



Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Childcare Strategy for Scotland

A Framework and Consultation Document

*Presented to Parliament by
The Secretary of State for Scotland
by Command of Her Majesty, May 1998*

Cm 3958

7.10

published by The Stationery Office
as ISBN 010 139582 5

Contents

Foreword by the Prime Minister

Introduction by the Secretary of State for Scotland

Executive Summary

1. The Need for a Scottish Childcare Strategy
 2. Raising the Quality of Care
 3. Improving the Affordability of Childcare
 4. Improving the Accessibility of Childcare
 5. Delivering the Strategy
 6. Follow up to the Green Paper and next steps
-
-

Foreword by the Prime Minister

This Government was elected to build a modern Britain and a fair and decent society. Families are the core of our society, but they are under pressure. Women and men struggle with choices over work and family responsibilities, whether to stay at home with their children full-time or balance home responsibilities with work. The Government is pledged to support families and children. But we must do so in new ways which reflect the new challenges which they face.

We want to encourage more family friendly employment so that parents can spend more time with their children. That is why we will implement the Parental Leave Directive, giving parents the right to three months unpaid leave after the birth or adoption of a child.

We also want to ensure that families have access to good quality childcare. This matters to us all. To children who thrive under good quality childcare. To parents - especially mothers - who face the strain of juggling work with raising children: many are unable to take up job, education or training opportunities as a result. To businesses, who suffer when skilled and talented people are unable to take up work.

Childcare has been neglected for too long. There are dedicated childcare providers doing excellent work right across the country, from friends and family providing informal care through to childminders, playgroups and nurseries. But the quality of care can be variable, there are not enough childcare places, and ordinary working parents often cannot afford to take them up. Parents are rightly concerned about standards, qualifications and inspection regimes. Often they cannot easily find out about what childcare is available quickly enough to take up a job or training.

That is why the Government is determined to act. And it is why we have made this the first plank of our welfare reform programme set out in the Green Paper on Welfare Reform, *New Ambitions for Our Country: A New Contract for Welfare*.

This Government has already done a tremendous amount. To improve provision, we are making available 30 million extra in Scotland - 25 million from the Lottery to set up new out of school childcare places. From this winter every four year old will have the guarantee of a free part-time pre-school education place.

On affordability, we have introduced extra help with childcare costs by raising childcare benefit by 2.50 a week, increasing the help given in Family Credit to meet childcare costs of working families, and drawn up plans for a new childcare tax credit, part of the new Working Families Tax Credit which will replace Family Credit next year. This childcare tax credit will pay up to 70 a week for a family with one child and up to 105 a week for a family with two children to help with childcare costs.

Each of these initiatives has been warmly welcomed. People immediately see the difference they will make to them and to their children.

But now is the time to bring all these threads together into a single strategy - a Childcare Strategy for Scotland. For the first time, a government is looking at childcare in the round. What works well at present, and what does not. What kind of provision we want for the future, and how this will expand the choices for parents and improve the future prospects of our children.

All this will take place within a national framework, but will be run locally to ensure that local needs are met.

Critically, the strategy depends on a whole host of parents to work together. Now is the time to mobilise them.

I believe this is one of the most important - and most exciting - initiatives which this Government is undertaking. We want you - as parents, childcare providers, local authorities and employers - to help make it succeed.

Tony Blair

Tony Blair
May 1998

Introduction by the Secretary of State for Scotland

In our election manifesto we undertook to produce a childcare strategy for Scotland which would match the requirements of a modern labour market and enable parents, especially women, to balance family and working life.... This Green Paper marks a major step forward in meeting that commitment. It makes clear our intention to bring about a step change in the provision of childcare for Scotland.

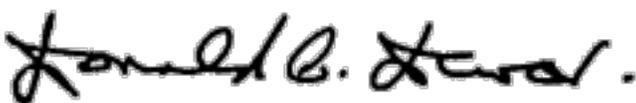
As will be seen from our manifesto commitment we are convinced that this will be in the interests of parents and of the Scottish society and economy as a whole. But above all it must be in the interests of children. Fulfilling another manifesto commitment, Sam Galbraith was appointed on our entry into Government as Minister for Childrens Issues with a special responsibility to monitor all our policies to ensure that they took the needs of children fully into account. I have therefore allocated to him, working closely with other Ministerial colleagues, the job of driving the strategy forward.

This is not a field in which Government has a monopoly of expertise - quite the opposite. For too long childcare has been neglected by Government. We need to work in partnership with others if we are to achieve our vision. To kick-start that partnership approach I will be inviting interested parties in childcare to a summit conference next month to discuss these matters in detail. But we will need a continuing source of advice as we implement the strategy. To secure that I will be appointing a Scottish Childcare Board which will include people from the public, voluntary and private sectors to bring outside expertise to bear upon our strategy. We need that partnership approach at local level too and our document sets out how we intend to achieve that.

We also need to ensure that the childcare strategy ties in with the wide range of our social and economic policies. It should, for example, contribute to promoting social inclusion. It can also support the policies set out in our Green Paper on *Working Together to Improve Scotlands Health* by assisting economic participation by those on low income, improving the safety of the settings where children spend time, and providing opportunities for effective health-linked interventions.

Much of the work of implementing the strategy will take place under the Scottish Parliament. I am certain that childcare will be a major policy priority for the Parliament. Its existence will enhance the scope for us to develop the strategy in Scotland in close dialogue with all the interests concerned. It will also make it easier to take forward the work we have already done to adopt a more holistic approach to childrens issues. We will need to look at ways of stimulating and fostering multi-agency working including such possibilities as the development of full service community schools, already developed in some states of the United States of America, where health, education, after-school care, parenting and family support are addressed together within the local school setting. Under the New Deal for Communities we will be supporting pathfinder projects to pilot New Deal Schools, based on this concept.

This framework and consultation document is not the last word. I very much hope you will let us have your views and suggestions before we turn to finalising the strategys detailed design. With your help and advice we can maximise the huge potential of the strategy to change for the better the lives of very many children and their parents in Scotland, both immediately and for the generations to come.



Donald Dewar

May 1998

Scottish Childcare Strategy

ES1. The Government is committed to supporting families and children. We have already demonstrated that support - raising school standards, increasing child benefit and helping parents back to work through the New Deal - the biggest ever welfare to work investment - and the new Working Families Tax Credit which will substantially raise the incomes of working families. The Scottish Childcare Strategy is a further vital component of our support for families.

ES2. Children are cared for in many ways and almost all children receive a mix of informal care from parents and relatives in the home and more formal care in other settings. Some services, such as parent and toddler groups and family centres, focus on meeting the needs of children with their carers. Others, such as childminders and out of school clubs, focus on meeting the needs of children while their parents are at work. Playgroups and homework clubs provide developmental and educational opportunities for all children, and may at the same time help parents in work with childcare needs. We want to see the full range of families needs being met.

ES3. Many parents prefer grandparents or other relatives to look after their children, but not all can rely on such informal sources of care. As the direction of social change is away from extended families an increasing proportion of parents who want childcare will not be able to use informal care. Government action is needed to fill gaps in the formal sector. This document explains how we will do this and gives examples of how we will support everyone who looks after children.

ES4. The approach taken by previous Governments to the formal childcare sector has been to leave it almost exclusively to the market. And the voluntary sector has been left to provide most of the support there is for parents looking after their own children. But this simply hasn't worked. As a result we now have three key problems:

- **The quality of childcare can be variable.** There is no definition of standards for good quality childcare which is recognised and applied across all childcare settings. There are gaps and inconsistencies in the system of regulation. For example, childminders and nurseries are required to meet staffing ratios but pre-school education classes in schools catering for children of the same age are not. Many childcare workers lack formal qualifications.
- **The cost of care is high.** The Daycare Trust estimates that the typical weekly cost of a full-time childminding place for a child under five years old varies from 50 to 120 and that the cost of a full-time place at a private day nursery for the same child ranges from 70 to 180. This means that a family on average income with two children could pay out as much as one third on childcare.
- **In many areas there are not enough childcare places and parents access to childcare is hampered by poor information about what is available.** Because so many families cannot afford good quality childcare, the development of provision has been sparse. The quality and accuracy of information on childcare availability varies between local authorities. In many areas parents choices are limited by lack of information about what is available.

ES5. It is up to parents to decide what sort of childcare they want for their children. This is not a matter for the Government. But it is the Governments responsibility to ensure that parents have access to services to enable them to make genuine choices. This means good quality affordable childcare for parents who wish to work outside the home, and support for parents who want to spend time looking after their children themselves.

ES6. We have made a good start in helping working parents to spend more time with their children. The European Parental Leave Directive will give parents the right to three months unpaid leave after the birth or adoption of a child and to take time off for urgent family reasons. The Working Time Directive will limit working hours for many people to 48 hours a week. By ensuring equal rights for part-time workers, the Part-time Work Directive will allow parents who wish to reduce their working hours to do so without losing their employment rights. These are a useful foundation for the Governments wider family friendly employment policies.

ES7. The Scottish Childcare Strategy is an important part of these policies. It will deliver good quality, affordable childcare across the country.

ES8. The two tests of success of our approach will be:

- Better outcomes for children, including readiness to learn by the time they reach school and enjoyable, developmental activities out of school hours.
- More parents with the chance to take up work, education or training.

