



CHANGE: Implications and concerns — COVID-19 response

This paper offers a summary of some of the challenges affecting and positive activity taking place in the Childcare & Nurture Glasgow East (CHANGE) project area. It is not exhaustive; there will be local activity happening that is not included that will be equally of value to children and families. As the CHANGE team has found from the outset, outstanding work happens in the area to support children and families and at the moment the efforts of different services across the sector is clearly aiming to do what is possible to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 for local families.

Communities in the CHANGE project area have experienced poverty and high levels of deprivation for decades. This means that families in the area are likely to experience the impact of the lockdown measures implemented to help tackle the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus disproportionately. According to the End Child Poverty Coalition, 42% of children in the Shettleston parliamentary constituency and 57% of children in Calton live in poverty after housing costs¹. This is likely to mean lower resilience for communities and families in this area during the COVID-19 lockdown due to high poverty levels and a number of related factors.

Partners across the CHANGE area have responded swiftly to the challenges presented by COVID-19 and the lockdown measures that have been implemented. In a short space of time services have had to adjust and respond quickly and flexibly to address community needs in the midst of a fluid situation. The CHANGE team has been gathering the thoughts and experiences of some of these partners since the beginning of the lockdown and some of the key issues and responses relating to children and families are summarised below.

Identifying families

Through discussions with some members of the CHANGE Hub², the CHANGE team has been made aware of concerns around how families might be

¹ End Child Poverty. Available at: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2019/>

² <http://change-childcare.org/change-hub/>

identified for support. Members have raised the likelihood of families who are normally considered to need support being inundated with offers of support, whilst others do not receive any. This may happen depending on how local authorities and support groups identify families. If the existing criteria for determining vulnerability is used, then those who have specific challenges as a result of the COVID-19 situation may fall between the cracks and receive no support. Alternative ways to ensure local authorities and local support groups are informed with the most accurate and up to date information are needed, highlighting all families that need support.³

Childcare provision

Schools and nurseries

Some local schools and nurseries are continuing to open as Community Hubs for children from families that have been assessed as vulnerable and those whose parents are key workers. In the CHANGE area three primary schools, a nursery and a family learning centre are operating as hubs offering local children breakfast, lunch, care, support and learning on a daily basis.

School-based Community Hubs in the CHANGE area include:

- St Michael's Primary
- St Paul's Primary
- Wellshot Primary

The Early Years Community Hubs in the CHANGE area are:

- Bridgeton Family Learning Centre
- Silverdale Nursery

Our discussions with local partners running Community Hubs have revealed variable uptake across the community. Some Hubs have ten children attending whilst others have more than 20 children on the register (however social distancing is being implemented so session numbers are being limited to less than this). One of these Early Years Community Hubs is a nursery that has children from six other early years establishments attending the venue. Staffing of the hub is shared on a voluntary basis, with each staff member working no more than one session a week. Sessions operate from 8:30-11:30 and 11:30-3pm. Staff are drawn from the workforce of these early years establishments whose children are in attendance. Some children in attendance normally go to a private nursery, however all of the staff working at the Hub are local authority staff. Despite this unfamiliarity the practitioners shared that the children have settled well into the new environment and

³ Scottish Government data has revealed that of those children considered "vulnerable" only around 0.5% are taking up the hub emergency provision that is available. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-vulnerable-children-young-people-data-intelligence-report/>

relationships are developing. However, some staff may be unfamiliar with the building and procedures of the host venue for the Hub and need to familiarise themselves quickly. It also means that staff are working with children and families whom they do not know, so need to ensure they are aware of as much information on a need to know basis as possible with regards to new children and families. This Hub has created a COVID-19 Hub book, which is populated with essential information to help communicate and aid the operation of the Hub between shifts. The CHANGE team has also been informed that as the lockdown measures continue, uptake of places at this Early Years Community Hub are increasing, due to increasing vulnerability within the local community.

One partner from an Early Years Community Hub reported that the current situation has led to a strengthening of partnerships as early years staff are in more contact than ever with partners such as social work and health visiting teams. This has also reinforced the importance of effective relationships when responding to complex local needs.

