

School Age Childcare

Delivery Framework 2023



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1. Introduction to our Delivery Framework



School age childcare services play a vital role within our communities, offering a variety of options which families can rely on to support their childcare needs before and after school, and during the holidays.

The current school age childcare sector is wide-ranging, with families often using a mix of regulated providers, registered childminders, breakfast clubs, children’s activities (including those centred around sports or cultural activities) and youth work provision to support their childcare needs. In addition, many families rely on friends and family, or consider at-home services such as nannies, to accommodate their family’s circumstances.

The [2023-24 Programme for Government](#) announced an ambitious, evidence-based set of proposals to expand high quality, funded childcare, particularly for low-income families. This includes a continued commitment to building a system of school age childcare, with a focus on our six early adopter communities. These proposals recognise that affordable and accessible childcare supports employment and the economy, and that secure and sustainable employment helps lift families out of poverty.

We continue to consider the school age childcare sector in its broadest sense, and we will work collaboratively with families, communities, childcare providers, and the wider public sector to build a system that

meets their needs. We will also take a place-based approach, recognising that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to providing school age childcare within communities.

[Best Start, our Early Learning and School Age Childcare Strategic Plan](#) sets out our strategic priorities across all our childcare offers – including a commitment to progress the expansion of our childcare offer by building a system of school age childcare for primary school children – which will contribute to our three high level outcomes:

- Children’s development improves and the poverty-related outcomes gap narrows,
- Family wellbeing improves, and
- Parents’ and carers’ opportunities to take up or sustain work, training, and study increase.

It makes clear that in developing a new system of school age childcare we will build on and learn the lessons from the significant programme of work that underpinned the expansion to 1140 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).

An expanded childcare offering for school age children is crucial to our national mission to tackle child poverty, to promote family wellbeing, drive greater gender equality and to #Keep The Promise to our care experienced children.

[Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022-26](#) also sets out how we can all work together to deliver on that mission.

Within that plan we reiterate our commitment to supporting families with funded school age childcare. Our Access to Childcare Fund and Early Adopter Communities work is helping us deepen our understanding of the difference that funded school age childcare can make for families on low incomes.

This Delivery Framework for School Age Childcare sets out our commitment to build a system of school age childcare which will be funded for those families who need it most. It defines our action areas for the next three years, describes our transformational approach – centred around people and place – and considers how we will measure and evidence the impact of early delivery.

The Framework forms part of a suite of published documents relevant to our school age childcare policy development building on our [Draft Framework for Out of School Care and consultation](#) (2019) and our [School Age Childcare Progress Report](#) (2021). These documents set out useful information about the scale and breadth of the school age childcare sector in Scotland which isn't repeated in this Framework.

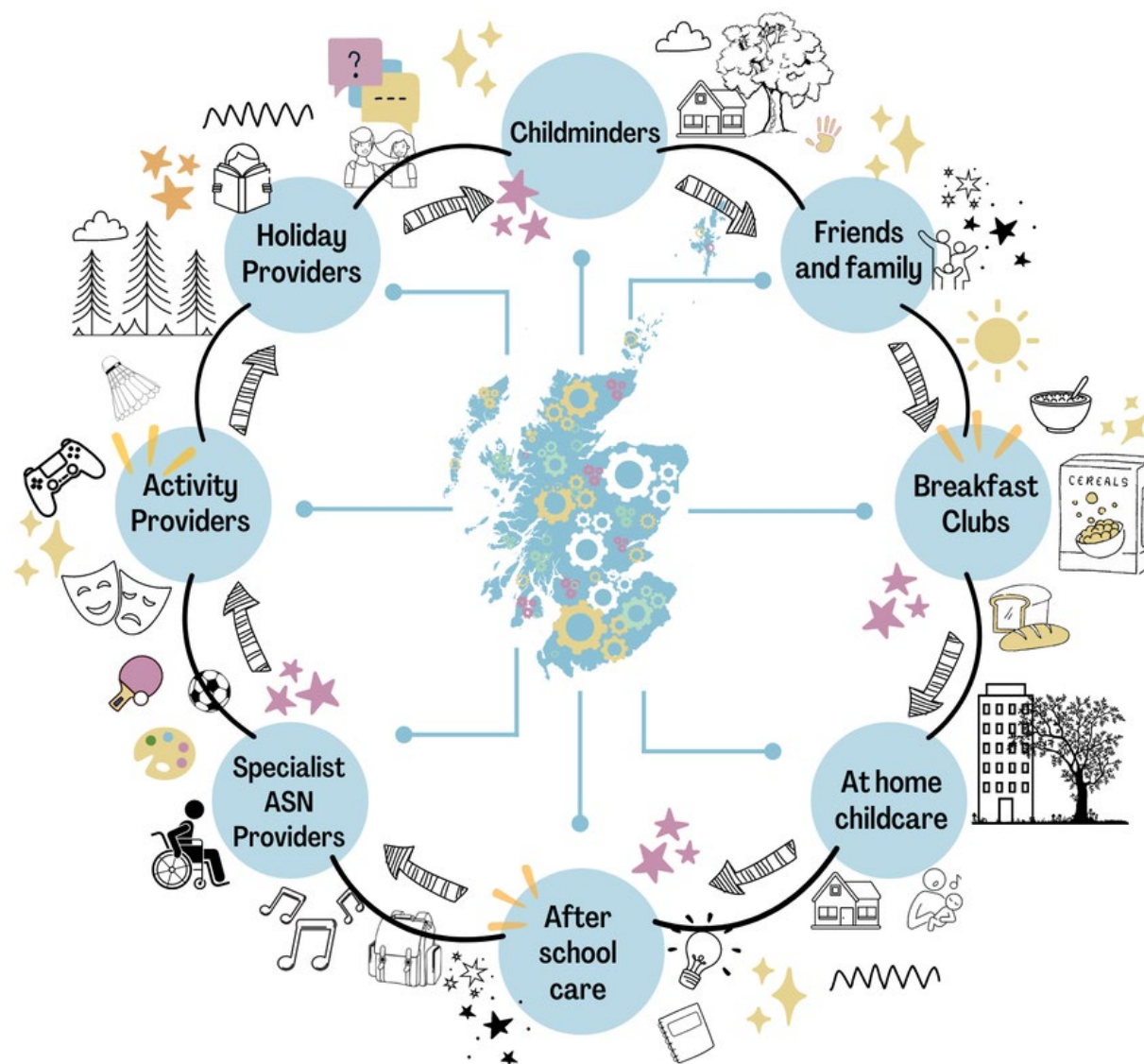


Figure 1: Who provides School Age Childcare?

Our 'Plan on a page' outlines how we will build and deliver a system of school age childcare:

Our vision

A rights based, dynamic school age childcare offer for children and young people, which supports choice and growth, enabling families and communities to reach their full potential.

Realising our vision - What our programme will deliver

"Scotland will have a system of accessible and affordable school age childcare providing care before and after school and during the holidays for primary school children from low income households. Children will be able to access healthy and nutritious food as part of this offer."

Why are we doing it?

Tackling Child Poverty

Parents from targeted families are able to access childcare that supports them to take up, sustain and/or increase their hours of work. Reducing barriers to employment by improving access to childcare for targeted families.

Improving outcomes for children

Reducing inequalities which exist in access to a wide range of activities for children from targeted families. Improving family wellbeing by supporting and increasing access to integrated childcare, food and activities.

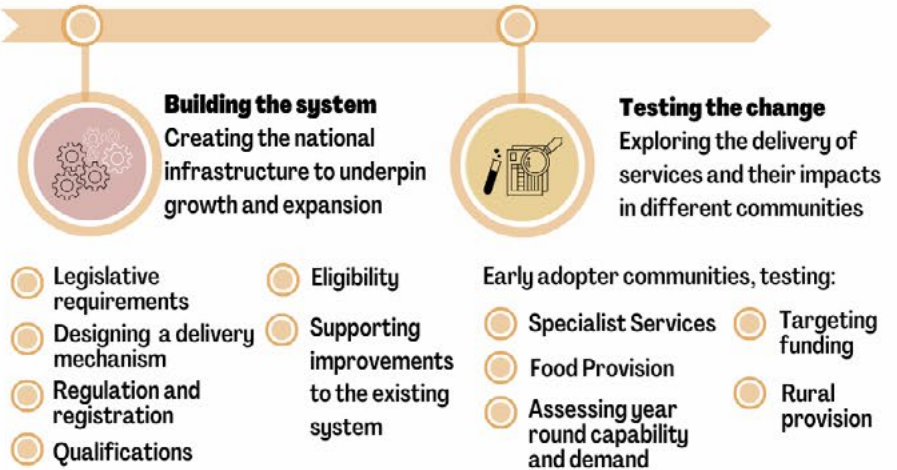
Who will it help?

