



## Feasibility study – Community Childminding

### What is Community Childminding?

The Scottish Childminding Association's (SCMA) Community Childminding Service provides intervention for families at a time of crisis. The desired outcome is to prevent circumstances deteriorating and avoid a more substantial intervention being required. SCMA provides training and local support to quality childminders, who in turn offer short-term placements to families in need, allowing children to remain looked after in their communities. The Community Childminding Service in Glasgow has supported families struggling with illness, bereavement, post-natal depression, and isolation.

Childminders provide care based on the child's individual needs, helping them develop resilience and achieve crucial milestones. The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) eight Wellbeing Indicators are used to map achievements and measure success.

The service benefits children and families through short-term placements, typically lasting 8 hours per week over 6 to 26 weeks. Most children cared for are in the 0-3 age bracket although the service can provide for children of any age. Families are referred to the service by Health Visitors (over 70% of referrals come from Health Visitors), social workers and family support workers. Those operating as Community Childminders have Care Inspectorate grades of 4 or above and one year's experience after their first inspection if they have an early year's qualification, or otherwise two years' experience.

### National overview

Over 900 families around Scotland were supported by the service between 2016-19 (approx. 300 families per year), of these:

- 95% of children are aged under five, with 69% aged less than three years
- 57% of parents/carers with mental health difficulties

- 89% of parents and carers stated they were isolated and not engaging within their communities.

SCMA is contracted, and financially supported, by interested local authorities to deliver Community Childminding services in their area. A Childminding Development Officer is responsible for co-ordinating the service. In April 2017, due to funding from Glasgow City Council, SCMA's Community Childminding expanded in Glasgow City, meaning the early intervention service extended to benefit families in the east of the city.

SCMA advertised to recruit more Community Childminders, indicating those intending to apply should live within Glasgow City, but it was not essential that reside in the East of the city.

## Overview of childminding and Community Childminding in the project area

Within the CHANGE project area of Parkhead/Calton, Bridgeton/Dalmarnock, Tollcross/Shettleston there were three Childminders operating in the Shettleston area. Due to lack of capacity, those children attending Community Childminding did so outside the project area. Information provided to CHANGE during this period from the SCMA reflected that number at eight.

## What community engagement tells us?

During the community engagement phase of the project the project team found that many families in the area are dealing with very complex issues, many of which are intergenerational. Families circumstances can change rapidly, to have the opportunity to refer to a Community Childminding or other family emergency childcare support would elevate some of the stress for these families. It was generally felt by Health Professionals there is not enough of this type of capacity in the project area. In discussions with SCMA the number of referrals received did not reflect this.

The complexity of the area is well documented. For example:

*"The proportion of school age children in Parkhead and Dalmarnock is higher than Glasgow as a whole. 9% of under 25s are from a minority ethnic group. 61% of children live within 400m of green space. The neighbourhood has more referrals to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (+136%), children in poverty (+58%) and victims of crime (+87%) than in Glasgow overall. S4 pupil attainment is lower (-48%) than the Glasgow average and approximately 65% of 16-19-year olds are not in employment, education or training (+134%). Likely*

*development difficulties in pre-school children are higher than the Glasgow average (+66%) but communication delay in young children is lower than average (-6%).”<sup>1</sup>*

*“Pupil attainment in Parkhead and Dalmarnock is markedly lower than the Glasgow average, while child poverty and P1 obesity levels are higher. Although fewer children than average live in proximity to green space, primary school age children are more likely to walk to school. Secondary school attendance and the proportion of children and young people from minority ethnic groups are lower than Glasgow overall while referrals to children and adolescent mental health services are marginally higher.”<sup>1</sup>*

Glasgow's Integrated Children and Young People's Service Plan 2017-2020 has been developed by the Children's Services Executive Group to set out the strategic direction for the planning and delivery of services for children, young people and families in the city. The plan was written in consultation with children, young people, parents, carers and staff from across partner agencies, to ensure everyone is working to and understands the vision, aims and priorities.

*“Our focus has been on families who are ‘just coping’. ‘Just coping’ families could be described as those who are often invisible to statutory services; however, this invisibility makes it difficult to quantify exactly how many families in Glasgow may be experiencing difficulties.”<sup>2</sup>*

To support the identification of families who are 'just coping' across Glasgow nine Early Years Joint Support Teams have been set up. The Early Years Joint Support Team holds a multi-agency meeting to discuss the needs of a family and child. The main partners in this approach are early years education services, Health Visitors, third sector organisations, housing services and, when required, addiction and other community services. Referrals to Community Childminding can come through this route.

