supervised drop-in sessions and/or activity style clubs would be preferred, while those with children under the age of three highlighted that the only provision available currently was a private nursery or a childminder - both of which were considered oversubscribed and cost prohibitive for some families.

OSC providers and other organisations typically described the age ranges they accommodated and/or that typically used their services. They highlighted that it was generally primary school aged children who accessed their services, even where the service was registered to accept younger and/or older children.

It should be noted, however, that there was a lack of consistency between the types of care being referred to by respondents. Some restricted their response to the age groups suitable for out of school care only (indicating that private nurseries, ELC provision and activity clubs etc. were more suitable for younger/older age groups), while others appeared to be more inclusive in their response and stated the age ranges of children that would require some/any form of care, activities or clubs:

*“That is a subjective question particular to individual families. It would also be skewed depending on the definition of 'out-of-school care'. If the term after-school activities was used, many families may state a higher age than if it was described as care.” (Organisation, Third Sector/Charity)*

## **Flexibility**

Q11. What flexibility do parents and carers need from out of school care services? Can you tell us why this flexibility is important?

A total of 1,085 (85%) respondents provided a usable response in relation to the flexibility required from out of school care services.

Most felt that flexibility was highly important for parents/carers as working patterns no longer adhered to the traditional hours of 9am-5pm, that childcare was needed for school holidays and other closures, that shift workers are currently poorly catered for, and that working parents/carers often require to deal with short notice changes to their schedules for a wide variety of reasons.

The nature of the flexibility required included:

- services that are open from 7.30/8.00am and until at least 6.00/6.30pm to allow parents/carers the ability to travel to/from their work (although a few suggested that even longer hours would be required);
- to accommodate parents/carers with irregular shift patterns, shifts that change week to week, evening and weekend working, and zero-hour contract requirements;
- to cover the school holidays, in-service days, voting days, etc.;
- to be able to book and pay only for the time used/not have to commit to or pay for large blocks of time and/or additional days when it is not all needed;
- to be able to change and/or access *ad hoc* slots as required, and at short notice should there be an emergency, change to parents'/carers' schedules, or they are running late;
- not having to book and pay a month in advance or on an annual basis;
- not having to pay for holidays in order to retain a space;
- for a range of service types to be available, including regulated out of school care clubs, childminders, activity clubs - this was considered important to allow parents/carers to choose the service most suitable for their/their child's needs and not to simply have to accept the only place available; and
- for out of school care clubs to collect children from school or other activity clubs.

Three organisations indicated the Flexible Childcare Services Scotland<sup>9</sup> model as a system which could assist in the provision of more flexible services. One noted that this model uses a week by week booking service where parents/carers only pay for the childcare that they need, there is no deposit, no upfront fees and no retainers or holiday fees. While it was suggested that this model could be utilised more widely, it was also suggested that this would require accompanying business support to ensure services could operate such a system.

A few (typically organisations), however, noted that the required levels of flexibility makes managing a service challenging and could make services more expensive to ensure that overheads and staff costs can be accommodated, or could result in cuts to the service. One OSC provider also indicated that the demand for spaces can also make offering flexible places difficult (as parents/carers have standing bookings and the space and staff numbers mean there is no room for expansion):

*“Some parents also require OSC provision at short notice, or the flexibility to change their requests. This requires a level of flexibility for OSC services that can be expensive to maintain re staffing and space.” (Organisation, Local Authority)*

*“It again comes down to cost. Our flexible online booking system gives all the control to the parents and they expect the service when*

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<sup>9</sup> More details can be found at: <https://www.fcsc.org.uk/>

*they need it. This makes budgeting and planning extremely difficult; then when a service is full because we reduce staffing to match income parents complain the service is not available.”*  
(Organisation, OSC Provider)

Despite the flexibility required, it was also considered vital that services were reliable and that parents/carers could be certain that a place could be secured when it was needed. It was also suggested that consistency was important, particularly for children with additional support needs.

Finally, it was also suggested by a few respondents that greater flexibility in employment opportunities and working patterns was required to support parents/carers into work and to allow them to maintain work, and to fulfil childcare commitments (i.e. introducing flexibility into out of school care was insufficient on its own to meet parents/carers' needs).

## **Location of Out of School Care**

Q12. 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?

In total, 1,139 (90%) respondents provided a usable response in relation to their preferences and requirements for the location of out of school care services.

The table below provides a breakdown of the frequency with which the suggested locations were preferred by respondents. This shows that out of school care delivered within school premises was preferred by the largest proportion of respondents overall, and within each of the respondent groups (although it should be noted that some respondents stressed that they preferred facilities away from school).

## Preferred Locations for Out of School Care

	Total Sample	Parents/ Carers	Other Individuals	Youth Workers/ Early Years Practitioners/ Education	Local Authorities/ Public Bodies/ Regulatory Bodies	OSC Providers	Third Sector/ Charity
In School	493 (43%)	331 (46%)	100 (41%)	11 (41%)	5 (42%)	38 (35%)	8 (40%)
Mix/Variety	258 (23%)	148 (20%)	70 (29%)	10 (37%)	3 (25%)	22 (20%)	5 (25%)
Access to Outdoors	224 (20%)	138 (19%)	41 (17%)	4 (15%)	2 (17%)	35 (32%)	4 (20%)
Near to school	201 (18%)	142 (20%)	38 (16%)	5 (19%)	2 (17%)	13 (12%)	1 (5%)
Community Facilities	140 (12%)	75 (10%)	28 (11%)	2 (7%)	2 (17%)	30 (28%)	3 (15%)
Any location	103 (9%)	78 (11%)	14 (6%)	3 (11%)	0 (0%)	5 (5%)	3 (15%)
<b>Total Respondents<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1137</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>20</b>

<sup>1</sup> Multiple responses were possible/provided.

### Services Based In Schools

Across all respondent groups, many felt that the best location for the provision of out of school care was the children's own school. This was generally considered helpful as:

- it provides convenience as the children would already be there and would remove the need for children to travel or be transported between school and the out of school care service;
- avoids the need for multiple pick-ups by the service;
- is a setting the child is familiar with;
- they would have access to the school facilities, such as the playground, library and gym hall;
- parents/carers would likely find the school accessible for pick-ups or drop-offs; and
- parents/carers would typically trust that the facilities were safe, secure and of high enough quality for their child to spend time:

*“It will be very easy if the location is within the school. They can use the same resources like the library, gym hall for activities.”*  
(Individual, Parent/Carer)

*“Ideally located in the premises children are educated in. This makes drop off and collection easy. Parents and carers could also trust that premises are safe, risk assessed, fit for purpose and familiar for their children.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

A few respondents (across a number of different respondent types) also highlighted that running out of school care services within schools could be beneficial for children with disabilities and additional support needs. In particular, it was felt that the familiar surroundings of the school would be less stressful for some children, and the challenges associated with transporting some children with mobility needs between school and the out of school care service would be minimised.

### **Mixed Venue Provision**

Many respondents felt that a mix of venues were required. Some parents/carers suggested this would provide an increase in available spaces, while others (across all respondent groups) felt this was desirable to provide families with choice. The main concerns were that the venues were safe for children, accessible for both children and their parents/carers, and suitable for the type of activities being undertaken:

*“The greater the choices, the more chance of finding something that suits your children.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Several respondents also suggested that any approach should be collaborative in nature, and regardless of where the out of school care service is based, they should utilise community facilities (e.g. including trips to local leisure centres/sports facilities, swimming pools, museums, etc.) and outdoor space (via trips to the local park, etc.) wherever possible:

*“In schools so that the kids don’t then need to be shipped somewhere. They should make good use of outdoor space and community facilities to change the scene and maximise benefits.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

A few respondents also suggested that the type of activity to be provided might impact on the location/facilities required, and that a range of provision may be preferred for different types of care. For example, it was suggested that, while schools may be the best location for breakfast clubs and after-school clubs, a community facility or outdoors location may be preferable for holiday clubs to ensure that children feel they are getting a break from school.

### **Near to Schools**

Many respondents wanted to ensure that, if out of school care was delivered outwith the school it was nearby and could be easily accessed by a short walk. It was also highlighted that transport would need to be provided if the service was not based in the child’s own school, and several parents/carers stressed that children would need to be accompanied during any travel between school and out of school care services. Several respondents also suggested that the school was not the preferred location as the children will have been there all day and might therefore benefit from a change in location, and/or school may not feel like a safe or relaxing environment for some children who have adverse experiences at school (e.g. bullying), or may not be accessible for children who have been excluded:

*“The best location is at the school but if that's not possible it should be as close as possible to the school.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“I think they should be delivered in schools or if that's not possible with school commitments then in a building within walking distance for the children to get to.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Having something close to the school, but independent of it was, therefore, welcomed.

## **Community Facilities**

Community facilities, such as community centres, church halls, village/town halls, leisure/sports centres, were also considered to be suitable locations for out of school care provision by many. Some felt this was more desirable than holding the out of school care service in the school to provide children with a variety of locations and a change of scene throughout the day and to allow children from different schools to mix:

*“Much better to have a mix of children from different schools than to have it in schools and the children be segregated.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Indeed, several OSC providers suggested they preferred to provide services outwith school premises for a number of different reasons, including:

- a lack of space in schools, with increasing competition from ELC and other clubs often taking higher priority;
- a lack of storage and private space in schools for out of school care purposes;
- issues generated by shared spaces, including teachers using classrooms/facilities beyond the end of the school day, having to vacate/reduce space to accommodate school discos, sports and other *ad hoc* events, limited/no ability to display children's art work, etc.;
- difficulties in creating a professional relationship between school and out of school care staff;
- that children were often more settled upon arriving at the service after a short walk from school, helping them to mentally transition between the two services;
- teachers taking pupils away to do school work or asking them to help them with other tasks during out of school care time when based in schools;
- community centres providing more flexible accommodation, with some allowing activities to be spread over lots of smaller rooms rather than all children being accommodated together in a school dining or gym hall; and
- services that could accommodate children from a range of schools allowed the development of wider friendship groups:

*“...being in somewhere other than the school building has benefits for children. It helps them know this is their time, to relax, play or learn in a less formal environment. Our centre provides care for four local primaries, and it is lovely to see the friendships that form with*

*children from different schools, and the confidence this gives the children in their ability to mix with others.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

A few (both parents/carers and OSC providers) suggested that purpose built or dedicated facilities would be preferred, so that the venue was designed around the needs of the children and the activities to be provided:

*“Would be fantastic if we had our own space somewhere instead of waiting on the school day finishing and trying to get set up and ready for 54 children in the 5 minutes we have, makes life so difficult.”  
(Individual, OSC Provider)*

## **Outdoor Access**

Being outdoors was seen as important to many respondents:

*“Outdoors is really important. More activities should be outside - even those traditionally done inside could be moved outside where possible.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Respondents were largely in favour of school care services having access to outdoor space and/or making trips to a local park, local woodland, etc. It was felt that the Scottish weather could make outdoor access challenging at times, however.

A few respondents also supported forest schools, hiking clubs, etc.

## **Other Considerations**

Having specified locations or venues was a secondary concern for many parents/carers, or at least just one of many considerations. Other issues mentioned as being important when deciding upon the location of an out of care service included knowing that children were safe and well cared for, that the location/venue is suitable for the activities being provided, that children are collected from school by the service and/or easy and safe travel/transport is provided to allow children to access the facilities, and is easily accessible for parents/carers for drop-off/pick-up (with a few highlighting the need for services to be accessible via public transport and by walking for those who don't have access to a car):

*“I would have no preference as long as set up was good with appropriate facilities and equipment and transport provided if necessary.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“Location wouldn't bother me as long as my child was safe.  
(Individual, Parent/Carer)*

A few third sector/charities also highlighted the benefits of keeping facilities together or near to each other, in particular out of school care services, nurseries, and activity clubs in order to facilitate the drop-off/collection of more than one child. It was also highlighted that, where activity clubs are close to or co-located with out of school care services this allows children to attend/move between the activity club and the out of school care service as required:

*“Out of school care and other providers being close to one another in holidays also helps as a number of services only run from 10am*

*till 2pm or 3pm and children can easily attend OSC until parents arrive between 5pm and 6pm.” (Organisation, Third Sector/Charity)*

A few respondents also suggested that local childminders could be used.

## Food Provision

Q14. Do parents/carers need food provision as part of after-school and holiday clubs?

A total of 1,158 (91%) respondents provided a response to the quantitative element of this question. The table below shows that most respondents (both overall and between individuals and organisations) felt that food provision was needed as part of after-school and holiday clubs.

### Q14 Do parents/carers need food provision as part of after-school and holiday clubs?

	Total Sample	Individuals <sup>1</sup>	Organisations
Yes	937 (81%)	857 (80%)	80 (91%)
No	221 (19%)	213 (20%)	8 (9%)
Base <sup>2</sup>	1,158	1,070	88

<sup>1</sup> This includes data from individuals, groups of young people and events where this question was discussed.

<sup>2</sup> 112 respondents did not provide an answer to the quantitative element at this question.

A total of 1,089 qualitative comments were provided in support of the responses given to the pre-coded part of this question (representing 86% of all respondents).

Of those who said ‘yes’, 853 (91%) provided qualitative comments to explain their answer. Of those who said ‘no’, 193 (87%) provided a qualitative comment. Of those who did not provide a response at the quantitative element of the questions, 43 (38%) provided qualitative comments.

