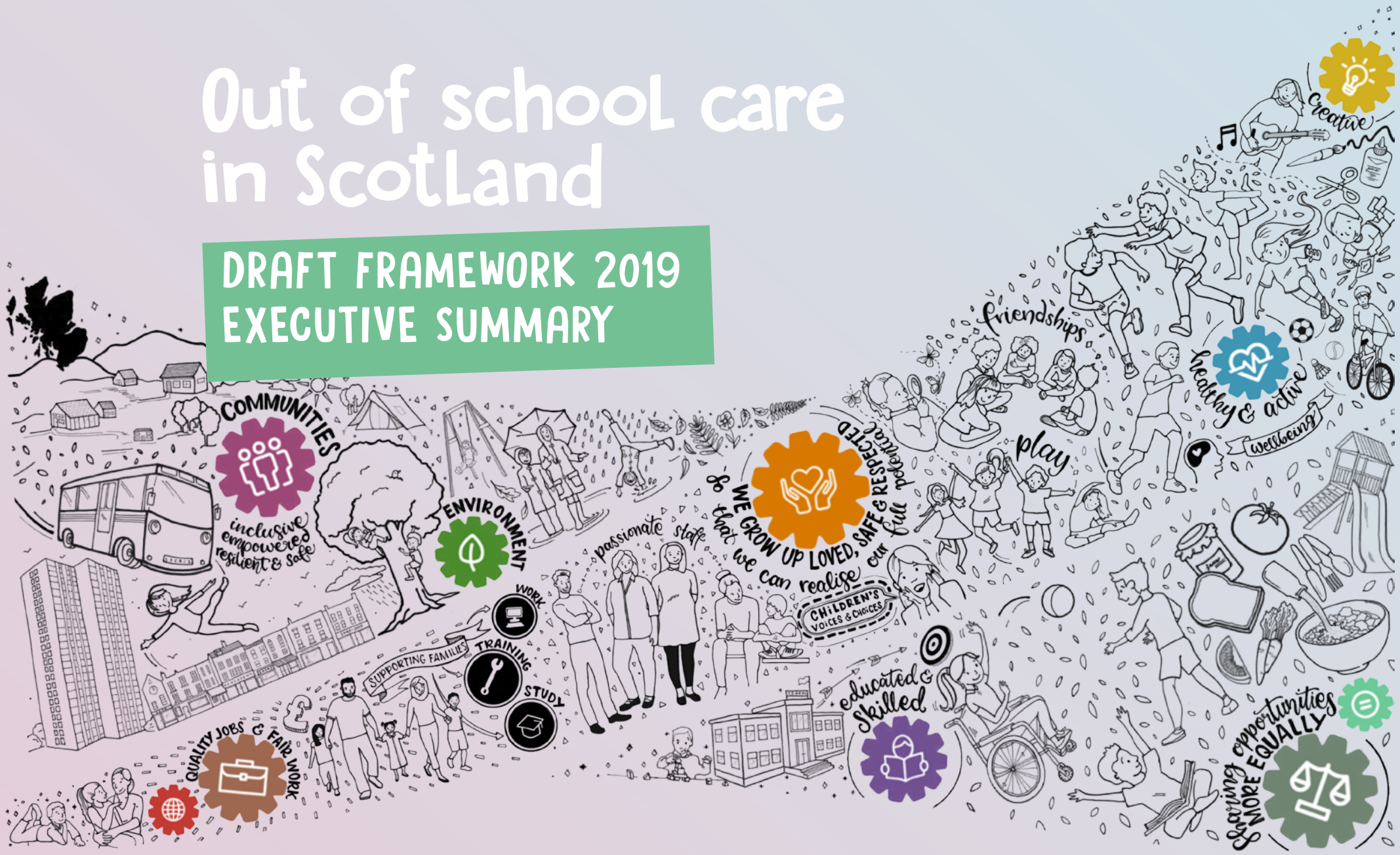


Out of school care in Scotland

DRAFT FRAMEWORK 2019 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Why Do We Need a Framework for Out of School Care?



