

Buckie Childcare and young children's facilities Audit

a report for the Buckie Regeneration Group

Autumn/Winter 2009

KP58 LMK

Prepared by NB Planning

Contents

	Acknowledgements	3
1		4
2	BACKGROUND	4
3	EXISTING PROVISION.	7
	A) Within Buckie	7
	B) Within 20 mile radius of Buckie	9
4	THE DEMAND	11
	4.1 Interview results	11
	4.2 Questionnaire results	12
	4.3 Interpretation of results	14
	4.4 Future demand	15
5	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS	16
	5.1 Private sector	16
	5.2 Public sector	16
	5.3 Voluntary sector	17
	5.4 Available premises	17
6	THE COSTS	20
7	SOURCES OF EXTERNAL FUNDING	22
8	SUSTAINING THE EFFORT	24
9	CONCLUSION	25
	9.1 Recommendations	26
	References	27
AP	PENDICES	28
	Types of registered childcare in Scotland	28
	Provision list in Buckie	29
	Provision list within a 20 mile radius	33
	List of consultees	39
	Sample questionnaire	40

Acknowledgements

This report could not have been compiled to the same standard without the kind assistance of the following: Gillian Rose of the Buckie Area Forum; staff of the Moray Childcare Partnership; Ivor Lee Council Local Integration Support officer; the head teachers of the Buckie area nursery and primary schools; Jo Maunder and the staff at Ark Childcare; staff at the Playbarn at Greenfields; staff at Brewers Fayre, Elgin; staff of the Moray College; staff at the Council Planning Dept; Gillian Bailey, Community Support Officer; Sally Wright and Kerry Bolton of Buckie Childminding Group, Morag Nye of Monkey Mayhem, Marie Buchan of the Scottish Childminding Association, local health visitor Helen Andrew, John Main of Springfield Properties, and Claire George of Building Blocks.



1 INTRODUCTION

This report has been commissioned by the Moray Council on behalf of the Buckie Regeneration Group, which is a sub-group of the Buckie Area Forum.

The main purpose of the report is to explore the role, if any, that new or reinvigorated facilities for young children (0-12 yrs) can play in supporting Buckie's regeneration.

This requires auditing existing facilities, ensuring that provision meets current demand, investigating whether or not improved facilities can enhance the work or learning ambitions of parents/guardians, and identifying if there are any opportunities for new or extended enterprises.

2 BACKGROUND

The Buckie Regeneration Group was established in 2008 with the purpose of steering actions towards the economic regeneration of the town. In doing so, the group formulated a widely agreed Three-year Plan, which laudably included a commitment to investigate childcare provision and facilities for young persons.

With a perception of limited provision in Buckie¹, the group was concerned that a lack of facilities may be a barrier to the ambitions of some members of the community. In particular, there may be people in Buckie who may wish to participate in full/part-time paid work, in further education, in vocational training, in volunteering, or in setting up their own business, but are hampered by childcare issues and/or facilities for young

persons. The group is also of the opinion that there could be opportunities for new business ventures, either in the form of a private initiative and/or social enterprise providing childcare or child play facilities.

The Regeneration Group has therefore chosen to commission research to determine local demand, identify any gaps between provision and needs, and where required, suggest possible solutions. The Regeneration Group has the backing of the Area Forum and the Moray Towns Partnership and has access to funding, albeit limited amounts.

The findings of this investigation will be reported to a wide range of stakeholders, including the local community, the Moray Childcare Partnership and, where appropriate, interested private sector providers and/or public sector funders.

1 "There is no childcare provision in Buckie apart from childminders", local mother, June 09.

Scope of study

The study is mainly focused upon issues around fully dependent children, rather than teenagers.² Coupled with the wider 'regeneration' origins of the commission, and the particular desire to facilitate working opportunities, this study is more concerned with the issues and views of parents and carers than those of the children themselves.

Since the overall objective is to enhance the economic performance of the Buckie, the study is naturally, in terms of geography, centred upon the town itself. However, since the residents of Buckie travel well beyond the town for work and/or recreational purposes, the study incorporates known facilities and activities within the Buckie catchment area, and also looks at driveable outlets up to 20 miles away.