### Preferred Food Provision

Many respondents (including both individuals and organisations, as well as parents/carers and OSC providers) felt that a snack (with many highlighting this should be a healthy snack) and a drink was needed for children attending after-school care. However, there were mixed views regarding who should provide this. Many suggested that parents/carers could/should provide a snack for their child if it was considered necessary, while several parents/carers and out of school providers felt that the services should provide this in order to provide exposure to and encourage children to try/eat different foods, develop both healthy and social eating habits, provide equality with all children being offered the same foods, provide convenience for parents/carers, and improve food security for children:

*“...children eat better when they eat together. It also encourages healthier options and reduces stigma if one child has a different lunch from another.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“It's not necessarily practical for parents/carers to provide fresh food for their children which will last through the day for the children to consume after school.” (Individual, Early Years Practitioner)*

Similarly, mixed views were expressed regarding whether a packed lunch, hot food and/or an evening meal should be provided by after-school clubs and holiday clubs. Again, some felt that this was not necessary as parents/carers could/should provide this, while others felt this might be appreciated by parents/carers who work late, or provide additional support in areas of deprivation or for families who struggle with food security:

*“Some parents do not leave their work until later. They then need to collect their children, rush home, cook a meal, ensure homework is completed, therefore it is difficult to spend quality time with your children. If a meal was to be provided then it would alleviate some stress from the parent and allow time to be spent as a family.”*  
(Individual, Parent/Carer)

*“Provision of food at holiday clubs may help alleviate holiday hunger.” (Individual, Not Specified)*

### **Tackling Food Insecurity**

Many (individuals and organisations) supported the provision of food by out of school care services as a means of tackling food poverty/insecurity. Several suggested that the provision of breakfast (via breakfast clubs), the availability of snacks after school, and having food provided by holiday clubs was helpful for those who struggled with food insecurity. Some stressed that if the child is entitled to free schools meals during term time then the same provision should be available for any holiday clubs they attend. Again, several (individuals and organisations) also highlighted that providing the same food to all the children attending a service would remove any stigma or embarrassment for children:

*“For holiday clubs it was important to have food provided. The mums noted the struggles with feeding all of their children and some of the difficulties around free school meals not being available in the holidays and the added stress this caused them.” (Event, Parents/Carers)*

However, a few felt that having an out of school care service provide food for children from deprived families was not the best way to tackle food insecurity and that alternatives had to be considered - e.g. through tackling the causes of poverty:

*“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... Rather we believe that parents should be given the agency and resources they need to feed their children through adequately paid work or social security benefits.” (Organisation, Third Sector/Charity)*

## **Safety/Risks for Children with Food Allergies/Intolerances**

Food allergies and intolerances were also discussed by respondents. However, mixed views were expressed regarding the implications for safety/risk for children with food allergies and intolerances. Some suggested that food allergies could be more easily managed if the service provided food, as this would stop children bringing in unsuitable food from home:

*“It means allergies and the like can be more easily managed if everyone is having the same.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Others, however, felt that the only way to ensure that food allergies/intolerances were properly managed was for parents/carers to pack and send appropriate food in for their child. This was considered necessary, both due to concerns over the quality and variety of food which would be provided by services for children with food allergies/intolerances and to ensure the child did not consume something inappropriate:

*“Due to increasing numbers of students with food allergies, it will be safer and easier if the carers/parents pack their children’s own meals.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

## **Concerns Over Cost Implications**

Another concern raised by both individuals and organisations, parents/carers and OSC providers alike was the implications for the price for parents/carers and/or cost to the services of providing food. This was linked not just to the cost of the food, but also the need for additional training and qualifications for staff in relation to food hygiene, preparation and cooking, as well as the need to access a kitchen or other suitable food preparation area:

*“Adds to costs of running a club which drives up prices....”  
(Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Some who did not support the provision of food at the closed question did suggest that food provision may be helpful, however, they felt it was not essential for the services to provide, or suggested that this could be provided as an ‘optional extra’. Indeed, many parents/carers indicated that they would be happy to pay a little extra to cover the cost of food provision, although some acknowledged that not all families would be able to meet this cost. A few suggested that perhaps a means tested method of charging with free provision for those eligible for free school meals may be necessary to ensure children living in poverty could still access/benefit from food provision (without stigmatising the child).

A few respondents provided suggestions over how the additional costs and preparation needs could be tackled without the need to increase costs for parents/carers. These included government subsidies, developing links with local supermarkets/shops to donate food which is either nearing its use by date or as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), developing links with local holiday food programmes and charities, and joining Food Share schemes<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Local and national schemes exist to re-distribute surplus food from shops and supermarkets typically to day centres and hostels for the homeless.

## Other Issues/Comments

A few organisations in support of food provision by out of school care services indicated that this should align with the current healthy food standards and guidance designed for Early Years Childcare and schools. A few parents/carers also commented that food provided by out of school care services was not always healthy or nutritious in their experience, and felt that this needed to be addressed if food was to be routinely provided. It should be noted, however, that this appeared to vary by service, with others being satisfied with the food options available.

Finally, it was also suggested by some respondents that food provision could provide useful learning activities for the children, both in relation to food preparation and cooking, as well as serving and clearing food, planting and growing food, understanding healthy options, and providing links with science and religion.

## Service Provision by Age

Q6. What do children and young people want from out of school care services and does this differ depending on age?

A total of 1,184 (93%) respondents provided a usable response in relation to what children and young people would want from out of school care services. Responses are detailed below, grouped into feedback provided by adults and from children and young people.

### Adults' Views

Many agreed that what children want from out of school care differs by age, although others suggested that the ethos of what is required (i.e. to feel safe, welcome and respected) remained consistent - only the level and nature of the activities required would vary by age. A few suggested that they would prefer to keep children of similar ages together to help with play, communication and peer relationships, whereas others suggested that older children could be involved in assisting the younger children, suggesting a desire for mixed age group sessions. A few also indicated that younger children will require more hand-on supervision and engagement from play leaders and staff while older children will require much less supervision and prefer to be given more independence:

*"...younger children will need more supervision and play leaders whereas older children just need to know that someone is there if they are needed." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Several, however, felt that what children would want from their out of school care would differ based more on their personality rather than age. A few also mentioned that gender may create a difference in what children want.

Many stressed the need for a fun environment as well as friendly and supportive/nurturing staff. A variety of spaces/activities were also considered important as some children will simply want 'down time' to relax and hang out with their friends while others will enjoy participating in more structured or active tasks. Indeed a wide range of possible 'wants' were outlined by respondents:

*"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.” (Organisation, Third Sector/Charity)*

The needs outlined by respondents in relation to what they felt children and young people would want from an out of school care service included:

- the need to feel safe;
- to be able to make and maintain friendships;
- to have access to both free play and a variety of activities - this ranged from access to toys, to more active sports and games, to more creative activities such as arts and crafts, music and dance, reading, messy or sensory play, dressing up, and life skills such as food preparation/cooking;
- watching TV, playing computer games and having access to IT - these were mentioned by a few parents/carers, however, others felt these should be limited and indeed children having too much access to these was an area of complaint and/or worry in response to other consultation questions;
- having a quiet space for ‘chill-out time’;
- having access to outdoor space for both play and learning;
- needing to feel different to school and not have an educational basis to activities;
- having a space to do homework (or a study group for older children); and
- to be provided with a snack or food (healthy food was mentioned by some while others made no distinction regarding the nature of the food):

*“My child loves her after-school care because it's a chance to stay with her friends for longer. The social aspect is very important for the older ones.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

## **Children and Young People’s Views**

The consultation also sought the views of children and young people, both directly (via Citizen Space and the events) and via the organisations that took part. Many organisations who contributed to the consultation ran their own consultation sessions with children who attend their services. However, it should be noted that most comments identifiable as being from children and young people came from those of primary school age.

Children and young people generally wanted to meet new people, maintain friendships, to be in a safe environment, develop new skills, build their confidence, have food provided, and decide for themselves which activities they wanted to participate in. The relationship with staff was also considered to be important, with young people seeking trust and respect, a non-prejudicial and non-judgemental environment, and support from staff with relevant qualifications and experience.

Young people listed the types of activities they would like to have access to. These activities were typically consistent with the categories outlined by the adults above (i.e. sports, creative activities, toys and games, IT, etc.), and specifically included:

- football/sports;
- STEM;
- colouring in/drawing/painting/other crafts;
- baking/cooking;
- quiet room/chill out area;
- reading materials;
- access to phones, games consoles, laptops, TV/movies, etc.;
- making and playing with slime;
- playing with Lego;
- access to toys;
- social games (including role play, hide and seek, chess, cards, etc.);
- dressing up;
- building dens;
- access to outdoor space and outdoor toys, going for a walk and/or being taken to the park, gardening and planting, looking for wildlife, riding bikes; and
- trips and outings (examples given by children included trips to Asda, McDonalds, Astro-Turf, museums, swimming, the cinema, the beach or to woods).

Older children (aged 8-12/P4-P7) also said that they enjoyed and wanted to be involved in planning activities.

## **Provision for Secondary School Pupils**

Q7. What different activities or provision might secondary school age children want?
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A total of 925 (73%) respondents provided information in relation to what activities and provision secondary school age pupils might want. A further 84 (7%) indicated they were unsure/did not know, largely because they had younger children who were not yet of secondary school age.

Some respondents also referred to the responses they had given previously (at Q6). As such, any comments given at Q6 which were specific to secondary school children have been analysed and included here. Again, feedback is considered from both adults and young people themselves.

### **Adults' Views**

There was a general concern that a lack of existing opportunities and options for young people of secondary school age meant that they were more likely to engage in drinking and other anti-social behaviours and get into trouble. However, a few also questioned whether there was a need for out of school care for this age group as they felt young people in secondary school would refuse to use a 'care' service as they would consider that they were able to look after themselves. As such, respondents suggested that the emphasis perhaps needs to be moved away from the 'care' aspect and be placed more on the 'activity' in order to appeal to/cater for secondary school pupils and their families.

Several respondents suggested that this older group would prefer to have a space away from younger children, and that they would prefer more independence from staff and to be given greater responsibility and input to the activities compared to primary school age children, while at the same time allowing the young person to decide for themselves what activities they want to engage with and when they just want to relax.

Specific activities and needs respondents felt would be required by secondary school age young people included:

- space (and possibly help) to do homework/study clubs;
- access to technology, e.g. phones, tablets, computers and consoles, with access to wifi and the internet both to help with homework and for access to social media, games, etc.;
- teaching life skills and/or interest based activities/clubs/workshops, such as cooking, mending and making clothes, make-up/health and beauty, woodwork, repair skills, learning about finances and budgeting, music and DJ skills, dance, art, photography, science, movie groups, drama clubs, coding clubs, glee clubs/choir, etc.;
- sporting activities - including activities like football, badminton, table tennis, snooker/pool, yoga, boxing, swimming, etc.;
- a chill-out zone facilitating a more unstructured format and allowing young people a chance to talk and 'hang-out';
- access to food, perhaps via a café/tuck-shop, or access to a kitchen to make their own food;
- advice, discussions and workshops, or access to confidential support services e.g. mental health, sexual health, drug and alcohol services, etc.;
- outdoor and more adventurous activities, such as hillwalking, canoeing/kayaking, mountain biking, climbing, archery, etc.; and
- other options for young people including volunteering or having some community involvement, Duke of Edinburgh, Princes Trust Award:

*"...secondary school aged children would want to learn new skills or learning about jobs they could see themselves doing in the future."  
(Individual, Not Specified)*

## **Young People's Views**

Very few young people of secondary school age responded directly to the consultation. While several organisations may have consulted with young people in order to develop their response, such responses were returned as an organisational based response and only one organisation returned a response which specifically detailed the direct views/comments of young people of secondary school age.

Activities suggested by young people themselves via this one response included:

- learning life skills (taught in a fun and engaging way);
- teaching public speaking/reading;

- homework support;
- learning technical skills (such as programming, game design, multimedia editing, 3D modelling, web design, music technology);
- having invited speakers (such as community workers, paramedics, zoo keepers, lawyers, engineers, STEM politicians);
- having days out;
- therapy pets;
- reading; and
- competitions.

The lack of identifiable views and experiences from secondary school age young people represents a possible gap both in consultation results and in understanding around what this group might like to see in after-school services aimed at their age group. Without a deeper understanding of what this group want, any provision runs the risk of not engaging with the target service users, respondents felt. As such, more detailed work may be required with this specific age group before the draft Framework can be finalised to incorporate their needs, it was suggested.

# Making Out of School Care Accessible

The consultation sought views on how to make out of school care accessible to all families and children. In order to address this, five questions were asked:

- Q8. How can we make sure out of school care is an affordable option for more families?
- Q5. 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?
- Q9. How can services be more effectively delivered in rural/remote areas to meet the needs of families?
- Q10. How can we ensure that children with disabilities and additional support needs can access out of school care services?
- Q2. What can we do to support community based approaches to delivering out of school care?

## Making Out of School Care Affordable

Q8. 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)

In total, 1,126 (89%) respondents provided feedback on how to make out of school care affordable for families. Of these, 384 (34%) respondents specifically mentioned the need for subsidised provision within their response, 75 (7%) explicitly identified a need for help with upfront costs, and 47 (4%) discussed barriers in accessing benefits. A further 98 (9%) respondents indicated that all three stated options were required/would be helpful.