Three Steps to a Scottish Childcare Strategy

Our aim is to provide good quality, affordable childcare for children aged 0 - 14 in every neighbourhood, including both formal childcare and support for informal arrangements by:

- **Raising the quality of care:** our plans include better integration of early education and childcare; a more consistent regulatory regime between education and childcare; new standards for early education and childcare; a new training and qualifications framework for childcare workers; more opportunities to train as childcare workers, including up to 5,000 places in Scotland through the New Deal.
- **Making childcare more affordable and available:** We will be investing 250 million a year in the United Kingdom in a new 'childcare tax credit' for working families - part of the new Working Families Tax Credit. It will give generous help with childcare costs of up to 70 per week for a family with one child and up to 105 per week for a family with two or more children.
- **Making childcare more accessible by increasing places and improving information:** We will be encouraging a diversity of childcare provision to meet parents' preferences. We will increase the number of childcare places through a 30 million investment in Scotland - 25 million of it from the Lottery - over the next five years to develop more places across the country. In addition from winter 1998 every four-year old will have the chance of a free part-time pre-school education place. Our plans include a new helpline in 1999 which will link parents with local childcare information services which meet national standards.

ES9. We depend on the expertise and knowledge of local authorities, childcare providers, parents, the Enterprise Networks and employers to deliver the strategy. We are establishing a Scottish Childcare Board with members from these groups to advise Ministers. At local level, we will set up new childcare partnerships based on existing Early Years Forums which will be charged with planning and co-ordinating integrated early education and childcare. Their remit will be expanded to cover children up to the age of 14.

ES10. We have already made great strides with the strategy:

- **Raising quality:** For pre-school education we have issued HM Inspectorates *Curriculum Framework for Children in the Pre-School Year* to ensure children are exposed to a broad range of stimulating and flexible opportunities for learning.
- **Making childcare more affordable and available:** In advance of the Working Families Tax Credit, we have increased the help with childcare costs for low income working families through Family Credit. We will be providing almost an extra 5 million this year to stimulate childcare provision, help set up local childcare partnerships and develop information services.

ES11. The timetable for follow up action to this Green Paper is:

June 1998	Summit conference on the Green Paper
28 July 1998	Deadline for responses to this document
Winter 1998	Introduction of free part-time pre-school education places for four-year olds
October 1998	Publication of guidance for new childcare partnerships

March 1999

Childcare plans completed and initial funding decisions announced.

April 1999

Funding for childcare from the Lottery's New Opportunities Fund becomes available

October 1999

Introduction of the Working Families Tax Credit incorporating the new childcare tax credit

The Need for a Scottish Childcare Strategy

1.1. This Government is committed to supporting families and children. We have already demonstrated that support - raising school standards, increasing child benefit, helping parents back to work through the New Deal, the biggest ever welfare to work investment. The Scottish Childcare Strategy is another essential component of our support for families and children.

Supporting parents and children

1.2. Children are cared for in many ways and almost all children receive a mix of informal care from parents and relatives in the home and more formal care in other settings. Good parenting is the key to ensuring that children grow up happy and well-prepared for adult life. Parents are the first and often the greatest influence on their childrens development and education. This is true whether they look after their children full-time or combine parenting and paid work.

1.3. Parental care is complimented by a range of other services. Some, such as parent and toddler groups, family centres, one oclock clubs and toy libraries focus on meeting the needs of children with their carers. They provide valuable developmental opportunities for children as well as the chance for parents to share experiences and resources.

1.4. Good parenting is the key to ensuring that children grow up happy and well-prepared for adult life. Parents are the first and often the greatest influence on their childrens development and education. This is true whether they look after their children full-time or mix parenting with paid work.

1.5. Childminders, nurseries and out of school clubs focus on meeting the needs of children while their parents are at work. Playgroups and study support arrangements provide developmental opportunities for all children, and may at the same time help parents in work with childcare needs.

1.6. Parents who choose to work or train want to be assured that their childrens needs will still be met when they are left in the care of others. Evidence shows that good quality childcare provides long-term benefits for the development of all children, of whatever background. Day care and early education are interdependent and closely interlinked. Good quality day care can contribute to young childrens social development. Through early education, learning opportunities are planned and integrated, paying attention to the childs emotional, personal, physical and intellectual development. Children need to be happy and emotionally secure, and to have ample opportunity for constructive play. Older children also need care when their parents are absent, whether in school premises or elsewhere. There is much to be gained from breaking down the traditional institutional divide between education and childcare, and developing seamless provision. Good childcare enhances educational achievement and personal development, for example by offering suitable opportunities to do homework or to enjoy out of school learning activities. It also offers a range of appropriate and stimulating activities for children including creative activities, sport and other developmental, enjoyable play.

1.7. Childrens needs are therefore at the heart of our Strategy, but if the Strategy is to meet the needs of families, it must also take account of wider changes in work and society.

Changing patterns of work

1.8. In the United Kingdom the proportion of mothers in paid employment outside the home has grown, from 52 per cent to 62 per cent in ten years. The change is even more noticeable for mothers of young children. In the last decade the proportion of mothers with children under five who work outside the home has increased from 32 per cent to 51 per cent. This has been matched by other changes: an expansion in the number of women achieving educational qualifications and a slow but clear

convergence of pay levels for women and men in full-time work. The number of women of working age in the workforce in Scotland is projected to rise by 27,000 (against a projected overall decrease in the total workforce of 21,000) by 2006. We welcome women's greater involvement and equality in the workplace and want to ensure that all those women who wish to can take up these new opportunities.

1.9. But we also want to ensure that parents - both mothers and fathers - can achieve a good balance between working and family life. British fathers work longer hours than in most other European countries, which limits the time they can spend with their children. Employed fathers with a child under 10 work an average of 47 hours a week in the United Kingdom compared with 41 in the Netherlands. A lot of parents - especially mothers - prefer to work part-time while their children are young.

1.10. We have made a good start in helping working parents to spend more time with their children. The European Parental Leave Directive will give parents the right to three months unpaid leave after the birth or adoption of a child and to take time off for urgent family reasons. The Working Time Directive will limit working hours for many people to 48 hours a week. By ensuring equal treatment for part-time workers, the Part-time Work Directive will allow those who wish to reduce their working hours to do so without loss of employment rights.

Changing family patterns

1.11. Many parents prefer their partner, a grandparent or another relative to look after their children. Only a third of mothers with children under the age of five use professional or registered childcare now, and over half of all working mothers rely on informal care, usually from their partner, for at least some part of their working day.

1.12. But not all parents can rely on such informal sources of care. Relatives may live a long way away or be in paid employment themselves. In most lone parent families, domestic and childcare responsibilities are carried largely by mothers alone. Without formal childcare, such parents find it hard to enter the labour market or to train to improve their chances of finding work. In Italy, France and Sweden around 70 per cent of lone mothers are in employment, nearly double the level in Scotland.

The failings of past approaches to childcare

1.13. The approach taken by previous Governments to the formal childcare sector has been to leave it almost exclusively to the market. But this has failed to meet the needs of vast numbers of children and parents as society has changed. The voluntary sector has been left to fill gaps in support for parents caring for their own children and informal carers. As a result we are all losing out - children, parents, employers and society as a whole. Childcare in Scotland today has three key problems:

- **quality is variable;**
- **the cost is high and out of the reach of many parents; and**
- **childcare is not readily accessible in many communities.**

Quality is variable

1.14. Quality assurance of formal childcare is at present focused on regulation under the Children Act 1989 of childcare places for children under the age of eight. This assures minimum standards in terms of fitness of carers, their qualifications, adult:child ratios and the physical environment. Guidance describes the quality of experience which children should experience in registered childcare, but how this is applied depends on local interpretation. Excellent quality assurance and enhancement programmes have been designed by voluntary bodies, and individual local authorities and others but they are not available to or used by all childcare providers.

1.15. There are also anomalies in the current regulation arrangements. The nature of the inspection and regulation regime varies according to the nature of the provider rather than the needs of children. For example, minimum staffing ratios are enforced for playgroups, childminders and nurseries but not for pre-school education classes in schools catering for children

of the same age. Some providers are subject to more than one form of regulation. Children Act standards have not always been applied consistently.

1.16. Many older children are indirectly protected by the Children Act requirements because they use childcare which is registered and inspected for younger children. Nonetheless, at present anyone can offer to look after children of eight and over. Parents understand that informal arrangements, for example with babysitters, are not regulated and make their judgements about care for their children in this light. They may not appreciate, however, that group care for older children can be totally unregulated and may not therefore always make appropriate enquiries before choosing this provision for their children.

1.17. As childcare provision has grown in recent years, not all local authorities have increased their registration activities in line with this growth, resulting in long delays in registering new childcare providers in some areas. The introduction of our childcare strategy will lead to a large increase in the number of childcare places and it is imperative that in this process the safety of children is assured.

1.18. One of the most important ways in which we can ensure quality in childcare is through the expertise, skills and qualifications of those who work in the childcare and playwork sector. Many existing childcare staff and playworkers are unqualified. As childcare grows an enormous increase in the supply of competent individuals will be needed. Working with children of all ages can be a challenging and satisfying job, requiring a wide range of skills. However, in the eyes of many, this sector still has the image of a low status, low pay occupation which anyone can do. These perceptions can make it difficult to recruit people of the right calibre to the profession and to retain them.

1.19. It can be hard for workers in the sector to add to their skills, progress in their careers, work with children of different ages or move freely from one employer to another. There are a large number of disparate qualifications which do not relate clearly to each other. Qualifications demanded by one employer may not be recognised by another. It can be hard for volunteers or the self-employed to find the time for training or to meet its cost. Those working on their own (e.g., childminders, nannies) may need support and encouragement in working towards a qualification.