The Scottish Government is focussed on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Access to high quality, affordable and flexible childcare has a huge role to play in enabling this. Our expansion of funded early learning and childcare will provide increased opportunities for children to access play and learning at an early age but we know that widening access to a range of out of school activities for children could help broaden their experiences and supplement their learning.

Making childcare options for school-age children more affordable, flexible and accessible can help provide families with the stability they need to be able to secure employment and increase their earnings in order to achieve a good standard of living. Accessing affordable out of school care could enable families to lift themselves out of poverty and for all children and young people, to be able to benefit from a range of activities and experiences which will deliver positive outcomes.

That is why a framework for future delivery is so important.

A framework for out of school care will provide the foundation and structure for creation of new policies around before, after school and holiday childcare and activity provision.

What is the purpose of the consultation?

The framework will recognise and build on the valuable work already being undertaken by a wide range of organisations and individuals delivering high quality childcare and activities for children and families across Scotland.

The draft framework will:

- set out a vision for out of school care in Scotland and consider the changes required to deliver that vision.
- consider the current picture of out of school care in Scotland.
- ask questions about what we can do to realise that vision.

Your responses to the consultation will, together with our continuing engagement inform the development of a strategic framework for out of school care.

Background and rationale

We committed in the 2017-18 Programme for Government to publish a framework for after-school and holiday childcare by the end of this parliamentary term. We provided more detail on our plans in the 2018-19 Programme for Government, including publication of a consultation asking for views on that draft framework within the next year.

One of the 15 actions highlighted in Every Child, Every Chance, the Child Poverty Delivery Plan, is new support for childcare after school and in the holidays to help low income parents reduce childcare costs, work more flexibly and increase their incomes. We committed to assess the availability of existing after school and holiday childcare, setting out what we will do to better meet the needs of families.

From August 2020, the provision of funded early learning and childcare (ELC) will expand from 600 hours to 1,140 hours. The expansion is an opportunity to ensure that we are prioritising a high quality experience for all children, recognising the significant contribution to a child's development and helping to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

We also recognise the vital role that out of school care plays in providing an essential and high quality service for older/school-aged children and their families, and we want to identify actions we can take to widen access to affordable, high quality out of school care.

The evidence points to the importance of out of school care for both children's and parents' outcomes. Through play, children are able to benefit from learning and socialisation. Research shows that out of school care can provide improved outcomes for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds¹. This is vital as we continue to work towards closing the attainment gap, and achieving our vision for Scotland to be the best place in the world for children and young people to live and grow up.

In order to provide opportunities for parents to be in work, training or study, childcare needs to be affordable, accessible and flexible to meet their needs.

Over the past year, we have been engaging with families, out of school care providers and a diverse range of stakeholders to understand the current out of school care landscape, better understand the needs of families and co-create a new vision for out of school care in Scotland.

Guided by the National Performance Framework, we will consider how this vision links to our national outcomes and to wider policies across Scottish Government. Our new framework will focus on positive outcomes for those children and families who stand to benefit most from access to out of school care.



¹ Scott E and Scobie G. NHS Health Scotland Evidence briefing on the impact of care. NHS Health Scotland (2015). http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/26583-Evidence%20Briefing_Impact%20of%20out%20of%20school%20care_5681.pdf