### Subsidies/Help with Costs

As outlined above, the most common suggestions around how to ensure out of school care is affordable focused on providing help with the costs. In addition to those who specifically mentioned subsidies, many others discussed alternative forms of financial support which could be offered. Suggestions (provided by respondents across all respondent types) included:

- the introduction of funding/free childcare in line with that offered to younger children via ELC;
- affordable, subsidised and/or free spaces;
- short term assistance for parents/carers when starting a new job;
- free provision for vulnerable children and those who could be identified/referred as most in need by partner services;
- subsidised/discounted places for families with more than one child using the service;
- charging hourly or only for the time used;
- provision of a tax free/tax relief system; and

- greater acceptance of childcare vouchers and use of working tax credits across the range of out of school care services (including childminders, unregistered services and activity clubs).

There were mixed views, however, regarding whether subsidised/free places should be a universal provision, means tested, or only available to those claiming benefits. Some were keen to ensure that out of school care services were accessible for families not currently in employment in order to benefit the child(ren), while others felt that working parents/carers (particularly those on low incomes but not claiming benefits) should also receive free or subsidised places. Some indicated that a form of means testing and/or a sliding scale of subsidy would be required to ensure those earning just a little over the threshold for benefits would not be penalised:

*“Parents who work and are in receipt of either Universal Credit or working tax credit can get a reasonable level of financial assistance for childcare costs... Subsidising out of school care for workless households will enable children to attend, when otherwise they may not have the opportunity. Engaging with others, mental and physical stimulation will benefit their [children’s] wellbeing.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“Subsidised places... or a set percentage paid per child, even up-front costs paid e.g. first month paid. All options could be means tested and have a sliding scale.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

Others, however, felt that any subsidy or discount should be applied universally, regardless of the parent’s financial situation. Several suggested that those not in receipt of benefits should not be penalised or charged more for the same service:

*“It’s unfair that as a working parent there are no additional benefits for childcare but those who are unemployed or on benefits are given additional help. People shouldn’t be financially penalised for trying to go back to work by having to then pay more in childcare which in some instances negates their salary entirely.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“...offering places at a reduced cost regardless of income so it is affordable for everyone.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Where subsidies, benefit schemes, grants or vouchers were used, a few parents/carers highlighted the need for the system to be easy and straightforward to understand and use. A few parents/carers and several OSC providers also felt that subsidies should be provided direct to the services rather than via any benefits related system which provides the funding to the parent, both to ensure simplicity of use and to ensure that childcare funds are used as intended:

*“If fees/costs are subsidised it would be beneficial if the money came direct to the provider as sometimes parents spend the money on other things and this can lead to services losing money and parents in debt.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

Subsidies for the service providers were also mentioned by some respondents (largely, but not exclusively, by parents/carers, other individuals and OSC providers), including:

- help with set-up costs (for private organisations as well as capacity building for community groups, social enterprise services, and other not-for profit groups);
- the provision of subsidised rents and/or free access to local authority premises and facilities;
- help with staff costs, training needs and the cost of qualifications for staff;
- assistance to deal with rising costs, such as the real living wage, pensions, rent increases, etc.; and
- providing grants to purchase equipment, including equipment that is required to accommodate children with additional support needs.

In particular, it was noted by OSC providers and other organisations that services required consistent and reliable funding in order to provide a sustainable service. Several respondents (from across the different typologies) also highlighted that subsidies are often required for services in rural/remote areas to make them viable.

### **Support with Upfront Costs**

The removal of, or financial support to help with the costs of deposits, registration fees and/or other upfront costs was also identified as a means of making out of school care more affordable:

*“Help with upfront costs, we find deposits are a big barrier to parents.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

*“Payment of first month costs and registration fees are often due up front before parent receives pay. A grant to cover this might help?” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

It was suggested that these costs can often be significant and/or prohibitive for some families, including those trying to get into work and who have not received their first wage, those with more than one child, those with fluctuating low incomes, or those on low incomes but not claiming benefits. Further, it was suggested that the way the Universal Credit system is currently implemented, with a delay in receiving the first payment, can lead to families either not being able to take up places in out of school care (or employment) as they cannot afford the upfront costs or need to take an ‘advance’ (or loan) to cover these initial costs.

A few respondents suggested that one practical solution may be to introduce childcare grants (similar to the Best Start Grant) to help with upfront costs.

### **Benefits**

In relation to benefits, parents/carers and other individuals generally did not discuss the barriers to accessing specific benefits<sup>11</sup>, but rather identified a need to raise awareness and support/advise parents/carers on what benefits and other financial supports may be available to them. It was also suggested that Working Tax Credits should allow parents/carers to claim back childminder costs and unregistered care services such as activity clubs. Reducing the stigma attached to claiming benefits and/or receiving similar

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<sup>11</sup> This may suggest that this was not relevant to most of those parents/carers who responded, either as they had not experienced difficulties with this, or because they did not receive benefits.

support for accessing out of school care services was also considered important, to ensure that children from deprived areas/poorer families continued to access the services. Several organisations also discussed these same issues.

Several organisations (particularly third sector/charities and OSC providers) also discussed barriers to accessing benefits. The challenges identified (by typically one or two respondents each) included:

- delays to payments;
- restrictive timescales in which to claim childcare costs;
- the need to uprate benefits to keep pace with increasing real costs of childcare;
- childcare costs paid via benefits being claimed back/paid in arrears, or covered via an 'advance' (or loan) thus leaving low income families struggling and/or being pushed into debt for the initial outlay/costs;
- limitations in the eligibility criteria for the advance/loan and cap on the amount available;
- some students being unable to access Universal Credit;
- the Flexible Support Fund which can provide assistance with upfront costs only helping those entering work but not those changing providers;
- the request to provide monthly evidence of costs often not compatible with out of school care services information/receipt provision to parents/carers;
- risks of being under/overpaid Universal Credits due to DWP errors; inaccurate information provided to claimants regarding eligibility; and
- Universal Credit rules and penalties for working additional hours making it difficult for providers to find staff to cover requirements (e.g. holiday and sickness cover).

## **Lowering Costs**

Many respondents (across respondent groups) focussed on finding ways to lower the cost of out of school care provision. Many suggested making greater use of community facilities and facilitating low rent/free use of local authority owned spaces (typically schools, although other venues could also be considered). Greater use of volunteers, students and/or secondary school pupils interested in a career in childcare, and/or parent helpers was also suggested by several respondents (typically, although not exclusively parents/carers and other individuals) to help minimise staff costs. A parent helper system where parents/carers could offer time to help facilitate an out of school care service in return for reduced fees was also suggested by a few (both individuals and organisations). Several respondents also suggested that the non-profit/charity sector and/or local authorities should be encouraged to provide out of school care services in order to reduce costs to parents/carers.

## **Other Suggestions**

A large number of other suggestions were provided in relation to how to make out of school care more affordable for families. Suggestions given by more than one respondent each (and often across different respondent types) included:

- removing transport barriers/costs;
- options to spread the cost and/or offer payment plans;
- providing a consistent rate/cost across the country to eliminate geographic inconsistencies, and between service types to allow parents/carers to choose the service best suited to the child's needs rather than based on affordability;
- providing volume discounts (i.e. based on the number of sessions booked or for booking a full week of holiday clubs, etc.);
- fundraising and/or support from local businesses;
- discounts for parents/carers with particular occupations, with suggestions including NHS staff, armed forces, third sector and public sector employees;
- greater transparency regarding costs, including any optional and/or *ad hoc* costs such as for food, trips, contributions for new equipment, etc.;
- increasing provision and allowing market forces/competition to reduce prices to parents/carers;
- extending the school day - with several suggesting that official learning time provided by teachers would remain as it is, but then classroom assistants or other out of school care staff could take over in schools to provide the additional care required; and
- increased taxes to allow costs to be subsidised.

One other theme raised by a few OSC providers was a limited funded/allocated hour's system for all children, for example, where children would be provided with three days free out of school care provision, and then parents/carers could pay for any additional provision that may be required.

## Providing Universal Access

Q5. 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?

In total, 1,177 (93%) respondents provided feedback on how to ensure all families have access to out of school care if they want it. Responses were largely consistent across the different respondent groups.

Some felt that provision should be similar to that of nursery or school provision where every child is offered a place. Others focused on more practical changes that would be needed in order to facilitate access for all families who want it.

### Capacity

One of the main topics discussed was the need to increase capacity both within existing services and increasing availability of new services - this included increasing the number of services in general, as well as increasing the diversity of services available so that families have more choice. Some respondents suggested that all schools should provide or facilitate such a service or have access to a range of different services. Many parents/carers (and several respondents from other groups) also discussed the long waiting lists for existing services and a lack of childminders, and felt that increased or expanded provision would help ensure families could secure a space when required:

*“Ensuring every school has access to a range of out of school options for parents to choose from e.g. local access to childminders, sports clubs etc.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“Make it compulsory for primary schools to provide space for out of school care services within the building outwith school hours.”  
(Organisation, OSC Provider)*

Other suggestions for increasing capacity included:

- increasing the number of staff within services;
- allowing and supporting clubs to expand their facilities (this was particularly important to OSC providers);
- providing greater assistance to help set up clubs, both in relation to financial assistance and practical advice/support; and
- increased provision for children with additional support needs and disabilities, for secondary school aged pupils, and in rural and remote areas:

*“More space available to allow service to expand.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“Clubs need to be encouraged to set up. Often too many hurdles to jump over to get set up.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Several OSC providers suggested that there needed to be greater co-ordination or joint working between the different providers and affiliated partners, including regulated out of school care providers, childminders, active schools, other activity clubs, schools, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), nurseries, and local authorities.

Some respondents also suggested practical ways of estimating demand so that service provision can be planned. This included:

- surveys of parents/carers to ask about their requirements in relation to days and hours needed, preferred activities, accessible locations, etc.;
- asking parents/carers to indicate their need/preference for out of school care within the school’s annual enrolment system; and
- monitoring the scale of any new housing developments.

## **Affordability**

Affordability was again a key issue identified in making sure all families can access out of school care, with discussion focusing largely on the need for investment in the sector generally, and (consistent with responses at Q8 above), funding/subsidies for services and/or child places, or ensuring fees are affordable for all.

Investment was considered necessary across a range of elements to support the sector. This included investing in:

- infrastructure and ensuring that suitable venues could be provided, including opening up community spaces and providing indoor and outdoor spaces;
- staffing, including investment in training and qualifications;

- inclusion and equality to ensure places are available for children in need, from disadvantaged families, and for those with additional support needs and disabilities; and
- provision for rural and remote areas.

A few parents/carers also suggested that a greater number of local authority based services should be provided as they tended to be more affordable than private services, and it was felt they would have access to the 'best' staff and facilities. Several respondents across a range of respondent groups also suggested that local authorities should keep the rent low (or free) when out of school care services are using their facilities in order to keep overall service costs down. A few also suggested that out of school care should become a statutory provision which local authorities should be responsible and accountable for.

### **Publicise/Advertise**

One barrier noted by parents/carers was a lack of information for parents/carers regarding what services are available. As such, many respondents (across all respondent groups) suggested that greater advertising of services was required:

*"...it is only by trial and error and word of mouth that you find out what is available." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Some suggested that schools could play a bigger role in advertising out of school care/clubs to parents/carers. A few parents/carers proposed that information regarding what out of school care is available could be given when registering a child for school or as part of the school induction process:

*"Effective communication to raise awareness that the out of childcare places exist. Engage with nurseries and schools so they can actively promote the services to the parents/carers." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

It was also felt that school websites and PTA/Parent Council websites/blogs could advertise local out of school care services, and that the services themselves should provide their own websites to advertise and provide information. It was stressed by a few parents/carers, however, that advertising/promotion should not be restricted to social media or online platforms, but rather wider advertising was required.

Other suggestions included some form of local authority register which is searchable by parents/carers so they can identify suitable local provision. It was stressed that this would need to be kept up to date and should include information on a range of elements, including availability of spaces or details of the waiting list and details to allow parents/carers to identify which services would be suitable for children with additional support needs and disabilities.

### **Other Comments**

As covered in other sections above, many respondents again discussed the accessibility of services for both children and parents/carers.

Several parents/carers also suggested that better facilities were required which provided age and stage appropriate activities. Several OSC providers also suggested that dedicated or consistent spaces were needed for clubs to occupy.

## Delivering Services in Rural/Remote Areas

Q9. How can services be more effectively delivered in rural/remote areas to meet the needs of families?

A total of 963 (76%) respondents provided an answer to the question about how services could be more effectively delivered in rural/remote areas, however, 130 (13%) of these indicated that they did not know how to address such issues, with some indicating that they had no experience in this respect. Therefore, only 833 (66%) respondents provided a substantive response.

Some suggested that the best way to address rural/remote delivery would be to directly ask those families living in rural areas what their needs are, what they would like to use, to identify work patterns and accessible areas, etc., indicating that each area would be different and/or that a 'one size fits all' approach would be unsuitable. Some recommended further consultation on this issue as part of the draft Framework process, while others referred to the need for local consultations ahead of developing any such service, and/or ongoing local consultation with families *per se*.

Of those who provided suggestions and comments in relation to how services could be more effectively delivered in rural/remote areas, two key issues were identified and discussed by respondents across all typologies, namely transport considerations/provisions and the location of out of school care.

### Transport Provision

Providing appropriate transport was suggested by many respondents as being key in rural/remote areas, including:

- the need for improved public transport links;
- the provision of community transport;
- dedicated buses, mini-buses and taxis (either operated by the out of school care service or the local authority);
- introducing American style dedicated school buses which could also be used for out of school care; and
- providing bus passes for children to facilitate travel to out of school care services, activity clubs, and for club based outings/trips.

