Scma

Scottish Childminding Association

Annual Report

2024–2025

Growing and strengthening the childminding workforce



Foreword

A message from Graeme McAlister, Chief Executive of SCMA

2024 – 2025 marked the start of an exciting new 'delivery phase' for our ten-year strategy journey: Changing the Narrative – Strengthening Childminding, Supporting Families and Increasing Choice.

The greatest challenge faced by childminding continues to be the decline of the childminding workforce, but in recent years SCMA has been leading nationally on addressing the reasons for this with the aim of reversing the trend.

We're delighted that the Scottish Government has now recognised the importance of childminding, investing significant funds to launch the Programme for Scotland's Childminding Future (PSCF) in June 2024. Led by SCMA, this three-year national programme aims to grow and strengthen the childminding workforce through trialing new and innovative retention measures to support the current workforce, whilst also continuing to attract new childminders using our successful supported recruitment model.

Children and families remain central to all that we do. We have continued to develop our Community Childminding Services (early interventions/family support for vulnerable families) and have prioritised our new childminder recruitment activities to areas where childminding provision is currently low and inequalities (social, economic or geographic) are pronounced, linking in with wider national efforts to reduce child poverty through providing the childcare that will enable parents to seek employment, training or to further their education.

Alongside the recruitment of new childminders, our commitment continues to supporting and sustaining the current workforce at all career stages and we have begun to trial a series of innovative new retention measures to address some of the issues causing our workforce to decline – see page 5 for more details.



As always, none of this work would be possible without the steadfast commitment and dedication of the whole of #TeamSCMA - our childminder members, Elected Members and core staff, as well as our valued partners and funders. We look forward to continuing our work together to grow and strengthen the childminding workforce in Scotland.

Graeme McAlister
Chief Executive, SCMA

Year in Focus: 2024–2025

Growing and strengthening the childminding workforce

In this second phase of our ten-year strategy 'Changing the Narrative: Strengthening Childminding, Supporting Families and Increasing Choice', we have continued to make strong progress, particularly with the escalation of our childminder retention and recruitment work through the Programme for Scotland's Childminding Future.

Highlights of work undertaken this year to support the five key work streams of our strategy include:

Membership

- We continued to engage with and involve our members in the direction of our work and keep them updated on progress. An Impact Report was shared, outlining what we had achieved in the first three years of our strategy, alongside a short animation and written plan for 2024 – 2027.
- Investment continued to support the delivery of Continuous Professional Learning (CPL), and a Designated Fund was established through releasing £70,000 from our reserves. Further detail is included under 'Workforce, Learning & Quality'.
- Our partnership with Morton Michel has continued and we were delighted to secure the addition of a number of 'Flick learning' courses to complement our own CPL offering. This includes access to Food Hygiene training and certification, for which childminders would previously have had to pay an additional cost.
- A full #TellSCMA membership survey was undertaken, capturing views and valuable insight on a wide range of topics from understanding learning needs to experienced of delivering funded ELC. The data was used to strengthen our understanding of the issues affecting childminders in Scotland, and helped to inform our future priorities and direction.
- Hundreds of childminders across the country joined our annual, online 'Childminding Week' celebrations, including our first ever BIG Teddy Bear's Picnic (also see Value of Childminding). The week was launched with our hugely successful annual online conference, Shaping Futures: Embracing Change where we were joined by 270 childminders – our largest audience to date and representing 31 local authorities.





Representation, Policy and Influencing

- Worked with other childcare bodies to survey the views and concerns of our respective members regarding the process of inspections, before issuing a joint report raising the common themes and areas of concerns. Following a meeting with Scottish Government and the Care Inspectorate, the Care Inspectorate updated and shared two guidance documents to help childminders prepare for inspections, including advice on what childminders can do if they are unhappy with any aspect of the inspection process.

- Met with Scottish Government to collectively influence and support their commitment to enable childcare workers delivering funded Early Learning & Childcare (ELC) in private and third sector services, including childminders, to be paid at least £12 per hour from April 2024. We provided information to members on how this would work in practice for them, through the sustainable rate setting process.

- Continued to represent members' needs in the development of the new Quality Improvement Framework to ensure it would deliver on the Scottish Government's commitment to making quality assurance more proportionate and specific to childminding, with a major reduction in paperwork for all childminders (and not just those delivering funded ELC).

- Provided oral evidence to the Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry, with Chief Executive Grame McAlister questioned on SCMA as an organisation, the role and benefits of childminding, the impact the pandemic had on our workforce, childminders' experiences of operating during the pandemic and their vital role in supporting families as part of the national response, financial support, our perception of how Scottish Government dealt with the challenges being faced by childminders during this time and what lessons could be learned.