Figure 1: Links to the National Performance Framework

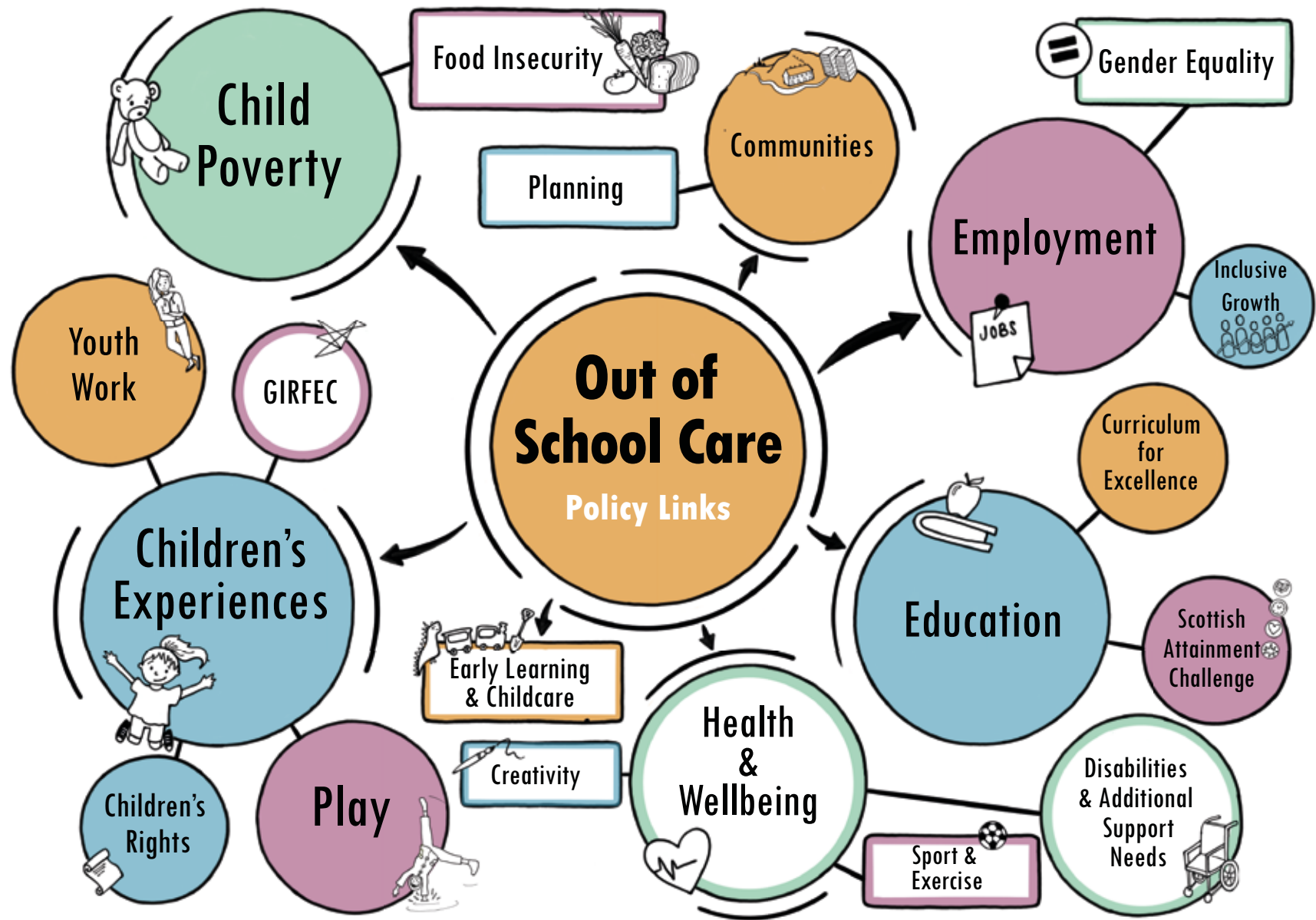


Figure 2: Policy links across the Scottish Government

Out of School Care in Scotland – the current picture



“Playing with my friends and doing new things.” (Boy, 10 being asked about what he likes about his after school club)

The Out of School Care sector in Scotland is diverse. It encompasses;

- breakfast, after school and holiday clubs (staffed by a qualified workforce);
- registered childminders (who don't require to be qualified to deliver school age childcare), and;
- activity-based clubs providing activities before or after school or in the school holidays (whose primary function is not childcare).