The cost of care is high

1.20. Good quality childcare does not come cheap. The Daycare Trust estimates that the typical weekly cost of a full-time childminding place for a child under five years old varies from 50 to 120 and that the cost of a full-time place at a private day nursery for the same child ranges from 70 to 180. Even when a child starts school and no longer needs full-time childcare, parents are faced with typical costs of 15 to 30 a week for an after school club and 50 to 80 a week for a holiday playscheme. This means that a family on average income with two children could pay out as much as one third on childcare.

1.21. For families on low or moderate incomes, especially lone parent families dependent on one income, the cost of childcare can be so high that they cannot afford to work. Others have to use a substantial proportion of their disposable family income on childcare.

1.22. The previous Government attempted to make childcare more affordable for low income working families by introducing a childcare disregard in family credit and other benefits. There are flaws in the disregard, which severely restricts its scope and its effectiveness as a means of providing childcare support. Not only is it complex to understand and to administer, but help to poor families is limited. As a result, only 32,000 families in the United Kingdom receive extra benefit through the disregard, around a fifth of the original intention.

1.23. Many parents, especially lone parents who on average have low levels of qualifications, need training or education to improve their employability. Lack of affordable childcare can be a barrier for them too.

Childcare is not readily accessible

1.24. There is a shortage of childcare places in Scotland and parents access to those places can be hampered by poor information about what is available. Overall there are just over one million children aged under sixteen in Scotland, of whom just over 300,000 are under five. There is currently (provisional November 1996 statistics) estimated to be around 300 formal childcare places for every 1,000 children under five in Scotland (not all of which will be full-time). Data for children of

school age are more patchy but in general there is less childcare provision. For example, it is estimated that only one in forty primary school children have access to out of school clubs. We also know that there is a wide variation in the local availability of provision.

1.25. There is clear evidence of unmet demand for childcare. Four out of five non-working mothers say they would work if they had the childcare of their choice and one in seven mothers who do not have a job but want one see childcare as a barrier in finding work.

1.26. Not only is there an overall shortage of places, but childrens and families particular needs may not be met. Parents of children with special educational needs or disabilities have difficulty finding appropriate care and so do parents with unusual working hours.

1.27. Childcare is of no use to parents unless they know it is there and they have the knowledge and information to make the right choice for their children. At present a range of voluntary sector and other organisations provide information about their own areas of interest and expertise. Parents may have to go to a range of sources to collect all the information they need. Local authorities have a legal duty to provide information on childcare but the scope of the requirement is not specified in detail. As a result the extent and quality of local information varies widely. Information often takes the form of paper records which rapidly become out of date. While some authorities offer excellent services others fall well short of what will be needed under the Scottish Childcare Strategy.

A new approach to childcare

1.28. It is up to parents to decide what sort of childcare they want for their children. This is not a matter for the Government. But it is the Governments responsibility to ensure that parents have access to services to enable them to make genuine choices. The Scottish Childcare Strategy will deliver this by dealing with the problems we have identified. Our aim is to ensure quality affordable childcare for children aged 0 to 14 in every neighbourhood, including both formal childcare and support for informal arrangements.

1.29. The Strategy will be founded on the five principles of quality; affordability; diversity; accessibility; and partnership.

1.30. We depend on the expertise and knowledge of local authorities, childcare providers, parents, local enterprise companies and employers to deliver the strategy. We will set up new childcare partnerships based on existing Early Years Forums. Their remit will be expanded to cover childcare for 0 to 14 year olds.

1.31. The following chapters set out our three steps to a Scottish Childcare Strategy and how they will be delivered. Chapter Two sets out our plans to raise quality. Chapter Three explains how we will make childcare more affordable. Our plans for making childcare more accessible are given in Chapter Four, and Chapter Five explains our approach to working in partnership. The timetable for action after the Green Paper is given in Chapter Six.

1.32. The two tests of success of our approach will be:

- better outcomes for children, including readiness to learn by the time they reach school and enjoyable, developmental activities out of school hours;
- more parents with the chance to take up work, education or training.

1.33. Above all, we want to engage all those concerned with childcare - childcare providers, local authorities, Local Enterprise Companies, employers, voluntary bodies as well as parents themselves in shaping and delivering the Strategy. We want your views on the detail of the proposals set out in the succeeding chapters. Together, we can deliver the childcare that we need and which our children deserve.

Raising the Quality of Care

Introduction

We want to ensure that all childcare is of good quality, so that it meets the needs of children and parents, and parents can have confidence in it. We aim to increase very substantially the number of skilled, qualified people working in childcare.

To achieve this, we are:

- improving **regulation**, including work on developing a better system for day care and early education inspection.
 - encouraging the adoption of **quality assurance** arrangements, including integrating childcare and learning where appropriate.
 - establishing an **Early Excellence in Practice** initiative to demonstrate the highest standards in early education and childcare provision and disseminating **good practice**.
 - boosting the **recruitment and supply** of competent people to work with children, in particular by raising the standards, status and attractiveness of childcare and playwork as an occupation
 - **setting standards** in the training, skills and qualifications of childcare and playwork staff and establishing a clear, comprehensive **qualifications and careers structure**
-

The importance of quality

2.1. We are committed to good quality in childcare. The strategy is not just about providing safe places for children to wait until their parents come to collect them. Children, especially the youngest ones, need the emotional security of warm, loving carers who take a close and consistent interest in their happiness and well-being. Good quality childcare must promote childrens development by offering them a range of worthwhile activities, including ample opportunities for creative and sporting activities and play. There is evidence that good quality day care in the earliest years has long term benefits for childrens social and intellectual development. For children from disadvantaged backgrounds, the benefits are particularly strong. For school age children, facilities must offer the same degree of support for learning - for example, quiet places for homework - as parents would themselves want to offer at home. And for the older children, supervised activities must be more attractive than an empty home or the street corner. If it is not, they will vote with their feet and stay away.

2.2. Quality matters to parents too. Parents who prefer to look after their own children for most of the time still want them to have access to a good range of additional development opportunities, for example in playgroups, family centres or out of school study arrangements. And those parents who want to work or train will leave their children only if they are satisfied that they will be well cared for by others. Deciding who should look after their children is a major and very personal decision for parents. They are likely to look first for someone who is kind and trustworthy, but they also want to be reassured that the carer is competent.

Regulation and inspection

2.3. Quality assurance of formal childcare is at present focused on regulation (registration, inspection, investigation and enforcement) under the Children Act 1989, of childcare places for children under the age of eight. As young children are particularly vulnerable, it is essential that they should be protected by a rigorous system which assures certain minimum

standards in terms of the fitness of carers, their qualifications, adult:child ratios and the physical environment in which care takes place. Our intention is to reaffirm that protection.

2.4. The concern for protecting children's welfare does not, of course, stop when they reach the age of eight. In practice many older children are indirectly protected by the Children Act requirements because they use childcare which is registered and inspected for younger children. Whatever the age of their child and the type of care used, parents have responsibilities to ask questions about the childcare provider and satisfy themselves that the care is of good quality.

2.5. We believe that a more integrated and consistent system of regulation for early education and day care would bring benefits, especially in those settings where the same provider offers both services. As set out in the earlier consultation paper *Education in Early Childhood: the Pre-school Years* the Department has already undertaken some technical work in comparing the standards laid upon childcare providers under the Schools Code 1956 and the Children Act 1989. That consultation paper sought preliminary views on whether a more integrated and harmonised system of standards and regulation would be desirable. We are now taking stock of the detailed responses and hope to issue a further consultation paper on this later in the year.

2.6. The introduction of our childcare strategy will lead to a large increase in the number of childcare places and it is imperative that in this process the safety of children is assured. We recognise that this has implications for the volume of regulation and inspection activity which will be needed. We do not want regulations to be any more burdensome than is genuinely necessary, but we cannot take risks with the safety of children.

Quality Assurance

2.7. Improvements in the quality of childcare are supported in a range of ways. Childcare should be stimulating, varied and meet the needs of the child. Some local authorities offer extensive support to childcare providers including training, advice and libraries of resources. A number of bodies, such as the Scottish Independent Nurseries Association, the Scottish Pre-school Play Association and the Scottish Out of School Care Network, have or are developing quality assurance systems for their members to use.

2.8. We want to ensure that childcare in all settings offers a good quality experience for the children attending, including: opportunities for free play; co-operation and good communication with parents, schools and other relevant services; close attention to children's individual needs and development; and an emphasis on continual quality improvement. For children with special educational needs or disabilities, there should be opportunities to participate in activities with their peers. Good quality childcare offers children a variety of well-planned activities which are appropriate for the ages and abilities of the children. We will encourage proper arrangements for quality assurance in different settings and encourage new provision to build this in from day one.

Scottish Independent Nurseries Association

The Scottish Independent Nurseries Association has developed a very comprehensive quality assurance scheme for its members. It covers the whole range of key areas important to running a nursery such as the learning environment and social experience offered to children, management, staffing and accommodation. Particular emphasis is placed on partnership with parents, the local authority and others.

Childcare and Learning

2.9. Scottish Office guidance under the Children Act 1989 advises on standards necessary to provide safe and good quality day care services for children under eight. The main standards relate to staffing and accommodation but the guidance also describes the quality of experience which children should receive in registered day care. For pre-school education, there are educational input and output standards, the latter expressed through HM Inspectors *Performance Indicators and Self-Evaluation for Pre-School Centres*, published in 1995, and also the *Curriculum Framework for Children in their Pre-School Year*, published after wide consultation in September 1997. Centres are encouraged to evaluate their own performance through these output quality standards which are also tested and publicly reported on through HM Inspectors' inspections of pre-school centres. There is now a need to explore in more detail the output quality standards for day care and early education, to reflect the interdependence of these services for young children. We need to do so in a way that will help the pre-school centres benchmark their own performance, and help practitioners recognise and promote characteristics of quality

provision. Many of the responses to the recent consultation on pre-school education called for such a guide. As a priority therefore we intend to develop, in consultation with providers, a guide to quality standards at the pre-school stage, which will follow the approach taken in the HM Inspectors publication *How Good is Our School?* The proposed guide will cover both the day care and educational aspects of services within pre-school centres catering for all children, including children in need. It will also help to set a clearer context both for the alignment of standards and for reviewing training and qualifications.