Economic development opportunities can be achieved in different ways through young person facility provision in Buckie. For example, (i) a parent or carer being able to work or study if a dependent child is cared for by another adult; (ii) a childcare centre being opened or extended; (iii) a private recreational centre being opened. Hence, the study will explore not only the provision of 'childcare', but also the availability of 'things to do' in the town.

Definitions

Registered Childcare

In Scotland, since 2001, any person taking responsibility for other people's children on a regular basis requires to comply with national regulations³. The following carer services are regulated by the Scottish Commission Regulation of Care (Care Commission⁴) and is subject to annual inspection: Childminders (i.e. providing services from their own homes); Nurseries run by a team of staff usually in either primary schools, private, workplace, or community settings, and often with government funded places; Playgroups, usually with voluntary set-ups frequently working with local authorities to provide sessions of play and education for 3-5 year-olds; Out-of-school clubs for school age 5 to 12-year-olds catering for around 10 to 40 children usually near schools or a large institutions/workplaces. Such clubs include breakfast clubs, after-school clubs, and holiday play schemes; Carers, for example provided by childcare agencies, coming to the parental home (see Appendix 1 for more information).

"Childcare registration is becoming more and more of a minefield"

Childcare Official Sept 09

² The needs of youths are very different from the focus of this study and require separate research.

³ The Regulation of Care Act Scotland 2001 is based on the main principles of dignity, privacy, choice, safety, equality and diversity, and realising potential.

⁴ Care Commission Elgin Branch Tel 01343 541734

Supervised Childcare

Care staff need to comply with the Scottish Social Services Council Code of Practice and have Enhanced Disclosure. They should ideally be qualified in childcare or education to SVQ level 3 or above. The person in charge of the care has overall responsibility (i.e. the provider) whereas the care manager will have daily responsibility for children and staff. Childcare managers now require having suitable qualifications, i.e. degrees and level 4 awards.

"The days of running childcare centres as informal, socially well-intended enterprises are long gone" Childcare Official Aug 09

The Moray Childcare Partnership (MCP)

The MCP is part of the Moray Council Education and Development Services and is responsible for creating, supporting, and promoting childcare services to families in Moray, in accordance with Scottish Government guidelines.⁵ It has a small dedicated team based at Elgin Community Centre Tel 01343 545368.

The National 'Curriculum for Excellence'

The CfE adopts a holistic approach to children's learning and supports children to be able to make informed choices and take responsibility for their own learning. It is encapsulated in the four capacities enabling every young person to become successful learners, confident individuals, with responsible citizens, and effective contributors to society'. The birth-to-three curriculum is based on three features: relationships; responsive care; and respect. Each area is significant in its own merit, but they also reinforce each other to enable effective practice.

Government funded places

Part-time preschool education is free for three to four year olds. Education authorities are given government funding to deliver such education, usually through Council-led nursery classes and/or private partners. Nurseries normally provide 2.5 hour sessions each day Monday to Friday. Staff must follow national education guidelines and are inspected annually by the HMI and the Care Commission.

Non-registered facilities activities

Some childcare solutions are exempt from registration where parents remain responsible. These include most parent and toddler groups, some holiday play schemes, and public facilities such as playbarns and soft play centres.

⁵ Over the years there has been a great debate on what constitutes childcare e.g. nursery / playgroup education facility ?; Care that allows a parent to return to work or take up full time education?

