

Children in Scotland magazine

Fighting talk

Protest, policy and politics in
Scotland's childcare system
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Quality, not
Quantity!

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happened
to my 600
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Our members span policy, practice and research in all areas relating to children, young people and families.

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Welcome...



Jennifer Drummond
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...to the April edition of *Children in Scotland Magazine*

As this magazine goes to press, many parents are eagerly awaiting details of the childcare that has been approved for the coming school year.

It's an anxious time, added to by the fact that for many, the hours offered through funded childcare isn't enough and additional arrangements must be made. Often this falls to family members and friends. But what if you don't have the luxury of having grandparents to help out, or friends close by? How can you possibly juggle meaningful, and financially beneficial, employment around the currently funded 3-hour blocks of childcare? How can that be made to work when so many parents need to do drop off, pick up and factor in travel or commuting time? Even shared with a partner, it is a challenge.

To make childcare more affordable, accessible and available has been the mission of campaign group Fair Funding For Our Kids and, in the shadow of the planned expansion of hours, they continue to voice their concern about how the current provision in Scotland, on its own, isn't working for the majority of parents (*Interview - Page 8*)

Elsewhere in this issue we look at some of the concerns that have been brought to light regarding children and young people across Scotland, including addressing child poverty (*Page 12*) and the presumption of mainstream education for children and young people with additional support needs (*Page 24*). With a government consultation on family law due shortly, we also introduce some thoughts on shared parenting, where it is safe and appropriate, in the wake of parental separation (*Page 26*).

Enjoy, and don't forget to share your thoughts and feedback with us!

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**WHY DOESN'T
OUR SYSTEM
WORK?**

**WHO CAN
JUGGLE WORK
AND 3-HOURS
CHILDCARE?**

**WHERE'S OUR
FUNDING GONE?**

“What we have here is an unusable system”

National campaign Fair Funding For Our Kids tells *Jennifer Drummond* why the planned expansion of funded childcare is fundamentally flawed and won't work until the current provision is accessible by all

The Scottish Government's childcare pledge has proudly been promoted as one of its flagship policies. However, the promise to more than double funded childcare places by 2020 has come under scrutiny of late with campaign groups, parents, councils and the childcare sector themselves raising concern that the expansion may be much harder to realise than those behind the policy planned for.

Earlier this year, spending watchdog Audit Scotland warned that there was a discrepancy between the funding allocated and the cash needed to deliver on the promise. In March the Auditor General Caroline Gardner reiterated that the government's allocation of £400m to provide the 1,140 hours falls well short of the £690m capital funding estimated by councils needed to deliver when she presented to the Scottish Parliament's Education and Skills Committee. She also highlighted the scale of change required to deliver on the hours in the proposed timescale came with “significant risks”.

But while there is much attention on the planned extension of hours, to be in place in just two years, many are warning that before we can look at expanding provision, we should be ensuring that what is currently on offer is working and of good enough quality for children.

Campaign group Fair Funding For Our Kids (FF4OK), now in its fourth year, works hard to raise the issues associated with the current provision of funded childcare, highlighting the very practical issues facing families today. They see inflexibility and inaccessibility of the current funded hours as the pressing issues failing parents around the country.

I talked to a spokesperson from the group.

“One of the biggest frustrations parents experience is the gap between the rhetoric and reality of childcare in Scotland. Listening to the politicians, the job is done and we are all happily making use of our 600 hours a year. But talk to parents, especially working parents, and it's clear we are tearing our hair out,” the spokesperson said.

“The first challenge is trying to understand the childcare system, which differs in every council area and, frankly, defies comprehension in quite a few. We don't have a national childcare system

at all; we have 32 different ones. Once a parent has figured that out, they must try to square a 9am-12:10pm nursery place with any kind of job, or find a private partnership nursery which has enough funded places for children to attend. Most councils only offer free childcare hours in slots of three hours and ten minutes across the week, during term-time only, with no option to buy extra hours for the rest of the day.

“It's an unusable system for many parents. The result is parents end up paying for all of their childcare at private nurseries, arranging for their children to be shuttled between childcare providers throughout the day, or unable to work at all. For many, if you don't have grandparents on hand to help out, it can be simply impossible to make use of the funded hours.”

The 600 hours entitlement should be implemented successfully before any attempt is made to double hours, the group argues. This, they say, makes looking at any extension a moot point; it is not helpful until everyone can access the free hours they are already entitled to.

“Focusing exclusively on the number of hours delivered is not helpful. If families cannot use their free hours then they get nothing,” the spokesperson tells me. “We need to focus just as much on flexibility and affordability.”

The team at Fair Funding, largely staffed by parent volunteers have been trying to establish the level of provision that is currently on offer, submitting regular Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to gain an insight into childcare places provided and how they are delivered.

In 2016, they found that 65% of all nursery places in Scotland were half-days only and that the majority (89%) of funded childcare places available for three to five-year-olds were also only offered in half-day blocks.

