



Scottish Childminding Association

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## Top 5 Priorities for Childminding

Scottish Parliament Elections 2026

April 2026



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A number of political parties have sought SCMA's input into their manifesto development for the Scottish Parliamentary Election in May 2026. Instead of publishing our own manifesto, SCMA is publishing our **Top 5 Priorities for Childminding** which we have been feeding into these discussions and sharing more widely:

- 1.** **Childminding is at a tipping point, in which significant progress is being made in reversing the decline in the childminding workforce and there is a critical need to extend the three-year Programme for Scotland's Childminding Future (2024-27) on childminder retention and recruitment to maintain and increase childminding places for families and communities by:**
  - extending Funded Time Off the Floor and peer-to-peer mentoring to the whole childminding workforce.
  - continuing SCMA's delivery of our demographically targeted and supported model of childminder recruitment around Scotland.
- 2.** **Childminding needs to be valued and recognised as a unique, high-quality form of registered childcare (spanning pre-school and school-age), family support and as a community asset, with proportionate childminding-specific quality-assurance (joined-up nationally and locally to prevent duplication).**
- 3.** **There is a need to work collectively to increase the level of pay for all childminders to support their business sustainability, retention and recruitment, the provision of childcare for families and the delivery of a range of national policies;** subsidy is also required in remote and island areas where there is a need for childcare, but not enough demand to support business sustainability.
- 4.** **After-school childcare shouldn't be an after-thought: the funded entitlement for two to four year-olds (and focus on statutory provision) has dominated the childcare policy landscape since 2016 to the detriment of providing childcare for other ages.** While this is an important age for children's learning and development, working parents/carers have childcare needs from 0-12 years and beyond traditional nursery opening hours to enable them to work which childminders are very well-placed to support - contributing to child poverty reduction; equitable attention must be given to providing flexible all-age childcare for 0-12 years and maintaining parental choice over which form of childcare they believe is best to meet the needs of their families.
- 5.** **The need continues to increase the number of childminders delivering funded ELC to increase uptake of the statutory entitlement, particularly for 'eligible two year-olds' (low-income/vulnerable families) and to support parental choice and childminders' business sustainability;** complex procurement exercises should be discontinued in favour of streamlined open application (building on the good practice which exists in some areas) accompanied by regular monthly payments to childminders to support their business sustainability.

*Further detail regarding the rationale and evidence underpinning the above can be provided.*

## Background

Childminding is a unique, high-quality, home-based, nurturing and flexible form of registered childcare spanning pre-school and school-age childcare (for 0-12/16 years) and family support, which provides a range of additional benefits for children and families.

Childminders are also a community asset, living and working within their local community, and play a vital role in contributing to community and economic development and child poverty reduction in our urban, rural and island communities. They provide much-needed childminding spaces for children, which enables parents/carers to work.

Many childminders found it difficult to sustain their businesses and felt squeezed out during local implementation of the expansion of the statutory entitlement of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), followed by the COVID-19 pandemic (despite which childminders stayed open more than any other form of childcare to support the national response) and then the cost-of-living crisis.

### **The childminding workforce has declined by 45% with the loss of 15,643 childminding places for children and families since 2016.**

SCMA has been leading nationally, in partnership with others, on piloting a range of vital work to reverse this decline. This has resulted in an improvement in childminder retention and recruitment, maintaining existing and creating much-needed additional new childminding businesses and places for children and families in communities around Scotland.

**This work must continue...**

## About Us | Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA)

SCMA is the only organisation in Scotland dedicated to supporting all aspects of childminding. We provide a diverse range of childminding-specific support and professional services for our members and the wider childminding community.

Crucially, we provide a voice for professional childminding in Scotland. By working in partnership with the Scottish Government, local authorities and others, we help influence the development and implementation of policy and standards to ensure they are well informed by the experiences of professional childminders in Scotland.

We are a membership organisation and service provider with charitable status.

SCMA wears a lot of different hats; but we have one purpose - to support registered childminders in Scotland to provide the best service they can for children and their families.

Find out more about SCMA at [childminding.org](https://childminding.org).



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