3 EXISTING PROVISION

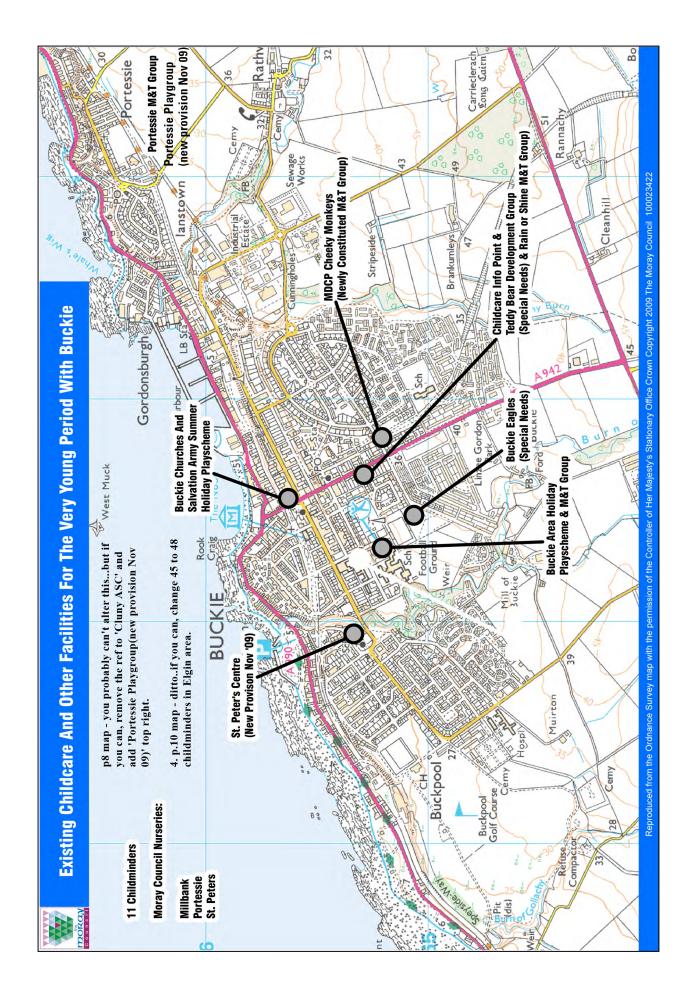
A) Within Buckie

There are currently the following main providers in the Buckie area (see Appendix 2 for details):

- 3 Nurseries
- 3 Playgroups
- 1 After School Club
- 2 Special needs groups
- 5 Mothers and Toddlers groups
- 2 Holiday playschemes
- 14 Registered Childminders







A recent, positive development is the establishment of a new nursery group provider at St Peters School at the end of October 09. 'Building Blocks' has been set up by a former nursery nurse. The new group will provide services Monday to Friday 8am-6pm for 2-3 year olds with snack food provided. An empty room at the primary school has been leased with space for 15 children. Building Blocks needs at least 3 staff qualified to Level 3 – it has made a successful Princes Trust grant application and seeking MCP training support towards degree qualification. The group hopes to increase its services to 4 and 5 year olds, but current attendance records are not as high as hoped for.

Another recent and positive development is the establishment of a Playgroup at Portessie Primary School. This Playgroup started offering places for 2-3 year olds in October 09 and has 40 children attending per week Mon-Fri 1300-1500. The Playgroup is associated with the Primary School and benefits from having a number of experienced members in its midst.

Although the above is all good news for Buckie, it is important to set it in the context of other registered provision that has sadly come and gone in recent times. Three group setting providers - Jesters, VIP Childcare, and the Mobile Creche - have folded in the past three years, and the BCHS holiday playscheme is presently vulnerable. Monkey Mayhem, a private sector provider of flexible services, has shut down business recently.

One public sector official commented that providing for childcare in Buckie has been 'a difficult issue' during the past decade or so. Much effort has been expended⁶, by both the public and private sectors, to make group setting childcare available, but with poor results. Paradoxically, every audit conducted in the area by the MCP produced favourable and complimentary outcomes. Clearly, however, there have been barriers to success.

One Mum suggested that the cost of the VIP care was an issue ("£30 per day was too expensive") and criticised its inflexibility ("I can't just leave a child for an hour or two, and it only provides for up to 3 year olds, so I need another arrangement for my older child"). Another Mum said that the "age range was too restrictive".

Meanwhile, there used to be a Mothers and Toddlers group at the Buckie Church of Christ, but this near collapsed when the principal leaders left the area. The group reinvented itself as 'Rain or Shine' and moved to improved premises at the Lady Cathcart Centre.

Although the VIP Childcare provision at the Lady Cathcart Centre shut down, the Centre has become a 'Moray Childcare Information Point' following MCP training for the Centre's Co-ordinators⁷. Nearly 10 years ago, local activist Stuart Scott had a vision, perhaps ahead of its time, that Buckie should have one 'super provider' at the Lady Cathcart Centre - i.e. one joined-up facility instead of several - but the concept lost its drive when Stuart himself fell ill. However, the Centre retains the potential to offer central services to Buckie families.

⁶ In excess of £250k

⁷ I.e. they are now trained to show the public how to access childcare providers in the area.