- Published our annual Early Learning and Childcare Audit 2024, updating on the progress of local authorities involving childminders in the delivery of funded ELC; the impact of wider issues such as the deferral year and local budgetary pressures on ELC; and an update on our childminding workforce projections. Significantly, we reported small signs of recovery for the second successive year in both an increase in new registrations attributable to SCMA's recruitment pilots and a decrease in cancelled registrations – presenting a platform for recovery to be driven at pace and scale by the PSCF national programme on childminder retention and recruitment.

- Conducted an important survey to collect members' views on whether they believed childminding should evolve beyond its current legal and regulatory basis to include delivery on non-domestic premises (e.g. in village halls or community centres) in response to acute demand for childcare in many areas. Our report with recommendations was then submitted to Scottish Government and the Care Inspectorate.



Workforce, Learning and Quality

In March 2024, SCMA launched the new 'Programme for Scotland's Childminding Future', predominantly funded by Scottish Government to grow the childminding workforce through piloting innovative childminder retention and recruitment activity in a number of local authorities. A new microsite was created within our website to explain the two strands of work:

Workforce Retention:

- **Quality and Learning**: includes access to three online courses and a self-evaluation toolkit to support childminders with their evidencing requirements, plus study groups and drop-in sessions to provide support in working towards qualifications.
- **Funded Time Off the Floor**: the first pilots of their kind for childminding in the UK testing three different potential models of Funded Time Off the Floor.
- **Mentoring**: pairing new and experienced childminders, offering guidance and peer support, encouraging skills transfer and sharing best practice to help new childminders thrive.

Childminder Recruitment:

Building on SCMA's earlier pilots in remote and islands and then urban areas, all local authorities in Scotland were invited to partner with us and benefit from the delivery of our recruitment model in their area. A digital marketing campaign was launched, directing enquirers and potential candidates to the new Become a childminder webpage within the microsite. During the first year, 17 local authority areas signed up to focus on childminder recruitment with 28 out of 32 local authorities lined up for year two (2025/26).

Learning and Practice Developments:

- Further enhanced our e-Learning platform to improve its functionality for members, including adding audio to e-Learning courses to improve accessibility, and varying the type of content (eg videos and webinars). Also continued to secure external funding and partners to develop new content and provide training free at the point of access to members. A pipeline of new and updated SCMA courses has continued to provide members with regular, fresh content as well as through working with partner providers, such as Bookbug.
- Continued to deliver local services and projects in a number of local authority areas where we have been funded to support childminders with their quality assurance and practice delivery.
- Represented childminding in the stakeholder group reviewing 'Setting the Table', providing up-to-date standards for food provision and easy-to-follow steps on how to make a positive difference to a child's nutritional intake and their future health.

Families and Communities

Scottish Government commissioned SCMA to run two new 'test of change' projects which will also help to inform the development of 'all-age childcare':

- Continued to test the impact and outcomes of the **Family Childminding Partnership** (FCP), a model which supports whole-family wellbeing, by targeting families in need and supporting the key commitments of The Promise, through the provision of preventative family support within enhanced, nurturing childminding placements. Placements are offered to those most in need, who fall within the six priority groups in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, as well as to kinship carers and parents who are care-experienced. The five pilot areas are Aberdeenshire, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian, supporting children (primarily from 9 – 23 months old, but including other siblings where possible) with flexible, family-centred childminding services.

- Initially launched in 2023, the **School-Aged Childcare** (SACC) project supports the promotion and inclusion of childminders as an equal partner in the delivery of school-aged childcare and builds on the previous learning of our 'Access to Childminding' service - with a focus on facilitating parent employability through the provision of funded childcare.

Value of Childminding

- Whilst we are aware there are still some outdated misperceptions and a longer-term plan will be needed to address this, much progress has been made to increase the value that different stakeholders attach to childminding, to SCMA and to our activities though our growing online and media presence, particularly enhanced through the high profile work of PSCF.