Our work is focused on supporting low income families, particularly those within the six priority family groups most likely to be living in poverty.

- ✔ Minority Ethnic families
- ✔ Large families (3+ Children)
- ✔ Families with a baby (aged < 1)
- ✔ Mothers aged <25
- ✔ Families with a disabled adult or child
- ✔ Lone Parents

What will we do?

Action Areas



How will we do it?

We will design our school age childcare system around people's needs and what's important to communities.

Place based



People Centred



2. Why are we building a system of school age childcare?

With a clear vision, guided by the National Performance Framework, and strong links to wider policies across Scottish Government, we will focus on delivering positive outcomes for those children and families who stand to benefit most from access to school age childcare. We will take a programme based approach to deliver our projected benefits and outcomes.



Our key policy drivers are:

Tackling child poverty

- parents from targeted families are able to access childcare that supports them to take up, sustain and/or increase their hours of work.
- reducing barriers to employment by improving access to childcare for targeted families.

Improving outcomes for children and families

- reducing inequalities which exist in access to a wide range of activities for children from targeted families.
- improving family wellbeing by supporting and increasing access to integrated childcare, food and activities.



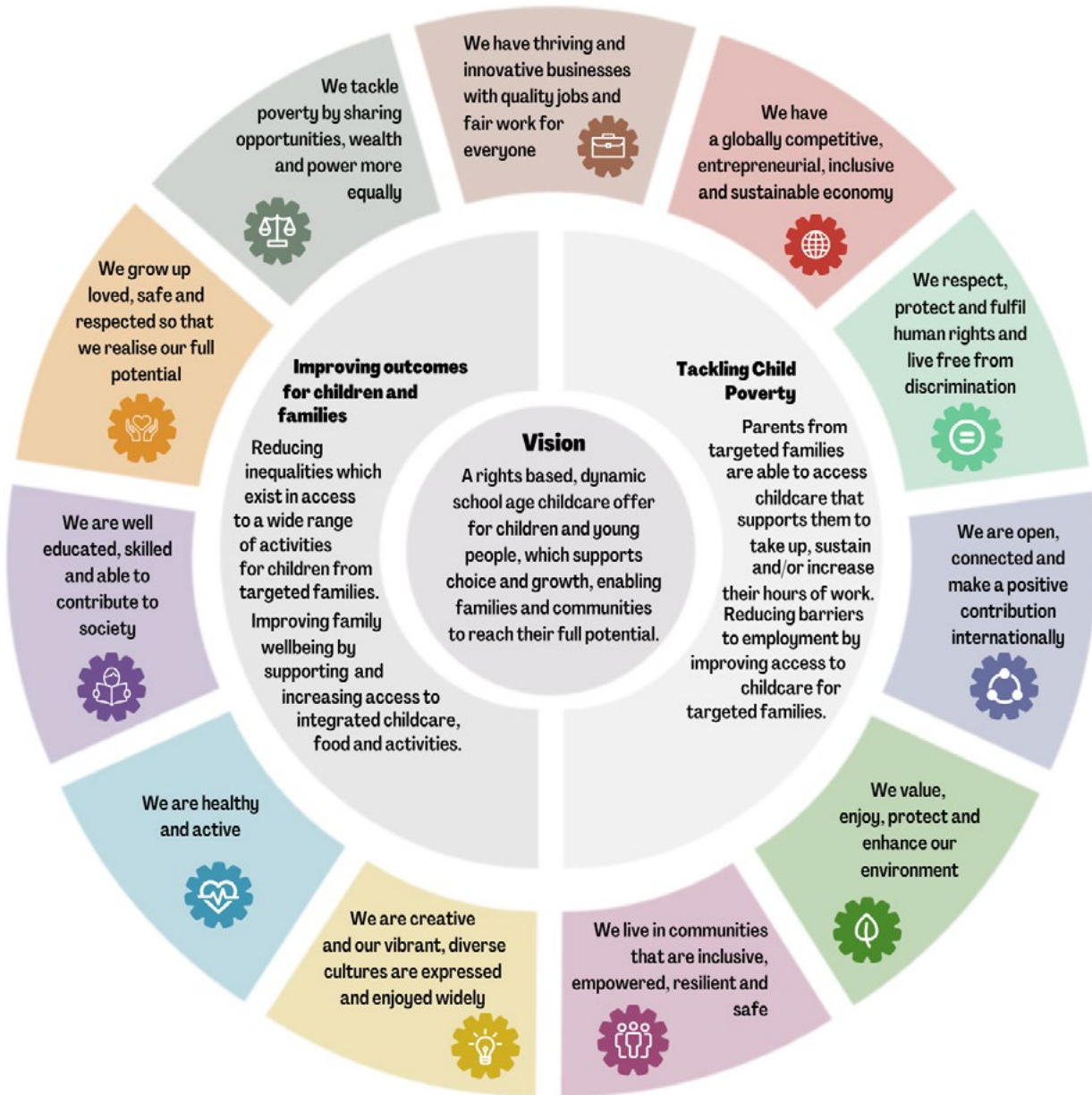


Figure 2: How the School Age Childcare policy vision and drivers contribute to the National Performance Framework outcomes

The cost of childcare, despite existing support available through Tax Free Childcare and Universal Credit (UC) benefits, presents major barriers to parents and carers taking up and sustaining employment. It also impacts people's career choices, progression opportunities and hours worked, and this impact is [disproportionately experienced by women](#). A school age childcare offer which is funded for families on low incomes, and directed towards the six priority family types identified in the [tackling child poverty delivery plan](#), will help enable parents and carers to access study or training, secure or increase employment or take the time and support they need to consider how they might re-enter the labour market.

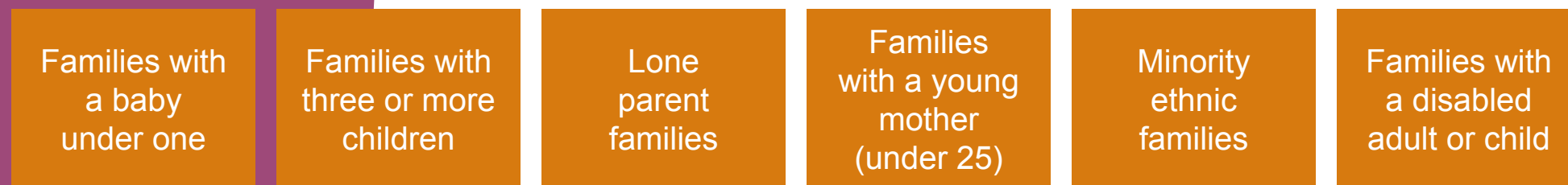


Figure 3: Six priority family types as highlighted in Best Start, Bright Futures

In addition to tackling poverty, a targeted school age childcare offer can also provide opportunities for children to access a range of activities round about the school day and in the holidays. This can help reduce inequalities and contribute to reducing the poverty related outcomes gap.

We know that funding school age childcare alone won't deliver the wider societal outcomes we seek. That's why we are working closely across a range of policies and partners to understand and maximise the benefits of a funded school age childcare offer. Our action areas recognise this complexity and our people-centred and place-based approach focuses on tailoring local systems to meet the needs of the children and families within their communities.

Our aim is that **Scotland will have a system of accessible and affordable school age childcare, providing care before and after school and during the holidays for primary school children from low income households, and that children will be able to access healthy and nutritious food as part of this offer.**