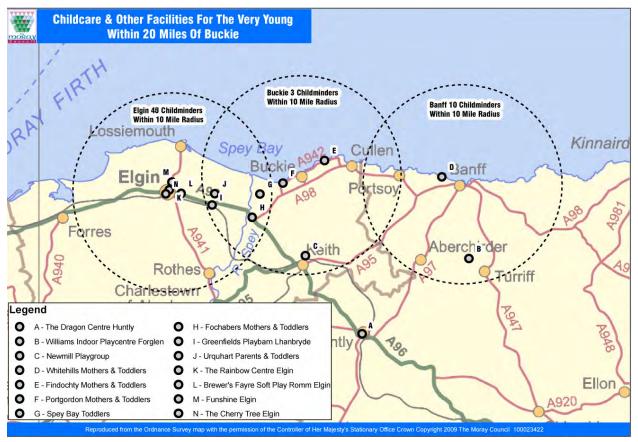
A summary of provision of facilities for the very young in Buckie draws out four main points:

- 1) The town lacks all-day care (although it is possible that 'Building Blocks' could fill this gap);
- 2) There is little provision for group setting care for 2 to 3 year-olds, other than those with special needs (although the new Portessie Playgroup could fill this gap).
- 3) There is significant concern that no group setting childcare in Buckie has been self financing in past decade, suggesting that the town is unwilling to pay for such services.
- 4) There is no soft play or outdoor/indoor play centre facility in the town.

B) Within 20 mile radius of Buckie

The following providers operate outside Buckie, but within a 20 mile radius (see Appendix 3 for details).

- 10 registered childminders in Banff area
- 48 registered childminders in Elgin area
- 16 childminders in Fochabers to Lhanbryde area
- Council-led nurseries in 8 nearby small towns
- Playgroups at Cullen, Banff, Newmill and Mosstodloch
- All day care provided at centres in Keith, Fochabers and Portsoy.
- Special needs care at Keith and Elgin
- Mothers and Toddlers in at least 5 towns



Elgin alone has 9 All-Day Care providers, as well as 4 separate Council-led Nurseries, 2 and Playgroups. Elgin, of course, with a population three times the size of Buckie and a large catchment area incorporating two RAF bases⁸, has a critical mass of prospective clientele. Not only does this place sustainable demands on Council-



led 'group setting' service providers, it also supports some private sector deliverers who can offer greater flexibility of care, e.g. drop-in services.

Furthermore, there are also some fun and entertainment centres for youngsters that can be visited throughout the day: namely, the Playbarn at Lhnabryde (with climbing frame and cafeteria); Brewer's Fayre, Elgin (with soft play room, outdoor climbing, and restaurant); Burger King, Elgin (small area in restaurant); the Rainbow Castle (soft play at the Moray Leisure Centre); Bowl 2000, Elgin (which has just increased its play centre area); Williamsons Tons of Fun Centre (soft play and restaurant) and the Bogie Dragon's Castle at Huntly. Only the Brewers Fayre does not charge for use of its soft play room. Macduff Aquarium is also a very popular venue, as it has a lot of hands-on learning opportunities. All these venues appear to be well frequented, especially during holiday periods.

It is understood that, where there is a lack of local provision in Buckie for either childcare or recreation, some children are driven out of Buckie to these outlying facilities, e.g. by parents who work in other towns, and/or by carers simply looking for something to do with children.



8 It is noted that RAF Lossiemouth has its own childcare service, which includes subsidisation.

4 THE DEMAND

In order to assess local demand for 'childcare' and identify 'things to do' for young people, this study obtained (a) qualitative information from face-to-face and telephone interviews and; (b) quantitative information using a questionnaire method. Due to sensitive issues of tender age and rights of access, young people themselves were not interviewed; instead parents, service providers, teachers and carers were targeted. (See Appendix 4 for list of consultees).

4.1 Interview results

The childminders consulted all indicated that Buckie's registered childminders are generally busy and often full⁹. This is especially the case once the school day has ended, i.e. there is less of a demand during the day. Only one has been forced to advertise as a result of the recession¹⁰ and this was the first time in six years. Those childminders interviewed would like 'somewhere they could meet each other in a social capacity from time to time'¹¹, but some do not drive. They state that they would certainly use private facilities such as playbarns, child friendly cafes, and adventure playgrounds (even if they have to pay for it themselves).