2.10. As part of our drive to improve standards of education for all pupils, we are considering how to improve support for parents of children with special educational needs. Our Discussion Paper, *Special Educational Needs in Scotland*, confirmed our view that parents should be treated as partners in the educational process.

2.11. We also want to ensure that our wider programme of out of school learning activities is available to children using childcare facilities. Close links between providers of study support and childcare can enhance the quality of both and ensure that those who go to childcare after school have the opportunity to take in study support. In some cases, schools and childcare providers work together to provide an integrated scheme offering both study support for all pupils and childcare for those who need it.

2.12. We will make funding available from the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) between 1999 and 2003 specifically for the development of integrated out of school childcare and study support schemes in Scotland.

2.13. We have already:

- issued HM Inspectors *Performance Indicators and Self-Evaluation for Pre-School Centres and A Curriculum Framework for Children in their Pre-School Year*.

2.14. We will:

- ask the New Opportunities Fund to ensure that all childcare projects supported through Lottery funding meet minimum quality standards;
- ask local childcare partnerships to include a strategy for quality enhancement and support for childcare providers, including informal carers, in their plans;
- develop in consultation with providers a guide to quality standards at the pre-school stage which will follow the approach taken in HM Inspectors publication *How Good is our School?*

Early Excellence in Practice

2.15. Our consultation paper *Education in Early Childhood: the Pre-school Years* raised the issue of how best to promote excellence in the provision and, particularly, integration of early years services. The possibility of an excellence in practice initiative was considered and this has provoked a very favourable response from a range of consultees. We will therefore consider further how best to take this forward.

Disseminating Good Practice

2.16. The opportunity to share experience and learn from others has an important role in helping to raise quality. We want to ensure that a strategy for promoting good practice is included as we develop new policy approaches. This will be a key feature of our Early Excellence in Practice Initiative.

2.17. We will

- ensure that a strategy for disseminating good practice is included in new policy initiatives.

Setting standards for those who work with children: why action on skills and qualifications is important

2.18. People who work with children need a range of skills: to keep children safe and healthy; to provide stimulating

activities matched to the children's needs and capacities; to maintain good relationships with parents; and to run their own business successfully. Training and support, both for those intending to work with children and for those already doing so, helps to ensure the necessary competences, and achieving qualifications gives individuals recognition for their skills and knowledge and demonstrates to employers and parents their competence to look after children.

2.19. A comprehensive and flexible framework of training and qualifications, recognised by employers, would enable workers in the sector to add to their skills, progress in their careers or to work with children of different ages, and to move freely from one employer to another. Such a framework is not yet in place for early education, childcare or playwork and there are other barriers to overcome in helping people to access training and development and progress their careers.

Boosting supply and recruitment of suitable staff

2.20. We want to improve the overall image of the childcare and playwork sector as an attractive occupation and career: the sector has much to offer to the right people. An early task under the childcare strategy will be to provide better information to a wider range of people on what it is like to work with children and to draw attention to the many positive points as well as the more demanding and routine aspects.

2.21. We are already supporting recruitment and training by:

- providing up to 5,000 opportunities in Scotland to train to work with children for suitable unemployed young people through the New Deal. The Scottish Office has issued guidance on this and is liaising with relevant bodies;
- providing funding to Further Education Colleges to run a wide range of childcare courses to meet the needs of childcare workers;
- funding childcare training through the Urban Programme.

2.22. Parents are a key potential source of childcare and play workers. Parents should be encouraged to recognise that the parenting skills which are acquired as they bring up their own children can stand them in good stead to take up training for childcare workers. The childcare strategy will provide parents with access to advice, guidance and support to help them care successfully for their own children and help them to build on their parenting skills so, if appropriate, they can take up employment looking after other children.

2.23. Many parents first become involved in childcare as volunteers in activities with their own children, perhaps helping with the local playgroup and then moving on to help in school or with after-school clubs as their children get older. After a period of training, supervised experience and confidence building, this can lead to employment opportunities, full or part time, in childcare. Under the strategy, we want to see this route into work in the childcare sector encouraged and developed. This can be particularly appropriate for groups of lone parents wishing to enter the labour market, through sharing childcare responsibilities amongst themselves and increasing opportunities to take up part time work.

2.24. Through the childcare strategy, we will ensure that there is more accessible information for parents on the opportunities available to them to work in childcare, including experience, training and qualifications to get them on the first rung of the career ladder.

2.25. Working with children tends to be seen as a predominantly female occupation. Yet male carers have much to offer, including acting as positive role models for boys - especially from families where there is no father present. The strategy will also encourage the recruitment of care workers from ethnic minorities, to reflect to all children the nature of our society. Provision should reflect the cultural and language backgrounds of all children.

2.26. Recruiting the right people to work with children also involves making sure employers have sound recruitment and employment practices, as well as good supervision procedures. Police checks have an important part to play in assessing the suitability of employees to work with children and must be carried out within reasonable timescales. Under the strategy, more information will be available to parents on the standards required of those working in formal childcare. Consideration will be given to whether there should be registration arrangements for agencies providing live-in nannies and other nanny services.

2.27. The introduction of the minimum wage should help to improve pay rates in the childcare sector. It will also, together

with the measures taken by the Government on affordability more generally, put more parents in a position to pay for childcare. Better pay and a better defined progression route for childcare workers, in conjunction with greater information for parents on the skills possessed by childcare workers, will taken together help to raise the standards, status and attractiveness of childcare as an occupation.

2.28. We will work with the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the National Training Organisations, local authorities and others to improve the following:

- careers advice and information on training and qualifications for those wanting to work in the sector and those wanting to progress within it;
- information for parents on what to expect of a childcarer, the selection and training they will have gone through and the nature of qualifications they hold;
- opportunities for parents to develop their own parenting skills and move into work in the childcare sector;
- information for employers of childcare workers so they understand the qualifications structure, refer to it when selecting staff, and appreciate more generally the business benefits of having staff trained in childcare.

A qualifications and careers structure

2.29. Deciding which training and qualifications are suitable for different jobs and career paths in the sector can be confusing. The sector is fragmented with different types of work (early years, playwork, and other related areas such as social care and youthwork) and many training courses and qualifications. There seems to be little consistency among childcare employers on the qualifications they require or recognise for childcare workers doing similar types of work which can be particularly problematic for childcare workers moving to a new area. There are only a few higher level qualifications in the profession, which include a professional development award offered by a consortium led by Aberdeen College, which is certified by the Scottish Qualifications Authority and can be thought of as broadly equivalent to an SVQ Level 4. In addition, Northern College and Strathclyde University have launched BA degrees in Early Childhood Studies. Similarly, developing a career by working with children of different ages at present often requires several qualifications.

2.30. Childcare workers may also want to develop a career by moving into other related areas of work, such as assisting in the classroom, teaching or nursing and find that recognised routes to the relevant professional qualifications are needed. Others choose to establish their own childcare businesses, and look for management and business skills training.

2.31. Our consultation paper *Education in Early Childhood: the Pre-school Years* pointed to the plethora of qualifications available in the early years sector. We wish to establish a clear, comprehensive framework of qualifications across the whole early years and childcare sector, agreed and accepted by employers and childcare workers. The framework will map out the equivalences between the various forms of training, qualifications and progression routes. Within the framework there will need to be training on entry to the profession, ongoing skills training, support for working towards qualifications, and continuous development to keep skills updated and to enable progression to higher levels and into different areas of work. Training should also be available for those working with children who have special needs. We will develop a climbing frame to help people enter, move within and progress up the sector, as well as to move to other related occupations.

2.32. Some young people enter the sector through full time training at college, or gain work experience and an SVQ Level 2 through the Skillseekers programme and can progress to a Level 3 Skillseekers Modern Apprenticeship in Childcare and Education. They can also complete a two year nursery nurses training at Higher National Certificate Level.

2.33. Most workers enter when they are older, with valuable experience of looking after their own children. But they can miss out on training and support to work towards qualifications if they are ineligible for main Government training programmes or cannot access other training funded by Local Enterprise Companies, voluntary sector organisations and local authorities.

2.34. When parents work towards SVQ qualifications, there is scope to assess their experience of parenting and related skills towards the accreditation of their competence. We will ask the Scottish Qualifications Authority to examine how this might best be done for childcare and playwork qualifications.

2.35. There are a growing number of courses offered by organisations, such as the Scottish Pre-School Play Association, which provide the first steps to gaining vocationally oriented qualifications. These can be delivered in flexible ways to fit in around the needs of parents, volunteers and workers, for example through open learning materials, holding courses in the evening or at weekends and in convenient places such as village halls, and giving local tutor support.

The Scottish Childminding Association

The Scottish Childminding Association has developed an Open Learning Preparation Training Pack. It is specially designed for prospective childminders to give them an insight into, and basic knowledge of, the role, responsibilities and skills of a childminder. It helps participants to embark successfully on a childminding career or, indeed, to help them decide that such a career is not for them after all.

2.36. Our Lifelong Learning Paper will underpin our strategy for further developments. We are looking at how individual learning accounts can offer support for people wanting to train in childcare or playwork. We will also explore how they can help fund childcare costs while in training. The Learning Direct helpline will offer information on what training and childcare is available.