At the end of last year, the group's FOI requests asked specifically about opening hours and found that just one in ten council run nurseries were open between 8am and 6pm. An accompanying parent survey from the group revealed that for nine out of ten parents who wanted to change their job, the main barrier was childcare.

“We don't have a national childcare system, we have 32 different ones”

For many working families, finding consistent childcare across council boundaries can be particularly challenging, despite government guidance suggesting councils should have reciprocal agreements for parents who require childcare out with their resident authority.

"There is no national agreement on children who live in one local authority area but, for whatever reason, need to attend nursery in another," says Fair Funding's spokesperson. "Navigating this can be a nightmare for parents. We hear of parents attempting to mediate between two councils, neither of which will accept responsibility for their child's free hours."

They point out that somebody has been funded to provide 600 hours of childcare and wonder what has happened to that money since nobody is putting it to its intended use."

Fair Funding argues that there is simply no need for this problem to exist. "The Scottish Government and COSLA need to sit down and agree one approach to what is a very common situation. This could be sorted out swiftly if the political will existed. Instead, parents are left floundering."

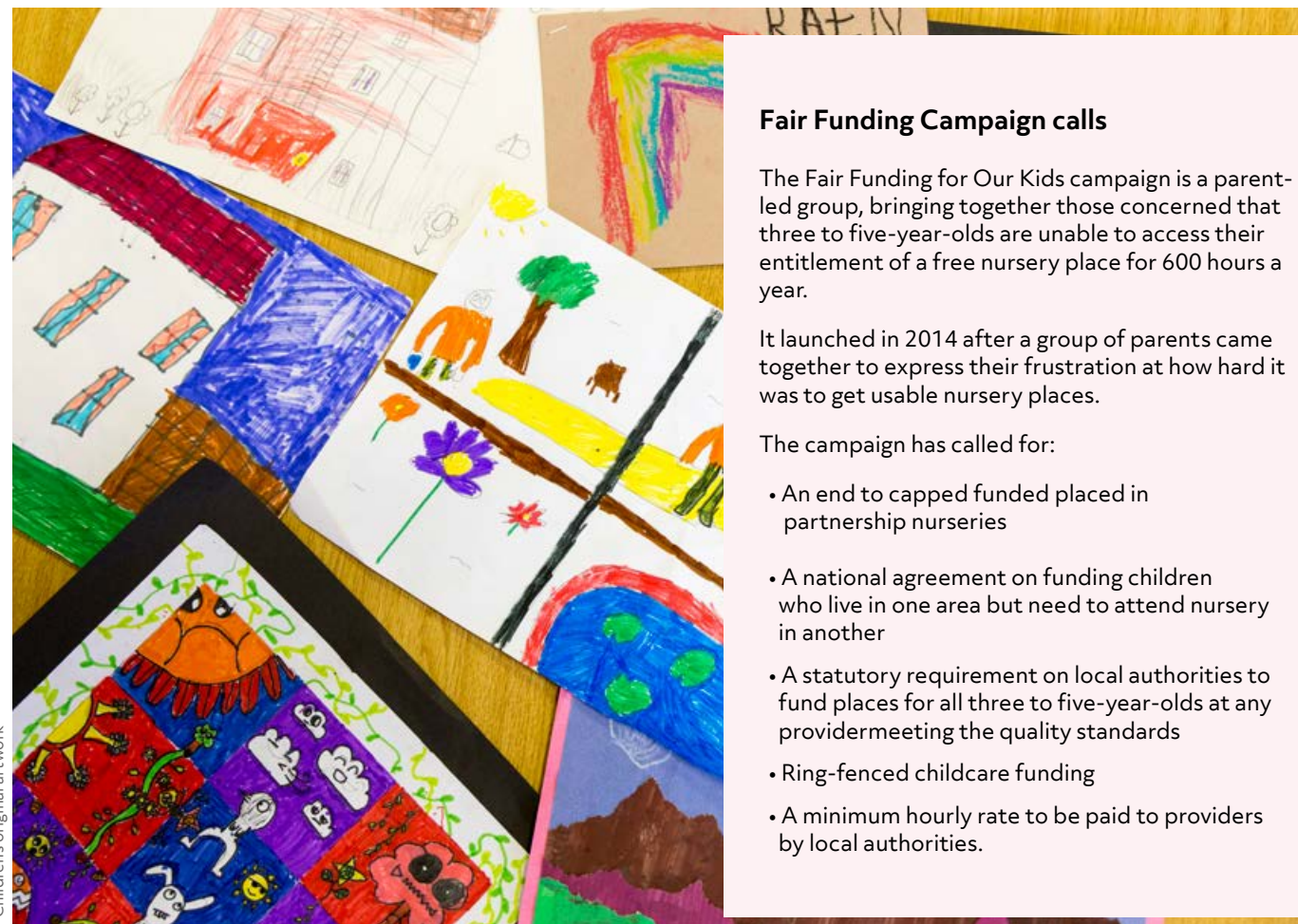
Significant proposals have been made to address this problem. The Childcare Commission, instigated by Children in Scotland, proposed a child account, whereby each family would be

granted a monetary allocation to purchase a childcare place directly - a suggestion that was welcomed by the Scottish Government when the Commission reported in summer 2015. The new system of tax-free childcare introduced by the HMRC in 2017 and recently extended to Scotland uses some of the principles suggested, but will a move towards a child account be enough to change how childcare is accessed in Scotland?