Although operating at an Early Years Community Hub alongside other local early years establishments, one partner highlighted their hope that they can reopen their own nursery in the coming weeks. It is felt that, with new social distancing and hygiene measures in place, this would help reinstate continuity for local families by being allowed to make contact again. This continuity is extremely important in the local context as Early Years establishments and their staff offer a source of much needed support and help to assist families with resilience, wellbeing and nurture. In the meantime, in order to help prevent families slipping through the net, staff are utilising telephone communications with families. Those who are most vulnerable receive a phone call from staff on a daily basis, some receive a call every second day and all other families are contacted on at least a weekly basis.

One of our partners who is leading a schools-based Community Hub explained that they have pupils from two more local schools as well as theirs in attendance. They have around 22 children attending on a daily basis. Of those children most are from families assessed as vulnerable. There are an additional 100 children who are assessed as vulnerable not in attendance. School staff are keeping in touch with these families via telephone and providing teaching and support via online platforms. School staff have also provided technical assistance to parents and carers via text message in order to help set up online teaching.

Out of School Care (OSC)

In the CHANGE area there are six registered services providing OSC to children aged 4-16 years. We have spoken to one provider who runs two OSC services in the CHANGE area about the current situation and they informed us that unfortunately, due to low demand since the government initiated lockdown measures and closed schools, their services have temporarily been

closed. Normally they would work with up to 70 local children after school each day from 3-6pm, however they have had to stop due to schools being closed. Some children have been removed from their register due to parents losing their jobs. Until the lockdown measures are lifted this provider has furloughed its staff, however the management team continues to operate to ensure longer term sustainability.

When the current lockdown measures are lifted it is expected that social distancing measures will need to be put in place in all public spaces, including schools. Partners discussed how this might affect OSC services as there may be less physical space for them in school buildings where many of them have lets.

Partners who represent the NE Childcare Forum have informed the CHANGE team of their discussions with partners around how to effectively social distance in an early years and Out of School Care (OSC) environment where young children may not understand the need to keep physical distance from staff and other children and where space is likely to be limited. The difficulties of recommencing training such as first aid were also highlighted. The Forum has written to Glasgow City Council (GCC) Education Department for guidance on social distancing and are holding an online meeting for OSC providers, anticipating that if a phased return is implemented then providers need to be prepared.

The NE Childcare Forum has also set up a WhatsApp group for OSC providers. This means they can contact each other more easily and regularly offer support to each other.

Childminding

With regards to Community Childminding our partners at Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) informed us that Joint Support Teams (JST) are operating in a different way. This means referrals are made directly to health visitors and SCMA then makes sure that a family is on the Glasgow City Council list for funding. Therefore, it is likely that families may be receiving support on the outskirts of the CHANGE area (there are currently no Community Childminders in the CHANGE area).

SCMA also informed us that problems surrounding college payments may be affecting families using Childminding services. Various reports suggest that the approach being taken by colleges at this time is variable with some committing to continuing payments to enable parents/carers to make payment to childminders during this time and others advising that they will no longer do this as settings are closed.

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) admissions

This is a key factor for children and families. If there have been any changes to this process it may mean that families experience a delay in the

application process and have to wait longer to find out if they have a place than previously.

Sustainability of services

Retention scheme for private sector nurseries

There is concern about the structure of funding for nursery staff who have been furloughed. This particularly impacts on private sector nurseries and may affect nurseries in the CHANGE area. Rather than furloughing staff directly, Governments across the UK are continuing to pay nurseries for their funded ELC places.⁴ It is suggested that this funding is used to continue paying staff. However some representatives from the private sector have indicated that this only covers 60% of staff wages and that they also need to factor in other spending such as building costs, utilities, training, resources, equipment, which are all vital to continue ensuring a quality service.

On 4 June 2020 Glasgow City Council provided an update to funded childcare providers regarding ongoing financial support. The statement included reference to the Scottish Government's decision to remove the duty on local authorities to deliver 1,140 hours of ELC from August 2020 in response to the COVID-19 situation and the requirement to divert resources to support the ongoing and future childcare needs for key worker and vulnerable families. It included that GCC has been advised to use its funding for ELC to pay for this support. It stated that GCC still intend to build on the progress made towards the 1,140 commitment and provide expanded provision when possible. It also indicated to funded providers that existing levels of commissioned placements will continue to be paid (whether utilised or not) as a financial sustainability support to those providers.⁵