Our research and engagement over the past year has highlighted innovative and collaborative models of delivering out of school care, yet barriers remain which can limit or prevent access. The ways in which these barriers present themselves are context-specific, and are shaped by geographical location, income levels, availability of support from informal networks (such as family and friends), access to transport and the additional support needs of children.

Our new framework for out of school care will provide a policy foundation from which we can consider how to widen access to affordable, high quality out of school care. The following sections highlight some of our key findings from engaging with families, providers and local authorities.

Meeting the needs of children

Children view out of school care as an opportunity to play with friends, have fun, participate in activities that they may not have the opportunity to otherwise, and to spend time outdoors. Children have a strong sense of what high quality out of school care looks like. They are keenly aware of the passion and dedication of the practitioners working in their services, in creating high quality experiences and positive environments for play and socialisation.

By engaging with children and visiting a diverse range of settings, it is clear that children want to use out of school care as an opportunity to develop their curiosity, try new things and experience a space that is theirs to shape and enjoy outside of the school day. These spaces do not refer to a specific place, but can be created anywhere (for example, in the community, outdoors, on days out). Activities for children must be age-appropriate and inclusive, co-designed with, and led by, children in response to their own needs and interests.

“We have lots of fun and the staff and children look out for each other. We have lots of fun there; the staff are funny. We make friends at the club. The staff help other children and it runs very well.” (Boy, 11)

“OSC can offer invaluable life experiences”
(Parent from Shetland)

“I just want to go to work and know that they're happy”
(Parent from Dundee)

“One of the fundamental reasons I'm a stay at home parent is the cost of Out of School Care” (parent from Renfrewshire)

Meeting the needs of parents

From our engagement, parents told us that the two biggest overall barriers are accessibility and affordability. For some parents, the cost of out of school care was identified as prohibitive, particularly for single parent families and families with more than one child, and can be exacerbated by transport costs. This a concern for parents living in both urban and rural communities and holiday periods were highlighted as a particularly challenging time. Support with costs of out of school care is available through Universal Credit and legacy benefit payments for those who qualify, however, there are recognised practical challenges that are limiting uptake.

The other key issue for parents is accessibility to out of school care. Parents told us of demand outstripping supply in a number of areas, with often lengthy waiting lists. In rural communities, and for parents of children with a disability or additional support need, it is commonly the case that there is very little provision (resulting in a lack of choice) or none available at all.

While recognising the need for providers to be sustainable, parents also indicated that they would like greater flexibility and to further strengthen the quality and experiences available to children accessing out of school care. Parents that cannot access appropriate out of school care for their children face repercussions for their employment prospects, limiting their own career ambitions and meaning that families may be less able to lift themselves out of poverty.



Local authorities

Out of school care does not have a statutory basis, although the Children and Young People Act 2014 does require local authorities to consult representative groups of parents at least every two years on non-statutory hours of childcare, including out of school care. The 1995 Children (Scotland) Act placed a statutory duty on local authorities to provide daycare for school age children “in need”, before and after school and during holidays. Being a child ‘in need’ is defined at section 93(4) of the 1995 Act as ‘being in need of care and attention’ because of a number of factors related to the child achieving or maintaining a reasonable standard of health or development; and disability – of the child themselves or a member of their family which, in turn, affects the child adversely.

We know that local authorities recognise and value the role of out of school care providers, and the importance of childcare provision within communities in supporting inclusive growth. Many provide support to the sector and the workforce in a variety of ways include directly providing out of school care, providing free or subsidised lets for local authority buildings, providing support with funding qualifications and accessing training, and facilitating local and regional networks to share best practice. Despite this, we know there are challenges for local authorities in their ability to provide longer term support, and that in some areas, levels of support to the sector have reduced in recent years.