"If hours are to be doubled, we support the funding model outlined by the Childcare Commission. This was also an option in the recent Scottish Government consultation [*A Blueprint for 2020: Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland*, published in 2016] and could broadly be described as a childcare account. But we have one caveat. We are concerned that parents in deprived areas, which tend to have fewer private nurseries, might continue to miss out if they are only able to access council places, provided on a half-day basis. The introduction of the new system must include careful analysis of the likely effect on parents in deprived areas and safeguards to ensure they are not worse off."

Fair Funding warn that we need to take a step back and look not just at how hours could be provided (and funded) but *where* this can happen. They have concerns about the infrastructure required to deliver on the

"Focusing exclusively on the number of hours delivered is not helpful. If families cannot use their free hours then they get nothing"



Fair Funding Campaign calls

The Fair Funding for Our Kids campaign is a parent-led group, bringing together those concerned that three to five-year-olds are unable to access their entitlement of a free nursery place for 600 hours a year.

It launched in 2014 after a group of parents came together to express their frustration at how hard it was to get usable nursery places.

The campaign has called for:

- An end to capped funding placed in partnership nurseries
- A national agreement on funding children who live in one area but need to attend nursery in another
- A statutory requirement on local authorities to fund places for all three to five-year-olds at any provider meeting the quality standards
- Ring-fenced childcare funding
- A minimum hourly rate to be paid to providers by local authorities.

government's ambitious childcare promise, worried that not enough nursery places will be available.

"We don't consider ourselves experts in the planned expansion," their spokesperson explains. "However, if councils used every single space currently available across council, partnership, non-partnership nurseries and playgroups, Scotland would still be 26,000 places short of the capacity needed by 2020. With an average of 40 children in a nursery, this means 650 new nurseries minimum. We have not yet seen any kind of capital building plan that suggests this level of activity is underway."

While politicians continue to discuss the best model for childcare in Scotland, there continues to be thousands of parents who have to wait and see. In the meantime, the issue of juggling childcare with work commitments is an ongoing everyday struggle.

"If councils used every single space available, Scotland would still be 26,000 places short of the capacity needed by 2020"

As this issue of the magazine goes to print there will be many who are eagerly awaiting, or may have just received, news of their child's funded place for the 2018-19 term.

For those who don't get the places they need, or where provision simply

isn't enough, Fair Funding have some words of advice.

"Make a fuss. Write to your councillor, MSP and local Director of Education and Early Years [contact details can be found on the Fair Funding website]. Write to your local paper, make a petition, get together with other parents and make as much of a noise as you possibly can.

"Lastly, do get involved in the campaign. The more of us who raise our voices, the harder it is for politicians to keep claiming that the 600 hours has been delivered."

With thanks to the volunteers and of the Fair Funding For our Kids campaign

> Find out more, or get involved, at fairfundingforourkids.org

> Follow the campaign on Twitter @FairFunding4OK, and on Facebook [facebook.com/FairFundingForOurKids](https://www.facebook.com/FairFundingForOurKids)

> Nurseries 'not meeting the needs of working parents' News, Page 06

> Interview by Jennifer Drummond

Case study: "Who works for only three hours a day?"

Jacqueline*, 34, has two children. Her daughter has been waiting a year-and-a-half for a place with extended hours at a council nursery. She said:

"I told the council that I worked long shifts for the NHS and asked for extended hours on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Instead, my daughter was offered an afternoon-only place on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

"I had to turn down her space on a Wednesday, the only day that I needed that they offered me, because I don't have anyone to pick her up or drop her off. Who works for less than three hours a day, term-time only?"

*Name changed

'Quality must be paramount' A response from Jackie Brock

"FF4OK's campaign has been instrumental in highlighting how the current system of childcare is simply not working for families. Their arguments about increasing flexibility and fairness in accessing childcare have been won. The challenge now is that we are in a transition period where frustrations with the current system remain but the opportunities of the expanded hours are only being seen by a very few and there is not yet clarity about when the promised transformation will take place across Scotland.

"We recently completed a short-term secondment with the Scottish Government as part of a team working with 14 local authorities on trials to test how best to expand early learning and childcare to 1140 hours. This evidenced the significant benefits, but also how much work needs to be done to make sure we have a childcare system that will be the very best for our children. Most importantly, we must make sure that we have expanded the numbers in the workforce (nursery staff, childminders and specialist provision) AND that they are well trained and developed. The evidence is clear - childcare is only beneficial for children if they have a well-trained workforce.