2.37. We will:

- support the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the emerging network of National Training Organisations in developing the climbing frame of training and qualifications. They will map existing training, qualifications and the various childcare-related occupations, and prepare a draft training, qualification and occupation framework by September 1998 for consultation across the sector by January 1999. This will be followed by an information campaign to establish the climbing frame and raise the profile of the profession;
- ask the new local childcare partnerships to audit training needs and provision in their area and to ensure that there is access to the training which is needed;
- work up in detail how childcare training needs can be met through individual learning accounts.

Support for parents and informal carers

2.38. Support for good parenting ought to start early, by example from parents who are the first teachers of parenting for their children, and through effective education in school and elsewhere on the implications of parenthood. For adults, parenting education can be effective in improving parenting skills and helping to build strong families. There are many good parenting classes, but they are not always accessible or attractive for some of the parents who are in greatest need of help. We are currently undertaking research to gauge the extent of provision for developing parenting skills in Scotland.

2.39. Parents, informal carers and children can also benefit greatly from the opportunity to come together to share experience. Parent and toddler groups, playgroups, one o'clock clubs and toy libraries, for example, provide valuable developmental opportunities for children and the chance for parents and carers to develop their own capabilities and resources.

2.40. As part of our drive to improve standards of education for all pupils, we are considering how to improve support for parents of children with Special Educational Needs. Our Discussion Paper, Special Educational Needs in Scotland, set out our view that parents should be treated as partners in the educational process.

2.41. We have already allocated funding to support the activities in Scotland of Home-Start UK, a charitable trust which provides training, information, guidance and support to local Home-Start schemes. Home-Start volunteers offer support, friendship and practical help to young families under stress in their own homes, helping to prevent family crisis and breakdown.

Consultation point 1

Should there be a single national recognition scheme for childcare arrangements which meet certain specified standards?

Consultation point 2

Has this Chapter covered all the main ways in which the supply and recruitment of childcare workers can be increased?

Consultation point 3

What action is needed to gain acceptance and use of a coherent training and qualifications structure?

Consultation point 4

How can we assist in strengthening the quality of care provided through the informal sector?

Improving the Affordability of Childcare

Introduction

We want to ensure that good quality childcare is affordable for those who need it. We will be:

- **supporting families with children** through the announced increases in Child Benefit
- **helping working families through the tax and benefits system**, in particular through investing some 25 million a year in Scotland in a new childcare tax credit for working families as part of the new Working Families Tax Credit. From October 1999 this will provide help with childcare costs for low and middle income families. In the meantime help available through the childcare disregard in Family Credit will be increased.
- helping **parents in education and training**, in particular through: doubling the Access Funds in further and higher education to a total of 8.6 million in 1998/99; exploring how the new individual learning accounts can be used to support childcare costs; and help with childcare costs under the New Deal.

3.1. Different families pay widely varying amounts for childcare depending on the type of care they need and what they can afford. For some, especially lone parents who have to rely on a single income, the cost of childcare can be so high that they cannot afford to work. For many other families childcare costs use up a sizeable proportion of disposable family income. We want to open up choices for families on modest incomes.

Support for families with children

3.2. We are determined to tackle the scourge of child poverty. The increases in Child Benefit announced in the Budget will give all families more money to spend on their childrens well-being. The Working Families Tax Credit will mean a better and a fairer deal for around 1.5 million working families with children, including support for childcare costs.

Help for working families through the tax and benefits system

3.3. The previous Government attempted to make childcare more affordable for low income working families by introducing a childcare disregard in family credit and other in-work benefits. This allows an element of earnings to be ignored when in-work benefits are being assessed. We will increase the disregard from 60 to 100 (for families with two or more children in registered care). The maximum additional benefit payable through the disregard is 57.30 per week.

3.4. The childcare disregard in family credit has not proved an effective means of helping working families with childcare costs. An alternative approach is needed. That is why the Government will introduce a childcare tax credit as part of the new Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) in October 1999 to replace Family Credit.

The childcare tax credit

Any lone parent working 16 hours a week or more, and paying for childcare, will be eligible for the childcare tax credit. Couples will also be eligible where both partners are working for 16 hours or more a week.

The childcare tax credit will:

- cover up to 70 per cent of eligible costs of approved childcare, up to a maximum of 70 a week for families with

one child and 105 for families with two or more children. Registered care, childcare on school premises (e.g. out of school clubs) and certain other places exempt from registration are all eligible. These limits have been chosen to ensure that the credit makes a reasonable contribution to family's childcare costs, while encouraging families to make the most cost effective use of childcare;

- be structured so that the lowest earning families will get help and the poorest families will benefit in full;
- give a couple with two children and income below 330 per week (17,000 per year) the full 70 per cent of their eligible childcare costs;
- reach higher up the income distribution than Family Credit. For example, a couple with two young children who earn 23,400 a year might receive as much as 45 per week.

Parents in education and training

3.5. Childcare can be a significant cost for students, particularly mature students, in further and higher education. The Scottish Office allocates access funds to the further and higher education sectors each year. Access funds are paid, by further and higher education institutions, to individuals facing financial difficulties in entering or continuing their education. Payments provide for a range of costs associated with learning, including childcare.

3.6. Students attending further education colleges can receive help with childcare costs, in addition to college bursaries, through the Further Education Access Funds. In 1996/97, almost 20 per cent of Further Education Access Funds were allocated to provide assistance with childcare costs. Further education colleges may also be eligible to claim extra funding from the European Social Fund in respect of childcare costs incurred by certain groups of students.

3.7. Higher education students are eligible for childcare assistance from the Higher Education Access Funds. Childcare costs are one of the three main purposes for which the Higher Education Access Funds are used.

3.8. We will:

- use the Teaching and Higher Education Bill to provide a more effective scheme of support higher education students;
- double expenditure from the Access Funds in Scotland from 4.3 million to 8.6 million in 1998/99;
- and extend eligibility to part-time students.

3.9. Childcare costs are also an issue for those taking training courses. Some existing Government programmes such as Career Development Loans, and various training programmes run by Local Enterprise Companies can include help with childcare costs. Providing opportunities for more flexible ways of learning will make it easier for people with childcare responsibilities, as it may reduce their need for childcare. We will therefore look at how our new individual learning accounts might be used to support childcare costs while people are learning.

Parents in the New Deal

3.10. Help with the cost of childcare is available to young people as part of the New Deal for Young People and help with the costs of childcare when searching for work and attending interviews is available under the New Deal for Lone Parents. And as we develop other New Deals we will consider whether help with childcare costs Should be made available.

Consultation point 5

Are there groups of families other than those described in this chapter who merit help with childcare costs?

Improving the Accessibility of Childcare

Introduction

We want to ensure that a range of good quality childcare is available in every community which allows parents to choose childcare which meets their needs. In addition we want to ensure that parents, childcare providers and employers have ready access to childcare information and guidance which is comprehensive, up to date and user friendly.

We will be:

- promoting **significant increases** in childcare provision. We have for example in Scotland already committed almost 5 million extra for 1998-99, and a further 25 million over the period 1999-2003 will come on-stream from lottery funding through the New Opportunities Fund;
 - ensuring that **all four year olds** have access to a part-time pre-school place by this winter and, in the longer term, extending similar opportunities to three year olds.
 - making progress on meeting **parents preferences on family friendly employment practices**, through dissemination of successful practice and implementation of the EU Directives on parental leave, part-time work and working time;
 - helping to meet **parents preferences on forms of childcare**, especially through the composition, plans and operations of local childcare partnerships;
 - developing **local and national information services**, including setting common standards to be applied by local childcare partnerships and setting up an information helpline.
-

Increasing Childcare Provision

4.1. It is already clear that a significant increase in the number of childcare places available in different settings is essential to a successful childcare strategy. It is not for Government to fund such increases in their entirety: many families are able to afford their own childcare and many employers rightly see childcare as a business investment. But it is Governments task to promote a framework within which the childcare needs of communities can be assessed and planned properly and to target areas where the market is not able to respond sufficiently.

4.2. The childcare tax credit (see Chapter 3) will ensure that childcare becomes more affordable for families who need it. In the longer term, this increased affordability will provide an expansion in the supply of places. However, in order to help families as soon as possible, we will make funding available to boost the supply of places. As part of the Governments strategy for widening the benefits of the Lottery, the Government has decided that 25 million of Lottery funding will be available from 1999-2003 in the form of grants to providers in Scotland to support the establishment of out of school childcare. The New Opportunities Fund will issue guidance on bidding arrangements and on any advice it needs from local childcare partnerships (see Chapter Five).

4.3. We have, in addition, already put in place range of measures which will lead to major increases in successful, quality provision:

- doubled funding to Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise for the existing Out of School Childcare Initiative;

- provided almost 4 million extra this year in Scotland to sustain and provide childcare places, allow the setting up of local childcare partnerships and help develop information services.

Responding to differing needs

4.4. If we are to help and support more families, it is not enough just to provide more childcare places, important though that is. Parents will not use childcare unless they are confident that it is right for their children, and it meets their own requirements in terms of affordability and availability. Working through partnership we want to develop more options for parents.