Many specified that transport was needed to transport children from school to an out of school care service, while others suggested transport was also required after the clubs finished (particularly where a child would have been able to use the school bus to get home after school) and for trips. Others did not specify what connections this transport needed to provide but rather highlighted that transport provision was vital for remote and rural communities where families live across disparate areas.

A few indicated that public transport provision (typically buses) needed to operate later at night to support families and out of school care provision, while the lack of availability and/or infrequent timetables of public transport was also highlighted by one OSC provider as a barrier to recruiting and retaining staff in rural/remote areas.

## Location of Out of School Services

To reduce transport concerns, many respondents across all typologies suggested that out of school care services should be provided within the child's own school. It was considered that the schools would be accessible to families (as the child(ren) would have to attend anyway) and so holding the out of school care service here too would reduce accessibility barriers. Several also suggested that local community facilities (such as town/village halls, church halls, libraries, etc.) could also be used if they are close to the school. Some felt that local services were needed in order to provide equality of access and opportunity across the country, not only in remote and rural communities.

Others, however, suggested that larger centralised services (which provided a service for a cluster of smaller schools) were perhaps more appropriate and would be more sustainable than a series of smaller local services. Where it was accepted that central services may be more realistic (or were considered beneficial to allow children to mix with peers from different schools), it was again felt that reliable, safe and affordable (or free) transport for the child between their school and out of school care service was paramount:

*“By not focusing on centralising services, and considering how National strategies can be implemented in real terms in a small rural community. If facilities do have to be centralised, then they must be accessible. In the case of childcare, this would require supervised transport to and from local communities.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

## Staffing and Other Support

Some suggested that out of school services should recruit and train staff from the local population and that this was especially relevant in rural and remote communities. It was also suggested that allowing volunteering and a parent helper/rota system may be beneficial/necessary to assist with staffing.

Encouraging, supporting and empowering the local community (e.g. community groups, parent councils, etc.) to set-up and/or be involved in out of school care services was important to ensure the service meets local needs and that it is sustainable. It was suggested that the support required included funding, access to premises, to develop management structures/processes, and advice and assistance to understand and adhere to the regulations and requirements of operating an out of school care service. It was also suggested that charities and community groups should be able to access schools and other community facilities (at an affordable level or at no cost) for the purposes of out of school care, and/or that subsidies could be provided to allow them to access non-council owned facilities.

Parents/carers, OSC providers, local authorities and others suggested that subsidies, funding, and/or access to grants for remote/rural out of school care could help with start-up costs and ongoing resource requirements where population/usage may make it unsustainable for private companies to provide a service. It was also suggested that funded child places would also be helpful in running a more sustainable and accessible rural service:

*“To effectively deliver services in rural areas financial support is a key consideration for services as often the numbers of children attending (paying fees) does not match the outgoing costs of the services (staff costs, rents, resources). Support with these areas*

*would be useful to ensure services are sustainable.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

A few mentioned the need to make out of school care hours longer and/or to provide greater flexibility in start and finish times to account for the additional travel time incurred by living in remote/rural areas.

Greater flexibility in the Care Inspectorate’s requirements was also considered necessary by a few respondents, specifically in relation to the staff/child ratio, requirements/expectations on the facilities/premises, and hours of operation in these areas.

### **Increased Availability of Childminders**

Several parents/carers, OSC providers, local authorities and organisations suggested that greater availability of childminders in rural areas would be helpful. It was also suggested that incentives, subsidies and/or support for childminders (both to set-up and maintain their service) may be required to boost this type of provision:

*“Childminders also have a clear role to play where it is not viable to provide group care in very remote areas.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

### **Other Comments**

A few respondents (including parents/carers, other individuals and OSC providers) suggested that mobile out of school care could be provided, for example pop-up facilities or using a converted bus or trailer:

*“Childcare on a bus? Like old style library buses. Converted double-deckers with space to play and learn.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“Adapted coaches/busses which could collect children on a route then park up near facilities (library, playpark, beach?)” (Individual, Not Specified)*

A few OSC providers suggested utilising open spaces and/or creating forest schools/clubs. Sitter services were also suggested as an option by a few respondents to help meet rural and remote communities’ needs.

Finally, a few respondents (typically parents/carers and other individuals) highlighted that more provision was needed in rural/remote areas generally. They indicated that there was currently no provision available for them locally, and so any service would be welcomed.

### **Inclusive for Disabilities and Additional Support Needs**

Q10. How can we ensure that children with disabilities and additional support needs can access out of school care services?

A total of 926 (73%) respondents provided a response in relation to how to ensure children with disabilities and additional support needs can access services. Of these, however, 59 (6%) respondents stated they did not know, meaning 867 (68%) respondents provided substantive comments. Again, there was general consistency in the issues raised across all respondent groups.

Many felt that it was important that *all* children were able to access out of school care and activities. This was seen as a 'right', as well as having benefits for both children with disabilities/additional support needs and other children, including reduced isolation and being integrated in the community for disabled children and teaching other children to be more accepting:

*"All children regardless of disability should be given equal opportunities to receive this support." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

However, some respondents highlighted throughout the consultation that there was currently a lack of services appropriately set-up with trained and experienced staff able to accommodate disabled children and those with additional support needs. Even where children and young people are in mainstream schools, the out of school care providers are often not able to accommodate these children, it was felt:

*"There's nothing else. Nothing else has ever been offered. With the council holiday programmes there's less and less for disabled kids. It's kind of a minefield to find out if there's anything he can go to." (Event, Parent/Carer)*

## **Accessible Venues**

Providing, utilising, and adapting venues to ensure they are accessible was a common response, with some suggesting that funding would be required to support services to provide the required equipment or make the necessary adaptations. This included not just physical adaptations such as being wheelchair accessible, and having ramps, accessible toilets and changing stations, and loop systems, but also included access to quiet spaces, time out zones, and sensory spaces:

*"By ensuring that facilities are adapted to be accessible. Where this is not possible and there is a need, create new facilities or provide a means of getting to other suitable facilities." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Others suggested that utilising the school building would ensure the facilities provided are compliant and suitable for all the children who attend:

*"Generally, school buildings are set up to cater for children who have disabilities so these buildings are ideal." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

A few also highlighted that any specialist schools should be encouraged to provide after-school care on site.

Again, the ability to transport children with disabilities and additional support needs between school and out of school venues was considered important. A few also suggested that the activities and equipment provided should be accessible to children with disabilities and additional support needs, either having been planned specifically because they are suitable, or with other activities being adapted to ensure that all children can participate.

A few, however, including parents/carers with children with disabilities or additional support needs, suggested that adapted facilities in mainstream provisions would not always be suitable for some children, and that more specialised services were required:

*“For other children with more complex needs (e.g. my son) it reaches the stage when inclusion is not the best solution and there is a need for a bespoke, specialist out of school service to meet his and the needs of other[s].” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

## **Trained Staff**

Providing trained staff was also seen as key to ensuring that children with disabilities and additional support needs can access out of school care. This included both general awareness training for all staff and the provision of specialist training for support staff. Again, however, several highlighted that funding and support may be required for services or staff to access such training and to assist with ongoing costs associated with providing higher staff numbers:

*“Ensure that staff are trained to meet all the needs. Train specific staff with specific skills to care for children with additional needs.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“Offer providers training in supporting children and young people with disabilities and additional support needs.” (Individual, OSC Provider)*

*“Specialist training is also often required and not always easy to access.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

Linked to this, several respondents suggested the need for additional staff so that higher staff to child ratios were achieved, and/or so that children with disabilities and additional support needs could receive one-to-one attention, where required.

## **Identifying Needs**

Some suggested that greater consultation was needed with children who have disabilities and additional support needs and their families to estimate demand, and to identify what their needs are and what barriers may prevent them from using current and future out of school care services. This was considered to be necessary to establish a greater understanding of the issues, as well as necessary for individual services and local families interested in utilising provision in order to appropriately tailor services and design/implement a suitable support plan.

Similarly, several respondents felt that services could seek advice and support from specialist public or third sector organisations to help accommodate specific needs. Others suggested that various agencies should work in partnership to ensure that the care provided was appropriate, including education professionals, health and social care, the third sector, families and the out of school care provider:

*“It would be beneficial to meet more with other professionals who work with the child in order to get an idea of the complete support.” (Event, OSC Provider)*

*“It’s important to recognise and utilise the experience and knowledge of the many charitable organisations in Scotland who lead on best practice regarding accessibility for those with disabilities and additional needs.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

## Other Comments

While it was acknowledged that provision for disabled children and those with additional support needs would have a higher cost, it was generally felt important that this cost should not be passed onto the family. It was felt the cost of the service should be standard for all children accessing it. This would, however, result in some families or the services needing to be funded/subsidised by central or local government, it was felt.

Some also suggested that the same model as school provision should be used, i.e. if a child receives support in school, the same or equivalent support should be available for out of school care. Indeed, several suggested that Pupil Support Assistants' (PSAs) hours could be extended to enable them to continue supporting their child before/after school:

*“When a child has funding for his level [of] support during school hours, that support should follow them after school.” (Event, OSC Provider)*

A few local authorities suggested that services could consider the use of shared specialist staff or equipment.

A few parents/carers noted that it was important for children with additional support needs and siblings to attend out of school care/activities together or in the same location in order to facilitate drop-offs/pick-ups.

Several parents/carers also discussed their personal experience in this area and highlighted the lack of suitable services, with others indicating that charities were the only ones providing suitable provision. A few also noted that they had been refused places/had places withdrawn in mainstream provision due to accessibility issues and a lack of staff, training or experience in dealing with specific needs/behaviours. Others, however, noted positive experiences with a few respondents identifying the services they used and suggesting that learning and/or good practice could be shared.

It should also be noted that, at the time of writing, Shared Care Scotland had commissioned research exploring the nature and availability of holiday clubs for disabled children and young people in Scotland. The study draws on evidence from qualitative research in six Scottish local authorities and from survey responses from 480 parents/carers, 162 disabled children and young people, 71 service providers, and 14 local authorities. The results of this research could usefully inform the future development of the Out of School Care Framework.

## Supporting Community Based Approaches

Q2. What can we do to support community based approaches delivering out of school care?

A total of 1,144 (90%) respondents provided feedback on how to support community based approaches to delivering out of school care. Again, there was much consistency in the responses provided across the respondent groups.

There appears to have been a mixed interpretation of this question, with many respondents simply reiterating the type of service they would like to see and/or discussing issues/challenges to accessing services without being specific as to whether this related to private provision, local authority provided services, or community led services. As these issues are covered in detail above and in the following chapter they are not repeated here.

Others, however, provided suggestions relating specifically to the support or promotion of community based approaches, as outlined below.

## **Access to Funding**

Many respondents identified the provision of funding for services generally, and minimising the cost of rent for facilities as key to assisting community based approaches.

Several noted that it had become increasingly difficult for third sector and community organisations to access funding due to more challenging funding conditions and not being able to meet the requirement for particular funding streams. Short term funding streams were also considered challenging as they did not allow services to guarantee a sustainable service or plan long-term. As such, it was felt that greater support was required in this respect.

## **Communication**

Some suggested that guidance, practical advice and support should be provided to those interested in setting up a community based service. This included guidance on the requirements of setting up an out of school care service and details of the support that is available, as well as support and advice on administration issues such as training, HR, legal requirements, paying wages, pricing structures, etc. A few also suggested that providing a 'start-up kit' would be helpful:

*“Help us understand how we can access training for individuals to want to be involved in out of school care, what funding is available and who/how we can apply for it.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“Access to practical and legal help is imperative; help with establishing and maintaining building provision is also key. Most importantly, communication, so that each group is NOT left feeling like it has to reinvent the wheel every time they come up with a possible solution to their own, local childcare issues.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Other factors which could support the setting up of community based services mentioned by a few respondents each included:

- capacity building for community/parent led groups;
- mentoring for those setting up new services;
- communicating and working in partnership with other community based organisations, for example:
  - transport providers may be able to support a club's transport needs;
  - exploring if individuals or other community groups and activity clubs may be willing to volunteer or share their skills with the children;
  - local groups may be able to provide training for staff/volunteers; and
- consult with the local community to establish their needs and wants, and to allow them to have input to the design and implementation of services.

Further, it was suggested that providers should communicate with each other in order to try to create more co-ordinated service offerings to better serve the community. Examples of this included:

- arranging activities so that clubs for different age groups can run in parallel in the same building/nearby to allow siblings' activities to be co-ordinated,
- timetabling a class which parents/carers could attend (for example, a fitness class, or an educational/training type class) to coincide with their children's activity clubs, thus providing mutually beneficial and purposeful activities; and
- to establish a resource lending library or facilitate sharing of resources and equipment in order to minimise costs to individual services and avoid unnecessary duplication.

A few OSC providers also suggested that it was important for out of school care providers to be consulted at an early stage of any planning or policy development to identify any possible partnership opportunities and to ensure that childcare is fully considered and provided for in any new policies, plans and developments. In particular, it was suggested that out of school care facilities should be built into new schools at the planning/design stage, and that out of school care should be considered when planning any new housing development:

*“Ensure that OSC provision is considered in planning of new schools and give protected space. Use collaborative strategies to ensure non-statutory organisations have a seat at the table to plan holistically for children’s well-being.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

## **Using Community Resources**

Again, many suggested that community facilities could/should be made available for out of school care and activity clubs. This would base the services within the local community. Again, common suggestions included either basing services in the local school or in a community centre/hall. This was seen as important to reduce the need for additional transport costs (or the challenges of using public transport) in order to access the services. A few noted that access to school facilities would be required year round and not only in term-time. It was also suggested that there are many community facilities that are under-utilised but could be used for childcare or activity clubs. A few, however, noted that there may need to be some flexibility in the regulations to allow such buildings to be used for out of school care. In addition, it was felt that more use could be made of outdoor community spaces, such as parks, playing fields and green space.