"Over the next few months, the Scottish Government and local authorities are to agree a long-term financial settlement to fund the transformation. Local authorities will then be in a better position to discuss and work with parents, FF4OK and others on expansion. Children in Scotland will be keen to support all plans but for us, making sure there is sufficiently well-trained staff is paramount - even if this were to mean a delay of a few years to achieve full expansion."

Jackie Brock is Children in Scotland's Chief Executive

> The Scottish Government is holding a learning event for providers on 22 May in Glasgow to talk about expansion, including infrastructure and outdoor learning. Further details will be published shortly.

> Children in Scotland is working with communities in Glasgow to develop childcare services in the area that better support families and children aged 0-12. Find out more about the work of CHANGE: Childcare and Nurture Glasgow East at change-childcare.org

Collective action, individual rights



@amywoodhouse

Despite progress with additional support for learning, the presumption of mainstreaming is still failing too many children, says Amy Woodhouse

The first few months of 2018 have been significant for those with an interest in additional support for learning. In January the rights of children aged 12–15 with additional support needs were extended to give them many of the same rights as their parents, carers and young people over 16. And in February, consultation on the Scottish Government's new presumption of mainstreaming guidance closed.

Children in Scotland is very lucky to have Enquire, the Scottish Advice Service for Additional Support for Learning, as part of our family. We benefit from a wealth of information from them about how schools are supporting children with additional support needs and their families, where the gaps, strengths and priorities lie and crucially what children and young people's perspectives are on these issues. We use these findings, and the team's knowledge of additional support for learning legislation, to influence and inform our own policy, projects and participation work. The partnership has also been an opportunity to strengthen joint working and our relationship with the partner organisations.

"We have deep concerns that mainstream school still fails a lot of children and young people with additional support needs"

The Scottish Government's intention in extended rights is to empower children between the age of 12 and 15 with additional support needs to influence decisions about their education and support, including the identification, planning and review of their needs.

My Rights, My Say is a partnership project designed

to ensure children know about and understand their rights and are able to access advocacy and legal representation where needed. It is being delivered by Enquire, Partners in Advocacy, Cairn Legal and Children in Scotland. We are responsible for the children's views part of the service, which ensures children's voices are heard as part of formal decision-making on their additional support needs. This project sits within our Policy, Projects and Participation team, and is a great example of how all three aspects of our department can work together.

There has been some criticism within the sector of the extension of rights for not being ambitious enough – particularly around the age limitations, and the assessment of capacity which will be required in order for young people to access their new rights. We recognise these limitations and know that some children aged under 12 would be perfectly capable of making decisions

for themselves in this regard. We would also be concerned if assessments for capability were an onerous process that added unnecessary barriers to young people accessing their rights.

We understand that it will be for each local authority to develop its own system for assessing capacity, and will be watching this area closely, supporting local authorities to enhance the skills and abilities they already have to engage with children with additional support needs. We hope that this will help local authorities become even more flexible and child-centred in their approaches. If we can achieve this by working together, then there may be scope to push for a wider extension in the future.

A significant question raised through this process has been: will young people want to take up these rights at all? The experience in Wales, where a similar service was set up, resulted in only one claim. It is early days, but given there



have been quite a few referrals to Partners in Advocacy already, this would suggest that we are operating in a very different context in Scotland.

I would like to think the fact that families and young people are more connected and conscious of their rights and entitlements is partly because of the work of Enquire. There is still some way to go in terms of ensuring that's the case across the country, but this can only improve over the lifetime of the project.

I am also keenly aware that accessing your rights, to an assessment, to a co-ordinated support plan, and to having a disagreement resolved, is only part of the picture of ensuring children and young people with additional support needs are able to fully engage in education.

In Scotland, there is a range of provision available to meet children and young people's additional support for learning needs. These include mainstream provision, special school provision, and flexible or shared provision. Since 2002, it has been presumed in law that a child or young person will be educated in a mainstream setting unless one of three exemptions are met.

We are broadly supportive of this approach. However, it does rely on some fairly large assumptions which evidence from Enquire, Enable and others would suggest are somewhat precarious. These assumptions are:

- Mainstreaming is the same as inclusion
- Mainstream schools have the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to ensure children and young people with additional support needs feel included and are getting the most out of their education.

We have deep concerns that mainstream schooling still fails a lot of young people with additional support needs. Calls to the Enquire helpline would suggest this may be particularly the case for children and young people who are, or may be, on the autistic spectrum or have a mental health problem.

To explore this issue further we recently worked with Scottish Autism and the National Autistic Society to survey parents of

children on the autistic spectrum about their experiences of their children being sent home or missing school for reasons related to their support needs. We received more than 1,400 responses in only three weeks. Unfortunately, timing meant that we could not feed these results into our consultation response but, with the debate about presumption of mainstreaming likely to continue when the findings are released, we will be sharing as widely as possible, including with the Government.