4.5. In deciding which type of childcare is right for their children, parents have to balance a wide range of factors. Their preferences are also likely to change as their children grow and their childcare requirements alter. We therefore want to encourage a plural approach which is responsive to :

- **parental views about what is best for their children:** many parents would prefer to leave their children with a close relative when they are not looking after them themselves. Some feel that their children will thrive in childcare provided on a small scale in a domestic setting, for example by a childminder or a nanny. Others prefer their children to have a wider range of social interactions with other children and adults, as in a day nursery or out of school club. Children with special needs may require carers with special expertise and qualifications. Childcare arrangements must also respect cultural differences and be accessible to parents and children who do not have English as their first language;
- **personal circumstances:** childcare needs vary widely according to the circumstances of parents, whether at home or at work. Lone parents are all too often not able to rely on a partner to help with childcare. Shift workers may need childcare at unconventional times and may find that childminders are more able and willing to fit in flexibly with such working patterns than nurseries or clubs can. Parents with more than one child may want them looked after together;
- **what children want:** as children get older, they will increasingly express their own preferences. They may, for example, prefer an out of school club which offers a supportive environment for homework and the chance to play with their school-friends.

4.6. The new provision that is developed under the strategy should be able to meet the needs of all families including those where the children have special educational needs or disabilities and those from ethnic minority communities. It will also be particularly important that the development of childcare services for young children is co-ordinated with education provision. Parents need to be able to choose the mix of early education and day care which they judge appropriate for their children's needs, whether in formal nursery education or in more informal settings such as playgroups. By the age of three, many children are ready to benefit from education. We are providing early education places for all four year olds and over time we want to extend similar opportunities to three year olds.

4.7. It is of course impossible to tailor childcare services individually for every child and parent. But we do want to increase the range of childcare options at local level and so enhance the choices open to parents. We shall expect local childcare partnerships (Chapter Five) to pay particular attention to the wishes and preferences of parents in drawing up their local childcare plans. It will be particularly important that the development of day care services for young children is properly co-ordinated with education provision. From birth to age three, children's needs are primarily for a loving, supportive and secure environment (whether at home or in the context of childcare) in which self-esteem and trust can develop. Of course, even the very youngest children are learning all the time and the way that care is provided in this early and crucial period must take account of the child's developmental needs. By the age of three, many children are ready to benefit from some more systematic opportunities for learning through play, in which their all-round development is carefully observed and promoted and their understanding of the world extended. Pre-school education responds to these needs in a distinctive way - focusing on opportunities for learning through play and helping children to prepare for school (and the lifetime of active learning which lies ahead), but not seeking to anticipate formal schooling. The Government are committed to providing, by this winter, part-time pre-school education places for all children in the pre-school year; and over time they will extend similar opportunities for three year olds as well.

Improving childcare information

4.8. The increase in the supply of childcare places must be matched by improvements to the information about local provision. Reliable, up-to-date information, in an accessible form, is vital to allow parents with childcare responsibilities to respond quickly to job, training and education opportunities. But many parents, especially those looking for childcare for the first time, struggle to find the information they need. They do not always know where they can go for information and advice. The information which is available is often patchy and out of date.

4.9. Parents need a range of different types of information:

- advice on what to look for in a childcare service;
- help in deciding upon the most suitable arrangement for their children, particularly for children with special needs;
- up-to-date details on what childcare places are available in the area where they live or work; and
- advice on financial support that may be available to help them meet the cost of childcare, including advice on benefits and the childcare tax credit.

4.10. Good quality information can also be used by employers to support their employees who have childcare responsibilities. Employers gain if mothers return to work after maternity leave, and if parents are comfortable at work because they know their children are being well-looked after.

4.11. Employers need

- information about local services which they can pass on to their employees;
- advice about local childcare facilities in which they can invest to secure places for their employees; and
- guidance on good practice so that they can integrate childcare into their forward business planning.

4.12. Good advice and information, although on different matters, is also important for people who are considering offering new childcare services. To plan their services, they need:

- information about local demand for childcare and what other childcare is already provided;
- access to specialist advice, for example on the registration and inspection requirements and on training and qualifications for childcare workers;
- access to business support, advice and training which is appropriately tailored to their needs.

Providers of information

4.13. At present there is no consistency in the provision of information about childcare: information is available from a wide range of sources and the amount of information available varies considerably. Information about childcare services is crucial to the success of the New Deal for Lone Parents. We will ensure that information to inform choices is available in different forms at both national and local level. Personal Job Advisers provide individuals with advice and assistance in making childcare arrangements to meet their needs.

Local information under the childcare strategy

4.14. We want to see information services in all areas to meet parents needs. In their childcare plans, we will ask childcare partnerships (see chapter 5) to demonstrate how information services in their areas will be developed, building on local authorities existing statutory role, so that all parents can readily find the information they need to help them make their childcare choices.

4.15. To help ensure that the services meet the needs of parents, we believe that these local information services should

meet minimum standards specified at national level. There would be benefits if the common standards allowed for information at a future point to be made available electronically through public information services run, for example, by the Employment Service, Benefits Agency and public libraries.

Responding to individual needs

4.16. Different people will have different preferences for the way they access information. The Internet allows information to be widely available and easily updated but where information is available electronically it should be user-friendly and easily accessed by non-specialists. Some people may prefer to use printed materials. Others may prefer to seek guidance from an expert adviser, who may have access to electronic information. Information services should offer a choice of delivery mechanisms.

4.17. Whatever arrangements are adopted, parents should expect, as a minimum, up-to-date and comprehensive information about the full range of provision available locally and that legal requirements concerning registration have been met. Information covered should include

- the age range for which the provider caters;
- the hours offered throughout the year;
- holiday provision;
- cost; and
- current vacancies.

4.18. Services also need to provide information for parents who may have particular needs, for example, who are seeking care for a child with disabilities or to cover unusual working hours.

4.19. Our Green Paper on welfare reform (*New Ambitions for Our Country: A New Contract for Welfare*, Cm 3805, The Stationery Office) endorses the principle that those who face barriers to work should have a personal adviser to help pull together a package of measures to help them into work.

Resourcing childcare information services

4.20. Setting up a childcare information service can be particularly expensive. The extra funding which we will be providing to local authorities in 1998-99 will help them to make a head-start on their development.

4.21. The running costs of a good service can be substantial. Keeping childcare information up-to-date, particularly information on vacancies, is resource-intensive. Local authorities have a duty to provide information on childcare services. There is a range of other possible funding sources: employers, Local Enterprise Companies, childcare providers, parents and others are all potential beneficiaries of good quality information services and could be expected to help in their upkeep.

4.22. Depending on how developed existing services are, it may be appropriate for local childcare partnerships, in developing their childcare plans, to co-ordinate the development of childcare information services in each area. Through discussion with employers, providers, voluntary organisations, statutory bodies and others, they could establish the service that is needed and how it should be managed and funded. Different solutions will be appropriate for different areas. There may be particular problems developing information services in rural and inner-city areas. There may be advantage in neighbouring local authorities areas working together closely to ensure that information about all local provision is readily available.

4.23. Once established, childcare information services might operate employer subscription schemes to help cover the costs of maintaining and developing the service.

4.24. We will:

- ask local childcare partnerships to demonstrate through their childcare plans that there is a local childcare information service in its area which meets national standards.

Information at national level

4.25. The new Learning Direct free helpline already offers information on learning opportunities and helps people find out about where they can get childcare whilst they learn.

4.26. Alongside the Learning Direct helpline, we will support a childcare helpline to provide parents and their advisers with a single contact number for childcare enquiries. We envisage that this will offer a signposting service, providing callers with details of how to contact local childcare information services.

4.27. We will also consider whether there is scope for the helpline also to signpost both potential and existing childcare providers to information and business advice and provide information to employers on how they can help their employees with their childcare responsibilities.

Consultation point 6

Are there types of childcare, or localities or age groups of children, that particularly require attention under the strategy?

Consultation point 7

How should good quality childcare information services be funded and managed?

Consultation point 8

What areas should be covered by the proposed minimum standards for childcare information services?

Consultation point 9

What childcare information is best offered at national level?

Delivering the Strategy

Introduction

To deliver the childcare strategy for Scotland, we need all those with an interest to work in partnership: central and local Government, other statutory agencies, employers, parents and private, public and voluntary sector childcare providers, among others, all have a vital role to play.

Scottish Ministers will;

- in carrying out in full **the Governments role**, set Scotland - level priorities and, where appropriate, targets; establish a quality framework; and ensure that the development of childcare is properly co-ordinated with other national policies and programmes.
- establish a **Scottish Childcare Board** to advise on and help drive forward the Scottish childcare strategy.
- establish a comprehensive set of **tasks to be undertaken at local level**.
- ensure those tasks are tackled successfully through effective **local childcare partnerships**. We want these to be set up in every local authority area, building on the existing Early Years Forums. In 1998-99, we will be providing funding for the partnerships to carry out local audits of supply and demand and to draw up local childcare plans.

Employers have a vital role to play in delivering the strategy. We want to encourage and enable more employers to support childcare and adopt family friendly employment practices to help their employees to balance work and family life.

We will be:

- encouraging employers to review and wherever appropriate adopt the forms of **childcare and family friendly employment practices** which best suit the needs of the business and its employees;
- publicising the **support available to employers**, including tax relief and potential contributions from other sources towards community childcare projects;
- publicising and **disseminating effective employer practice**.

As an employer, Scottish Ministers will continue to promote good and extensive childcare in The Scottish Office and related bodies.

5.1. In this Green Paper we have set out our vision of a childcare strategy for Scotland. Government has an important role in setting the framework to deliver this strategy, identifying priorities and in promoting good quality provision.

