

Project:	ELC Strategic Forum		
Date & Time:	13:00 – 15:15 21 st January 2016	Meeting No:	1
Meeting Place:	Scottish Parliament Edinburgh	Minutes By:	JM

Attendees

Aileen Campbell (Chair)	Minister for Children and Young People
Irene Audain	Scottish Out of School Care Network
Jackie Brock	Children in Scotland
Lesley Brown	Education Scotland
Jean Carwood-Edwards	Early Years Scotland
Davina Coupar	West College Scotland
Vicky Crichton	Save the Children
Anna Fowlie	Scottish Social Services Council
Lesley Gibb	ADES
Ann Henderson	Scottish Trades Union Congress
Gerry McLaughlin	NHS Health Scotland
Kevin Mitchell	Care Inspectorate
Robert Nicol	CoSLA
Satwat Rehman	One Parent Families Scotland
Clare Simpson	Parenting Across Scotland
Maggie Simpson	Scottish Childminding Association
Christine Stephen	Stirling University
Purnima Tanuku	National Day Nurseries Association Scotland
Jim McCormick	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Julie Wild	NPFS (& cover for CALA)
Sam Anson	Scottish Government
Susan Bolt	Scottish Government
Jeff Maguire (minutes)	Scottish Government
Cat Macaulay and team members	Scottish Government

Apologies

Stuart Robb	Scottish Government
Valerie Gale	Care and Learning Alliance
Neil Mathers	Save the Children
Fiona McQueen (Chief Nursing Officer)	Scottish Government
Bruce Robertson	ELC Strategic Evidence Group
Julia Unwin	Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Item 1 - Welcome and Introductions

The Minister welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Forum, stating that she was pleased to see a variety of stakeholders around the table. She outlined the importance of this group for the Scottish Government's overall purpose to make Scotland a more successful nation from which all of Scotland's people can benefit. She stated that our specific aim is to develop high quality, flexible early learning and childcare which is affordable and accessible for all. This means the whole system - including out of school care. The Minister then invited round-table introductions and brief overview of specific interests.

Item 2 - Remit of the ELC Strategic Forum (Paper 1 / 1)

The Minister introduced this item by reminding everyone of progress made in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), including the extension of provision to eligible 2 year olds and more hours and greater flexibility as part of the 2014 CYP Act. She stated that we now need to push on in key areas such as quality, family support, workforce and capacity. The Minister referred everyone to paper 1 / 1 and invited comments and questions.

Main points made in ensuing discussion:

- Stakeholder engagement is key, and this needs to include ELC providers.
- ELC as a measure to tackle poverty and inequality should be highlighted more in the remit.
- The Forum has a key leadership role in co-ordinating policy developments, including being aware of relevant UK-wide developments.
- The group's main focus should be on how we deliver, rather than deliberating too much over our vision.
- To increase numbers of 2 year olds we need to support parental and family learning – a staged, incremental approach might help with this.

Action 1 – SG officials to draft a formal Terms of Reference in light of the discussion and circulate for comments / approval.

Item 3 - Co-design of service delivery

Cat Macaulay, Head of the Scottish Government's User Research and Engagement Unit, introduced and led a group-based, interactive session around potential positive and negative impacts of the expansion to 1140 hours of ELC on children, parents, organisations and society. Delivery of ELC via local government and the private and voluntary sectors means the Scottish Government must act in partnership with its key stakeholders to ensure the delivered services meet the needs of all parents and children. This session acknowledged that need for proper co-design and co-production of services, and will be instrumental in rapidly surfacing critical issues.

Action 2 – SG officials to draft and circulate a full note of this session separately.

Item 4 - Forthcoming ELC engagement (Paper 1 / 2)

The Minister referred everyone to paper 1 / 2, and also highlighted the First Minister's announcement the day before of an ELC National Summit in February, plus publication of a discussion paper and £1M funding to support a series of trials to test a variety of delivery models in preparation for the transformative expansion of ELC. The Minister reiterated the SG's intention to genuinely co-design these trials with key partners/stakeholders – the SG has published an online discussion paper to this effect.

The discussion paper outlines that the aim of these trials will be to test how best to deliver ELC to all eligible children across a spectrum of differing requirements. The intention will be to develop case studies of what works, where and why, and to assist in the dissemination of best practice across local authorities and providers. In doing so, we intend that the expansion to 1140 hours of free provision delivers the benefits to children and families in Scotland that will be vital in achieving our ambitions.

Main points made in ensuing discussion:

- It would be useful if the trials could examine the impact of wider industrial and economic change on ELC provision, users and providers.
- The focus on quality in the meeting paper (1 / 2), and discussion paper, was welcomed. Developing evaluation plans from the outset, including assessing impact from children's and parents' perspectives, including those living in poverty, was thought to be crucial.
- Government support is needed to ensure that the right people are attracted into the future ELC workforce, including via good quality apprenticeships. Communications opportunities e.g. Apprentice Week should be utilised to this end.
- Important to think of the trials against a backdrop of wider public sector reform, and the wider health and wellbeing of communities.
- The trials could examine the feasibility of introducing the 1140 hours earlier for some people, and targeting specific groups e.g. children with Additional Support Needs.
- It was clarified that the discussion document is asking for views on the key themes and principles which the trials should focus on, rather than inviting suggestions for specific individual trials.