Inclusive education is vitally important for all children and young people to reach their potential. In this context it's worth reflecting on a comment Nicola Sturgeon made when the Standards in Schools Bill was debated 18

years ago. She said: "A good school will adapt to suit the abilities of all children, not just some. That is the hallmark of a good education system."

"Inclusive education is vitally important for all children and young people to reach their potential, but we need a personalised approach"

It is an individualised approach which recognises, supports and celebrates differences which is so important. Young Ambassadors for Inclusion is a group of young people with additional support needs invited by local authorities to work with Education Scotland, Scottish Government and Enquire to share their views and experiences of inclusion. As one of the Young Ambassadors summed up so succinctly: "We want to be seen as individuals with our set of unique strengths and skills." We couldn't agree more.

Amy Woodhouse is Children in Scotland's Head of Policy, Projects and Participation

> Read our consultation response on the presumption of mainstreaming on our website childreninscotland.org.uk/our-work/resources/cis-downloads/

> Find out more about Enquire at enquire.org.uk

> Contact the *My Rights, My Say* team - help@myrightsmysay.com

Policy, Projects and Participation round-up

Ensuring children's voices are heard at the highest possible level, and communicating the voices of the sector to policymakers, have kept the team busy over the last two months. *By Elaine Kerridge, Policy Manager (Participation)*

First Minister's Question Time



©Anna Cervinkova

We were delighted to begin work on our First Minister's Question Time (FMQT) for children and young people, in partnership with YouthLink Scotland. This incredibly exciting development will give children and young people the opportunity to ask questions directly to the First Minister about the issues and priorities of importance to them. We've been inundated with applications to join the planning group to design the event, suggesting it will be a popular and lively experience! The first FMQT event is planned for the end of June with a second later in the year.

Media Takeover

Funded by Big Lottery Fund and Children in Need, our Young Media Voices project will work with national media organisations to develop young person-led media content for broadcast in the Year of Young People, which will have a lasting legacy beyond 2018. We are about to begin recruitment for this project – watch this space!

Data, diets and deprivation

Over the last two months we've completed responses to the Information Commissioner's consultation on children and the general data protection regulations (GDPR), *A Healthier Future: Actions and Ambitions on Diet, Activity and Healthy Weight*, and *Empowering Schools: A consultation on the provisions of the Education (Scotland) Bill*. We also responded to the Education & Skills Committee call for evidence on attainment and achievement of school pupils experiencing poverty. As always, copies of our consultation responses are available to download on our website.

> For more information on our policy, projects and participation work, visit childreninscotland.org.uk

> Download our consultation responses childreninscotland.org.uk/our-work/resources/cis-downloads/

Is the future 50:50?



@FNFSScotland

With a new Cross-Party Group on Shared Parenting launched this year, and the government's consultation on family law due soon, Ian Maxwell puts the case for change and suggests how it could benefit Scottish children

When looking for ideas on how to improve children's welfare, Scotland's politicians regularly look at other countries' approaches, and take inspiration from Scandinavian countries in particular, where the importance of parental leave, play and outdoor learning are recognised. Most recently, for example, the Finnish baby box idea was adopted in Scotland. Political leaders here also seem increasingly willing to use the law to bring about social change in areas such as alcohol consumption and smacking.

The Scottish Government is about to launch a comprehensive review of Scottish family law, recognising that family life has evolved considerably since the 1995 Children (Scotland) Act.

On the economic side, women's participation in the workplace has never been higher. The number of households in which the woman is the higher earner is also rising, affecting the pragmatic decision about who should be the stay-at-home parent.

On the cultural side, more men than ever are present at the birth of their children and they are expected and encouraged thenceforward to be hands on parents.

Politically, there is endorsement of these changes as being good in themselves in addition to their economic desirability.

However, nearly half of the Scottish babies who now start life with a well-stocked baby box are likely to experience separation of their parents at some point during their childhood. And when a relationship founders the legal presumptions tend to revert to the old paradigms.

In many separated families in Scotland, any children or dependents involved become the sole or main care of one parent, usually the mother. Fathers who previously played as full a part as they could in parenting their children can suddenly find themselves battling for time with them as a visitor. This is bad, I would argue, for everyone concerned.

Although successive Holyrood administrations have loved to claim that our wee nation is 'world-leading' in many areas of policy, in family law it is a long way behind.

"I urge political leaders to recognise how the tide is flowing in favour of shared parenting in advanced economies around the world"

So at this early stage in the family law review process I urge political leaders and opinion formers alike to look up from the way it has "always been" in Scotland and recognise how the tide is flowing in favour of 'shared parenting' in similar advanced economies around the world.

From Sweden we have strong research evidence that shared parenting either in intact families or after separation is better on a range of measures of wellbeing for children. Shared parenting (50:50 joint physical custody) has grown

from 2% in 1984 to 35% in 2013. Data from the child supplement of the annual Swedish Living Survey from January 2017 showed that for children aged 10-18, most measures of wellbeing were similar for children with shared residence after separation and those still living with two parents in the same household, whereas outcomes were measurably worse for children living solely or mostly with one parent. For example, children living with one parent were significantly more likely to report experiencing health problems, more psychosomatic complaints, and more stress than children in shared care or living with two parents.