“I just couldn’t afford it, not on the wages I could earn” (single parent on the costs of OSC)



Understanding the priorities and challenges for out of school care providers

The out of school care sector in Scotland is responsive to community needs and therefore highly diverse. We engaged with providers from across Scotland and, despite the diversity, found there to be strong consensus concerning the ambitions, barriers and changes required to further strengthen the out of school care sector in Scotland. Out of school care practitioners described themselves as dedicated, passionate and committed to improving outcomes for children. However, there are recognised issues around recruitment and retention of staff, and this can be particularly challenging in rural communities.

While changing qualification requirements for those working in registered services have supported the development of a professional workforce and strengthened practice, it has also increased the challenges of recruitment and retention of staff. Furthermore, despite the professionalism and commitment of the workforce, out of school care practitioners still feel that they lack due recognition of the important role that they have in children's development, and improving their outcomes, as well as supporting families more widely.

Providers are committed to meeting the needs of local families, however, this has to be balanced with sustainability. Providers often operate within tight margins and are limited in the flexibility that they can offer. There are also challenges in finding venues in the community from which to deliver out of school care. Most providers are based in schools, which are purpose-built to create a positive environment for children. However, out of school care providers are sometimes overlooked in school decision making that may affect their service. More generally, there tends to be a shortage of other community facilities that could suitably accommodate out of school care services.

“It's amazing: I can speak to staff about my worries. I like how we are involved with new changes at a club. I love making new friends I enjoy going on trips. I like how Brenda teaches us new games.” (Girl, 10)



Providing both high quality childcare and access to a range of activities for children within communities

We know that there is currently a diverse range of activities and childcare options available in most urban areas for children and families to access if they require to and can afford to. Many after school activities may operate at a low cost due to being staffed by volunteers or parents or teachers. They are exempt from regulations which apply to childcare services and although not officially childcare, they may be being used by parents to extend their working day, particularly if they operate in a school and take place immediately after the end of the school day.

The same applies to activity-based holiday clubs which may operate during the school holidays. As well as providing access to a range of activities for children, these clubs may also be being used as a childcare option by many parents. It's important to consider how we ensure that we maintain this level of diversity and choice for children and families within communities and open it up for those who can't currently access it.

Realising the Vision: Mapping Out the Drivers for Change

Working closely with our out of school care reference group, the out of school care sector and children and families, we thought about the current situation and the key shifts and changes required to deliver our vision for out of school care in Scotland. Figure 3 "Realising the Vision; mapping out the drivers of change" sets out the relationship between the vision, primary drivers and secondary drivers required to deliver change. This highlights 3 key aims:

- high quality services which provide children with life-enhancing experiences.
- out of school care is accessible and affordable and meets the needs of children and young people, parents and carers and communities.
- out of school care services are embedded in communities and enable children and young people to access a range of spaces including the outdoors.