The Government's role

5.2. The development of childcare will be driven from the local level by the needs, energy and initiative of individuals and communities. Central Government will act as an enabler and facilitator and set a framework within which local developments can flourish. We will:

- set Scotland-wide aims and objectives, identify priorities and, where appropriate, set targets to stimulate swift progress;
- in setting aims and objectives take account of the advice of a new Scottish Childcare Board;
- ensure that childcare is linked effectively with other relevant national policies and programmes;
- promote delivery mechanisms at national and local level which bring together effective partnerships;
- ensure the existence of a quality framework to cover regulation and inspection of childcare providers, standards for child development in childcare settings, a system of training and qualifications for childcare workers and effective and appropriate support for informal carers;
- enhance parental choice through the promotion of family friendly employment practices and by increasing employers awareness of the business case for the provision of childcare;
- pump-prime the provision of new childcare places in areas where there is market failure, and provide other appropriate targeted funding;
- secure necessary information about supply and demand to support national policy-making and inform local developments;
- arrange simple, clear signposting and contact points at national level for parents, employers and providers leading to detailed information services at local level which meet national standards;
- promote work in childcare as a career option, develop a framework of qualifications, and make training more accessible;
- establish a financial framework which encourages the costs of childcare to be shared among the beneficiaries and ensures that childcare is affordable for those who need it;
- disseminate good practice (including by setting a good example as an employer) and promote the strategy; and
- seek to raise the profile of childcare as an issue at European Union level, including as part of the forthcoming review of the Structural Funds

Scottish Childcare Board

5.3. A Scottish Childcare Board will advise Ministers on objectives and priorities for Scotland as a whole and in doing so draw out particular issues for different types of area eg peripheral estates and rural areas. The Boards advice will also provide a strategic framework for the work of the New Opportunities Fund in Scotland and for childcare partnerships who will have the detailed knowledge to advise on the distribution of funds within localities.

5.4. A Scottish Childcare Board will also be able to advise on research into childcare and the drawing up of departmental and best practice guidance, and help to identify and disseminate good practice more generally.

5.5. Appointments will reflect the breadth of different interests in childcare.

5.6. Our vision of a Childcare Strategy for Scotland cannot be delivered by Government alone. If we are to ensure that good quality, affordable childcare, including formal and informal care, is available in every neighbourhood, we must look to all those who have a contribution to make to work together at local level. This will mean building on the valuable work which is already being taken forward in many areas, with a new focus on working together in partnership to reflect the needs of each neighbourhood.

A framework for action at local level

5.7. Childcare services must be able to respond to local needs and circumstances. They must respect parents preferences and local traditions in childcare, and take account of local employment patterns, the location of schools and transport networks, and strengths in existing provision. In some areas this already happens, but we want services to meet needs in all areas.

5.8. In every locality attention must be given to :

- assessing the demand for childcare and the supply of places available to meet it, and setting achievable local targets for filling the gap between the two;
- advising the New Opportunities Fund (see chapter 4) on local needs for out of school provision and priorities between bids for Lottery funding;
- identifying how the locality can draw on other potential sources of funds;
- providing support to parents and informal carers;
- ensuring childcare information services are available which meet national standards;
- identifying and meeting training needs; and
- securing employer involvement and commitment.

Local partnerships

5.9. This range of tasks can only be achieved by drawing upon the commitment and expertise of a wide range of partners with local knowledge and experience.

5.10. Local authorities are key partners. They already have responsibilities under the Children Act 1989 for registering and inspecting childcare services for children under the age of eight, for reviewing childrens services, and for providing information about childcare services. They are also important providers of childcare in their own right, particularly childcare geared to children in need.

5.11. Other partners include:

- private and voluntary sector providers of childcare;
- employers, many of whose employees will need childcare;
- Local Enterprise Companies which currently deliver the Out of School Childcare Initiative;
- further education colleges;
- schools, many of which are ideally placed to provide and develop suitable and accessible premises for out of school childcare. Many schools also provide nursery classes for under-fives;
- Health Boards and NHS Trusts, including the new Primary Care Trusts proposed in our White Paper Designed to Care; and, of course,
- parents, who will be best placed to decide the needs of their children and will need to be involved in decisions about childcare need and provision.

5.12. In order to bring together these partners, and to oversee and co-ordinate the planning and development of childcare and information services in each area, there is a need for a body - a partnership - representing all the relevant local childcare interests.

5.13. We believe that the responsibility for convening and supporting the partnership should most appropriately rest with the local authority. It is important, however, that partnerships are not seen as local authority bodies - it may be appropriate,

for example, for partnerships to be chaired by an independent person, or perhaps a parent or an employer.

5.14. Most local authorities have already convened Early Years Forums. In *Education in Early Childhood: The Pre-School Years* we proposed that early education should become a formal part of the remit of all Forums, and this drew wide support. We now propose that Early Year Forums should be the basis for the new childcare partnerships and that they should have an enlarged membership, covering all the stakeholders, in order to function as childcare partnerships. The partnerships should be developed so that they can expand their remit to include childcare for older children.

5.15. Early Years Forums already include in their membership most of the local groups with an interest in childcare, including the private and voluntary sectors. However, in order to become fully representative childcare partnerships, they will have to be extended to include, for example, broader representation from employers groups, Local Enterprise Companies and from those with a particular interest in older children, including those with special needs. In many cases it will be appropriate to form strong links with out of school networks: there are twenty of these throughout Scotland.

Organisation of childcare partnerships

5.16. It will be for each partnership to decide how to organise itself. Different partnerships will cover areas of very different sizes and types with differing needs, and we expect to see that reflected in the range of approaches.

5.17. We envisage that each local authority will continue to have a single partnership covering its area. However, this does not prevent local authorities - especially the larger ones - creating or building on existing groups covering smaller areas to bring local knowledge and experience to the work of the partnership.

5.18. The childcare partnerships would be responsible for strategic overview of childcare in the area and taking on the tasks listed in paragraph 5.6. We would expect them to build on existing expertise and provision and to co-ordinate local activity to maximise the choice of good quality childcare in the area.

Role of childcare partnerships

5.19. We see the first task of the local childcare partnerships as carrying out an audit of local childcare services and of potential demand for childcare from parents and employers. In the light of the audit, partnerships should agree a childcare plan, setting out how childcare needs in the area will be met. The plan should identify priorities, timescales, local targets, responsibility for delivering different aspects of the strategy and the use to be made of the potential sources of funding. It may link to the Childrens Services Plan which local authorities are currently required to produce in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. In the slightly longer term there may be benefit in central government working together with local government, in particular, to review the existing statutory framework and guidance for planning and monitoring childrens services, particularly in the light of the new emphases produced by pre-school education and childcare.

5.20. Under Section 19 of the Children Act 1989, local authorities are already required to review every three years the range of services provided for children under eight. Local authorities must look at provision, assess the level of need in the area through a process of consultation and publish a report setting out how they intend to meet that need. We intend that the childcare plans proposed here should dovetail with existing arrangements.

5.21. In drawing up their local childcare plans, childcare partnerships will need to pay particular attention to the different wishes and needs of parents through promoting diversity of provision.

5.22. Partnerships will need to consider how they can meet the needs of all children from all communities, including those with Special Educational Needs and those with disabilities. They will also need to recognise and respect the needs and expectations of children and families from ethnic minorities.

Funding and guidance for childcare partnerships

5.23. We will make specific grant funding of almost 4 million available to local authorities in Scotland in 1998-99 to stimulate childcare provision, help develop information services and for local childcare partnerships to carry out audits and

draw up plans. The Scottish Office is commissioning research to inform the drawing up and issuing of guidance on local audits.

5.24. Further guidance on setting up partnerships, their remits, and funding will be issued in the autumn, following analysis of the responses to this Green Paper. In the meantime, local authorities, Early Years Forums and other interested parties are encouraged to begin preparatory work: identifying potential extra members for childcare partnerships and considering the scope of the local audit.

Employer involvement

5.25. We want to see employers playing a full part in the work of childcare partnerships. Some Early Years Forums already have employer representatives, and employers will have an even greater contribution to make to the new local childcare partnerships.

5.26. Individual employers can also benefit from helping their employees to balance work and family commitments. Employers should be concerned about the well-being of their employees. With more women employed, employers are recognising the need to change patterns of work to reflect the needs of the family.

5.27. The benefits to employers of family-friendly policies include the retention of skilled, trained workers, a wider pool of skilled personnel from which to recruit, and less stress and absenteeism among their workers. The costs of not helping employees include the cost of recruiting and training new staff if new mothers do not return from maternity leave, the cost of being unable to recruit the best staff and the cost of extra, unplanned absences by parents who have no-one else to care for their children when they are sick or during the school holidays. The business case for family-friendly policies is becoming more compelling as patterns of work and family life continue to change.

"Childcare is not a perk - it is an investment for today and tomorrow"
Employers for Childcare

5.28. Practical assistance towards childcare provision is currently only offered by around 10 per cent of employers. Provision of assistance of any kind is concentrated in the public sector or private sector employers with large numbers of employees. The Daycare Trust estimate that in the United Kingdom the total annual expenditure by employers on childcare is around 60 million, compared with the 2.6 billion spent by parents.

5.29. A significant number of employers do provide some family friendly practices. Maternity leave beyond the statutory minimum is available to 9 per cent of mothers (paid for 6 per cent) whilst 24 per cent of fathers are eligible for paternity leave.

5.30. Many parents particularly value flexible working patterns, such as reduced hours or home-working, which enable them to look after their own children for some of the normal working week, reducing their reliance on formal childcare. We want to encourage employers in enabling this to happen. We shall build on the parents existing statutory rights in particular by implementing European Directives on parental leave, part-time work and working time.

Support for employers

5.31. There are many ways in which employers may assist their employees with childcare. But not all employers are aware of all the options available. Different options will be appropriate for different employers. Options for childcare need to be flexible to take into account the needs of employers, especially small business, as well as the needs of employees with childcare responsibilities.

5.32. Workplace nurseries are one way in which employers can support the childcare needs of their employees. But they do not suit all employers or employees and there are many other ways in which employers can help. Businesses will want to consider what is best for them and their workforce.