In 60 studies from around the world recently reviewed by Professor Linda Nielsen of Wake Forest University, North Carolina, 34 showed that children in joint physical custody (more than 35% of time with each parent) had better outcomes than children in sole physical custody on all the measures of behavioural, emotional, physical and academic wellbeing. They also had better relationship with parents and grandparents.

Shared care is often dismissed as not working for parents in poorer situations or where conflict levels are high, but Nielsen's meta-analysis found better outcomes for children independent of household income or conflict.

In Sweden old gender stereotypes have been eroded. There is now an expectation that both parents share parenting throughout their child's

life. Eyebrows are raised in mothers' groups and fathers' groups alike when one of their members isn't sharing. Dr Bergström quotes one mother from her research who said, "Why should they live more with one of us when they are children to us both?"

But legislators should be aware that the expansion of shared parenting needs more than fine words and wishful thinking. Even in Sweden it didn't happen by itself. This shift in family structure has resulted from building in positive incentives and tackling the disincentives over several decades.

Sweden has had far better parental leave and comprehensive childcare provision since the 1970s. In Scotland there are active disincentives to shared parenting that need to be addressed, such as the systems of child support and child benefit. Employers have to be on board too, accepting that both parents have obligations to their children.

In Belgium, where family law changed in 2006 to include a rebuttable presumption of shared parenting, the percentage of children spending at least 33% of time with each parent has risen from less than 10% to more than 40%.

A "rebuttable presumption" of shared care means that if separated parents have to go to court because they can't agree about arrangements for time with their children, the judge's starting point will be an equal split of time with each parent. Both parents can advance reasons why the time share should be different. Starting from this point wastes less time, money and emotion on the petty attacks by each parent on the character or competence of the other that characterises so many cases in the "winner takes all" approach of the current adversarial system in Scotland.

Simply changing the law alone can't force every separating couple to practice shared parenting. For some it isn't practicable or desirable for the children for a range of reasons, but experience from an increasing number of countries and many states in the USA shows that it can make a significant difference to parenting patterns for the majority.

The existing family law in Scotland has no such presumption, which means that sheriffs have tended to opt for the more cautious "every second

weekend and half the holidays" approach. One sheriff stated in a judgement last year that "even with the greatest degree of co-operation between parties it [shared parenting] can rarely, if ever be sustained".

We know from our own casework and from evidence in other countries that his sweeping pessimism is not justified. Many Scottish sheriffs are more positive towards shared parenting, and many examples do exist of successful shared parenting in Scotland.

As Scotland begins its national consultation on family law reform in the coming months, we will urge legislators to consider inserting a rebuttable presumption of shared parenting into the law. It would give a clear lead to the judiciary without removing their independence to make whatever order is best for the children. Inserting shared care as a standard starting point sets a norm. Even for those who don't end up in court we believe a change in the language of the law will encourage parents to focus their attention on their children rather than their own grievances with each other.

And for those whose parents separate even before birth, perhaps the Scottish Government should think about providing two baby boxes!

Ian Maxwell is National Manager of Families Need Fathers Scotland: Both Parents Matter and Secretary to the Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group on Shared Parenting



Illustration by Stella Small, aged 12

> To find out more about the work of Families Need Fathers Scotland, visit fnfscotland.org.uk

> More information on the Scottish Government's consultation on Family Law will be available at consult.gov.scot

> Read more about the Shared Parenting cross party group, including information on future meetings parliament.scot/mmps/shared-parenting.aspx

Discussion points

Mindful that child custody is a hugely emotive and complex issue, we plan to explore the following points further in a future issue of *Children in Scotland* magazine:

- Welfare of the child is paramount. Any changes to family law must ensure the needs and best interests of the child are the basis upon which decisions are taken
- Children have the right to a safe and a loving home. This may involve one, both or neither biological parent
- The role of courts. The reason some separated parents parent well together is the joint decision to put their child first. Courts can't order good behaviour, only compliance. Is court mandated behaviour really the answer?

New solutions to age-old problems



@SCCRCentre

We need to embrace new ways of addressing and preventing serious familial conflict, utilising the digital world to encourage self-awareness and reflection, writes Diane Marr

Conflict happens in all our lives for myriad reasons, often with minimal consequences, but sometimes having devastating and debilitating impacts on our relationships, life chances, mental health and wellbeing. Whilst figures have decreased, the staggering fact remains that 4,500 young people became homeless in Scotland in 2016/2017 due to conflict at home and relationship breakdown, with many families continuing to struggle with relationships behind closed doors.

However, the complexity of the problems that family conflict gives rise to – of which homelessness is one of the most severe – straddles a number of social care and health issues, as well as economic and emotional factors.