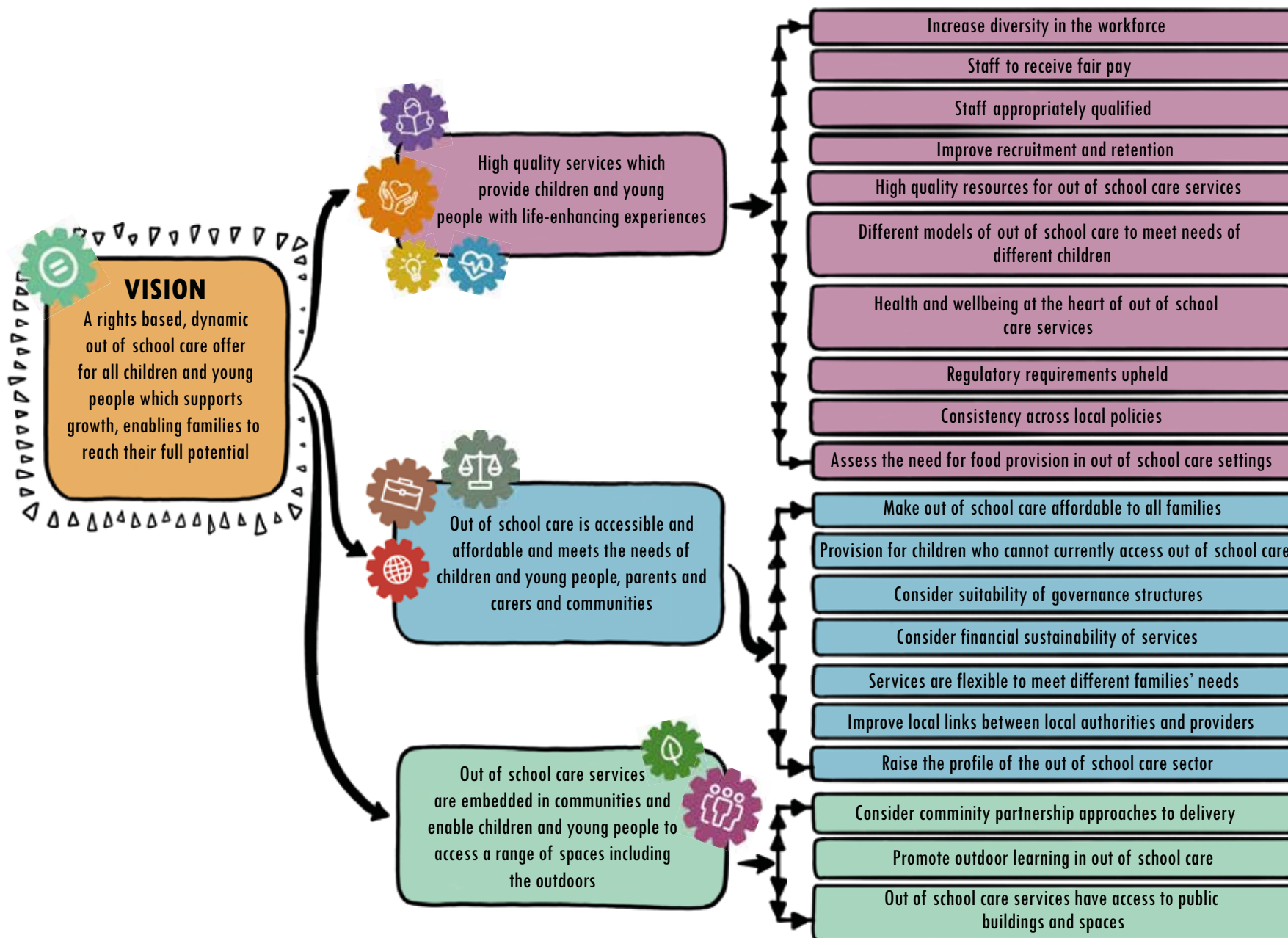


Figure 3: Realising the Vision; mapping out the drivers of change

FUTURE POLICY ON OUT OF SCHOOL CARE

What we want to find out:

What can the Scottish Government do to ensure that out of school care better meets the needs of children and families in Scotland?

How can national policy support and enhance 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'? (Q3)
- Do you agree with our 3 key aims for a future out of school care framework? (Q4)

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

- 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)
- What ages of children do parents/carers need provision for? (Q13)

- What flexibility do parents and carers need from out of school care services? Can you tell us why this flexibility is important? (Q11)
- 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)
- Do parents/carers need food provision as part of after-school and holiday clubs? (Q14)
- What do children and young people want from out of school care services and does this differ depending on age? (Q6)
- What different activities or provision might secondary school aged children want? (Q7)

How can we 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? (e.g. subsidised provision, remove barriers in accessing benefits, help with the upfront costs) (Q8)
- 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)
- How can services be more effectively delivered in rural/remote areas to meet the needs of families? (Q9)
- How can we ensure that children with disabilities and additional support needs can access out of school care services? (Q10)
- What can we do to support community based approaches to delivering out of school care? (Q2)

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

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

Figure 4: Consultation Questions

Summary and Next steps

This summary document condenses the information which we have gathered to date. We have published a full document detailing our engagement and providing more background which we would encourage you to read if possible.