Local community workers, and more than one local teacher, also have a perceived need for more facilities, such as soft play centres, as well as believing in the need for more formal childcare services. Local provider 'Building Blocks' (see Section 3 and Appendix 2) advertised extensively during February and March 2009 through a poster campaign and the local newspaper, and received positive responses from around 20 parents wishing to use new childcare services.

The local health visitor indicated that formal childcare services are needed especially in two to three years age group. *"There are childminders available; there are mothers and toddlers groups; there are several nurseries; but there is no facility for two to three-year-olds"* (note, however, that the subsequent start-up of Building Blocks and the Portessie Playgroup could fill this gap).

Over the years there have been a number of surveys and questionnaires conducted in Buckie, all indicating the need for childcare. This however is countered by actual uptake (refer to Sect 3a).

The Moray Childcare Partnership, meanwhile, holds data, acquired from the census, on the number of children in the area and the working capacity of the local community. Current figures indicate a higher potential of children requiring childcare than those who actually use it - thus suggesting that alternative solutions are being sought; for example, utilising childcare services outwith the Buckie area or depending upon family member support.

⁹ Buckie's childminders can each take 6 to 8 children depending on circumstances.

¹⁰ Resulting in job losses for parents.

¹¹ It is noted that childminders cannot meet regularly as a group with children for more than 2 hours without having to register with the Care Commission

4.2 Questionnaire results

After taking advice from the Buckie Local Community Network, and with the cooperation of local headteachers, 1200 questionnaires were distributed to all parents in Buckie's catchment area. The questionnaire was also made available online and deposited at various public outlets. The questionnaire was also successfully publicised within the local and regional media.

Around 220 questionnaires were returned, thus representing a response rate of 18.5%. Whilst this is not a particularly large return rate¹², it is a significant enough response to merit considered interpretation, especially on the assumption that those with most concern in the issues made the effort to complete and return the questionnaire.

(See Appendices 5 and 6 for further details).

A summary of the questionnaire results is shown below:

1. Do you currently use childcare services?										
	Often	14%	00	casiona	lly	13%	, D	Never	59%	
2. If you require childcare, what services would you pay to use?										
	Birth – 3 Group				12%		2 – 3	31%		
	3 – 5 Nursery / Playgroup				23% Childminder				24%	
	Breakfast / After school Club				33%	% Crèche for occasional use			casional use	21%
	All Day Childcare				8%		Famil	52%		
	Holiday Club				23% Homework Club			ub	14%	
	Health/Fit	tness gro	up		13%	, D	Othe	r		1%
3. Are you aware of tax credits to assist registered childcare? Y 78% N 10%										
4. Would new facilities allow you to work or study? Y 54% N 28%										
5. Does Buckie need more things to do for the young? Y 74% N 7%										
6. If yes to Q5, what sort of things are needed? Various										
7. If 'yes' to Q5, what kind of facilities would you pay to use?										
	Ball pool 41% Outdoor play centre 64%									
	Soft play	area 70	%	Other				5%		

Not all the respondents, however, focused on the itemised issues. Several recorded their very real concerns about the rise in traffic, especially in and around the school gates. Others pointed out the lack of places for teenagers to go, especially in evenings. Others

¹² It is understood that this is a reasonably good response compared to previous returns on other subjects.

singled out the lack of publicity regarding childcare and things to do, whilst some drew attention to public transport being a barrier towards use of facilities.

4.3 Interpretation of results

In the course of interpreting the results, it is assumed that those interviewed, together with those who returned questionnaires, adequately represent those adults in the Buckie area who are interested in the topic of survey.

A striking result from the questionnaire is that more than half of the survey (59%) never use formal childcare services and prefer to rely on a family member or friend (52%). This confirms the interview opinion that Buckie has a strong extended family network base, which creates its own informal childminding support system. Whilst this is a mostly healthy situation, there will likely be cases where the support system is an inconvenience, or an imposition, on some individual carers. This network system also does not cater for those who do not benefit from the same degree of family support, or who function within a different culture¹³.

Despite more than half of the questionnaire respondees indicating that they do not use childcare services, there was a healthy spread of positive responses towards the potential use of different childcare provision and other facilities/activities (ranging from 8% to 33%). However, one anonymous respondent honestly declared, *"When money isn't an issue, it's easy to tick all the boxes for the things you'd like!"*

Whereas the interviews had predicted a demand for two to three-year-olds (31%), the level of demand expressed through the questionnaire for an after-school club (33%) was perhaps higher than expected¹⁴.