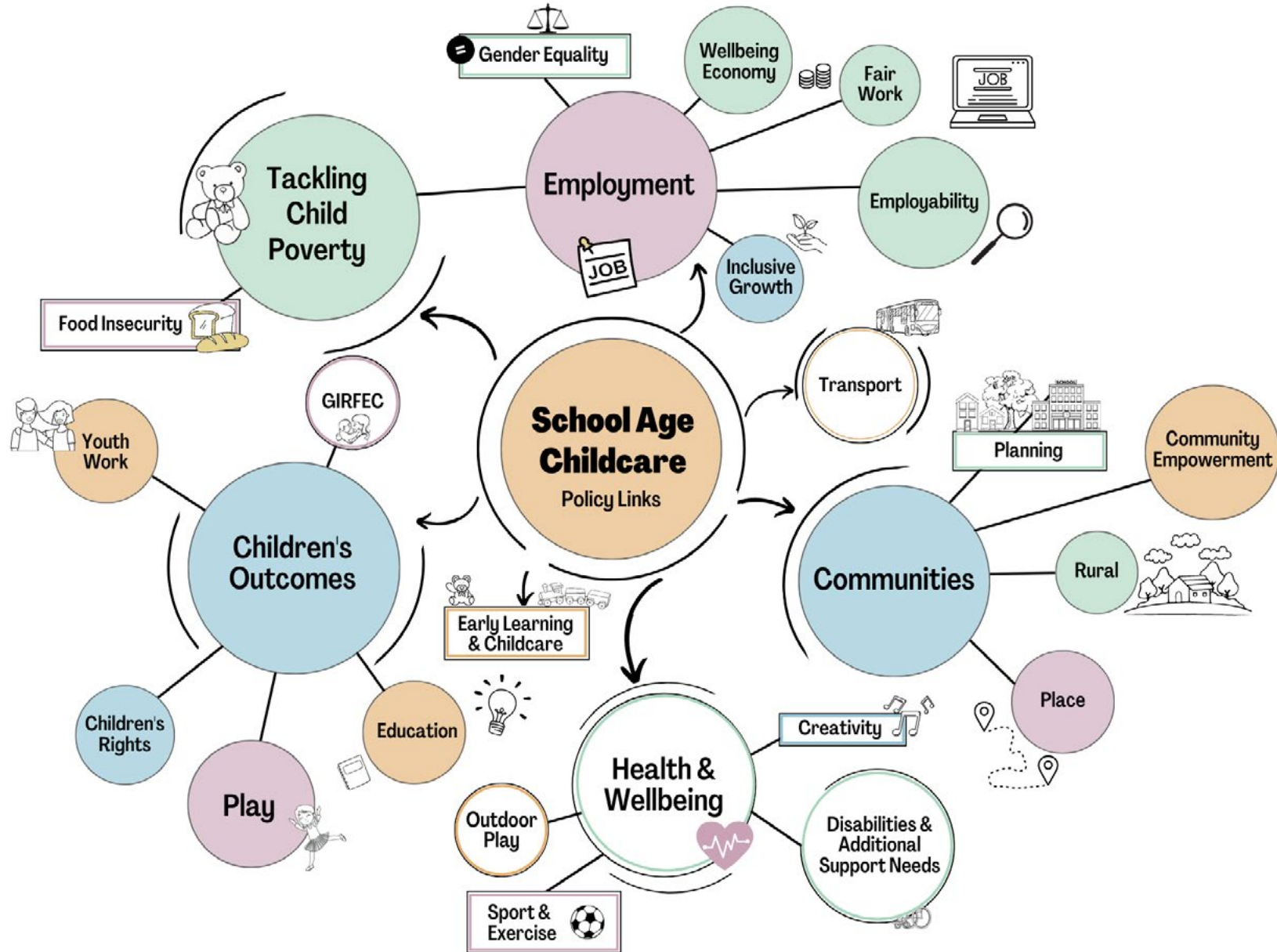


Figure 4: School Age Childcare policy links

3. Approach – How will we build the system?

Our approach to designing and building a system of school age childcare will be **people-centred** and **place-based**.

By this we mean that the people of Scotland are supported and empowered to actively participate in the definition, design and delivery of their public services. This approach is consistent with the [Scottish Approach to Service Design](#) (SAatSD) which is now part of standard practice for the design of public services in Scotland, particularly digital public services, and has been used successfully in designing Scotland's devolved Social Security system.

Taking a **people-centred approach** to this work will ensure that we don't just design services and system structures in the right ways, but that we design the right services and the right support system. It means that the school age childcare system will be co-designed with those who use services and those who deliver them. As we design and build the school age childcare system we will put the needs, rights and experiences of those who use and deliver services at the heart of our decision making.

The basis of a **place-based approach** is to work with and for communities to determine what is important to them. We will align work to our [Place Principle](#), agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

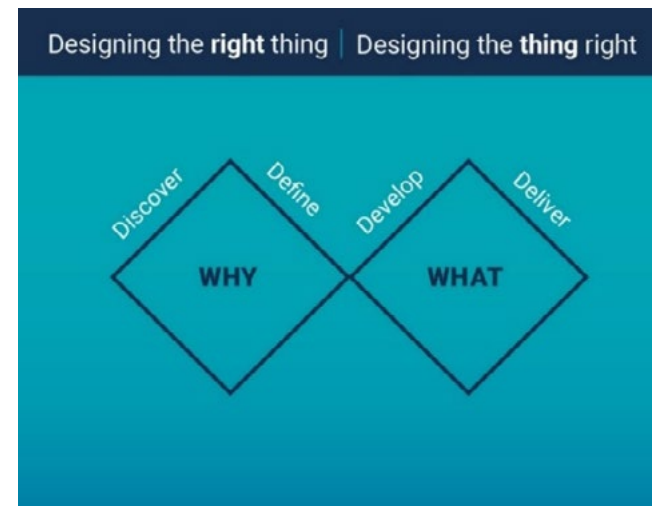


Figure 5: Policy design approach

(COSLA), to help overcome organisational and sectoral boundaries, to encourage better collaboration and community involvement, and improve the impact of combined energy, resources and investment.

We expect that the needs of families, and the resources available to meet those needs, will differ between communities in Scotland. We also recognise that, over time, these different needs and resources have led local networks of childcare providers, who know their own communities, to develop childcare solutions tailored to meet local needs. By taking an approach which delivers the outcomes which are important to particular communities, we recognise that co-design may lead us to distinct school age childcare systems and services in different places.

Our people-centred and place-based approach is set out in our **Programme Approach Principles** as shown below.

- 1** We listen to what people have told us is the problem before we start designing a solution. 
- 2** We design our school age childcare system around people and communities, and aren't constrained by existing delivery models. We work across our childcare programmes and the public, private and third sectors to do this. 
- 3** The school age childcare system should be co-designed with those who use services and those who deliver them. The services which make up the school age childcare system will put the needs, rights and experiences of those who use services at the heart of their decision making. 
- 4** We use inclusive, accessible and flexible design methods so people can participate fully and meaningfully in co-design. 
- 5** We are clear about what people can expect from the design process, and what decisions are and are not available for co-design. 
- 6** We use and share the best evidence available to inform the design process. Where evidence is not available, we will look further to find the answers. 
- 7** We understand that people may access the wider childcare system at different stages, depending on the age of their children. They may also move between different services within the system. We commit to coherence across our childcare programmes to ensure that families' experience of childcare is consistent.
- 8** We understand that the school age childcare system is rooted in communities. We will design a system in which childcare and other services can come together in the right way, in the right spaces, and in the right places for people. 
- 9** We will prioritise existing community assets, considering how we can re-use, support and grow them as part of a future system of school age childcare.
- 10** We recognise that this programme is one element of wider work to improve outcomes for families and communities. We will work across Government and with the wider public sector to design systems which make sense to people, and solve whole problems for them. 

Putting the approach principles into practice

The school age childcare programme approach principles are an evolution of the engagement work we began in 2019, and which we described in the [Draft Framework for Out of School Care in Scotland](#). This work used both classic engagement, and innovative approaches such as [forum theatre](#) to involve parents, carers and, [children and young people](#) in discussion of the problems that school age childcare solves or could solve for them.

The principles now underpin our school age childcare People Panel project and our Children's Charter project, as well as our work on wider projects with providers and within communities.



“The kind of childcare system you design depends on the communities you want to create.”

(People Panel member)



Children's Charter – Co-design with children and young people

We have worked with [A Place in Childhood](#) to develop a Children's Charter, visiting children in primary schools in Highland, Alloa, Shetland, Aberdeen and Dundee, and spending time with a group of young carers. The children we spoke to came from a mix of communities including rural, urban and island communities, had experience both of attending after school activities or not, and included children whose families belong to one of the six priority family types.

The children mapped out and then guided us on a walk around their local area. On the walk, they told us about the places which are important to them and why, and the things they do round about the school day and in the holidays. Back in the classroom, we talked about who should run a great after school club, and what children would enjoy doing there. We used everything we heard to help children write a local Charter for school age childcare.

In January 2023, we brought children from all locations together for a national workshop in Dundee, to negotiate and agree a final draft of one national Charter. This Charter sets out all of the children's thoughts about why we need school age childcare, how school age childcare should be run and by whom, where it should take place, and what activities should be on offer. It also sets out principles which the children agreed should be respected in school age childcare settings.

[The National Children's Charter for School Age Childcare in Scotland](#) is now available to read and use, alongside other publications, including the charters local to the participating schools, a Gaelic version, and posters.

The finished Children's Charter is important to our co-design approach. We will continue to share it across Scottish Government, with our local government partners, the people and organisations who deliver and support the school age childcare system and with other children and families. We will use it to make sure that when we make decisions about the system, we think about what is really important to children. In particular, we will use the Charter in our engagement with childcare providers, and to steer the course of the work we carry out in our Action Areas.



The People Panel – Co-design with providers, parents and carers

Phase 1 – Discovery and insights

We have recently worked with external partners to deliver a discovery phase of the school age childcare People Panel project. The People Panel consists of parents, carers and childcare providers, including childminders, other regulated childcare providers and activity providers. Panel members came from rural, urban and island locations, and all six priority family types were represented.

