
REVIEW OF OUT OF SCHOOL CARE POLICY

Report by Depute Chief Executive – People

Executive Committee

15 September 2015

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report describes the review undertaken to develop a revised Out of School Care Policy. This review has recommended enhanced governance arrangements for the Vulnerable Out of School Care Grants Scheme.**
- 1.2 Out of School Care is provided in the Scottish Borders by a range of voluntary and private sector organisations who operate from a mixture of Scottish Borders Council (SBC), community and privately-owned facilities. Out of School Care providers supplement the core universal school activities provided in communities whilst providing a valuable service for families.
- 1.3 SBC provides financial support to Out of School Care providers through subsidised rent arrangements for some Out of School Care providers who operate from SBC premises and the Vulnerable Out of School Care Grant Scheme is in place to assist Out of School Care providers who meet specific criteria.
- 1.4 A number of organisations who are based within SBC premises provide Early Learning and Childcare as well as Out of School Care. Currently there are a range of rental agreements in place for these providers. A piece of work will be taken forward to review these agreements and to ensure there is for consistency in arrangements across Children & Young People's Services.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that the Executive Committee:

- (a) Approves the revised SBC Out of School Care Policy (2015)**
- (b) Approves the implementation of a decision making panel to assess applications to the Vulnerable Out of School Care Grants Scheme.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 There are 37 Out of School Care providers operating across the Scottish Borders. There is a mix of voluntary and private sector providers and several providers operate clubs in more than one location.
- 3.2 The majority operate as a voluntary organisation with opening hours to meet the requirements of local families whilst aligning with the constraints of the business. Most provide care before and after school and some also provide wraparound and holiday/in service care.
- 3.3 The Early Years Team within SBC provides support to the Out of School Care providers with the aim of improving the quality of care across the Scottish Borders. This may be in the form of practical support ranging from establishing new Out of School Care provision, setting up a management committee through to provision of training and practice development.
- 3.4 The Out of School Care in the Scottish Borders Policy was approved by the Council Executive in November 2010 and outlines SBC's commitment to work with all Out of School Care providers to develop their services and achieve financial sustainability. The policy established principles which would be applied consistently when working with all Out of School Care providers in the Scottish Borders. To further assure consistency of application, a review of the 2010 Policy has been undertaken.

4 REVIEW OF THE 2010 POLICY

- 4.1 To inform the review of the existing policy, the following has been considered:
 - Data collected through the Out of School Care quality assurance scheme
 - information provided through the Vulnerable Grants Scheme application process which has enabled a financial appraisal of a number of providers to be undertaken
 - Recommendations and findings from Care Inspectorate inspections
 - The range of premises in which Out of School Care providers are located (SBC premises, community owned, privately owned/rented)
 - Range of discussions with Out of School Care providers at the quarterly management meetings arranged by the SBC Early Years Team.
- 4.2 A main conclusion of this review has been that further clarity on rental arrangements for providers and access to the Vulnerable Grants Scheme is required. This is now reflected within the updated Policy.
- 4.3 The review has established that the Vulnerable Out of School Care Grants Scheme is fit for purpose, however there is awareness that some providers have experienced challenges in accessing the funding. To address this, the Early Years Team are consulting with the current providers on their views to improve the process and this will inform improvement actions going forward. An information leaflet will be provided for Scottish Borders Area Forums to provide clarity on the availability of this scheme and the application process and this will be informed by the consultation. Further detail on the Vulnerable Grants Scheme is found in section 5.

4.4 The revised 2015 Policy has a suite of linked documents, each addressing a specific aspect of the necessary information as outlined in the table below.

Out of School Care Policy 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers the Council’s position on and commitment to supporting the development of Out of School Care • Outlines the support available • Links to the documents below
Out of School Care Guidance for SBC Premises 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed guidance on the operation of Out of School Care within SBC premises • Standard let agreement in the appendices
Vulnerable Out of School Care Grants Scheme: Governance and Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains the governance and operation of the grants scheme • Covers eligibility and appeals process • Detailed guidance for applicants and application form in the appendices

4.5 The Policy maintains the commitment that where providers are located within SBC owned premises that they will continue to benefit from a free let arrangement. The annual charge for consumables based upon a reasonable assessment of costs will remain in place. This is currently a maximum of £150.00 and this will be reviewed at regular intervals.