It was also suggested that community based services should be led/staffed by local people, and/or that parents/carers and other local people could be recruited as volunteers:

*“Pathways should be developed and/or strengthened to support local training and recruitment to enable the increased need for providers to be met by members of the local community.”  
(Organisation, Public Body)*

## **Other Comments**

More relaxed or flexible regulations were also seen as needed in order to support community based approaches. As for rural areas, this included the need for flexibility in the Care Inspectorate's requirements, but also included:

- the Scottish Social Services Council's (SSSC) qualification requirements, which were seen to be acting as a barrier to community approaches/participation; and
- less administration and strict regulations for childminders as this was seen as reducing the availability of this type of service.

# Supporting the Out of School Care Workforce

Four questions were asked in order to understand how best to support the out of school care workforce to deliver high quality services. These included:

- Q15. What qualifications, skills and experiences should the out of school care workforce have? What is most important and why?
- Q16. 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?
- Q17. How can we promote working in the out of school care sector as a more attractive career choice?
- Q18. How can we increase diversity in the out of school care workforce?

## Workforce Qualifications, Skills and Experience

Q15. What qualifications, skills and experiences should the out of school care workforce have? What is most important and why?

Overall, 1,072 (84%) respondents provided feedback in relation to the qualifications, skills and experience which were felt to be important for the out of school care workforce.

Many felt it was important to provide a range of qualifications, skills and experience both within and between out of school care services:

*“A variety of skills, experiences and qualifications should be encouraged in the team.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

There was a slight preference at the aggregate level for out of school care staff to have, or be working towards relevant formal qualifications, with around half of all those who answered the question supporting or suggesting qualifications for all staff. However, there was also a notable split in opinion with many (with around a third of those who provided a response) suggesting that a person’s experience and personal skills and attributes were more important. Parents/carers and other individuals were more evenly split in this regard, while all other groups were mostly in favour of the need for qualifications.

Some felt that those looking after children should be formally qualified in order to provide high quality services and to raise the status and recognition of the work/sector. Others, however, felt that qualifications were less important than other attributes, with a few highlighting experiences of fully qualified childcare professionals not being well suited to working with children while others without formal qualifications had been considered to provide better care.

## Qualifications/Training

A wide range of possible qualifications, certifications and training requirements were cited fairly consistently across all respondent groups.

In relation to formal qualifications and training, many felt that out of school care workers should have obtained or be working towards a relevant childcare qualification, or

qualifications in child development/behaviour. Leadership qualifications were also considered important by some. The level of the qualifications varied, however, with some suggesting an appropriate SVQ or an HNC/HND should be required. Degree level qualifications for managers were important for some, and considered too high/unnecessary by others (only a few parents/carers suggested this should be required). Youth work, education<sup>12</sup>, teaching, social work/care, or community education/care based qualifications were also mentioned (typically by parents/carers). Some also felt it was important that practitioners were registered with the SSSC:

*“Childcare qualifications and experience, I want them to be experts in their field and know what they're doing.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“Having trained qualified or staff working towards qualifications maintains standards and provides a better quality of service and experience.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“I feel that especially now, this workforce require to have the correct qualifications for their job role and also to register with the SSSC. This not only enhances the quality of care for the children but ensures that this workforce are regarded as professionals.” (Individual, OSC Provider)*

Other important qualifications, certifications and training focused on:

- health and safety - such as First Aid, Personal Hygiene, and Food Hygiene;
- security checks and child safety - full Disclosure Certification or PVG scheme membership were considered essential, while others included Safeguarding, and Child Protection; and
- Play Work (or youth work) - including outdoor learning/education, forest and beach school training, youth and sports related qualifications, and imaginary play. Several OSC providers suggested that play work (and other courses of relevance) should be recognised by the SSSC.

Other aspects that were considered important by a few respondents each included an understanding of attachment; knowledge of child psychology; learning support training; disability awareness training (including specifically for dyslexia, autism, ADHD, and learning disabilities); knowledge of mental health and how to tackle bullying; understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); understanding of trauma informed practice; equalities training, training in allergies and diabetes; and knowledge of UNCRRC.

Continuing professional development (CPD) was also seen to be necessary by several OSC providers.

Several parents/carers and other individuals suggested that all out of school care staff should be qualified and trained to similar levels as required for nursery staff/those providing early years care, those who work in schools (such as Pupil Support Assistants), or registered childminders. A few local authorities were also keen to ensure that out of

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<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that respondents were often not clear whether they were referring to qualifications in child education, or those required to work in an educational establishment, or if they simply meant out of school care staff should have be educated to a certain level.

school care staff were trained and qualified to the same standards as ELC practitioners so that staff can move between the roles more easily. A few, however, (including parents/carers and other individuals) felt the qualifications should be similar to youth workers as this better reflected the work undertaken.

### **Issues with Requiring Qualifications**

A few parents/carers, other individuals, third sector/charity organisations, and several OSC providers stressed that the sector was not typically well paid and that wages should rise to recognise the need for professional qualifications, and that this could impact costs. Again, a few respondents suggested the system should follow the Nordic countries where they stated all educational staff (including nursery, primary and secondary school and out of school care) were paid the same:

*“...if staff are expected to be qualified to provide their service then their pay should be reflected in this.” (Individual, Not Specified)*

*“Graduate leaders have raised quality and reflective practice, however pay scales need to be equivalent to the state sector and this requires funding or the burden is in fees.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

While some OSC providers felt that the current qualifications and training framework was appropriate and necessary, others (including OSC providers and a few local authorities) suggested that imposing strict qualification requirements had (and could continue to) result in some negative consequences, including:

- good staff being dissuaded from entering or remaining in the profession and/or leading to staff shortages (particularly for smaller/rural services);
- staff retention issues with staff leaving the profession and moving to better paid and more ‘respected’ careers upon qualifying;
- missing out on suitable candidates whose qualifications are not recognised in the sector or who are less academic/able to commit to studying;
- discrepancies in funding for the differing SVQ levels and by age; and
- the retrospective nature of the SSSC change in qualification requirements being seen as unfair and resulting in a loss of experience:

*“If you empower people with a degree then they feel like “Why are we here with poor pay and hours?” (Event, OSC Provider)*

*“The workforce are losing great staff members due to lack of funding and registration requirements even if they have worked in childcare for many years and are key members of staff.” (Individual, OSC Provider)*

Several OSC providers felt that a more tailored qualification for out of school care was required. One OSC provider suggested that courses could provide greater flexibility, allowing all education based qualifications to maintain core units and to offer a range of optional units tailored to the different sectors - they suggested the Scandinavian Social Pedagogy model as a basis. A few also suggested that more vocational based qualifications were necessary, with on the job training counting towards the final

qualification, and that the SSSC registration should recognise a wider range of degrees and/or qualifications to assist with recruitment.

## **Experience/Skills**

The range of skills and experience respondents felt was important was largely consistent across the various respondent groups. This included the need for:

- experience with either a range of age groups or with the target age group;
- the ability to engage with children and young people and being skilled at building relationships with children and their families;
- being able to boost children's confidence;
- experience of the curriculum and/or an understanding of GIRFEC;
- being able to utilise different forms of play and/or having knowledge of different games;
- experience of delivering specific activities (where appropriate) such as sports, outdoor activities, drama, dance, music, arts and crafts, languages, STEM, other subjects for help with homework or study groups for older children; and
- having specific skills, e.g. knitting, woodwork, baking/cookery, chess, and gardening.

Having a range of life skills and experience was also important to both parents/carers and many OSC providers as well as a few respondents across the other respondent groups.

## **Personal Qualities**

Personal qualities were also seen as being important, with many respondents across the respondent groups (including young people who participated in events) listing vital and desirable qualities that staff should possess. This included kindness, role-modelling, stability, consistency, reliability, approachability, being caring, nurturing, supportive, compassionate, enthusiastic, having a genuine interest in and desire to work with children as well as having a good rapport with children, good communication and interpersonal skills, patience, understanding, being non-judgemental, fun, fair, having common sense, being energetic, honest/trustworthy, having humour, being empathetic, creative, flexible, encouraging and creative.

Indeed, some respondents (including several who supported the need for qualifications) indicated that a person's experience and personal qualities were often more important than the qualifications that they had:

*"It is attitude and character that children thrive on not certificates.  
The more diverse the workforce the better." (Individual,  
Parent/Carer)*

*"Demanding qualifications excludes too many people that are great  
with kids and validates others that are not." (Individual, Not  
Specified)*

A few suggested that, as long as managers had relevant qualifications, then the skills, experience and qualities of other staff were more important than professional qualifications. Similarly, parents/carers and OSC providers suggested that a core group of

supervisory level staff should be qualified, but others could have lesser qualifications, or work whilst in training/train on the job. This was seen as a way to allow the retention of valued staff members who were reluctant to commit to pursuing professional qualifications for whatever reason. Several also suggested that volunteers could be useful (either parents/carers, or high school pupils and students looking for experience, etc.), although others were against the use of teenagers:

*“College qualification for at least one senior member of staff. I would be happy for the rest to do on the job training as long as gone through all the safety checks.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“3/4 staff should have a Play worker qualification but the quarter remaining shouldn't need to have qualifications. Staff range from 16 to 78 and especially the staff members that are still scared of computers and don't use them, they have enough life experience to be able to love and support children.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

### **Other Comments**

Several respondents highlighted that training and/or experience of supporting children and young people with additional support needs was important. Specific requirements that were mentioned included staff being trained, skilled or qualified to administer medication, deal with toileting issues and dietary requirements, awareness of sensory issues and sensitivities, and being skilled/experienced in both appropriate activities and de-escalation. Being trained in Makaton and British Sign Language were also mentioned by a few parents/carers and other individuals, while young carer awareness training was also suggested by a third sector/charity organisation.

Those leading sports and other activity clubs were expected to have relevant training in the specific activity.

### **Qualification Requirements by Type of Provision**

Q16. 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 be the same or different? Why?

Overall, 987 (78%) respondents discussed whether qualification requirements for staff should be the same or different across the range of out of school care provision. For parents/carers, other individuals, early years providers, education providers, and local authorities there was a relatively even split between those who felt that the same qualification requirements should apply across the full range of provision and those who felt that differences should be accepted. Among third sector/charities, more respondents felt qualifications should be different, while the opposite was the case for OSC providers, where more indicated that qualification requirements should be the same across the sector.

### **Reasons for Supporting the Same Qualifications**

Many respondents (across all respondent groups) who considered that it was most appropriate for there to be the same qualification requirements felt this was necessary because staff faced the same risks, issues, and needed to provide the same level of support to children. It was also felt that standardised training would allow for staff to transfer between the different settings with greater ease. This latter point was important

for local authorities, with a few suggesting that OSC could be aligned more with ELC to allow both workforces to combine more and work across both sectors. Further, it was felt this would provide a consistent standard and higher quality of care across all the settings. A few OSC providers also felt this would help to professionalise the sector:

*“They should all provide the same level of care so why shouldn’t they all be qualified to the same standards. There needs to be consistency.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“Should be the same, then all children are getting the high standard of the play workers knowledge, support, nurturing, caring etc.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

A few parents/carers, who were generally in favour of standardised qualifications were, however, concerned about this impacting negatively on costs and supply:

*“Ideally but I can’t afford holiday cover as it is, but if staff costs are higher, I can’t see me managing at all.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“Ideally yes, however, this would perhaps reduce childminders/nannies available which would make position worse for working parents.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Many (across all respondent groups) also suggested there should be the same minimum qualifications needed, and/or basic safety requirements (such as first aid, disclosure/PVG certification, child protection and safeguarding training), but that different additional training specific to the setting would also be appropriate:

*“Should have the same basic minimum requirement then more specialised requirements based on the setting.” (Individual, Not Specified)*

## **Reasons for Supporting Differences**

Many others (across all respondent groups) felt that, while staff should have appropriate qualifications, these should be varied in order to best suit the setting and activities being offered, the age/nature of children under their care, and the nature/level of the job. It was also considered important to support volunteers within the sector, for example, for small community groups and volunteers like those leading brownies and guides it was felt inappropriate to require them to gain formal qualifications in childcare:

*“Depending on age/range of activities different qualifications would be required.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“The differences are what makes each setting unique and the choice should be with the families to make. By providing a universal qualification approach, the provision risks losing its individuality thus stripping parents of choice.” (Individual, OSC Provider)*

The low wages and part-time hours typically experienced by staff working across the sector was also mentioned by a few respondents, with them generally feeling that it was unrealistic to expect all workers to be well qualified as a result.

## Activity and Holiday Clubs

There were mixed views over the staff qualification requirements for both activity and holiday clubs. This was noted across all respondent groups but was a particular feature of OSC providers' responses.

Many respondents (largely, although not exclusively, parents/carers, and other individuals) felt that activity and holiday clubs would require different qualifications to regulated care settings. In particular, it was highlighted that they may require sport coaching qualifications, or people who are experienced in the activity which would be less relevant to after-school care and childminders:

*“Some variation is needed - someone providing a creative writing club does not need a qualification in childcare for example.”  
(Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Several felt they should require less in the way of formal qualifications as after-school clubs or childminders as they were considered to be less formal, were often provided over relatively short time periods, and holiday clubs were provided less frequently. Rather, it was considered more important that staff were qualified/trained/skilled/experienced in the specific activity being offered.