Engagement with panel members took place between early June and September 2022 in Campbeltown, Argyll and Bute, Shetland, Fife, Perth, Dundee and Glasgow. Over 100 parents and carers participated, and over 30 childcare and activity providers. The recruitment of panel members from families and from the sector was supported by local authority partners, by community organisations, and by the Scottish Out of School Care Network and the Scottish Childminding Association.

Panel members generously shared their stories, their hopes and concerns for a future system of childcare and responded positively to the opportunity to participate.



“We appreciate that you came, to see what it’s like here. It’s not the same as Glasgow.” (Parent, Campbeltown)

“To be honest, it’s just good to be listened to” (Parent, Shetland)

“This is democracy in action” (Parent, Glasgow)





“It feels difficult asking for shifts that work with children when it means other people have to work weekends” (Parent)

“Grandparents looking after the children changes the relationship. There’s guilt in asking them. I want them to enjoy looking after the kids, not to feel they have to” (Parent)

“I feel guilty because I need to take more shifts to pay for bills going up, but that means I won’t have as much time with the kids. It’s a really difficult balance” (Parent)



During this discovery phase, we spoke with participants about how affordable school age childcare might support parents and carers into work, and how it might help protect them from leaving work. Panel members spoke about their experiences of making complex decisions, in ever-changing circumstances, about school age childcare, work, family and finances.

This complexity was even more keenly felt by Panel members with disabled children.





“We just want our kids to have what everyone else’s kids have.” (Parent)



“My son was really thriving in his Summer Club. The woman who runs it said, ‘Why not have him come here after school?’ I just couldn’t do it. I knew it would be better, but I just don’t have the strength right now to go through the fight again.” (Parent)



“There is a two-year waiting list for after-school club.” (Parent)

Given time together, Panel members shared not just information but also ideas with one another. As we recognise with our place-based approach, each community is unique. However, whether Glasgow or Unst, Campbeltown or Perth, when People Panel members came together to talk about childcare, invariably there reached a point where the conversation shifted from problems to problem-solving.

By taking a person-centred approach to delivery, we will ensure that we continue to create opportunities for parents, carers, children and providers to work with government to co-design school age childcare services which meet their needs.



“This. Just bottle this and do it everywhere. They’ve really helped me with (my daughter) because I did have some problems. I get a text everyday saying how she’s been and to remember it’s a trip tomorrow so get her at 8am. They’re brilliant” (Parent)



Phase 2 – co-design and prototyping

In Phase 2 of the People Panel, we built on the insight from Phase 1, as we developed further co-design work with both the parents and carers who use school age childcare services, and the people who deliver and support them. In Phase 2, we tested our people-centred approach by working with parents, providers and other support organisations in a Glasgow community to explore how to move from discussing problems to collaborating on solutions. We will learn from this prototype and expand it as we progress work in our community tests of change. In the next year, we expect to build on this project to develop an offer to parents, carers and others in our Early Adopter Communities, which will prepare them to participate confidently in the co-design of local services. This offer will be targeted to the priority families and to communities where access to childcare is currently difficult for those families. We will align the co-design work taking place in our Early Adopter Communities, creating a network of communities where parents and carers and children and young people are actively involved in shaping and influencing their local school age childcare offers.

Beyond the People Panel – supporting co-design at a national and Local Level.

We will take what we've learned from Phases 1 and 2 and consider the best options for embedding co-design at both national and local levels. Our aim will be to create the conditions within all local areas to support effective co-design of school age childcare services and systems. At a national level, we will take account of the experiences of parents and carers when we design the policies which support the school age childcare system. We will also involve parents and carers in the person-centred design of public services, such as our work to scope a delivery mechanism for a funded school age childcare offer.

Dedicated provider co-design

Alongside parents and carers, school age childcare providers have been valued participants in Phase 1 and 2 of the People Panel. We will continue to facilitate providers' involvement in community-based co-design with parents and carers. In addition, we will develop plans for delivery of a dedicated provider co-design work stream, beginning with engagement in 2023.



CASE STUDY 1: Access to Childcare Fund – Supporting Families Clyde Gateway

Case Study

Clyde Gateway

Supporting Families (SF) is a holistic project focused on employability, skills development, accessing childcare and addressing elements of wellbeing (financial/mental/physical). It targets unemployed, low-income families, specifically aimed at the six tackling child poverty priority family types. It involves a collaboration of delivery partners in and around Stonelaw High School in Rutherglen, South Lanarkshire.

Supporting Families is a 'whole family' approach that supports children to access subsidised or free out of school childcare, combined with family support services relating to their families' general wellbeing, including fuel and food vouchers, as well as employability and leisure opportunities.

It's an established model, focused on improving and integrating with existing services, designed to be flexible to meet different family needs.

About

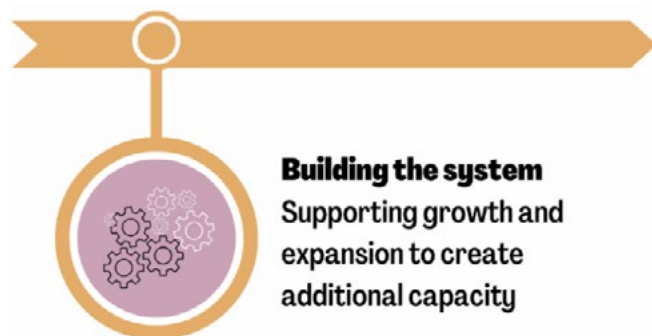
Parent Testimonial

Mrs Gough was referred to the Access to childcare Supporting families through St Columbkille's Primary School. She has three children and was struggling to balance work and childcare, particularly due to affordability. Supporting Families were able to provide places for her three children at the existing school breakfast club and at the after school club free of charge, reducing barriers to accessing childcare for the family. The children were also provided free places in the Summer HUB during the school break which supported Mrs Gough to continue to work.

Ms Gough made the following comments in terms of the support provided to her, being able to access school age childcare provision and how this has positively benefitted her family circumstances:

"Since receiving the supports offered of free extra hours childcare this has greatly reduced my anxiety and provided me with a much more manageable family life, as I could not afford any extra childcare".

"The summer HUB was a God-send as during the school holidays I used to have to work through the night to free up time to look after the children during the day, again no more juggling work and family commitments."



Building the system

Supporting growth and expansion to create additional capacity

- Legislative requirements
- Designing a delivery mechanism
- Regulation and registration
- Qualifications
- Eligibility
- Supporting improvements to the existing system

Building the System

Legislative Requirements

At present there is no general statutory duty on local authorities in Scotland, to provide school age childcare during term time or holiday periods. However, the Children

(Scotland) Act 1995 does place a statutory duty on local authorities to provide such day care for school age children in need as is appropriate, before and after school and during holidays. It also provides a power for authorities to provide such day care to children who are not in need. In addition, the Act places duties on local authorities to:

- consult with parents about their out of school care (school age childcare) needs every two years: and to
- prepare and publish plans in relation to the provision of appropriate care.

We will consider any legislative requirements which may be necessary to ensure year-round school age childcare is accessible nationally to those families who will benefit most, including those with additional support needs, and to support appropriate data sharing between relevant agencies and professionals to facilitate accessibility.

Designing a Delivery Mechanism

We know that the current school age childcare system can create access and financial barriers for many families, particularly those on the lowest incomes. We have begun scoping work on possible options for delivering a future school age childcare offer to families – looking closely

at the benefits of different delivery models (such as voucher or payment systems) and how they fit with what families have told us will work best for them. We will assess options and agree the best method of delivering a future offer working closely with parents and carers to design this.

Regulation and Registration

Recognising the many different elements that make up the year-round provision of school age childcare sector in Scotland, we will work closely with our partners – in particular the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Social Services Council – to consider what a robust regulatory framework for school age childcare, that supports quality, innovation and growth within the sector, should look like.

We will work together to identify new options and consider how we might deliver this. We will look closely at how the formation of the National Care Service and the regulatory reform of Education Scotland interacts with existing childcare frameworks to ensure that there is an appropriate and effective regulatory system to support the expansion of school age childcare. We will also review any relevant findings from the [consultation analysis on inspection reform in ELC](#).

Qualifications

We know from previous consultations with partners and childcare practitioners from across the sector that there is a lack of consensus on the type and level of qualification most appropriate for the school age childcare workforce. A holistic school age childcare sector needs a varied workforce to meet the differing needs of children and families. A workforce which brings diverse experience from across the childcare, youth work and activity sectors, rich with knowledge and skills, provides a solid foundation for a future school age childcare system which includes supporting families who have a child with a disability or an additional support need.

We are working with partners and professionals to address the needs of the workforce now and in the coming years. This includes consideration of regulation, qualifications and professional development which support the workforce to thrive and provide the best possible care. As part of this work, and with our partners at the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), we will look closely at the varied workforce that deliver existing school age childcare services and consider how we might support better recognition of a wider range of school age childcare relevant qualifications.