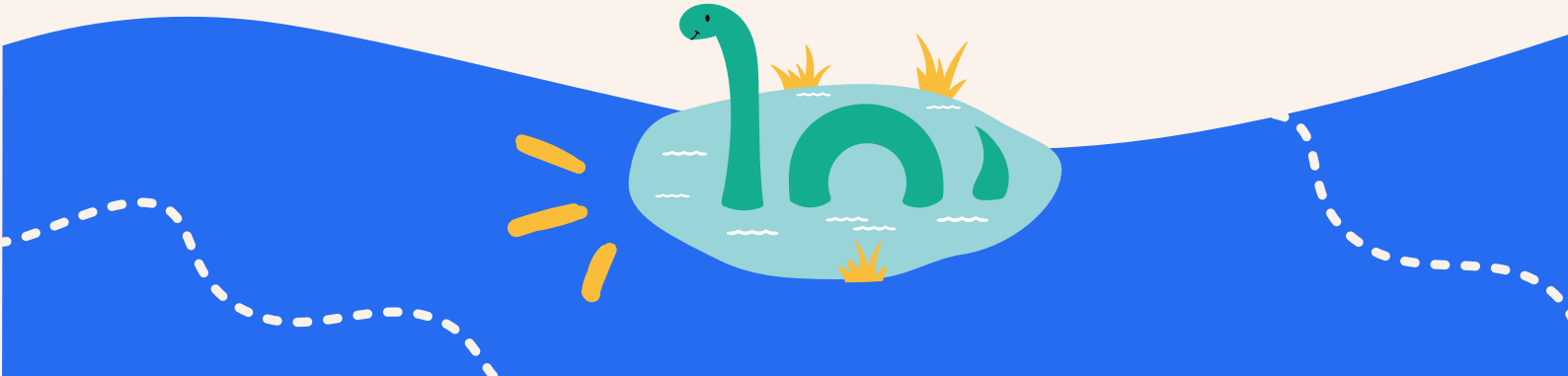
- Childminding Week 2024 provided a fantastic platform once again for celebrating and showcasing the fantastic work of childminders to new audiences online. Engagement levels reached a new high as we reached 64,452 people across Facebook and Instagram alone (+117.6% from 2023). We were delighted with the endorsement and support for childminding from parents, stakeholders, local authorities and the partners we work with, showing that recognition is building of the high quality of childcare provided which will help to increase the value attached to childminding.

- Through our partnership work we have successfully engaged a number of new partners and strengthened connections with key stakeholders and influencers. We will continue to advocate for and promote childminders, the value they provide and SCMA's childminding-specific expertise.

Annual Finance Report 2024–2025

Income and Expenditure Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

	2024	2025
Incoming Resources		
Incoming resources from generated funds		
Voluntary Income		
Memberships and Subscriptions	282,158	270,410
Core Funding	430,386	430,386
Activities for Generating Funds		
Project and Service Agreement and Administration	343,694	699,335
Sales of Publications	28,628	26,149
Delivering Training to SCMA Members	123,681	183,425
Investment Income		
Deposit Account Interest	23,508	18,336
Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities		
Project and Service Agreement Funding (excluding fees)	3,163,775	3,842,596
Total Incoming Resources	**4,395,830**	**5,470,637**
Resources Expended		
Cost of Raising Funds	909,520	957,203
Other trading activities	342,770	370,190
Charitable Activities	3,094,915	3,887,745
Total Resources Expended	**4,347,205**	**5,215,138**
Net Incoming / (Outgoing) Resources	48,625	255,499
Total Funds (brought forward)	1,045,456	1,300,955



Key Stats and Figures 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025

- **83%** of childminders in Scotland are SCMA members.
- **562** Helpline calls were received by #TeamSCMA.

SCMA Website

- **135,188** visitors to the SCMA homepage.
- **10,115** people searched for a childminder via our website.
- **60,174** total hits on the Childminder Search profile pages.
- **86,294** visits in total to our new 'Become a Childminder' microsite.

Professional Learning

- Childminders from **all 32 local authorities** accessed a total of **5,542** learning opportunities with us (**all formats**, including e-Learning, Flick Learning, Best Practice Workshops, Information Sessions, Webinars); **+24%** on previous year.
- **2,265 childminders** accessed e-Learning, with funding secured for an additional **8,000** spaces for learning **free at the point of access**.
- **300** joined our Childminding Induction Support Programme
- **209 childminders** attended Interactive CPL courses
- **144 childminders** attended Best Practice Workshops, with almost **170 children**.

NEW for 2024-2025!

- **20** short e-Learning courses provided by our partners Flick Learning, fully funded as a Membership Benefit and accessed **1,735** times by members.
- **Four exclusive new webinars** hosted, attended by **586 members**, with approx. **448 children** joining the daytime Bookbug webinars.
- Added several new topics for CPL courses, e-Learning and Best Practice Workshops.

Social Media

- **Facebook** continued to be our main platform for sharing content with childminders: Impressions: **5.34M** | New Followers: **522 (+4%)** | Interactions: **12,300 (+549.2%)**
- **Instagram 126,000 (+553.8%)** people reached
- **TikTok**: launched in June to support PSCF childminder recruitment activity, our videos were viewed **24,509** times

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Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
We acknowledge the support of the Scottish Government through a CYPFEIF and ALEC Fund Grant

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