*“Fundamental to healthy child development and attachment is the family/household environment, the health and wellbeing of the child's parents (or main carers) and crucially consistent love and care.”<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Glasgow Centre for Population Health: Understanding Glasgow, The Glasgow Indicators Project (2016). Available at: <https://www.understandingglasgow.com/>

<sup>2</sup> The Glasgow Integrated Children and Young People's Service Plan 2017-2020. Available at: <https://glasgowcity.hscp.scot/publication/glasgow-integrated-children-and-young-people-service-plan>

<sup>3</sup> Glasgow Centre for Population Health: What have we learned about Early Years and Health? Available at: [https://www.gcph.co.uk/children\\_and\\_families/what\\_have\\_we\\_learned](https://www.gcph.co.uk/children_and_families/what_have_we_learned)

## What action did we take?

At the early stages CHANGE approached Clyde Gateway with our findings and they were keen to work with the project to try to increase capacity by recruiting an additional 20 Childminders. However the Clyde Gateway area does not completely match that of the CHANGE area and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) were also involved in discussions initially to try to support those on the outskirts of the Clyde Gateway area but within the CHANGE area, to enable us to recruit a further 10 Childminders. This would take the total to 30 Childminders within the project area.

In December 2018 and February 2018 and February 2019, the CHANGE project carried out two scoping exercises on Community Childminding with representation from the DWP, SCMA, NHS North East Improvement and Health Visiting teams.

The focus of the sessions was to understand the reasons why the number of referrals received through the Joint Support Team does not reflect the perceived increased need on the ground. At this stage Health Visitors reported that they felt they were not fully aware of the full remit and criteria necessary to refer to SCMA. There is awareness that referrals require to go through the Early Years Joint Support Teams, but Health Visitors have asked if this pathway for referral can be widened to include generic referrals to SCMA. The staff have indicated that there are many families out there who struggle and require childcare to enable them to seek out further education and ways to improve their family's outcomes.

This also indicated some potential around raising the profile as well as refreshing and sharing clear referral processes for all. We discussed how we could demonstrate an evidence base that would offer clarity of the current situation in the project area and offer the opportunity for potential future development.

The DWP highlighted at these sessions that the Dynamic Purchasing System possibly could be used to provide potential Childminders with the opportunity to further develop the skill base needed to become quality Childminders. They also explained that Universal Credit may be beneficial to Childminders as they would be able to use this to subsidise their finances if numbers of children attending dropped or they did not manage to fill their places.

SCMA and DWP agreed to meet and investigate the opportunity to raise the understanding of the Childminder role with the DWP advisers.

SCMA offered to investigate if there was potential to increase Community Childminding capacity within the surrounding areas until a 'grow our own' model was established in project area. Giving new Childminders a chance to establish themselves and spend the necessary time meeting the regulation

requirements before progressing, where appropriate, into Community Childminding.

In April 2019 SCMA and CHANGE staff met to discuss the national overview for Childminding and the Glasgow perspective and where the work in project area could align with these. From this meeting SCMA agreed to carry out a comparison of uptake in the area with others within Scotland and to investigate capacity in the surrounding area to address capacity issues. It was also agreed to arrange a meeting between DWP, CHANGE and SCMA. This meeting was unable to take place and the CHANGE project did not achieve its target of recruiting 10 Childminders from outside the Clyde Gateway area.

## **The Clyde Gateway Project**

Clyde Gateway, SCMA, Children In Scotland (the CHANGE project's host) and Jobs and Business Glasgow were successful in securing funding from the Hunter Foundation for a project to grow Childminding in the area by recruiting a potential 20 Childminders from within the Clyde Gateway area. The first phase was completed with three new Childminders being recruited in early 2020, the project team involved in this phase are currently collating the lessons learned data. A further four Childminders were recruited but are not linked to the Hunter Foundation Clyde Gateway project.<sup>4</sup>

The CHANGE project was involved in the initial recruitment drive both locally and online, through a survey to scope interest from potential Childminders and those who would use the service.

CHANGE staff visited local schools to gauge the children and young people's understanding of Childminding services and found that when speaking to those who had attended Childminders their view of Childminding was more positive compared to those who hadn't experienced this service and who were primarily concerned about being in someone's house.

Through community engagement with families it is recognised that there is much to do to lift the profile of Childminding in general in the area and for families to recognise this as a viable childcare and career opportunity. The CHANGE team and Children in Scotland created double page illustrations on what makes a good Childminder and a day in the life of a Childminder based on communications with local children and which could be distributed locally.

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<sup>4</sup> Information regarding recruited Childminders provided by SCMA, April 2020.

We hope the recruitment of Childminders to the area will help to contribute towards a North East 'grow our own' Community Childminding model, as well as an increase to childminding places generally.

## **COVID 19 implications**

The COVID 19 outbreak in March 2020 has resulted in significant challenges for Childminding services. In early July 2020 Childminding services are still currently unable to offer 'blended care' (i.e. where a child attends a Childminding service and another setting such as a nursery). However, the Scottish Government has confirmed they will review this with expert advice and will confirm by the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2020 whether this can be lifted in line with the schools re-opening. SCMA have reported that if this were to continue only 19% of Childminding businesses believe they will be viable within 12 months.

## **Conclusion**

If we can continue to recruit Community Childminders from within this project area, we will be able to offer support for families who are experiencing points of crisis, within their own community. There remains a need to increase the profile of Childminders and Childminding and increase parental and carer choice for childcare.