This work will explore the value of other complimentary qualifications and skills that enrich children's experiences and will link to developments being progressed by the sector's registration body, the SSSC, and other partners.

Working with stakeholders, including regulatory bodies, schools and colleges, we will ensure the qualification framework for school age childcare is fit for purpose, embeds quality, is responsive to the needs of all school age children, and will ensure a sustainable workforce across the sector over the longer term.



Eligibility

As set out in [Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26](#), we will be conducting an eligibility review. We will consider how to develop a consistent approach to determining eligibility for any future funded school age childcare offer to maximise the opportunities to support children and families out of poverty. This will be based on evidenced need. Our first step will be to map our current approaches to eligibility and to develop a set of overarching eligibility principles for all our childcare offers, from ELC through to school age childcare.

Supporting improvements to the current system

We know that there are improvements which can be made to the existing system of school age childcare in Scotland. Our design and engagement work has shown that improving the quality and availability of information about school age childcare is an important first step in this. We will ensure that parents, carers and providers can easily access information about school age childcare and will continue to consider where further improvements can be made, including supporting the sector to be more sustainable and for the value of the sector to be more widely recognised.



Testing the change

Exploring the delivery of services and their impacts in different communities

Early adopter communities, testing:

- Specialist Services
- Food Provision
- Assessing year round capability and demand
- Targeting funding
- Rural provision

Testing the Change

Community Tests of Change

Between 2020 and 2022 we funded 18 projects through our Access to Childcare Fund, and wider pilot funding, to test how to deliver school age childcare and activities for low-income families through a range of individual services across Scotland. This included regulated childcare, organised children's activity services and childminders.

These projects have demonstrated the important role school age childcare services play in supporting children's health, wellbeing and relationships; how funded childcare can reduce household costs and enable an increase in household income, and how services can provide dedicated family support which helps improve family wellbeing. A report of the [2020-22 Access to Childcare Fund projects](#) was published by Children in Scotland in October 2022 and an evaluation of the Access to Childcare fund has also been conducted by the independent research company Ipsos Mori.

The report sets out the impacts of projects for children, parents and families as well as key lessons for a future system of School Age Childcare across Scotland.

In 2021 and 2022 we provided funding to local authorities to deliver an enhanced holiday programme for children and families experiencing barriers to accessing food, childcare and activities during the holidays.

Evaluation from 2021 showed that the range and choice of activities; food provision; inclusion of children and young people in development of the offer; reduction of access barriers and support with key transitions were key benefits of the programme. The [evaluation of the summer 2022 programme](#) was published in April 2023.

Building on this service-level work to support priority families, we have expanded into community-level tests of change projects to build and deliver an effective all year-round school age childcare offer for parents and carers in targeted areas. These areas form our **Early Adopter Communities**.

Through targeted investment in Early Adopter Communities across Scotland, we are working with local children, families, providers, employers and support agencies to understand the childcare needs within each community.

We know an effective system will look different in different communities, and we are committed to supporting the development of innovative solutions that continue to put children and families at the heart of services. Our desired outcome is a local system of school age childcare that delivers change for families who want to access it and also supports the organisations and workforce who deliver services.

Our Early Adopter Communities are the forerunners for a future targeted school age childcare offer for Scotland – providing an opportunity to adapt and implement this offer as we learn from the children, families and communities involved. They are early adopters rather than pilots to ensure that families and communities have a reliable and continuous childcare offer which will provide the security needed to enable them to consider options and make changes to their circumstances.

Early Adopter Communities

In October 2022, we invested £1 million to begin school age childcare provision in four communities across Scotland, targeted to support families most at risk of poverty. These areas are all supported by existing tackling child poverty initiatives, including the Child Poverty Pathfinder projects in Dundee and Glasgow; a whole family wellbeing approach supported by the Social Innovation Partnership in Clackmannanshire; and new childcare service delivery for low income families through the Access to Childcare Fund in Inverclyde.

In these areas work had already begun to understand childcare needs. Through targeted investment we are delivering funded school age childcare for families who would otherwise struggle to afford it. Combining provision of school age childcare with wider supports for families will maximise benefits for families.

Our People Panel, Children's Charter and provider engagement work will support co-design within these areas.