Young people, parents and carers, professionals and practitioners have told us it's crucial to find a way to address the universal issues of emotion and anger and to reduce the stigma and societal labelling that deter people from asking for help. For this, we need a better understanding of the emotional and anger cycles that lead to conflict and an improved understanding of brain science, particularly the chemistry that drives communication and conflict.

From our research we know that parents who are interested in resolving conflicts, should they occur, could benefit from better understanding of teenage development – particularly the teenage brain. Similarly, young people were often keen to get to the underlying causes of family

arguments – showing willing to improve communication and understand their anger.

In this context, it is important to recognise the value of the digital world, particularly when dealing with young people. Digital media is redefining the information culture. Finding new ways to engage and connect through this medium in a meaningful way is vitally important.

Our digital resources, developed in collaboration with Dr Sara Watkin, are designed to integrate professional and often complex scientific knowledge with the needs and wants of those we are trying to help to create interactive, engaging content with universal appeal.

We have learned over time that digital resources, like the popular quizzes #MonkeyVLizard, and Keep the Heid and our latest development, The Emotional Homunuclus and the Brain's Amazing Drugs Cabinet, give users easy and engaging tools to help them understand their brain and the science of conflict, and better equip them to avoid arguments.

And we know that this approach works. The digital quizzes are clearly popular; an increase of 1,001% visits to our website in the initial weeks of launch shows just how important this medium can be for self-reflection, understanding and awareness.

But delivering a sustainable digital resource for

understanding and improving conflict resolution, enhancing education and bridging the attainment gap is a challenging proposition, considering it sits within the multiple 'moving parts' of governance and policy, a rapidly changing digital culture and the realities of familial and social economics.

However, in the context of relationships, embracing digital is about engaging a younger generation

to both acknowledge and work to alleviate the impact of conflict and relationship breakdown, and build confidence and emotional literacy. It is about using an approach young people are familiar and comfortable with to explore conflict and the interconnected relationships between our bodies, emotions and minds.

As a generation, adults are often terrified of what we don't know, or what we aren't comfortable with, but it's time we get over that fear. By understanding how we end up in arguments, and what our responses are, we can transform conflict, improve relationships, reduce stress and work towards supporting young people and families.

Embracing digital methods, and utilising digital resources, will help us get there.

Diane Marr is Network Development Manager at the Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution

> Find out more and explore your inner-self digitally at scottishconflictresolution.org.uk

“Embracing digital is about engaging a younger generation to acknowledge and alleviate the impact of conflict”

“Digital resources give users easy and engaging tools to help them understand their brain and the science of conflict”

VOICES People, projects, perspectives

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“Remember, it could happen to any parent”

Two out of five child deaths in Scotland are the result of accidents. Katrina Phillips, Chief Executive of the Child Accident Prevention Trust, explains why the charity's prevention and education campaign is vital if that statistic is to change



The roots of the Child Accident Prevention Trust go back 30 years, to a paediatrician called Hugh Jackson who just couldn't bear treating children with the same entirely preventable injuries over and over again. He felt that there had to be a different way and was the force behind creating our charity's main message, which is that the vast majority of child deaths and injuries can be prevented. Child Safety Week, which has been running for 20 years, developed from that founding ethos. There's a way of getting this message across which isn't about wrapping kids in cotton wool and making parents feel bad. The week allows us to resource people working with children and families in their local communities, giving them facts and ideas for events they can run which help bring accident prevention to life. This is vital because childhood accidents are one of the leading causes of death for children in Scotland. In fact, once you get out of the neo-natal period it's the top cause of death of children in Scotland, responsible for two out of five of all child deaths in Scotland under the age of 15.

For under-fives there are five main types of injuries that keep recurring – falls, burns, poisoning, drowning and choking. These are strongly linked to how young children develop, how they explore their environment, how they test their abilities.

As an organisation we try to keep a balance of awareness between these common, continuing threats and the new ones related to products such as lithium button batteries, nappy sacks and laundry capsules. It's also about strong links with clinicians. We were first alerted to the danger of lithium button batteries by a clinician who saw the problem.

We look at what can be done to improve safety standards and ask: is there something that the manufacturer themselves can do to improve the safety of their products? As an example, we are working now with the British and Irish Portable Battery Association to establish whether there are technical solutions that would stop the electrical charge being released from the lithium button battery having such a devastating impact on a child.

Economically and financially, it makes sense to invest in prevention because the cost of child injuries to the NHS and local authorities are huge. Just one serious accident to a child under five can cost the NHS £33,000. But most of these injuries are preventable. Rather than treating what's gone wrong, that money could go into services to help children and their families thrive. The Scottish Government gets that. But I don't think that understanding is necessarily shared by the government in Westminster.

As a result of Westminster cuts we're limited in how we can circulate our resources in England. But due to the continued support of the Scottish Government this year we are able to send printed copies to agencies across Scotland, including fellow members of Children in Scotland.