Others, however, felt that the same minimum childcare qualifications should apply across all sectors, and that any activity specific qualification/training should be additional. In particular, holiday clubs were cited as often having children in their care for longer periods per day than after-school clubs. A few respondents, however, suggested that requiring activity holiday clubs to hold the same formal qualifications as regulated care providers could be detrimental to the provision of such services as they are often run/lead by volunteers.

Some OSC providers were generally critical of the unregulated elements of the sector, including activity and holiday clubs. However, others felt there was a need to move away from viewing them as typically poor quality and identified programmes that were considered to provide excellent services.

## Childminders

Several parents/carers and other individuals felt that all childminders should have qualifications as they are typically working on their own with no supervision. It was also considered that they provide greater levels of 'care' or more personal care to children than activity and holiday clubs.

Some suggested that the current requirements for childminders were appropriate while others felt they should have a formal qualification, with several suggesting that they should have a first aid certificate, food hygiene certificate, be disclosure/PVG checked and have a childcare qualification as a minimum:

*“A childminder is a single person in charge of multiple kids on their own so arguably needs more qualification than someone working under some supervision as part of a team in an after-school club I think.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Several parents/carers and other individuals, as well as a few OSC providers however, felt that childminders may need different or less qualifications as they considered them to be

working in a different environment, providing a different kind of care, often to fewer children. It was also suggested that childminders may have capacity issues or be less financially able to undertake lengthy qualifications and there were concerns that requirements for such qualifications may put people off becoming a childminder and thus reduce availability - although it should be noted this was also a more general concern in relation to the sector as a whole:

*“When it becomes too over regulated this causes people to turn away from the profession. Keep it simple.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

## **Need for Regulation**

While considered separate to qualification requirements, some respondents suggested that all services should be regulated. This was mentioned by a few parents/carers, other individuals and some OSC providers. They felt this was necessary to provide a level playing field and ensure an equally high level/quality of care regardless of the setting. Several OSC providers discussed the ‘risks’ of the provision of unregulated care (including staff with no appropriate qualifications, no requirement to adhere to specific staff/children ratios, not having the appropriate insurances, etc.) and felt that parents/carers did not always know the difference between regulated and unregulated services. Several respondents also suggested that greater transparency for parents/carers was required regarding qualifications and regulation requirements:

*“Don’t think parents understand the risk or genuine care of the child. Parents don’t know the difference, they just see it as cheaper.”  
(Event, OSC Providers)*

*“I don’t have enough of an understanding of the roles and responsibilities so I would like to see more transparency about roles, qualifications, regulation, etc.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

## **Alternative Models**

One alternative system proposed by a few respondents (including one local authority, one third sector/charity organisation, and two OSC providers) involved the provision of a core skills certificate for practitioners, while managers would still require a relevant degree. For unregistered/unregulated services it was suggested that local authorities (if provided with funding) could operate a licensing scheme linked to requirements, including the core skills certificate.

Another suggestion (from one OSC provider) was that regulated and unregulated providers could partner to deliver services, particularly for holiday provision. It was noted that it can be challenging/unviable for some regulated providers to provide holiday clubs due to competition from cheaper (unregulated) options, and so partnering may provide a ‘win-win’ solution.

## **Other Comments**

Some respondents repeated the issues raised at Q15 above, including suggestions that experiences and skills/personal qualities were more important than requiring formal qualifications; that the manager should be qualified but that this was less important for other staff; and that unqualified volunteers could work alongside a core group of qualified staff. These issues were reiterated by a range of respondent groups.

As well as impacting upon the retention of current staff and acting as a barrier to recruitment/supply of staff/services, another unintended consequence of requiring all out of school care staff to obtain specific formal qualifications could be a negative impact on certain third sector/charity organisations. It was noted by one third sector/charity organisation that, where organisations work with school age children, as well as other age groups, they could conceivably be expected to ensure all staff meet the qualification requirements, however, they considered this unaffordable. Rather, they suggested that key training elements could be provided as online modules for staff to undertake, as a minimum requirement.

## Promoting the Sector as an Attractive Career Choice

Q17. How can we promote working in the out of school sector as a more attractive career choice?

In total, 995 (78%) respondents provided feedback about how to promote the out of school care sector as a more attractive career choice. Responses typically focussed on either practical changes that could be made to attract people into the profession or on how careers in the sector could be better promoted. Responses given were similar across the various respondent groups.

### Salary and Conditions

The main issue highlighted by all respondent groups was related to wages, and a general sense that the sector was poorly paid at present. Some respondents suggested that salaries should reflect at least the living wage, while others suggested that the pay needed to be high enough for this to be considered as a sustainable career, and others suggested that out of school care workers should be paid in line with early years practitioners:

*“Better pay. It is crazy that childcare workers are paid so little for having so much responsibility and requiring qualifications.”*  
(Individual, Parent/Carer)

*“A proper salary is key to this, as in some provisions the cleaner is paid more than the play worker, this will not attract people to come into and remain in the sector and does not reflect the value of work done.”* (Organisation, Third Sector/Charity)

Several respondents felt that the fees charged to parents/carers were already high and so government funding or subsidies for services were required in order to facilitate wage rises in the sector without significantly increasing the cost to families:

*“These jobs have to be better paid... But we also have extremely high childcare costs in the UK, and so these wages need to be subsidised so that parents are able to afford childcare.”* (Individual, Parent/Carer)

Similarly, it was suggested there was a need for improvements in conditions or other benefits, including:

- providing greater job security;

- issues in relation to the hours available (including providing contracted hours and/or increased hours by extending services or combining roles/service offerings);
- providing flexibility (including flexible working/hours);
- providing improved terms and conditions to include the provision of permanent (or at least not zero hour) contracts, holiday and sick pay, and pensions;
- providing high quality facilities;
- having plenty of staff available; and
- providing supportive management.

The hours typically offered for this type of employment were seen as a significant barrier to recruiting staff. The part-time nature of the work with hours available only outwith school hours was considered as off-putting and/or unsuitable for many. It was also suggested that, as a result, out of school care was often a second job for many rather than being their main or sole career. Paying higher wages was seen as one way to overcome this challenge, with many also suggesting that workers could be provided with free or discounted spaces within the service for their own children.

A few also suggested that salaries and the hours worked should map favourably onto state benefits to ensure that this does not create a barrier to employment.

### **Qualifications/Training**

Requiring, supporting and/or funding staff to gain qualifications and/or providing access to high quality training while working was considered important. It was also considered important to advertise to staff that they can access training and would be supported to gain qualifications. Some suggested that it would act as an incentive if staff could increase their salary following the completion of certain training or gaining qualifications. Several also suggested that apprenticeships could be provided as a route into the sector.

Others, however, again suggested that the need for qualifications should be lessened, with transferrable skills and experience recognised and valued.

### **Career Progression**

Offering clear career progression opportunities was also seen as important to some. This included both progression within the sector but also facilitating access to other sectors such as ELC, classroom assistant positions, teaching, social work, and nursing. It was also suggested that providing a blended model where staff had the opportunity to combine roles would allow staff to increase their hours and potentially undertake full-time work. Combinations that were suggested by respondents included working in out of school care and as a classroom assistant, school play worker, school administrator roles, or another role in the school, or combining this with ELC, youth services, or active schools. A few respondents (generally parents/carers and other individuals) suggested this could go a step further and have out of school care fully incorporated within nurseries/schools so the team could be utilised more flexibly and provide a more holistic approach:

*“Opportunities for progression are key to allow the sector to be seen as a career pathway where there is scope to progress on to other*

*areas of work and continue to develop and use the skills the staff have.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

## **Recognition**

Many respondents (across all respondent groups) considered it important that the sector was valued and suggested that, at present, it was undervalued. This needed to include improving perceptions of childcare careers overall in society, within local authorities and education establishments, so that staff feel valued:

*“Bring awareness to parents/carers/other professionals/community that practitioners have a valuable role in supporting the learning, development and wellbeing of our children and young people.”  
(Individual, Early Years Practitioner)*

*“Raising the profile of after-school care to other professionals as well as to the public. We are rarely included in new policies...”  
(Organisation, OSC Provider)*

It was considered important that this was seen as more than just ‘babysitting’. It was felt that promoting, marketing and advertising the profession would be helpful, focussing on the professional and qualified nature of the sector, the difference that staff make in children’s lives, and the support they provide to children and families:

*“Show how important they are in the lives and development of the children in their care. Show them their value.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“Advertising what out of school care actually does instead of everyone assuming they are babysitters, etc. Showing the development of children and opportunities we provide.”  
(Organisation, OSC Provider)*

Others suggested that the out of school care sector could be promoted within schools to encourage young people to consider this as a career, develop better links with colleges to attract those studying for a childcare qualification and/or to provide work placements, promote to those with no/older children and older/retired people looking for flexibility, and/or to those looking for a more varied work profile by combining this with other part-time options.

Others suggested promoting the ‘perks’ of the work, which included that the work is fun, local, part-time/flexible hours, term-time work, offers Christmas and weekends off, and allows people to gain qualifications whilst working:

*“Promote the fun element of OSC i.e. sports, outdoor activities etc. Also promoting the fact qualifications can be achieved whilst working in an OSC setting is important.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

In terms of practicalities, it was suggested that social media was a good way to run promotional campaigns. Several suggested that advertising campaigns should be similar to those previously utilised for teaching and early years. Others suggested that providers could/should be invited to careers fairs/talks and that open days for services could provide good opportunities for promotion and recruitment.

## Increasing Diversity of the Workforce

Q18. How can we increase diversity across the out of school care workforce?

A total of 731 (58%) respondents provided a response in relation to how to increase diversity across the out of school care workforce, however, 83 (11%) of these stated that they were unsure or did not know. As such, 648 (51%) respondents provided more substantive comments and/or suggestions on how to increase diversity. Again, the range of comments provided were largely consistent across the different respondent groups and focused on the barriers created by the current terms and conditions, widening the distribution/visibility of job adverts, and creating a promotional campaign to raise the profile of the sector and endorse diversity.

Specific groups that were mentioned as important to encourage into the workforce included men (this was a key target demographic mentioned by many respondents), a more diverse ethnic mix, a range of age groups and socio-economic backgrounds, those with disabilities, LGBT, a range of religions/beliefs, and those from care experienced backgrounds. It was also suggested that a range of different roles could be utilised within the sector, including volunteers, students, older and retired people, sports staff, and parents/carers returning to work following a career break.

Again, improving pay and conditions, raising the profile/value of the profession, providing accessible and supported training and/or qualifications, and developing a career path and/or opportunities for progression was seen as a way to encourage diversity in the sector generally, and to help make the role more appealing to men in particular. It was also suggested that more could be done to recognise overseas qualifications to assist black and minority ethnic (BME) individuals into the out of school care sector, and that the provision of free/subsidised spaces for staff's children would help immigrant/ethnic minority women into the workforce, along with others. Providing mentoring and taster sessions was also suggested, as was promoting the role-model element of the work to those currently under-represented in the staff profile:

*"...make it a career choice with a decent and attractive salary where there is plenty of scope for progression." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*"Improve wages, especially in the private sector, and increase working hours as low wages and hours/split shifts is what puts a lot of people off working in this industry." (Individual, OSC Provider)*

Several highlighted that societal stereotypes also needed to be tackled:

*"Male out of hours workers are very rare as it can be seen as weird by our society, so breaking that barrier would help diversity." (Individual, Not Specified)*

Again, several suggested that less emphasis was needed on qualifications and that skills and experience should also be valued, or that wider qualifications should be recognised to consider transferable skills and experience. It was felt that the need for formal qualifications could limit the diversity of the workforce:

*"No qualifications necessary. Life skills and experience of/interest in working with children only pre-requisites." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“Loose the compulsory SVQ and use the many people who have gained a life degree by living and gaining knowledge through experiences.” (Individual, OSC Provider)*

Likewise, it was again suggested that the sector should be promoted in schools and colleges. In addition, it was suggested that community groups should be consulted to seek support and advice and that the advertising of posts should be done more widely. It was also suggested that advertising or promotional campaigns could target specific groups, that promotional materials needed to show diversity within the workforce, and that the wording of adverts should be inclusive or clearly state that employers welcome applications from diverse backgrounds and minorities. It was also considered important to promote the benefits to the children of having diverse carers in advertising/promotional materials:

*“Ensure advertising is spread across multiple platforms to catch as wide an audience as possible.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“If you can see it you can be it, show them pictures of diversity.”  
(Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Several suggested that positive discrimination was required in the recruitment process, either by advertising in specific areas/publications, by creating links with equality organisations, or by actively setting equality targets:

*“Better recruitment, targeting underrepresented groups and clear messaging on benefits of diverse workforces, engaging with equality organisations especially those with employability programmes.”  
(Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Others, however, were not keen on encouraging diversity, were against positive discrimination, or felt this was of a lower priority than getting the best staff possible:

*“Employment should simply be based on skill, ability, enthusiasm and suitability for the roll. A focus on diversity ‘targets’ skews this and shouldn’t be considered.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“The most important thing is who is the right person for the job, not whether, they’re male, female, black, white, etc.” (Individual, OSC Provider)*

There was also a role for the services in relation to increasing diversity, with a few respondents in each case highlighting that:

- they needed to be inclusive equal opportunities employers who provide a supportive work environment;
- they needed to be open to diversity;
- they should utilise blind CVs/job applications so candidates are not profiled;
- should be non-discriminatory;
- should develop and adhere to appropriate workforce/workplace policies; and
- they should provide flexibility to accommodate cultural or religious needs.