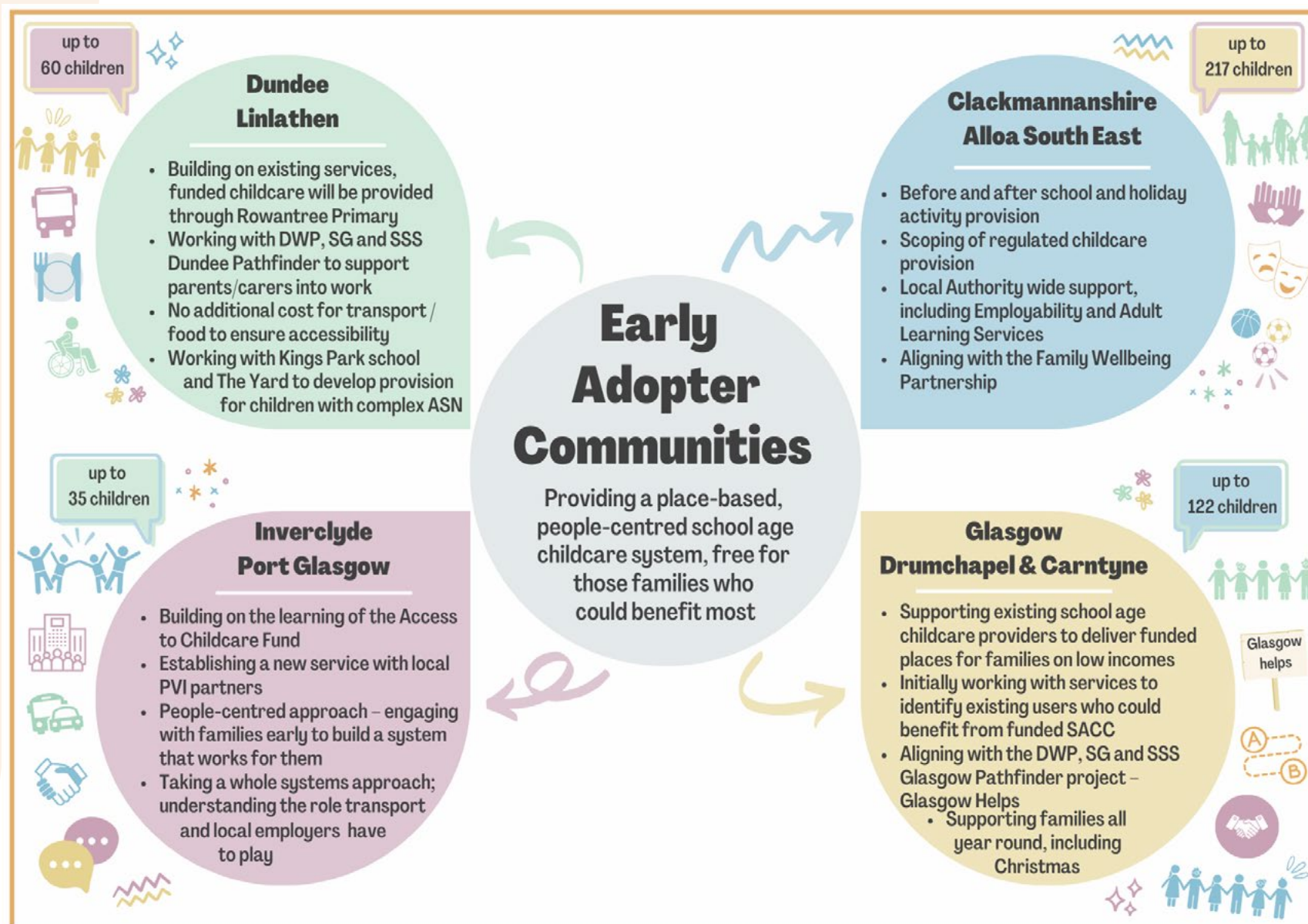


Figure 6: Existing School Age Childcare Early Adopter Communities

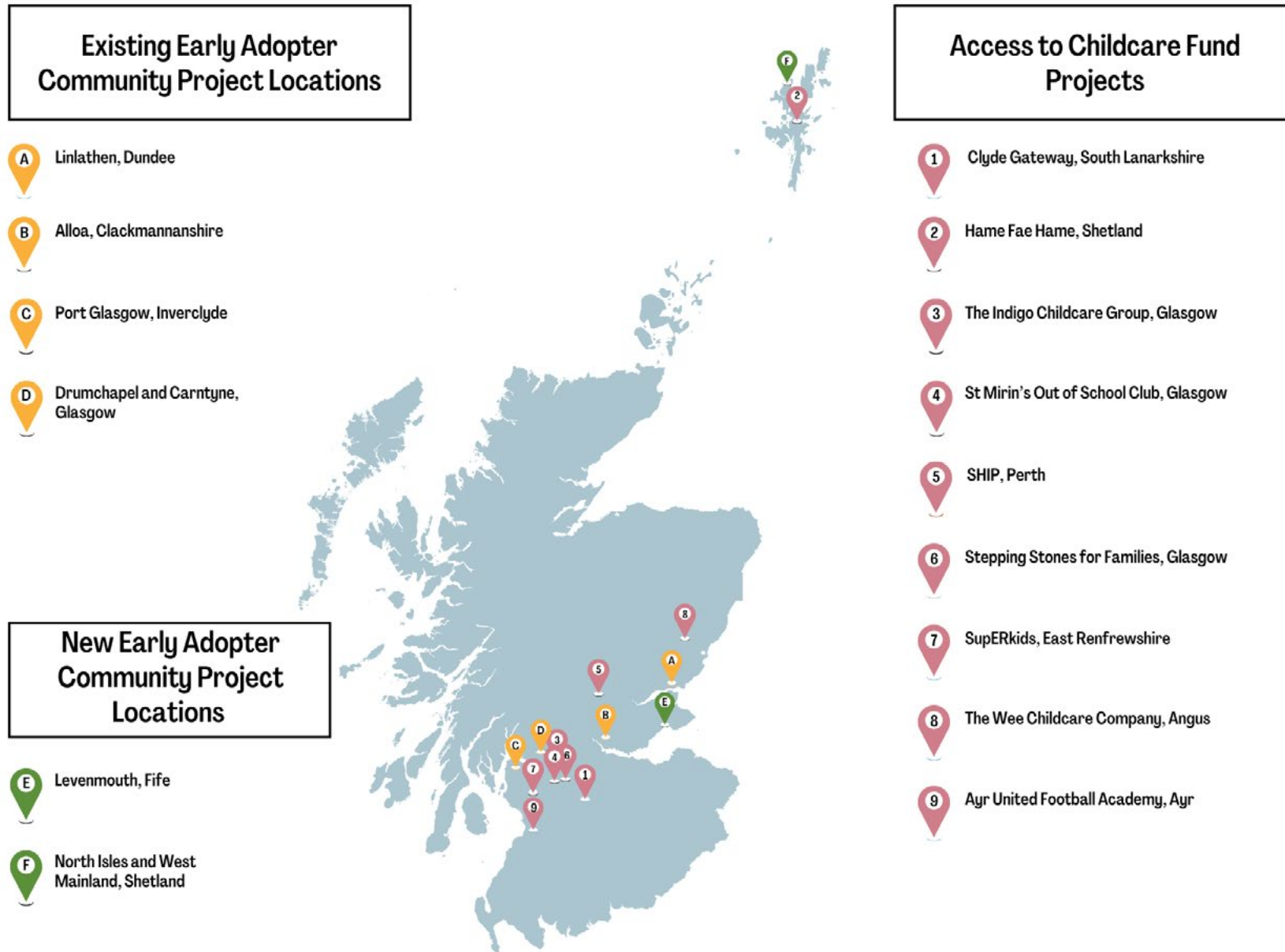


Figure 7: Locations of School Age Childcare projects

CASE STUDY 2: Linlathen

Case Study

Linlathen



About

Situated in the East End of Dundee City, Linlathen sits within the 10 most deprived areas in Scotland. Through close engagement and consultation with the community, accessing childcare was identified as a challenge which was affecting families within the Linlathen community.

Test of change

By testing new ways of working, sharing learning and building on what works in Dundee, the project team seeks to:

- Gather and analyse information to illustrate how school age childcare (SACC) can contribute to reducing child poverty and some of the associated challenges.
- Work in partnership with Kids Fun House (a regulated service and parent-led charity) providing Out of School care for children living in Linlathen in the East Campus and Ballumbie areas, to develop a new SACC offer in Rowantree Primary School, located in the heart of the Linlathen Community
- Co-design a process involving Linlathen families to unlock improvements for both parents and their children by wrapping discrete services provided by individual partner agencies around the family so that support feels integrated and relevant to each family.
- Listen closely to families to identify gaps in service provision and to use their lived experiences to drive change and create opportunities to resolve any barriers in a person-centred way.

"Receiving the Early Adopter Communities Fund has allowed Kids Fun House to run a wonderful provision which has afforded families from our school the opportunity to work, study, pick up extra shifts, and receive support. Parents know at KFH their children are safe and have great social experiences. The Early Adopter Communities Fund has allowed for a truly valuable services for our families and we look forward to building on our partnership"

- **Head Teacher**

"The staff (Kids Fun House) were great with my son. They were great with me, dead good at communication. E has a ball. He got on fine with them all. It takes the stress off me, trying to find child care. They (Kids fun House) were dead good at getting him to share. He is a single child and it was a great experience to meet new children and do different things." - **P4 single mother whose son attended the Kids Fun House**

Testing School Age Childcare in Communities

In 2023-24 we will invest in our **test of change** projects, by continuing to support and expand our Early Adopter Communities and Access to Childcare Funded services. In addition to the four existing Early Adopter Communities in Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Inverclyde and Glasgow, we will expand into new areas in Fife and the Shetland Islands. We will ensure that these community projects are linked to wider initiatives – such as employability support, help with transport costs, holistic family support, tackling population decline, and community regeneration – and that we can demonstrate impact for families.

Where we understand the dynamics and challenges of a community, we can work with families to understand what will make a difference to them. Our work will build on existing investment, particularly in relation to place, and will also consider how we might improve outcomes for families who we know struggle with accessing childcare and employment.

Testing School Age Childcare in Communities

We will also continue to consider the role all school age childcare providers can play at a local level in, providing options for children and families. This will include private, voluntary and third sector providers of both regulated childcare and children's activities, enabling choice and improving access to enriching activities for those children who will benefit most.

Building on our learning from the Access to Childminding service, the Scottish Childminding Association will work with our Early Adopter Communities to support the inclusion of childminders as an equal partner in the delivery of school age childcare. As we continue to invest in communities, we will create a network of support between projects to share learning, enabling communities to interact and engage and consider how the story of building capacity in one area relates to that of another. Through ongoing monitoring and evaluation, careful gathering of qualitative and quantitative data and understanding how the conditions have been created for successful delivery and change, we will look to share and grow our change programme.

We are currently evaluating our four initial Early Adopter Communities, including Dundee, Glasgow, Clackmannanshire and Inverclyde.

The work will include user research, developing local and national-level theories of change and a monitoring and evaluation framework.

Research will be conducted between August 2023 and May 2024.



Assessing year-round demand and capacity

Insights from our People Panel and Children's Charter, alongside evaluations from the Access to Childcare Fund and the Summer 2022 programme, are helping us to better understand demand for school age childcare and how this varies throughout the year. We know that demand for services changes at different times of the year with many people requiring before - and after - school childcare during term-time but often requiring full day childcare options during holiday periods.

We also know that the summer holiday period can create significant challenge for families, not just in relation to childcare but also related to access to food and activities to support their children during this period. Through engagement with the existing childcare and activities sector, and through our Early Adopter Community projects, we will consider how best to design and deliver sustainable services which can support families all year-round, responding to their need to continue to work in the summer, and for children to have access to food, activities and trusted relationships.

Our programme of work starts from a position of utilising all of the existing childcare and activities services within communities who work together to provide childcare solutions for families. This includes utilising and investing in existing infrastructure, resources and services. We will consider the demand for childcare services and the existing capacity within the system so that we can determine where and how best to build any additional capacity required. This is supported by our CivTech project to create a digital solution to mapping supply and demand for childcare across Scotland.

We also know that we cannot deliver good outcomes for children and families without a sustainable, diverse and thriving childcare sector. Childcare services and professionals across the public, private, third and childminding sectors have provided vital support to families and children during the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that businesses and individuals are still experiencing real challenges as a result, and that these pressures are being compounded by economic upheaval that is impacting people, businesses, public services and the third sector across Scotland.

Services for children with disabilities or additional support needs

All children and young people should receive the support they need to reach their full potential. We recognise that more needs to be done to improve the experiences of children and young people with additional support needs throughout their childhood, including any additional support needed before and after the school day within school age childcare settings.

In 2020, Angela Morgan's [review of implementation of additional support for learning](#) was published. This included analysis of views from children and young people across Scotland on how they want to be included within schools and their communities. They expressed a need for primary, secondary and other organisations (this can include school age childcare providers), which provide support in a child or young person's life to communicate better and provide them with a choice on how information is shared about them. Across Government we have been working closely with local government partners to implement the

review's recommendations. In 2020, we published an action plan in response to the Morgan Report, [in 2021 an updated plan was published and a refreshed action plan and report](#) published in November 2022. We will be working closely with the Additional Support for Learning Project Board to review the current plan, how it interacts with and impacts school age childcare and to agree priorities for the future to ensure that meaningful change is realised for children and young people.