Each year we do an impact evaluation and part of that is a survey of parents and carers. We see a much higher awareness of Child Safety Week and the safety messages in Scotland compared to the UK as a whole. We've seen a real difference in understanding by putting resources into the hands of people working directly in their local community.

People need to know that in terms of hospital admissions it is children from the most deprived communities in Scotland who are over-represented. So it's vital that we enable

the agencies working with children and families who are at greatest risk. They must have the tools they need, and we need to understand the kind of barriers they experience and the extra support they require.

"Children from the most deprived communities in Scotland are over-represented in hospital admissions"

We try to have strong links with parents. Particularly in terms of accidents in the home, there can be a powerful feeling that they're to blame. When we've done research, parents have told us they feel their home should be a safe place for their child. So, when an accident happens parents can be very reluctant to talk about it because they feel a terrible misplaced guilt.

Unfortunately, social media can open up parents who do come forward to quite a lot of judgment, which is so unfair. Anyone who has children knows that they're designed to catch you out. They can use products in the home in a way you'd never think of doing! That's all part of child development.

But social media can also be a force for good. Last year a dad whose daughter died after swallowing a button battery was willing to be interviewed. That YouTube video has had more than 90,000 views and a hugely positive response. There is a real power in parents sharing their experiences, because it could happen to any of us."

Katrina Phillips is Chief Executive of the Child Accident Prevention Trust

This year Child Safety Week runs from 4-10 June with the theme Safe children: together we've got this! See childsafetyweek.org.uk for more information and detail on how to get involved.

> For more information on the work of CAPT visit www.capt.org.uk

> Interview by Chris Small

Benefits of Children in Scotland membership



"Children in Scotland are hugely knowledgeable about issues affecting children and young people. You're so well connected, with links across charity, the public sector, the Scottish Government, from the frontline up to chief executive level. For us to be able to work in partnership with an organisation like that is hugely beneficial. We really benefit from the information we get from you: reading the magazine, picking up on news from your digital channels – it helps us improve our work in Scotland.

But it's also about shared values. We're absolutely passionate about tackling inequality, enabling all children to thrive, building partnerships, bringing people together. We see all those values reflected in Children in Scotland."

Katrine Phillips, Child Accident Prevention Trust (left)

> Find out more about membership, page 2

From Scotland to Somalia, the stories of your favourite foods

International School Meals Day raises awareness of the importance of good nutrition among school-age children. This year, a new competition asked young people to submit their best recipes. Lynn Gilmour explains

International School Meals Day (ISMD), held this year on Thursday 15 March, aims to encourage children and young people around the world, with support from their teachers, to talk to each other about the food they eat and the role it plays in their lives.

Launched in 2013, the day raises awareness of healthy eating and good nutrition for all children by bringing people together to take part in food activities as well as share recipes and best practice.

Each year we have been delighted to see an increase in collaboration and contributions, helped by the opportunities brought by using Skype in the classroom and engaging in discussion on social media.

This year's theme, 'My Food', encouraged pupils to share and discuss their favourite meal, either provided at school or cooked at home with food grown locally.

Thanks to Scottish Government funding, and to mark the Year of Young People in Scotland, this year we decided to do something a bit different to celebrate the day. We ran an international competition, seeking children and young people's favourite recipes, with the winners being published in an ISMD Children's Cookbook made available on the day.

The cookbook is comprised entirely of recipes submitted by children and young people from around the world. Contributions came from as far away as Honduras, Japan and Somali, with pictures, poems and stories detailing the foods children love to eat at home or school.

With more than 140 entries received, representatives from Children in Scotland's young people's advisory group, Changing our World, had the difficult job of deciding the selection that would appear in print. Four members, Martha, Alice, Ellie and Alasdair,

agreed the final 20 making up the My Food cookbook.

Lindsay Graham, food and nutrition expert and a champion of International School Meals Day, welcomes the level of support the day has received.

"It's great to see International School Meals Day celebrate another year of school food stories, pictures and recipes from around the globe. It's particularly heartening to see this year's theme of 'My Food' giving children and young people the opportunity to take part in this annual event," she said.

"In Scotland 2018 is The Year of Young People, so it's very fitting that some of our Scottish schools have had their recipes selected for the cookbook. The cookbook is not only interesting and practical, but also provides an insight into what children are eating around the world, and its contents could form the basis for a range of lessons and classroom activity".

"We know that healthy, nutritious food is essential for physical and mental health and wellbeing for adults and young people, and mealtimes can be positive social experiences from the earliest age," said Simon Massey, Head of Engagement and Learning at Children in Scotland.

"We are always keen to demonstrate the positive effect of involving children and families in the preparation and enjoyment of healthy meals."

> International School Meals Day is managed by Children in Scotland as part of our wider work on challenging inequality through food. Find out more at: internationalschoolmealsday.com

> Our Food, Families, Futures project continues to support families during summer holidays and has extended from Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire into Irvine and Perthshire. Learn more about our projects: childreninscotland.org.uk/our-work/projects



Image: Taqwa and Buzayri, winners from Somalia