Summary

This draft framework highlights the huge amount of work already going on across Scotland to deliver high quality out of school care services for many children and families. It also sets out a bold vision for the future of out of school care and considers the changes which might be required to deliver that vision.

The framework identifies three key aims for focussing future policy development:

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.

We Heard

The framework also presents a substantial amount of information resulting from a wide range of engagement with children, with parents and with the out of school care sector. We hope that this information assists in provoking discussion and sparking conversation about what the priorities should be for our developing out of school care policy.

Most importantly our framework has told the stories of the many people who have contributed to developing our vision and have helped us better understand the challenges and barriers which currently exist to delivering this vision. This has been an invaluable part of our engagement and policy development process and we will continue to do this as part of our consultation.

“The club offers a fantastic service. Children are well looked after at both after school and holiday club. They provide a wide range of activities and outings. All staff are friendly and approachable and well-liked and respected by the children who attend.”
(Parent describing their after school club)

Next Steps

Our draft framework asks a number of questions Figure 4 - Consultation Questions. The responses to these questions will help us to shape our strategic framework and to consider the priorities for the future.

We want to understand what more can be done to further support the out of school care sector to continue to deliver high quality sustainable services within communities and to address the challenges for some parents of accessing out of school care and for some children of accessing a range of out of school and activities.

Over the coming months we will invite parents, carers, children and young people to form a public panel which will create a reference point, providing a voice for those groups throughout our ongoing policy development. We will also continue our engagement with the out of school care sector through a series of consultation events. This will ensure that this process continues to be a truly collaborative one, focussed on changes which will better meet the needs of children and families across Scotland.



Access to Childcare Fund

In order to deliver our suggested vision, changes will be required within the current system. In order to test models which can deliver this change we have created a £3 million fund for supporting childcare provision and activities which are based in local communities and which will directly reduce the cost of living for low-income families (by providing subsidised or low cost childcare for school-aged children). This will be coupled with support for parents or carers to enter employment or training or to increase current hours of work.

The fund will be delivered over a two-year period starting in April 2020. Each project funded should be able to demonstrate direct positive impacts for at least one of the six priority groups identified in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan and also demonstrate positive outcomes for children. We will maximise opportunities to align this fund with the £12 million Parental Employment Support Fund (PESF) and the £6 million investment in employability support for disabled parents.

The fund will:

- test the change required to remove the barriers of school aged childcare costs for low income families as a driver for reducing child poverty
- test the change required to deliver our vision for after school and holiday childcare
- provide solutions to enabling opportunities for all children to enjoy a full range of play experiences outside of school
- consider appropriate models of delivery which can support this change
- provide robust evidence of the social impact and positive outcomes for children and families which access to affordable, accessible and flexible out of school care and activity programmes can deliver.

Details of the criteria for applications to the Access to Childcare Fund will be available over the coming weeks.



Thank You

We would like to offer a huge thanks to everyone who contributed to this draft framework, particularly to all the parents and children who gave up their time and allowed us to tell their stories and share their aspirations for out of school care. We'd also like to thank all those working in the out of school care sector, who spoke so passionately about the job that they do and thought carefully about how we might best improve what's provided for children and families. And finally a big thanks to our reference group who started us on this journey, helping us to create a collaborative and bold vision for out of school care in Scotland and working with us along the way to consider what might be possible. We look forward to continuing the work to deliver that vision.

Consultation

Consultation is open on this draft framework and will remain open until 6th December 2019 – please take the time to provide us with your thoughts and views on the future of out of school care in Scotland. We will be supplementing our formal consultation with further engagement events, in advance of publishing a final framework for out of school care in Scotland before the end of this Parliament.





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