5.33. Employers can claim their day-to-day expenditure on childcare provision or subsidies for their employees as an

allowable expense when calculating their business profits for tax purposes. They may also be able to obtain tax relief for the running costs of operating workplace nurseries. The cost of equipment for a nursery or playscheme and the capital costs of providing nursery or playscheme premises may qualify for capital allowances. Employees do not have to pay income tax on the benefit in kind of a place in a qualifying workplace nursery provided by their employer.

Motorola

Motorola employs over 5,000 people in manufacturing semi-conductors and mobile phones at three sites in Scotland. In 1995 they established a purpose-built on-site nursery, offering fifty subsidised places, at their Bathgate plant in West Lothian. The nursery is open from 6.45am to 6pm throughout the year (other than Christmas and New Year). The nursery reflects Motorola's desire to attract and retain good quality staff but also their commitment to family and company values.

Glasgow City Council

Glasgow City Council has its own 15 place nursery for Council staff at the Queenslie Industrial Estate in Glasgow and buys another 70 places at another nursery at Cowglen. Subsidies are available at both nurseries, the exact amount depending upon household income. Glasgow City Council believe that the provision of nursery places has resulted in recruitment and training costs, the retention of skills and expertise which otherwise would have been lost and higher morale amongst the staff concerned.

5.34. Typically, employers decisions on childcare are taken in terms of its direct advantage to the business. However many employers also choose to support their local communities in ways which do not necessarily have an immediate payback. We encourage employers to consider community childcare projects when doing so. Larger companies may be able to make financial contributions and smaller companies may be able to make donations in kind.

Information about childcare

5.35. We will ensure that we continue to secure the national level information needed to inform policy-making, the allocation of resources, and monitoring and evaluating the impact of the strategy. We will undertake an audit of supply and demand for childcare in Scotland in 1998.

Disseminating effective employment practice

5.36. In developing the childcare strategy we want to find more effective ways of encouraging best practice amongst employers. We want to strike the right balance between providing support for employees without placing undue burdens on business.

5.37. All employers need to be aware of the business gains from childcare support as well as the benefits to their employees, their employees children and the wider community. The Government is undertaking a range of initiatives to help promote the business case for family friendly employment more effectively.

5.38. We have made the promotion of family-friendly employment policies a key priority and are working across Government to identify the best ways of achieving this aim. Government Departments have various projects in hand to research and disseminate good practice. For example:

- we have sponsored a new employers pack on childcare by Parents at Work which will form part of its wider series on ways in which employers can help parents;
- we have supported activities such as the Parents at Work Employer of the Year Award for family friendly employment;
- we will make available booklets, aimed particularly at small and medium sized companies, presenting good practice examples of family friendly policies in the science, engineering and technology, including information technology, sectors;

- we have provided support through Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise for the Fair Play Initiative which was established by those organisations and the Equal Opportunities Commission in response to a request by The Scottish Office. Fair Play is a consortium bringing together the strengths, expertise and information resources of specialist agencies to support and promote equal opportunities between men and women and has promoted childcare as part of this, for example through its guide aimed at employers *Childcare: A Business Case*.

5.39. There is much to be done to increase employer involvement in childcare, and we shall be discussing with employer bodies and others how to make sustained progress. More immediately, we will:

- ask local childcare partnerships to include employer representatives and to work with local employers to find ways of meeting business needs and increasing employer involvement in childcare provision;
- continue to identify opportunities to disseminate good practice;
- ensure that the help available to employers through the tax system is widely known about, so that more take advantage of it. The leaflet IR115, *Tax and Childcare*, gives further advice and can be obtained from tax offices;

Government as an employer

5.40. We recognise the importance of Governments own role as an employer. We too must adopt best practice and not be complacent about the progress that is being made. We will continue to encourage flexible working arrangements and the provision of high quality childcare throughout the Civil Service. Many Departments and agencies provide assistance with childcare - for example, by helping with childcare costs (e.g. while on training or on special duties); providing information about private nurseries, and playschemes; arranging after-school care; or giving special leave for childcare emergencies. Virtually all civil servants in Scotland have access to one or more of part-time working, career breaks or job-sharing.

The Scottish Office

The Scottish Office provides two workplace nurseries offering 51 subsidised places. In addition almost all staff are eligible to work flexible hours and many work part-time or job-share. All female staff have the normal statutory maternity rights and most are eligible for 52 weeks maternity leave of which 15 are paid. All male staff are entitled to 5 days paternity leave.

National Savings

National Savings is an Executive Agency of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and employs almost 2,000 staff in its Glasgow Office. It runs a holiday play scheme with 47 places and also has 14 subsidised places at a 70 place nursery open from 8 am to 6 pm throughout the year.

Consultation point 10

How can the effectiveness of childcare partnerships at local level be maximised?

Consultation point 11

Does this Chapter set out correctly what should be done to improve national and local data on childcare?

Consultation point 12

Have the tasks to be carried out at local level been identified correctly?

Consultation point 13

What are the barriers to employers, including small and medium sized companies, becoming developing family friendly employment practices, including help with childcare, and how can employers be encouraged to recognise the benefits?



Follow up to the Green Paper and next steps

6.1. In this Green Paper, we have made a commitment to develop a childcare strategy for Scotland, which will respond to the needs of children, of parents and of a modern labour market. The strategy will be based on common principles and a shared approach to delivery at national and local level.

6.2. The detailed proposals set out in this Green Paper relate in particular to Scotland. Separate Green Papers are being published in England and Wales. Northern Ireland Ministers also plan to issue a consultation document on implementation there.

6.3. We want local childcare plans to be in place from April 1999 in all local authority areas. These plans must be agreed by local childcare partnerships, convened by local authorities and representing all the key local interests. Chapter 5 of the Green Paper describes the main necessary main features of these plans and their preparation. We propose to issue guidance on local childcare partnerships by the autumn. This guidance will set out who should be represented on the partnerships, what they will be expected to do and how they will be funded.

6.4. However, if partnerships wait until the autumn before starting their work, the time available to them to draw up comprehensive, well designed plans will be limited. We therefore recommend that local authorities, along with Early Years Forums and other interested parties, should consider as soon as possible the establishment of the childcare partnerships and setting in train their local audits of childcare supply and demand.

6.5. The sooner partnerships are established and start work, the quicker they will be able to start playing their key role in helping to realise our vision of making good quality, affordable childcare available in every neighbourhood. In particular, partnerships are crucial in ensuring that the 25 million which will be made available from April 1999 for childcare in Scotland through the New Opportunities Fund (and other potential funding sources such as the European Social Fund and the Urban Programme) is used as effectively as possible.

6.6. In summary, the timetable for follow-up action to the Green Paper is

June 1998	Summit conference on the Green Paper
28 July 1998	Deadline for receipt of responses to this Green Paper
Autumn 1998	Publication of guidance on childcare partnerships
by winter 1998	A free part-time pre school place will be guaranteed for all four-year-olds whose parents want one
March 1999	Childcare plans completed and initial funding decisions announced
October 1999	Introduction of Working Families Tax Credit, incorporating the new childcare tax credit

6.7. We would welcome comments on all aspects of the Green Paper from all of those involved. The key questions on which we would welcome views are brought together at the end of each section of this document and the full list is as follows.

Consultation point 1

Should there be a single national recognition scheme for childcare arrangements which meet certain specified standards?

Consultation point 2

Has this Chapter covered all the main ways in which the supply and recruitment of childcare workers can be increased?

Consultation point 3

What action is needed to gain acceptance and use of a coherent training and qualifications structure?

Consultation point 4

How can we assist in strengthening the quality of care provided through the informal sector?

Consultation point 5

Are there groups of families other than those described in this chapter who merit help with childcare costs?

Consultation point 6

Are there types of childcare, or localities or age groups of children, that particularly require attention under the strategy?

Consultation point 7

How should good quality childcare information services be funded and managed?

Consultation point 8

What areas should be covered by the proposed minimum standards for childcare information services?

Consultation point 9

What childcare information is best offered at national level?

Consultation point 10

How can the effectiveness of childcare partnerships at local level be maximised?

Consultation point 11

Does this Chapter set out correctly what should be done to improve national and local data on childcare?

Consultation point 12

Have the tasks to be carried out at local level been identified correctly?

Consultation point 13

What are the barriers to employers, including small and medium sized companies, becoming developing family friendly employment practices, including help with childcare, and how can employers be encouraged to recognise the benefits?

6.8. To help us analyse all the responses fully in the time available, please keep responses as succinct as possible and indicate clearly the question to which you are responding. If you want to respond in more general terms, please indicate nonetheless the issues or areas that you are addressing. It is not necessary to respond to every question.

6.9. **The closing date for responses is 28 July 1998.**

6.10. Please send your comments to

Peter Willman
Scottish Office Education and Industry Department
Area 2-B(N)

Victoria Quay
EDINBURGH

6.11. Comments can also be e-mailed to:
peter.willman@SO013.scotoff.gov.uk

6.12. Responses to the Green Paper will be made available to the public on request unless you indicate clearly that you wish your response to remain confidential.

Copies of the Green Paper

6.13. Copies of this Green Paper are being sent to local authorities, Local Enterprise Companies and other organisations with an interest in childcare.

6.14. You can obtain further copies of this Green Paper as a priced publication from The Stationery Office and its agents (for details, see the back cover). We have also produced a leaflet summarising the Green Paper. This leaflet is being made widely available - it will be sent to many childcare providers. It sets out the main proposals and issues for discussion.

6.15. The Green Paper and its summary version are also available on the Scottish office web-site Internet. The address is:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk>