Item 5 - Provision to eligible 2 year olds (Paper 1 / 3)

The Minister referred everyone to Paper 1 / 3, the purpose of which is to inform discussion on how uptake levels of funded ELC for 2 year olds can be increased and / or more accurately reflected in national statistics; and on further research to explore what supports or prevents access to the entitlement and levels of awareness.

The Minister reminded everyone that, by the start of the summer term in 2016, 27% of all 2 year olds in Scotland will be eligible, which is around 20,000 2 year olds per year. As we continue to expand this provision, we need to pay close attention to monitoring the uptake amongst this cohort.

The Minister stated that the SG will be commissioning a short research study that will build on feedback from previous local authority consultations and examine how uptake rates can be increased, including what supports or prevents access to the entitlement. The newly-created ELC Strategic Evidence Group will act as an advisory group to that project.

The Minister invited comments on the paper and the proposed approach outlined therein.

Main points made in ensuing discussion:

- Positive that the focus is on learning for 2 year olds as opposed to just childcare.
- Need to be careful with terminology – the use of the word 'vulnerable' is stigmatising.
- We need to be open minded about uptake and the reasons behind it. For example, uptake can be affected because people are not aware of the benefits of ELC.
- There are issues with the census, and we need to review that with our ELC Strategic Evidence Group.

- Health visitors have an important role to play in encouraging and promoting uptake.
- Need to look at barriers e.g. local authority blockage to available providers.
- Need research on kinship carers.

Action 3 – SG officials to incorporate feedback into the design of the associated research project.

Action 4 – SG officials to continue to work with the ELC Strategic Evidence Group to address highlighted issues with the census.

Item 6 – Out of school care (Paper 1 / 4)

The Minister referred everyone to Paper 1 / 4. She reiterated that the Forum's remit includes not just early learning and childcare, but also out of school care (OOSC), delivered through breakfast clubs, after school clubs, holiday clubs and childminders.

She stated that there is evidence that high quality OOSC has a generally positive social impact on children, enabling them to have access to play opportunities in a safe place and the opportunities to establish and sustain friendships.

The SG aims to develop a high quality system of early learning and childcare for all children which is accessible, affordable, and integrated with school and out of school care. The purpose of this aim is to improve outcomes for all children, especially those who are more vulnerable or disadvantaged; and to contribute to closing the attainment and inequality gaps. The purpose is also to support parents to work, train or study, especially those who need support into sustainable employment and routes out of poverty.

The Minister said that she was keen to have this item on the first agenda to signal that it is an important component of the package that the government is putting together to support parents who want to work, train or study. The SG intends to develop a new OOSC framework that will capture the key changes in the policy landscape relevant to delivery of OOSC since *Schools Out* was published in January 2003. The paper lists the proposed content of the new framework – attendees were invited to say whether these were the correct areas, and whether anything was missing. She also welcomed other comments or questions about the paper.

Main points made in ensuing discussion:

- Recent stakeholder engagement undertaken by SOSCN with 400 children (during summer 2014) and 5 discussion events around the country with adults would provide helpful material for developing the new policy framework. SOSCN's own research suggests that children and young people most value the opportunities through OOSC to play, and to be with and make friends. SOSCN's figure for those aged 5 to 12 in OOSC was, at over 79,000, considerably higher than latest Care Inspectorate figures, who only count those in centres whose main purpose is OOSC. SOSCN's own research accords with the recent research undertaken by NHS Health Scotland which found that older (secondary-age) children would benefit from youthwork inspired approaches within OOSC settings.
- The Commission for Childcare Reform report called for 50 hours per week of free or subsidised care for all children pre-birth to 12 years old.
- Community childminding has a key role to play in helping children and young people make friends, including over the summer – a key benefit identified in the SOSCN engagement with children and young people, plus other research.
- UNCRC Article 31 is central to high quality OOSC, including the right to rest and leisure.

- Modern qualifications for the OOSC workforce emphasise that provision is for children and young people, not just younger children, which fits well with the NHS Health Scotland briefing finding on the need to provide more engaging OOSC for older children.

Action 5 – SG officials to report back on developments with the OOSC framework at the next meeting.

AOB

The complexity and diversity of the policy area was acknowledged, and attendees were asked if they thought any specific interests were missing from the Forum membership. Given the potentially significant implications of the expansion of ELC for the broader Scottish economy, it was suggested that representation from an employer organisation or business should be invited onto the Forum.

Action 6 – SG officials to identify and invite an appropriate candidate to cover economic / employment issues.

Close

The Minister confirmed that amended Terms of Reference, in light of today's discussions, would be circulated for approval ahead of the next meeting. That meeting will take place ahead of the onset of the pre-election period on 23 March. The Minister thanked everyone for their constructive contributions and wished them a safe journey home.

Summary of Actions

No	Description	Responsible
1	Draft a formal Terms of Reference in light of the discussion and circulate for comments / approval.	SG officials
2	Draft and circulate a full note of the interactive session.	SG officials
3	Incorporate feedback into the design of the research project regarding uptake of 2 year olds.	SG officials
4	Continue to work with the ELC Strategic Evidence Group to address highlighted issues with the census.	SG officials
5	Report back on the OOSC framework at the next meeting.	SG officials
6	Identify and invite an appropriate candidate to cover economic / employment issues.	SG officials