Finally, it was also suggested that by providing a wide range of activities, both within services and across the sector, this could encourage diversity. In particular, it was suggested that promoting active or outside play, outdoor activities, coaching or sports activities, science activities, etc. may attract more men into the profession:

*“With a varied programme, this would bring varied skills and talents. Complementing play workers with sports/dance/drama/outdoor/IT co-ordinators for example.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

# Other Comments

A number of other topics and issues were discussed throughout the responses which did not directly relate to any of the specific questions asked, but which still provide valuable information and learning relevant to the development of the Out of School Care in Scotland Framework. These other comments are detailed below.

## Purpose of OSC

Throughout the consultation there was some disagreement (largely among parents/carers) as to the overall purpose of out of school care and therefore the priority groups who should be supported to access this. Several appeared to consider this to be, first and foremost, childcare provision which is vital to support working parents/carers, and thus indicated that provision should be prioritised towards this group. They occasionally expressed opinions that parents/carers who do not work do not 'need' childcare:

*"I see out of school care as a necessity to help working families continue their work." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Several others, however, appeared to focus on the wider benefits of out of school care to the child(ren), such as supporting/encouraging a child's development, providing experiences they would otherwise not have, and assisting with food security for children. As such, they felt that the most vulnerable and/or those on the lowest incomes should be supported to access such services and/or that spaces should be allocated to this group first:

*"Prioritise spaces on a means basis, i.e. those on low incomes get first space." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

## Interaction with ELC Provision

Several respondents (across all respondent groups) highlighted the perceived disparity in provision for pre-school aged children and school aged children. They noted that the free childcare hours provided via ELC (soon to increase to 1140 hours) meant that parents/carers utilised this to allow them to work or to increase their hours. As the provision is free, the cost is not factored into household spending. However, when these same children go to school the provision of funded childcare is removed, meaning parents/carers then need to both find a suitable service for their child and cover the costs of this themselves. For many families this was considered to create much stress and worry, and in some circumstances could lead to parents/carers either reducing their working hours or leaving their job entirely. As such, it was considered necessary for similar levels of investment and support to be provided for the out of school care sector in order to meet the growing and additional demand generated by the investment in ELC:

*"...so much has been poured into 1140 [ELC provision], yet when all these children go to school parents are back at square one." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*"...after supporting children and parents with funding for nurseries they go to school and suddenly you have to find £700/month school care for 2 children - my wife is about to go part-time as it no longer is viable for her to work with these costs." (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

The ELC provision was also considered to have impacted on staff recruitment and retention within the out of school care sector. Several OSC providers noted that they could not compete with the wages, working hours and other terms and conditions that were being offered by the local authorities under the ELC provision, and suggested that a lot of staff had left the out of school care sector to take up employment in early years' provision as a result.

### **School Refusers/Exclusions**

It was noted by a few respondents that most services are not set-up/able to deal with school refusers and those who have been temporarily or permanently excluded from school. This is particularly the case where out of school provision is based within the school. This impacts on working parents/carers who may be forced to take unpaid leave, or who cannot access unpaid leave in such situations, it was suggested.

### **Gender Equality**

Childcare was considered as vital to allow women to enter/re-enter the work place, and as important in providing financial equality between the genders, as well as equality in the workplace. As such, childcare required to be consistent and reliable, and cover the full year (not just term-time). Any difficulties in accessing affordable childcare was considered to have a much greater impact on women's ability to access and maintain work compared to men:

*“The government need to provide support to school age children as well as nursery or else working parents (quite likely to be the mums) won't be able to engage fully in work place opportunities.”  
(Individual, Parent/Carer)*

*“If the government wants more women in the workplace then they need to help with childcare costs, not just nursery places but out of school care as well.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

### **Young Carers**

One event was undertaken with young carers and one organisation responded specifically to highlight the needs of young carers. They stressed that young carers need additional support to be able to access out of school care services and after-school activities/clubs. It was suggested they should receive free or subsidised access and, importantly, they should not be penalised if they cannot attend at short notice. Free travel on public transport or the provision of greater transport opportunities were also suggested as necessary to ensure that young carers can access services. It was also suggested that a trusted replacement carer may be required to allow young carers to attend clubs and activities.

### **Possible Alternative Models**

Several respondents referenced Scandinavian and Nordic models of childcare provision throughout the consultation. While they did not always provide specific details of what these models entailed, these were referenced in relation to their funding models, accessibility for parents/carers, inclusiveness of services for children with disabilities and additional support needs, and the support/recognition provided to staff. It was recommended several times that these should be considered by the Scottish Government when considering a framework for Scottish provision:

*“I would like to see a system that mirrors something like the Swedish model of childcare which is subsidised through taxation, topped up by (possibly) their version of child tax credits, is primarily based outside, had classes of mixed age to encourage socialisation learning and development, and that home cooks and grows nutritious food. The system in the UK is far substandard on comparison to other countries who do so much better and it would be a good time with this remodelling of the system to benchmark and perhaps consider a completely new approach.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

Others suggested that a change to the school day was required in order to fit better with working patterns. While few provided any suggestions on how this might work in practice, one respondent provided a possible outline as detailed below:

*“My personal preference would be a change to schooling hours and a 4 day school week. Monday-Thursday 8am-4pm with no Friday at school. Putting Active Schools activities or after-school club on straight from school 4-6pm for children whose parents work late. That would give working parents a Monday-Thursday school session in line with nursery hours. After-school clubs could then work half days on a Friday for parents who needed the extra day and active schools could continue to support after-school clubs on a Friday... Schools could even incorporate whole school breakfasts like in nursery where children come in & eat between 8am-9am with a soft start activity in their classes... and they get called for breakfast like they would for lunch.” (Individual, Parent/Carer)*

One OSC provider also outlined how alternative/loosening the requirements for staffing could provide an alternative and more cost effective model:

*“To meet the needs of all children and the idea of Play Clubs that are operated by local authorities and located within already open and available premises. These could be staffed by suitably qualified and experienced practitioners recruited by the Local Authority without the need to register with SSSC to avoid unrealistic conditions on qualifications. Support staff within a school are not required to register with SSSC and are carrying out similar or more demanding posts... Recruitment would still require PVG and the staff retention would be higher. These services could still be regulated by Care Inspectorate.” (Organisation, OSC Provider)*

Finally, a few respondents, typically parents/carers and other individuals felt that, rather than focusing on the provision of out of school care, more should be done to encourage employers to be more supportive of and flexible for working parents in order to allow them to spend more time with their children. This included the provision of more flexible and part-time working arrangements, as well as the provision of on-site child care facilities by large employers. A few others felt that more should be done to encourage/support parents/carers to look after their own children rather than choosing/needing to work.

# Discussion

## The Consultation Process

Overall, the consultation achieved a high response rate, both in general and to each individual question posed. A high number of service users and service providers responded, as well as a wide range of other stakeholder groups. There was also significant consistency in the range of issues discussed by respondents, both between questions and across respondent groups.

It should be noted, however, that many respondents were largely focused on after-school clubs and, to a lesser extent, holiday clubs. Even less attention was given to childminding and activity clubs (perhaps due to the nature, interests or experiences of the respondents). As such, responses may not reflect or fully explore the situations or desired future provision for these services.

Similarly, various groups appear to be under-represented within the consultation. This includes childminders, activity group providers, young people of secondary school age, and children with disabilities and additional support needs. As such, more work may be required with these groups in order to ensure that their views are fully considered. Likewise, while questions were asked about the out of school care needs of rural communities, and for disabled children and those with additional support needs, the consultation did not record respondents' background in this respect, and so it is not possible to know how many respondents were commenting based on direct experience or real need.

A difference in views was also noted between the parents/carers who responded to the consultation via Citizen Space and some of those who attended the events. The events largely targeted those living in more deprived areas, while the Citizen Space responses appear to have attracted a large volume of responses from parents/carers who were in work. As such, there was a difference in the extent to which respondents utilised the different out of school care provisions discussed and the reasons for use, although many of the key issues (such as cost and accessibility) were consistent between the two groups. As each event constituted only one response each, (despite representing the views of a greater number of individuals), there is a risk that the needs/views of parents/carers from deprived areas have been under-represented within this analysis.

## Answering the Core Questions

Extensive detail was provided at each of the consultation questions. The key points related to each of four core questions are outlined below.

How can national policy support and enhance out of school care?
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Many welcomed the draft Framework and the opportunity to have an input to its development. Many respondents were generally happy with the terminology/name 'out of school care', noting that it was suitably descriptive and accurate, and currently well understood by parents/carers, children and the sector at large. Others, however, thought it sensible to move away from including the words 'school' and/or 'care' and place a greater emphasis on 'clubs' or 'activities' in order to be more inclusive.

Respondents were also overwhelmingly supportive of the three key aims outlined for a future out of school care framework. Providing accessible and affordable services was considered to be the most important aim, and was considered vital in supporting parents/carers to work, train or study. Respondents generally believed in the provision of high quality services, staffed by high quality staff who can provide a caring and nurturing environment. They were also supportive of services that can support children to try different activities, and develop life and social skills. Similarly, respondents were generally supportive of out of school services using/accessing community facilities and spaces so that children integrate with and feel part of the community. Having access to the outdoors was also considered important to promote health and wellbeing among children and young people. A common theme throughout, however, was that additional funding would be needed to allow the Scottish Government to achieve what were seen as somewhat 'aspirational' aims.

With 95% of respondents supportive of the aims, it would seem appropriate for these to be retained and implemented.

What sort of out of school activities do families want/need?

Most respondents felt that regulated out of school care and activity based clubs and programmes were needed, and over half of all respondents suggested childminders were needed. Indeed a wide range of different provision was seen as necessary to meet the different needs of parents and children, as well as to offer choice to families.

Provision was also considered necessary for a wide range of age groups, although the largest perceived demand from those responding to this consultation appears to be for primary school aged children, as it was typically felt that older children would be more independent and more capable/trusted to be home alone. While secondary school provision seems less in demand, the issue for the older age group seems to be about providing more diverse and tailored offerings that help with the development of life skills and support the focus on attainment at secondary level. Allowing older children to have independence and be more actively involved in shaping their 'care' experience was also seen as key by respondents - although it should be noted that there was a lack of identifiable responses from young people of secondary school age so it is difficult to be certain about what they would like.

Considerable flexibility was required by families, including accommodating various needs in timings and uptake of sessions, being able to access sessions/change bookings at short notice, access fairer payment terms, and transporting children between school, activities and care services. However, providing this degree of flexibility could be challenging for service providers within their current models of delivery, and costly. Reliability was also highly valued with parents/carers needing to be certain that space(s) could be accessed as required.

The preferred location for out of school care services appears to be in or co-located with schools, largely for convenience (for both the children and parents/carers) and because these are typically considered to have suitable facilities. Several, however, felt it was important for services to be located elsewhere so that children get a change of scene. This was especially true for rural and remote communities.

Most respondents felt that food should be provided as part of after-school and holiday clubs, although there were mixed views as to who should provide this (the service or parents/carers). Service based food provision was, however, considered important in

tackling food insecurity for some families/children. It was also felt that activities should be age and stage specific, and that the type of provisions should be different by age - with older children requiring a more informal and hands-off approach from staff compared to younger children.

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

Financial support was considered important for the sector in general, and specifically for rural/remote services, community based approaches, and to assist services in delivering the best care for disabled children and those with additional support needs. It was felt that subsidies and help with the costs (for both parents and service providers) were necessary to make out of school care more affordable.

Increasing the overall capacity of out of school care was also important, along with the accessibility of services, transport provision (where necessary), the provision of trained staff, better advertising of services, and providing more joined up services.

Capacity issues were noted in relation to urban and rural areas, as well as for those seeking services suitable for disabled children and those with additional support needs. For more urban areas, respondents highlighted issues in accessing services due to long waiting lists, while the lack of any suitable service provision was discussed in relation to rural, remote and island communities, as well as for disabled children and those with additional support needs.

Accessibility was again important across all settings. The location of services was important both to facilitate easy transitions for children between school and out of school care services, and to fit with parents'/carers' routines. The accessibility of the service was also crucial to ensure that services are inclusive for disabled children and those with additional support needs.

While transport provision was universally considered important in order to support the safe transition of children between school and services, this issue was particularly acute in rural and remote areas. Likewise, the provision of trained staff was particularly important for disabled children and those with additional support needs, while also being relevant to all services more generally. The need for better advertising and more joined up services was also raised.

Other, practical supports for community based approaches were also identified, including the provision of guidance, advice and support on how to set-up an out of school care service, as well as capacity building and mentoring for those interested in providing such a service.

How can we support the out of school care workforce to deliver high quality services?

Around half of the respondents supported the need for out of school staff to have, or be working towards, formal qualifications, however a notable proportion (around a third) suggested that skills, experience and personal qualities were more important. Parents/carers and other individuals were more evenly split, while all other groups were typically in favour of the need for formal qualifications. Those in favour of requiring qualifications suggested this was needed to ensure high quality care, to professionalise the sector, to promote the sector as a viable career, and to ensure greater respect for workers. Others, however, felt this requirement may be too restrictive and felt that existing high quality and experienced (but non-qualified) staff may be lost and potential staff put

off. Others suggested that the ability to achieve qualifications didn't always translate into suitable staff members.

Views were also split on whether requirements should be the same or different for the various provider types. On the whole, those working in the out of school care sector tended to favour the need for the same requirements across all provider types, the third sector/charities tended to advocate for different requirements, while most other groups provided a reasonably equal split in views.