Insurance

Local partners in the CHANGE area have shared their concerns with us about insurance policies not paying out in the wake of service disruption due to COVID-19. For example, a local OSC provider informed us that the pay-out conditions for their insurance policy excludes pandemics. This will affect the income and the short to medium-term sustainability of third sector and privately run services for children and young people in the CHANGE area. Services in this area are at risk of being particularly vulnerable to this due to longstanding low demand issues. Low demand for paid childcare places mean that services such as OSC providers already experienced financial insecurity and sustainability issues in terms of staffing and securing premises. Early Years Scotland has indicated that the Scottish Government is working

⁴ 'Nurseries reveal impact of furlough changes', Nursery World website. Available at: <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/nurseries-reveal-impact-of-furlough-changes>

⁵ 'Schools and learning' update on Glasgow City Council website. Available at: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/coronavirus>

closely with the UK Government to establish a clearer position on insurance in such circumstances.⁶

Community support provision and space

Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS) has created a database of Glasgow community support around COVID-19. Local partners in the CHANGE area have been feeding into this, collating local information around the food response in Glasgow East. It is clear that some services have shifted their focus whilst others are operating in a reduced capacity or temporarily closed.

This raises a concern about the impact for families with some community links missing when they are needed most. It is an understandable and necessary measure for organisations to shut down or operate in a reduced capacity in order to follow the guidelines and support the health and wellbeing of their staff. However, the potential fallout from this is that a lack of direct access to some forms of community support provision may intensify the situation for local families.

Staff from the Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Health Improvement team in the North-East have indicated to us that their own local services have had to adapt, with face-to-face support being replaced by telephone contact. For some services such as money advice this has meant no interruption to normal service. They also stated that it appears to be the case that the number of referrals from health services has dropped significantly, however this is made up by an increase in self-referrals.

The local Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) office in Shettleston is closed, but open to people who are not experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 for emergency appointments. The aim of this is to help progress any Universal Credit claims and help with the verification process. To date they have not had any uptake on this. People who wish to arrange an appointment are asked to call ahead, as they may not be able to access the building on a walk-in basis. Alternatively, appointments can be conducted over the telephone if preferred.

A number of local partners in the CHANGE area have adjusted their way of working, responding quickly to address the identified gaps and issues brought about by the lockdown measures. It has been noted by a variety of partners that relationships both between services and between families and services have strengthened. Teachers have been using online platforms to carry out teaching sessions directly with children; Parkhead Housing Association has been distributing activity packs and setting online art challenges with

⁶ Early Years Scotland website. Available at: <https://earlyyearsscotland.org/blog/latest-elc-update-from-the-scottish-government>

Parkhead's Community Artist, and local organisations have highlighted various activities that families can take part in during the lockdown measures via social media.

Local third sector organisations are playing a significant role in responding to the amplification of existing issues in the area too. For example, PEEK has rolled out the 'PEEK-A-CHEW' mobile food van, which is delivering hot food to families in their communities at breakfast, lunch, and dinner time. They have been working with local partners such as nurseries to get food to families in need as quickly as possible. Organisations such as FARE, Achieve More! Scotland and Urban Fox are also working tirelessly to source, collect, sort, and deliver food parcels to families across the East End of Glasgow. These parcels help those who are vulnerable, including families who are experiencing food insecurity and those who are unable to leave their homes during the lockdown period. Some charities are also helping local families by making direct payments to help with fuel bills.

Playbusters is highlighting information and activities for local children and young people to participate in online and Church House has been setting 'Churchy Challenges' on its Facebook page. Parkhead Youth Project is continuing to run a number of its projects by carrying out some online activities. They have also been delivering packs to participants and continuing to support local young people and families. From the 6 April Fuse Youth Café moved online. Alongside The Pavilion and Connect Community Trust they created [The Game](#) on YouTube, Twitter and Facebook; a series of videos, challenges, activities and games that children and young people can engage with, gain points and win prizes.

The local Glasgow Community Planning Partnership Thriving Places community development team has continued operating two days a week. They have been distributing hot meals in partnership with a local commercial partner and are continuing their project work around mental health and connections such as a digital pen pals project, online mindfulness sessions and activity packs for local residents who have no digital access.

At the online CHANGE Hub meeting partners gave thought to medium- and long-term planning. This related to mindfulness and mental health support which will take on added importance as the need may be exacerbated during challenging times for local families and staff. Some services have already been carrying out mindfulness work with families.

