



Early learning and childcare 1140 hours expansion, programme of trials: SSSC response to Scottish Government's discussion paper

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is the regulator for the social service workforce in Scotland. Our work means the people of Scotland can count on social services provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce. We protect the public by registering social service workers, setting standards for their practice, conduct, training and education and by supporting their professional development. Where people fall below the standards of practice and conduct we can investigate and take action.

We:

- publish the national codes of practice for people working in social services and their employers
- register people working in social services and make sure they adhere to our codes of practice
- promote and regulate the learning and development of the social service workforce
- are the national lead for workforce development and planning for social services in Scotland.

The social service workforce provides care and support for some of the most vulnerable people in Scottish society. The sector employs approximately 200,000 people¹ in Scotland. This figure includes more than 32,000 workers in day care of children or out of school care settings and more than 5,600 childminders (SSSC, 2015).

Our responses to the questions posed by the Scottish Government are as follows.

1. What should be the key features of Scotland's ELC model?

The discussion paper identifies the key features of the model.

¹ There are a number of groups of workers not captured by this data. These include childminding assistants and personal assistants employed by individuals in receipt of a direct payment (Scottish Government, 2015).

2. Which specific principles of ELC models should be prioritised within our programme of trials?

Developing high quality, flexible early learning and childcare (ELC) should be a key principle within the trials. The recent workforce review by Professor Siraj identifies the importance of making sure that quality features at the heart of the expansion plans. The Scottish Government has developed a strategic group which aims to retain a focus on quality.

The model should also maintain a focus on parental choice. Early learning and child care staff are important leaders for the children they work with, their families and colleagues. Children and families also have an important role to play in helping to influence services and their experiences of them.

3. What do you see as the key barriers to a successful implementation of the 1140 hours commitment? and 4. How might these trials be designed to overcome such barriers?

The expansion of the workforce will require a substantial increase in training provision. Maintaining a focus on developing current staff is critical. It will also be important to develop a better understanding of the additional workforce development needs for all staff working with two year olds.

We need to continue recruiting people with the right skills and competencies to work in early years and to give them opportunities for career progression. We have a number of initiatives which support this agenda. For example, we are running a project which helps more people to understand the complex, rewarding work undertaken by the sector. We are also encouraging more people to try A Question of Care.² This website give people who are considering work in the care sector an insight into what this involves, through video clips of day to day situations. It also gives people a way of checking their own suitability as they answer questions based on the video clips or characters featured in them.

A key priority is to continue the work to recruit a diverse workforce which reflects the Scottish population. The vast majority of the workforce is female. Encouraging and supporting more males to join this workforce features prominently in Professor Siraj's workforce review and the Scottish Funding Council's interim Gender Action Plan.³ The Scottish Funding Council has identified a need to develop a better understanding of the work that colleges are doing to tackle gender stereotypes. The trials could provide an opportunity to identify good practice examples.

Another important issue to consider is pay. A wage commensurate with the knowledge and skills required is a vital part of promoting the status of this profession and attracting high quality calibre of applicants to the sector.

² <http://www.aquestionofcare.org.uk/home-page>

³ <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/Priorities/Access/GenderActionPlan/GenderActionPlan.aspx>

5 Are there existing examples of best practice within ELC provision that you can share with us?

There are a number of new initiatives which will promote good practice within ELC provision. These include

- Foundation Apprenticeships
- induction framework for childminders
- the announcement that nurseries in the deprived areas should have an additional qualified teacher or childcare graduate.

Registration is a key part of the drive for higher standards in social services. All workers in day care of children services must achieve registration within six months of taking up employment. Holding a relevant qualification is a condition of registration.

We have developed a range of work-based qualifications and awards for this sector. As of 2014 there are over 1,200 Childhood Practice graduates in Scotland. The evidence highlights the positive impact these awards are having in learning and practice in day care of children services. A 2012 report by Education Scotland notes:

“Our evidence would suggest that in almost all centres surveyed, staff who either have the BA (Childhood Practice) award or are undertaking the qualification, believe that it is having a significant and positive impact on children’s learning. Staff are delivering more child-led learning which promotes deeper and challenging learning experiences”

In 2014 we published two reports which illustrate the way that Childhood Practice is making a difference within early years services. These include a positive impact on analytical practice and reflexive working; knowledge; status, confidence and employment prospects; and values, social justice and children’s rights.

6 Are there existing examples of innovative delivery within ELC provision that you can share with us?

The SSSC is working in partnership with Education Scotland and other stakeholders to support a programme of enhanced learning in the sector. The Childhood Practice award and the virtual nursery⁴ are examples of innovative delivery and our approaches to supporting learning.

7. What outcomes should we be measuring through this programme of trials?

An assessment of progress and impact on children and families is important and involves all aspects of day care of children services including out of school care.

8. Are there other services for children and young people that the trials should be integrated with?

We believe it is important to be aware of the context for children’s services and that there should be an alignment of activity at strategic level. The increase in hours should align with activity such as the realigning children’s services⁵ work.

⁴ <http://ssscnews.uk.com/?p=7074>

⁵ <http://transformingchildrensfutures.scot/>

9. Are there local/regional characteristics that should be explicitly built into the trials?

We think it is important that the trials should cover a reasonable span of different areas and forms of service provision.

10. How can we design trials in such a way as to ensure scalability?

The choice of pilot sites should ideally reflect a broad geographical spread and a range of services.

11. Would you be interested in being involved in the programme of trials? If so, in what capacity?

The SSSC welcomes the opportunity to support this work. We are members of the following groups:

- the Early Learning and Childcare Strategic Forum
- the Workforce and Quality group
- the Early Learning and Childcare Strategic Evidence group

We are also working with Scottish Government to develop revised data on the sector.

Scottish Social Services Council
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References

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