In addition to formal qualifications, other elements that were considered to be important in promoting the sector as a viable career option included:

- improvements in salary and conditions;
- staff being supported to undertake training;
- creating a career path and/or career progression; and
- raising the value and recognition of the sector.

These elements were also considered as important to increase diversity of the workforce, along with challenging wider societal stereotypes and providing more joined up childcare roles to facilitate full-time positions.

## **Informing Future Provision**

The consultation provided significant and valuable feedback to assist the Scottish Government in taking forward the Out of School Care in Scotland Framework. It has highlighted what type of provision is preferred by service users, as well as identified elements that are important in accessing provision, both across the sector and specifically in remote/rural areas and for specific user groups. Methods to support the profession were also explored.

However, as outlined above, more work (perhaps utilising different approaches) may be required with specific groups to ensure their preferences and needs are fully considered and accounted for going forward.

This report will be considered alongside the Scottish Government's continuing engagement and the findings from other external research in the area to deliver the Framework before the end of this parliamentary term in May 2021.

# Appendix A Quantitative Analysis

## Q1 What Range of Services are Needed?

	Total Sample	Individuals <sup>1</sup>	Organisations
Regulated out of school care	1107 (92%)	1022 (92%)	85 (93%)
Childminders	678 (56%)	615 (55%)	63 (69%)
Activity-based clubs and programmes	1020 (85%)	955 (86%)	65 (71%)
Other	126 (10%)	111 (10%)	15 (16%)
Base <sup>2</sup>	1206	1115	91

<sup>1</sup> This includes data from individuals, groups of young people and events where this question was discussed.

<sup>2</sup> 64 respondents did not provide an answer to the quantitative element at this question.

## Range of Services Needed by Respondent Group

	Regulated out of school care		Childminders		Activity-based clubs and programmes		Other		Base
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Parent/Carer	694	91%	400	53%	653	86%	69	9%	760
Other Individuals <sup>1</sup>	251	93%	157	58%	235	87%	27	10%	269
Young People	2	100%	2	100%	2	100%	0	0%	2
Early Years Practitioners	11	100%	9	82%	9	82%	1	9%	11
Youth Workers	3	75%	2	50%	3	75%	2	50%	4
Education providers	13	100%	9	69%	12	92%	4	31%	13
Local Authority	7	88%	7	88%	7	88%	4	50%	8
Public Bodies and Regulatory Bodies	2	67%	2	67%	2	67%	0	0%	3
Third Sector/Charities	16	89%	17	94%	17	94%	4	22%	18
OSC Providers	107	91%	73	62%	79	68%	15	13%	117
Total	1106		678		1019		126		1205 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Includes 'other' individuals and 'not specified'.

<sup>2</sup> One response cannot be allocated to a group as the event contained both parents/carers and OSC providers.

#### Q4 Do you agree with our 3 key aims for a future out of school care framework?

	Total Sample	Individuals <sup>1</sup>	Organisations
Yes	1129 (95%)	1041 (95%)	88 (97%)
No	57 (5%)	54 (5%)	3 (3%)
Base <sup>2</sup>	1186	1095	91

<sup>1</sup> This includes data from individuals, groups of young people and events where this question was discussed.

<sup>2</sup> 84 respondents did not provide an answer to the quantitative element at this question.

#### Agreement with 3 key aims by Respondent Group

	Yes		No		Base
	N	%	N	%	
Parent/Carer	702	94%	41	6%	743
Other Individuals <sup>1</sup>	262	98%	6	2%	268
Young People	2	100%	0	0%	2
Early Years Practitioners	11	100%	0	0%	11
Youth Workers	2	67%	1	33%	3
Education providers	13	100%	0	0%	13
Local Authority	9	100%	0	0%	9
Public Bodies and Regulatory Bodies	3	100%	0	0%	3
Third Sector/ Charities	19	100%	0	0%	19
OSC Providers	106	92%	9	8%	115
Total	1129	95%	57	5%	1186

<sup>1</sup> Includes 'other' individuals and 'not specified'.

## Q14 Do parents/carers need food provision as part of after-school and holiday clubs?

	Total Sample	Individuals <sup>1</sup>	Organisations
Yes	937 (81%)	857 (80%)	80 (91%)
No	221 (19%)	213 (20%)	8 (9%)
Base <sup>2</sup>	1158	1070	88

<sup>1</sup> This includes data from individuals, groups of young people and events where this question was discussed.

<sup>2</sup> 112 respondents did not provide an answer to the quantitative element at this question.

## Need for food provision by Respondent Group

	Yes		No		Base
	N	%	N	%	
Parent/Carer	577	78%	159	22%	736
Other Individuals <sup>1</sup>	210	83%	42	17%	252
Young People	2	100%	0	0%	2
Early Years Practitioners	11	100%	0	0%	11
Youth Workers	3	75%	1	25%	4
Education providers	12	92%	1	8%	13
Local Authority	8	100%	0	0%	8
Public Bodies and Regulatory Bodies	2	100%	0	0%	2
Third Sector/ Charities	15	88%	2	12%	17
OSC Providers	97	86%	16	14%	113
Total	937	81%	221	19%	1158

<sup>1</sup> Includes 'other' individuals and 'not specified'.

# Appendix B Summary of Parent/Carer Consultation Events

## Engagement with parents and carers

Through our face-to-face consultation events, we gained important insight into the needs of particular types of families and the challenges some parents currently face in accessing school age childcare. These small focus groups took the form of informal conversations where participants could share their experiences of school age childcare, the barriers they face and their ideas for improving things in the future. We made efforts to meet with groups of parents and carers who typically find access to childcare more difficult including parents living with low-income, parents of disabled children, parents living in rural areas, and lone parents.

We worked with local organisations and local authorities to identify and connect with groups of parents who would be interested in speaking to us and sharing their experience and views on school age childcare. In the Possilpark area of Glasgow we held two events, engaging with a total of 10 parents. At a further two events we met with 7 lone parents and 2 parents of a child with a disability, also living in Glasgow. In Shetland, we met with 4 parents in the Sandwick area.

## Families living with low income

We spoke with parents living with low income, including lone parents, who shared with us the barriers that they face in accessing suitable services, and the impact this has on their lives and ability to work, earn and provide opportunities for their children.

All the parents we spoke to acknowledged the importance of school age childcare in impacting their ability to enter into and sustain employment. Without support around the school day, parents described struggling to find jobs that fit around their caring responsibilities. For many of these parents, the barriers to childcare, including lack of provision and the cost of childcare, trapped them in a vicious cycle; unable to find jobs that fit within the school day and unable to afford childcare without having a job.

The conversation highlighted that waiting lists at after school clubs are difficult for parents seeking work. One parent's local after school club had a year-long waiting list and when her daughter was finally offered a place, she didn't have a job so couldn't afford to accept the place. At a later date when she had found suitable job options, her daughter was back on the waiting list for the after school club so she couldn't take up employment. Other parents faced a complete lack of childcare options in their local area.

*"There's no after school care where I stay, hence why after seven years I'm still looking for work."*

The cost of school age childcare was prohibitive for many of the families living with low-income we spoke to. Parents said that childcare is often too expensive to pay for, especially when they are looking for the part-time hours that they need to fit with other caring duties. Some parents noted that it's particularly hard to pay for childcare while transitioning from being unemployed into employment.

Parents were aware that they could be entitled to claim back a proportion of their childcare costs through Tax Credits or Universal Credit but this didn't necessarily provide a solution for them.

*"The 70 or 80% isn't enough – it's still a big portion of your wages to spend on childcare."*

Several parents felt that the benefits system doesn't support them and said that their experience of finding work and being able to take it up really depends on having a work-coach who is understanding of their situation and the need for childcare. Some parents also said that Universal Credit was difficult to navigate and that accessing entitlements was extremely stressful.

*"I was petrified of Universal Credit and going to the job centre."*

Parents were also aware of the "hidden costs of working" and felt it was unfair that they might lose support with childcare costs if they work hard to increase their income.

*"Sometimes two parents are working and there's thresholds for income deciding what help you get, so you end up paying more. But if you're going to work to better yourself it doesn't make sense to pay out so much on extortionate childcare."*

Some parents had been or were currently students and received funded childcare places in after school clubs to enable them to study. These parents said that they wouldn't be able to, or would struggle to afford school age childcare without support from their education institutions. Some of these parents were worried about being able to afford childcare after they graduate.

*"Even if you want to work, you need to think about part-time only, otherwise all your money will go on childcare."*

Parents also discussed facing challenges in finding childcare provision that was flexible enough to meet their needs. They pointed to the fact that services which finish at 6pm and operate only on weekdays don't help with childcare for jobs that require irregular shift patterns and evening/weekend working. Lone parents in particular said that it was crucial that childcare services which cite flexibility really mean it and are reliable.

Some of the parents used local youth clubs or drop-in activity clubs for their children. While the parents said that the activities on offer were good and something that their children enjoyed, they didn't feel they could rely on them for childcare because of the drop-in nature. They want services that they can rely on to look after their children and accept full responsibility for them when they are not around.

Parents were also concerned with their children's needs, and being able to give them opportunities to take part in activities that they enjoy. They said that it would be good if their children could attend clubs that focussed on particular activities they were interested in, such as football or drama, but many said that these activities were too expensive for them.

*"They'd be better in some sort of dancing or gymnastics but I don't have the money."*

Those with older children, in the early years of secondary school, said that they would like more choice in after school and summer activities. They said that they would feel happier if their older children had somewhere they could go, rather than being on their own if their parent was working. They had concerns about them not having someone to help if they needed it.

*"It would be good to have something until they are at least 14, it would make things much easier if there were more things he could go to after school as well. They're too young to be on their own when they start high school."*

Parents said that services based in their local communities are best but some felt that there is little communication between local organisations and that things could be much better if they worked together and co-ordinated services more.

While parents all recognised childcare as a barrier to work, they also highlighted the fact that employers also have an important role to play in making work more flexible and family-friendly.

## **Families with a disabled child or child with ASN**

Shared Care Scotland published their report [Holidays or Isolation: Research into holiday activity provision for disabled children and young people in Scotland](#), which consulted with disabled children and young people, parent carers, service providers and local authorities. Some of its key findings include:

- Disabled children and young people acknowledged they have low level of contact with their peers and expressed concerns about becoming bored and losing contact with their friends;
- Disabled children and young people acknowledged the reality of holidays spent mainly with family, with the aspiration of being a young person in the company of friends;

- Parent carers noted that the main carer (99%) during the holidays, is overwhelmingly the mother;
- Parent carers recognised that many disabled children and young people lack a wider network of peer relationships, and this is particularly evident during the longer break;
- Parent carers experienced two main challenges over the summer holidays:
  - The continuous demands on their time negatively impacted their own mental health, and;
  - Many had to reconsider their employment status in order to care for their child, often with knock-on financial consequences.

We spoke to parents of disabled children who use school age childcare services as part of our consultation events, including attending an ASN-focused out of school care setting in the east end of Glasgow. These parents highlighted the importance of specialist school age childcare for children with ASN so that they can broaden their already limited social circles. Parent carers also stressed the impact services had on their children's confidence in enabling them to try new things and act independently away from their families. Families told us that the school age childcare settings were typically the only peer engagement their children had, other than school, and that there was increasingly less services available for children to attend, which is having an impact on young people with ASN's lives.

*“He doesn't go anywhere without us so he doesn't get the confidence to know it'll be ok and that he can have fun.”*

In order to tackle isolation, parents said that it was important that school age childcare services allowed their children to engage in the wider community, explore their local areas and develop the confidence needed for as independent a life as possible.

*“It's about life skills – communication skills, friendships...”*

Parents generally spoke about valuing the people skills of the staff at services more than their formal qualifications. A minimum of knowing how to handle emergency situations was expected, but they were clear that a friendly, caring personality was more important.

## **Families living in remote rural areas**

As noted in the proposed [National Islands Plan](#), lack of childcare provision in island communities is a key obstacle to encouraging young families to the islands and, in turn, to promoting sustainable economic development.

We held a consultation event with parents in Shetland where we heard about the particular challenges with childcare provision in their communities. This group of parents told us about the challenges they face in accessing employment where they have limited or no access to after school and holiday childcare for their children. In some cases, as in the island community of Yell, complete lack of

childcare has led to families having to move away from the island. Elsewhere in Shetland we heard about inequality of access to school age childcare services between communities and challenges with public transport systems that don't enable access to childcare or activities after school. Parents told us that the barriers to accessing childcare have wider implications for the communities they live in, with people forced to move or otherwise be unable to work due to lack of support.

*“There's no infrastructure here to support families and there's a drive to get people coming to Shetland but they won't stay if there's no support for families.”*

As with the rest of Scotland, parents of children with disabilities and additional support needs described facing additional barriers in accessing school age childcare. Some parents told us that they rely on family members or friendship networks to cover childcare, but that this can be unreliable and stressful to manage, sometimes making it difficult for them to access the hours or type of employment they would like.

*“It's women that this affects. I came to a point where I felt like I had to give up my job but I've worked really hard for that.”*

Though there are a range of activity and sports clubs available for school age children in Shetland, lots of these opportunities are delivered in the evenings and run by volunteers which means that they don't help families with childcare needs around the school day. Parents also told us that it was important to have reliable, local childcare options that enabled them enough time to travel to and from work. In these rural communities it was deemed important that childcare provision catered for a range of ages, to give parents the time they needed for work and other commitments.

*“It's hard if you've got a mix of ages [of children] to find something they can all go to. You might spend 30 minutes driving around and dropping off to lots of different places.”*



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