Some third sector organisations have also been able to divert money received from Glasgow City Council's Children's Holiday Food Programme (CHFP), originally designated to provide meals during the Easter holiday to children who normally get free school meals. This funding has been used to help children and families across the city during the COVID-19 outbreak. Altering their plans for the Spring break activities has allowed organisation to

use financial resources to supply hot meals and essential items to local families at home.

Housing and access to the outdoors

Many families in the CHANGE project area live in traditional tenements or flats and no private garden space, which will bring particular challenges for those self-isolating with children. There is lots of green park space around the area, which is accessible to some families, but families are nervous about venturing out and may have a number of children to look after which makes trips out more difficult.

Food access

Access to fresh food such as fruit and vegetables can be a challenge at the best of times for local families in our area, but this will be particularly so in the coming months.

During term-time lockdown restrictions Glasgow City Council's Education Department has been distributing Farmfoods vouchers to families in receipt of free school meals and/or clothing grants. This is a welcome, speedy response to need. Along with partners the CHANGE team has had conversations around whether direct cash payments would allow families to access food from whatever shops are most local to them and allow families with internet access to order food via home delivery services. It was highlighted that some families may struggle to pay for travel if they do not have a Farmfoods store locally.

However, partners also highlighted reasons why the Farmfoods vouchers were a good option. One partner stated that the distribution of Farmfoods vouchers helps guarantee that money is being spent on food and essentials as they do not sell other supplies such as alcohol.

It was also noted that some glitches had been reported where families voucher cards have not worked properly, as well as families discarding their cards after using them once, when they should be retained to allow more money to be loaded on to each card at a later date. These issues have been remedied through redistribution of a limited number of cards.

On 17 June 2020 Glasgow City Council announced that following extended funding from Scottish Government additional financial support for families that qualify for school clothing grants would be distributed through the summer holidays to help provide food. They also announced that this would be made as a direct payment alongside the clothing grant which is transferred into bank accounts.⁷

⁷ Glasgow City Council website. Available at: <https://glasgow.gov.uk/schoolsandlearning>

Internet access

Another aspect of the COVID-19 outbreak that disproportionately impacts on families in the CHANGE project area relates to internet access. As data from the Scottish Household Survey⁸ below demonstrates, people in areas like Glasgow East, which is a higher SIMD category and has higher rates of social rented housing tenures, are less likely to have household internet access. Some people access the internet on mobile phones on a pay as you go basis or with contracts that can be quickly cancelled if you cannot afford it. Many local people rely on their local public library for IT and internet access. The current closure of public libraries has intensified the issue, as they offer many people their only access to a computer and the internet.

Scottish Household Survey 2018 indicates that

- Households in Scotland's 20 per cent most deprived areas continue to be less likely than those in the rest of Scotland to have home internet access.
- Internet access varies by tenure. More than 90 per cent of both owner-occupied households and privately rented households reported having home internet access compared to only 75 per cent of those in social rented housing.

Directions to self-isolate during this time means internet access has taken on added importance, for example:

- employers asking employees to work from home
 - without reliable internet access parents/carers might find themselves unable to carry out expected duties from home
- schools and nursery closures
 - without reliable internet access local children may not be able to access home learning resources from their school or nursery teacher
- access to food and essentials
 - without internet access those who parents/carers who are self-isolated and unable to shop for their family, e.g. disability or immunodeficiency, will not be able to place online shopping orders
- access to support and essential services
 - some front-line services have had to close their offices, placing greater importance on online systems of communication and information sharing
- access to family and friends

⁸ Scottish Household Survey 2018. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/pages/4/>

- without access to the internet many families may lack the means to communicate with family and friends like many people are currently doing via video call. This has the potential to add extra stress to the situation, in an area where mental health issues are already prevalent.

Summary

This paper summarises some of the challenges and positive activity taking place in the CHANGE project area in response to the Covid-19 outbreak and lockdown restrictions. This information was gathered during conversations with partners from day to day and at the CHANGE Hub meetings in April and May 2020.

As and when we become aware of any developments locally, we will update this document. We will also use this learning to shape our planning moving forward and we will remain in regular contact with those partners who have helped inform this paper.

About

CHANGE is a project working with communities in Glasgow East to develop childcare services in the area. CHANGE has been funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and is managed by Children in Scotland. It has been operating since 2016 and is due to finish at the end of 2020.