We know that accessing school age childcare is challenging for families across Scotland with a child with a disability or an additional support need, as highlighted in [recent research](#) and our [Out of school care - draft framework: consultation analysis](#). We will utilise existing research and experience, from those accessing and delivering high quality specialist services, to be clear about the funding, staffing models and high-quality environments required to deliver a school age childcare offer for children, whatever their needs.

Through our community tests of change work, we will fund services that specifically support families with a child with a disability or an additional support need, supporting co-design with children and families. We will review inequalities in access to a range of activities for children with disabilities and/or additional support needs and look at how school age childcare can reduce barriers and support positive outcomes.



CASE STUDY 3: SHIP

Case Study

"Support, Help
and Integration in
Perthshire"
(SHIP)

SHIP, (Support, Help & Integration in Perthshire) are a charity who support children and young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN). SHIP have been providing funded/subsidised childcare for a total of 175 children from 171 families in the Perthshire area through after school clubs and holiday clubs. They are focused on improving the quality of life for families with children with complex ASN. 95% of families stated that they had no other form of childcare available therefore would not have been able to either work or have any respite (the other 5% said they would have had to rely on family and friends). Without after school club and holiday club families have stated they would have been financially disadvantaged. Families stated that receiving respite over the holiday period and accessing after school clubs increased their mental wellbeing and improved family relationships. The children have benefited from the routine of the clubs and felt less isolated over holiday periods.

About

Parent Testimonial

Hailey Reville is a parent who uses the SHIP shares her views on how the service has supported her family.

Did it improve your finances? Job prospects? Opportunity to study? Ability to retain employment? If so how?

"It has meant that I am able to work full time, so has increased our household income. It's also meant I've been able to apply for new roles as I can now commit to full time employment, whereas before I needed a role that would fit in with school hours. Without SHIP after school care this would not have been possible."

What would you and your child do without SHIP? How would it affect your lives?

"I really don't know what we would do – life would be hard! ... Mainstream after school club is not suitable for our daughter, so it would mean I would have to give up work and look for a role that fitted in with school hours – this would affect our income, which would then affect our ability to pay our bills."

Workforce

Due to the complex needs of the children, SHIP require a child:adult ratio of 1:1 or 1:2, resulting in very high staffing requirements. To tackle this challenge and maintain quality, SHIP recruit and maintain a high-quality mixed workforce made up of permanent staff, 30 sessional staff and over 90 volunteers aged 14+. To promote their volunteering opportunities, SHIP employ a volunteer coordinator who works closely with the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and local schools.

Creating an inclusive food offer

Food provision can often be a challenging aspect of service, especially when trying to cater for any special meal requirements such as food sensory issues or blended food. Because of this, SHIP felt that the food provision on offer wasn't as inclusive as they would have liked it to, so they looked at innovative ways to make meal times more inclusive by ensuring they included cooking as an activity. This is a great learning opportunity as it is something that all children and young people can get involved in no matter their ability. It boosts and promotes positive food confidence, it also promotes positive food relationships.

Food Provision

Integrating food provision within a targeted school age childcare offer, wherever this is appropriate, can help to address food insecurity in a rights-based, dignified and stigma-free way. The evaluation of our [Summer 2021](#) programme showed that the inclusion of food as part of activities was viewed positively by children and young people and their families. It helped reduce worries about getting hungry during physical activities, and for some helped 're-set' relationships with food. Delivery partners also viewed the free food offer as important for supporting participation among lower income families.

We placed a strong emphasis on food provision and promotion of healthy relationships with food through our Access to Childcare Fund, Summer 2022 programme and our Early Adopter Community projects. We will continue to monitor and evaluate the demand for food and the outcomes for children and families as a result of our investment in community tests of change.

We will continue to work with members from across the childcare and food insecurity sectors, to further understand how food provision can be successfully integrated with school age childcare to help reduce food insecurity and the effects of poverty; and to promote healthy relationships with food.

Rural and Island Communities

Our Draft Framework (2019) and Progress Report (2021) highlighted the challenges of providing childcare services in remote, rural and island areas. It also highlighted that demand for provision may be different in these areas due to the seasonal and sectoral nature of employment. Challenges that impact the entire childcare sector are often exacerbated in more rural locations, as indicated in the [Assessing school age childcare in Scotland's rural and island areas](#) report which noted

challenges school age childcare providers face with inconsistent demand; lack of funding; lack of facilities and transport; and issues with attracting and retaining qualified staff. It can be very difficult to deliver sustainable services where there may only be a small number of families with varying demands, and where those families are geographically dispersed.

We are also aware that "hidden poverty" can be an issue in rural areas. The types of employment most commonly found are often lower paid, while costs of living are higher. There is also increased risk of stigma in accessing free services in small communities, with low numbers of children. [A Scottish Government \(2021\)](#) report estimated that the minimum cost of living in remote rural Scotland is between 15% and 30% higher than urban parts of the UK. The research suggests that this is on account of significant additional costs, such as food, clothing, household goods and holidays.

We recognise that many of our rural and island communities face specific challenges and barriers to designing and delivering a year-round system of school age childcare. We will develop and test solutions that support the sustainability of essential school age childcare services within rural and island communities.

We will consider recent Child Poverty research, [improving our understanding of child poverty in rural and island Scotland](#) to begin to identify what form of targeted action is most suitable to tackle child poverty in rural settings, focusing on childcare solutions which are rooted in communities, recognising the critical importance of childcare services in rural and island areas. We are also aware of the importance of ensuring immersion opportunities are protected for Gaelic families and will work to grow and protect this essential stage in a young person's language development. We will build evidence of the socio-economic benefits associated with provision of school age childcare, such as reducing child poverty, maintaining local populations, and ensuring language and cultural education (including protecting opportunities for Gaelic immersion).

5. How will we measure success?

Embedding monitoring and evaluation in the programme development

Monitoring and evaluation is a core component of our school age childcare programme, with ongoing data gathering and shared learning built into projects. Alongside the policy design of our new system, we will also develop and publish an evaluation framework.

This will take account of the [ELC Expansion Programme Evaluation Strategy](#) and other relevant evaluations, particularly those with a focus on how we best support targeted families. This will include understanding links with the Tackling Child Poverty programme, Employability services, the Whole Family Wellbeing Funding and the Social Innovation Partnership projects. It will also link to learning from place-based initiatives such as the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund.

Programme Logic model – developing a theory of change

The high-level programme logic model at **Figure 8** will inform our evaluation, data development and collection plans, and provide the structure for our evaluation framework. The logic model sets out three high level outcomes our system of school age childcare is expected to contribute to – aligning with the key policy drivers of tackling child poverty and improving children's outcomes. It underlines that, to contribute to these high-level outcomes, a number of intermediate outcomes must be achieved. In the initial stages of developing our evaluation framework we will work with stakeholders to develop a more detailed national level theory of change. This will set out how our planned actions to develop the system of school age childcare linked to intermediate and high-level outcomes.





Inputs 	Appropriate funding and governance is provided at national and local level		
Outputs 	A system of childcare, food and activities for school age children in targeted families is created across Scotland providing care before and after school, all year round		
Intermediate Outcomes 	Targeted children take up the offer of available food as part of funded services	Accessibility of school age childcare increases for targeted families	School age childcare is more available to families who could not otherwise afford it
	Participation in a range of activities outside of school time is increased for targeted children	Social interactions and social connections are improved for targeted children	For targeted families, time available to parents is increased when their children are cared for
High-level Outcomes 	Targeted groups of children are healthier and have increased wellbeing	The poverty-related outcomes gap narrows	More parents from targeted families take up, sustain and/or increase their hours of work, training or study

Figure 8: School Age Childcare high level logic model

The policy and evaluation context

Within our [Draft Framework for Out of School Care \(2019\)](#), we summarised the existing evidence relating to childcare and the role of school age childcare in tackling poverty. This highlighted research showing that childcare can be a significant cost for households with children. A lack of affordable and flexible childcare can also limit opportunities for paid employment. Not being able to access flexible childcare may mean parents having to choose low-quality part-time jobs, take a role they are overqualified for or leave work altogether. Recent research with parents with lived experience of poverty commissioned by the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation \(2022\)](#) confirms these findings and in particular that the cost, inflexibility and/or inaccessibility of childcare is a significant factor in families on low incomes in Scotland and experiencing hardship. In December 2022, the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) published a [Rapid Review of Evidence on the Impact of Childcare on Parental Poverty, Employment and Household Costs in Low-income Families](#). This provides an overview of the existing evidence on the immediate and longer-term impacts of investing in childcare, as well as some of the barriers to achieving benefits.

