

Dear Members,

It's hard to escape the fact that at the time you will be reading this, we'll all have been living with COVID-19 and its restrictions for a full year.

This was something that none of us could have foreseen or imagined, and has had a massive effect on every area of our daily lives – our work, our family, what we can do, where we can go, who we can see and on our individual wellbeing.

COVID-19 has also changed us all, including SCMA. At a personal level, I'm just coming up for two years in post with half of that time worked entirely during the pandemic. While as an organisation we have always been focused on childminding and our members, we're not the same organisation we were ten years ago, five years ago or even a year ago. We're even more committed.

Prior to COVID-19 we had undertaken extensive work to engage members, to strengthen what we do for you and the families you support. We had also looked at the trends in relation to our workforce and the challenges which childminding faced (including long-standing and negative misperceptions about childminding). In response to this we had developed a new, ambitious, and wide-ranging three-year strategy as part of a longer ten-year journey. Then COVID struck.

We paused the plans to implement our new strategy and willingly accepted and embraced our responsibility to prioritise supporting you, our members, during this unprecedented national emergency. Very quickly we enabled all of our staff to work remotely from their homes around the country, on full hours, so that we could do this and work to keep childminding open as long as it has been safe to do so. In doing so, all of our staff around the country have worked tirelessly and have put their hearts and souls into supporting members.

The impact of our activity and influence continues to increase and bear dividends for childminding. The new Action Plan on Childminding, which we advocated the need for, and secured and informed the development of, includes a series of important commitments to childminding underpinned by a vital financial support for childminding businesses.

We had to adapt how we did things, to experiment and innovate. Little could I have foreseen when joining SCMA that I would regularly find myself now sitting in my living room at home, recording a video on my mobile phone, uploading it to YouTube, sharing it online and connecting with you individually in your homes. But I am very happy to do so.

We recognise there has been a massive amount of frequently changing information coming through, we know many of you are exhausted from working longer hours keeping your settings clean and safe and don't have the time or energy to read lengthy documents. So, if we can make your lives that bit easier by trying to make sense of where we are and sharing with you the key information that you need to know, we will continue to do so. This is just one example – our team have all been working creatively, as we've gone virtual, to ensure that we continue our support for you.

During this time our team's response has been phenomenal. On the next page, you will find a feature which provides a snapshot of the activity which we have undertaken and achieved on your behalf during the last 12 months. From informing the COVID-19 operating guidance to ensure it understands the nature of childminding, to successfully using evidence captured from members to challenge policy where measures (existing or proposed) have been harmful to childminding, and to influencing a range of much-needed financial support for childminding.

As you can see, the impact of our activity and influence continues to increase and bear dividends for childminding. Since the beginning of the year the new Action Plan on Childminding which we advocated the need for, and secured and informed the development of, was published. This includes a series of important commitments to childminding underpinned by a vital £3.2 million in financial support to provide stability and support the sustainability of childminding businesses.

Other important commitments are already underway. This includes new research by Ipsos/MORI into the quality within childminding and its outcomes on children and families. This will help to support the promotion of childminding, and will include separate research aimed at creating a more sustainable childminding workforce.

Another exciting development and output from the Action Plan which SCMA has secured – a new £250,000 pilot project to provide Access to Childminding for the parents of school-age children in low-income families. This will initially be available in two areas of Scotland to support their move into employment.

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During the development of the Action Plan, SCMA shared our new strategy and ambitions for childminding to inform this. We are now preparing to formally launch our new strategy and we look forward to sharing this with you in late April and involving you in fundamentally changing how childminding is perceived, in increasing understanding of professional childminding and the value attached to it, and ultimately increasing demand for childminding services.

We know how beneficial childminding can be in supporting children and families and we believe it's time that others do too. We're also committed to creating opportunities which will both support families and create new routes for childminders to develop your businesses as we progress through recovery from COVID-19.

While we still have some way to go, we do believe many more positive things are starting to happen for childminding as a result of our combined efforts and that there continues to be many reasons to be optimistic at this time. We also continue to be very grateful for your on-going support and engagement. **Together we make a great team: #TeamSCMA.**

Stay well,

Graeme
Graeme McAlister
SCMA Chief Executive



ONE YEAR ON...

SCMA Support for Members during COVID-19

Throughout the pandemic, we have successfully provided a national voice at the top level to keep childminding open provided it has been safe to do so – whilst continuing to deliver an extensive range of services and support for our members.

Financial Support for Childminders

ESTABLISHED an emergency hardship fund for childminders by releasing **£30,000** from our own reserves.

The **Childminding Workforce Support Fund** totalled **£420,000** with additional Scottish Government support.

WORKED with Scottish Government and played a major role in **securing a further £3.2 million for childminders** to help maintain business sustainability.

LOBBIED Scottish Government to establish the **Newly Self-Employed Hardship Fund**.

SECURED **£70,000** to establish the **Wellbeing Service** to enable childminders to support vulnerable families during the pandemic.

SECURED **£250,000** to set up our **Access to Childminding** pilot project due to launch in spring 2021.

WORKED intensively with the Scottish Government to secure the continuation of **College Childcare Payments**.

Support with Childminding Practice

SCMA has provided regular and accessible updates for members, via our website, email and social media. Our **dedicated COVID-19 webpage** has received almost 50,000 hits, featuring your FAQs and links to important information.

SCMA has posted 28 **unique video updates** focusing on important practice updates for childminders. Our YouTube channel has had more than 40,000 views since March 2020.

SCMA has continued to operate our **Helpline**, whilst all staff have been working remotely from home. Since March last year, **#TeamSCMA** has taken more than 10,000 calls.

SCMA has continued to champion on-going professional learning, with our Learn with SCMA adapting to provide virtual interactive training courses. We have offered a range of reduced and **free Continuing Professional Learning (CPL) opportunities** throughout the year for members.

I feel I am very lucky at this time to have SCMA membership and I'm very glad for the updates and clear advice. Graeme's videos are so helpful! I really appreciate the personal feedback – I messaged SCMA one Friday evening and received a reply straight away, which helped ease my mind.

SCMA member

Influencing National Policy

SCMA has conducted **regular essential research**; gathering evidence to press the urgent need for COVID-19 funding and to help support critical childcare placements.

Secured **national media coverage** to help raise the profile of childminding in Scotland, ensuring the concerns of the workforce were raised in the Scottish Parliament.

Worked alongside the Scottish Government and Public Health Officials to provide a **voice for childminding**, and we have been instrumental in the development of specific **Childminder Services Guidance** to ensure it is proportionate to the unique nature of childminding settings.

Secured a commitment from Scottish Government to develop a **Childminding Action Plan**; including a commitment to research to strengthen the workforce and remove barriers and increase inclusion of childminding services in funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).

Worked extensively to **maintain blended placements** and support the continuation of blended care throughout COVID-19.

SCMA is always providing us with good information. The regular updates are helping to ensure we are always up-to-date with public health guidance as we go through all of the phases of lockdown. I don't feel so much of a lone worker.

SCMA member



We saw a **443%** increase in the number of enquiries from members when compared to a typical two-week period pre-covid.

More than **40,000** YouTube channel views since March 2020

When we step back and consider what has been achieved to help support our members through this time, I feel very proud of the SCMA team. One of our central roles is to work with others to help influence policy and decision making based on the real experiences of the childminding workforce.

We are particularly pleased that our continued efforts throughout the pandemic, along-side the many childminders who contacted Ministers and their MSPs, resulted in helping to secure further funding for childminding.

Graeme McAlister, Chief Executive, SCMA