4.6 The revised Policy recognises that that it will not always be possible or practical to provide accommodation for providers within SBC premises. There will be examples where there is a demand for service provision where there are no suitable SBC premises or these may not meet the needs of service providers. The Vulnerable Out of School Care Grants Scheme is available for providers who are experiencing immediate significant financial difficulties to provide some support with operating costs. The support provided by the Early Years Team, in particular the sharing of good practice may also assist in identifying potential efficiencies within the operation of a service which will support sustainability.

5. VULNERABLE OUT OF SCHOOL CARE GRANTS SCHEME

5.1 The Vulnerable Out of School Care Grant Scheme is administered by the Early Years Team under delegated authority. This is open to all voluntary and private Out of School Care providers who are experiencing immediate and significant financial issues within the current financial year and providers will be considered when they meet specific criteria. Up to £3,500 can be awarded to Out of School Care providers who meet the criteria.

5.2 Under the 2010 Policy, applications to the Vulnerable Out of School Care Grants Scheme were previously assessed by the Childcare Partnership. This group is no longer in operation and applications are currently considered by the Early Years Team.

5.3 To enhance transparency and fairness, it is recommended that a decision making panel be established to asses and decide on applications to the scheme. The Panel would comprise a senior member of the Early Years Team, an Elected Member, and the Funding and Projects Officer, Chief Executive’s Department. A flowchart detailing the application and decision making process is found at appendix 1 of the Vulnerable Out of School Care Grants Scheme: Governance and Operations document.

- 5.4 The Funding and Projects Officer will also attend the Out of School Care providers meetings arranged by the SBC Early Years Team on an annual basis to provide advice on applying for funding to raise awareness of potential organisations who provide funding for providers.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

- (a) The proposals set out in this paper maintain the current approach and would not result in increased costs.
- (b) It should be noted that some providers operate in premises which may transfer to the Culture Trust. A further discussion may be required with the Executive Committee relating to potential implications for some providers if changes to current arrangements are proposed.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) There is a risk that Scottish Borders Council is viewed as the first option for any organisation seeking funding, which can lead to an expectation of support, poor financial practice and a dependency on limited public funding. It may also lead to inconsistent application of Council policies if some organisations are treated differently. This report seeks to consolidate the current policies to encourage long term future self-sustainability of these organisations.
- (b) There is a risk that valuable local provision closes due to funding difficulties. SBC must have a transparent and equitable way of ensuring that emergency funding is available for essential local services, whilst also ensuring that all funding is channelled towards genuine need. Should emergency situations arise, the Early Years Team will ensure that decision making on the Vulnerable Grants Scheme is completed as quickly as feasible.

6.3 Equalities

- (a) The revised Vulnerable Out of School Care Grant Scheme and Out of School Care Policy will support consistency of application and improve equity. It is anticipated that there are no adverse equality implications due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals in this report.
- (b) An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on the revised Policy, procedures and proposed scheme governance.

6.4 Acting Sustainably

There are no significant impacts on the environment arising from the proposals contained in this report. Out of School Care and Early Learning and Childcare support employment in local areas and provide a valuable community service. This report seeks to promote continuation of sustainable local voluntary and private enterprises which have an effective business model.

6.5 Carbon Management

There are no significant effects on carbon emissions arising from the proposals contained in this report.

6.6 Rural Proofing

Out of School Care Services in rural areas may face particular difficulties of viability due to funding issues and uptake of places. This report seeks to ensure that all clubs are supported and issues of viability are addressed as necessary. Out of School Care is also provided by child-minders, particularly in a rural setting where a club or group would not be viable.

6.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes to be made to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals contained in this report.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1** The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Service Director Strategy and Policy, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR, and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

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Signature

Title **Depute Chief Executive - People**

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