Our [Strategic Childcare Plan \(2022\)](#) set out some areas where further research and data is needed and underlines how ongoing monitoring and evaluation work will develop and inform this evidence base. This work will also be an important part of the evaluation framework. As outlined in the Testing the Change section, we have evaluated our Access to Childcare Fund projects and the summer holiday programme. In line with our Programme logic model, these evaluations explore the extent to which projects have contributed to outcomes such as: making services more accessible, flexible and affordable; providing access to food; reducing household costs. This includes understanding the lived experience of families who use services. The evaluation research captured key learning on service-level models such as: what has and has not worked well; approaches taken to overcoming access and participation barriers; best practice in cross-sector working and community collaboration.

Findings and learning from these and previous evaluations will feed into testing and building a system of school age childcare. We are developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Early Adopter Community projects. This will involve collecting data to understand whether the community-level work is contributing to improved outcomes for children and families, as well as to learn what does and does not work well, for whom and why. Our aims, as we test the changes needed at a national level to support community-level systems of school age childcare, are to understand:

- who can benefit most from a school age childcare offer,
- what form that offer should take, to deliver most impact for target families, and
- how that can best be implemented to deliver change at a local level.

It is important to note that building the system of school age childcare involves changing a complex system and taking an iterative and locally variable approach. This means evaluating the outcomes and impact of the policy will also be complex, and careful thought will be needed in selecting appropriate and practical evaluation approaches and methods.

Data development

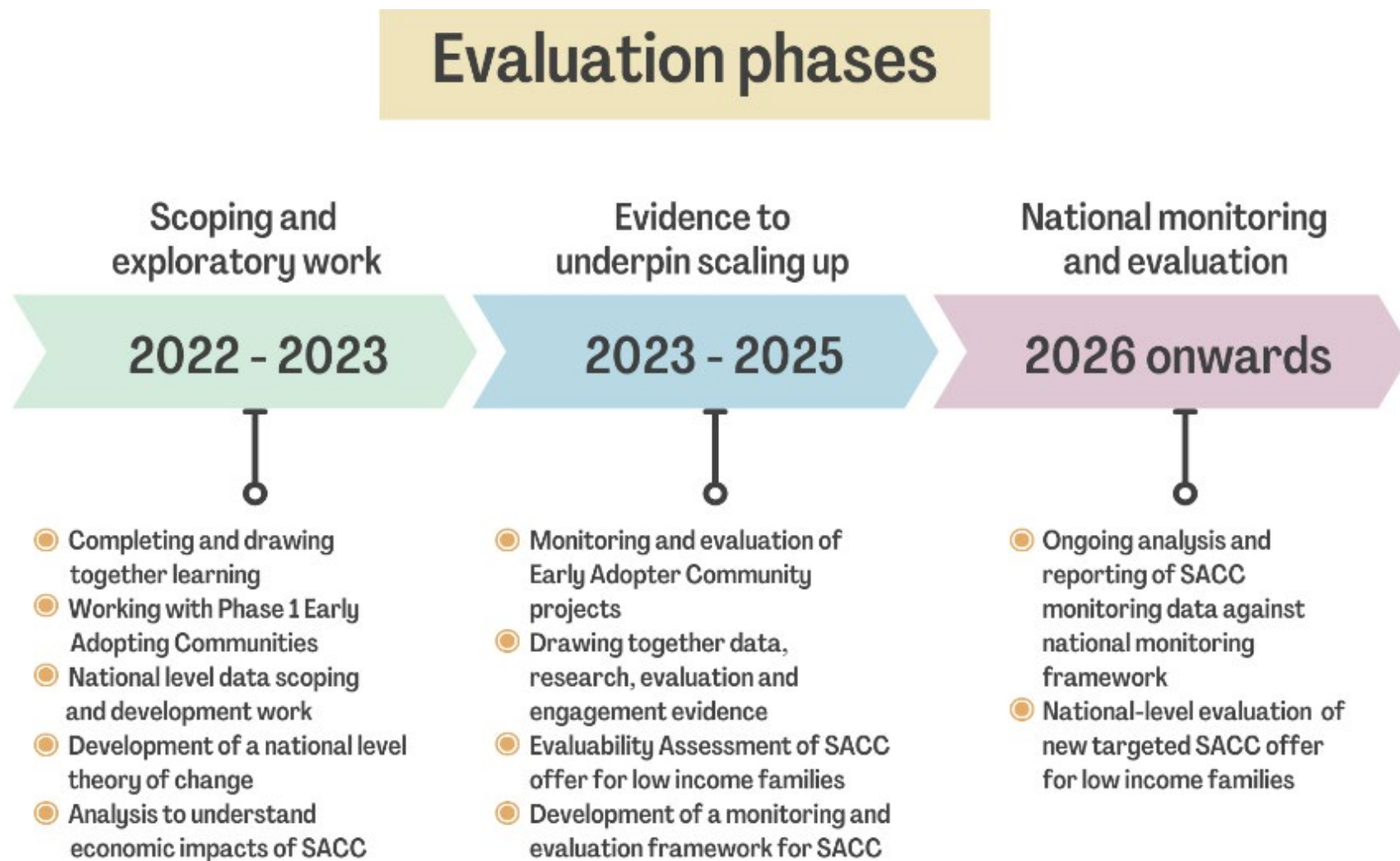
As we progress through the tests of change and system build action areas, we will gather data and learning to inform each phase of the programme. We will build a body of evidence to synthesise learning and produce recommendations to inform the design of a system of school age childcare in Scotland. The data gathered will also be used to monitor phases of implementation of the new system. It is envisaged that data will be obtained from a variety of sources, including:

- Care Inspectorate data on regulated school age childcare,
- a range of household/parent survey data to understand changes in e.g. living costs, childcare costs, economic activity, and
- management information showing uptake of provision through projects, alongside data related to workforce and infrastructure.

Available data sources such as the Scottish Household Survey will be utilised alongside new data management information, surveys, or commissioned research to address any gaps or limitations.

Evaluation Phases

A number of phases are planned for the data development and evaluation work.



6. Summary and Next Steps

This is an ambitious framework that sets out our commitment to build a system of school age childcare, providing care before and after school and in the holidays, which will be funded for those families who need it most. It supports our aim of making that system more accessible and affordable for families on lower incomes.

We have defined our 2 key action areas:

Building the System and Testing the Change.

Our Tests of Change projects will be progressed through our six Early Adopter Communities. We will build on our learning from the summer programme and Access to Childcare Fund evaluations, feeding this into the design of our new community level systems.

We will also progress our action areas which will help to Build the System – considering the frameworks which will be needed to create capacity, support a thriving workforce and ensure appropriate regulatory and legislative structures are in place.

Ensuring our policy design is evidence-based is key – that's why we've also set out how we will use data, both qualitative and quantitative to tell the story of the impacts which our new services have for families, particularly those six family types who are most at risk of living in poverty. Evaluation is paramount to ensuring our work contributes towards our high level programme outcomes:

- More parents from targeted families take up, sustain and/or increase their hours of work, training or study
- Targeted groups of children are healthier and have increased wellbeing
- The poverty-related outcomes gap narrows.

Developing a system of school age childcare is being realised by using a programme approach and will include governance structures and a programme board. This will involve key stakeholders and ensure regular and informed communication. We will review our existing stakeholder groups, including our reference group, and make sure that sector voices and views, continue to be heard in our programme work.

We will build on our engagement to ensure that the delivery of our school age childcare commitments reflects the views of children, families, communities and the sector. In 2023, we will undertake a series of engagement events for local authorities and providers with a focus on clarifying our approach, as well as communicating the expectations of the Scottish Government as we move towards realising our school age childcare commitment. Building on this engagement, and on the contribution providers have already made to co-design as People Panel participants, we will develop plans for dedicated provider co-design work in 2023. In addition, we will engage with SSSC, the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland, as well as the national organisations (including the Scottish Out of School Care Network and the Scottish Childminding Association) that represent the school age childcare sector, to raise awareness of the approach we are taking and their role in the supporting delivery of our action areas.

As our action areas progress and we move forward with the co-design of our system, we will, in 2025-26, develop a more detailed delivery plan setting out what a targeted school age childcare offer will look like for families within communities and providing a clear timescale for delivery.

Thank You

Finally, we would like to thank the children, parents, carers, providers of school age childcare, and the many other stakeholders who we have already spoken with, who have helped to shape our vision and action areas for the future. We particularly want to thank our children's charter and people panel members who have provided invaluable insights communicating openly and honestly about challenges and working enthusiastically on ideas for the future.

We would also like to thank everyone currently working to provide school age childcare for families across Scotland – you are providing the vital services which support children and families within your communities now and into the future.





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