An interesting statistic, and one to especially interest the Buckie Regeneration Group, is more than half of the respondents (54%) require childcare solutions in order to work, or take part in study or training courses. However, this would be very hard to achieve on only 2 hours at a nursery or playgroup, so more flexible solutions may be needed in order to realise this potential.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the huge majority of respondents (74%) and interviewees concluded that there could be more things to do with their young people in the town. The overwhelming response was the need for soft play centre (70%) and/or an outdoor centre (64%).

The number of considered suggestions from respondents indicated the scope for new ideas for young people's facilities, which are generally deemed to be 'poor'.

"There is definitely a need for more types of childcare facilities in Buckie" Local teacher

¹³ Local intelligence indicates that immigrants tend to look after their children independently (i.e. often one parent looks after children whilst other works, then they swap shifts!). With immigrant families, there are understandable barriers relating to language and culture, but these seem to be more issues for the parents than the children!

¹⁴ This statistic should be read in the knowledge that respondents may only use services in their local village, e.g. Findochty, rather than Buckie itself.

4.4 Future demand

Whilst some caution must be exercised about predicting future populations and demographic trends within the area, it is known that there are plans for the physical expansion of Buckie during the next 5 years. The local planning authority is allowing for an additional 50 houses being built by the end of 2010. This is based upon a series of planning permissions and/or applications during recent times, namely: 75 houses by Grampian Housing Association at Barhill Road; 150 houses by Springfield Developments at Barhill Road/Letterfourie Gardens (including premises allocation for a nursery/playgroup); 122 flats at the old Shipyard site at lanstown; 55 houses to the rear of Parklands; 135 houses by Robertsons to the south of Whispering Meadows; conversion of the former garage sites at Millbank, High Street and Barhill Road; further development of ground at Highfield Road and High Street.

Although it cannot be assumed that these developments will go ahead as planned, it is strongly indicated that the town will grow, possibly as much by 150 people per year, including around 10-20 children under the age of 12 years. There is, however, now a small counter trend of immigrants starting to return to their native lands as their own economies grow.¹⁵

The longstanding intentions of TESCO to build a superstore on the south side of the town include claims of several hundred full time and part time employment opportunities. With this now proceeding, it is likely that the demand in Buckie for full time or flexible childcare will increase.

The law now entitles employees to consider flexible work patterns and, with the Government very recently expressing its recognition of the importance of childcare, it is likely that demand for more (flexible) childcare provision in Buckie will rise, rather than fall.

Similarly, the demand for a playcentre is likely to rise as the town's population increases and as time for leisure and recreation becomes more sought after. Buckie's parents and/or carers are already travelling to Elgin, Lhanbryde, Huntly and Turriff in search of playcentres. Should Buckie wish to become a Transition Town (refer to the Buckie Regeneration Action Plan), then it should be seeking to provide its services locally, including facilities for young people.



5 POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Various sectors have the capability of providing different solutions to address market demands.

5.1 Private sector

The private sector has the ability to offer are several solutions for Buckie.

Childminders work usually from home between 0730 and 1800, are not required to have formal qualifications,¹⁶ and have the flexibility to adapt to customer need¹⁷. Very few advertise weekend care, but will usually help out families already registered with their service. They are especially appealing to working mums with babies, and the usual charge is around £3.50 to £4 per hour. Some parents particularly appreciate the individual care that childminders can provide. Coupled with the fact that childminders can legitimately care for up to 6 children including their own, they work in an area of childcare that is financially viable¹⁸. It is the view of the Scottish Childminders (i.e. giving a total of 18 to 19) without endangering the sustainability of existing childminders.

Private sector entrepreneurs already successfully deliver registered childcare in group settings throughout Moray, and one local provider has just started at St Peter's, Buckie. There is also the likely inclusion of privately-run scheme for up to 70 children at west Buckie within the new Springfield development at Barhill Road/Letterfourie Gardens¹⁹.

Many of the soft playcentres in the area are privately run, and are usually combined with other commercial facilities, such as a cafeteria, restaurant, shop, and childcare.



¹⁶ Training, such as first aid and hygiene, is however strongly encouraged.

- 18 Although one childminder stated that the profits were minimal.
- 19 A comparable facility in south Elgin has recently been provided by Springfield Properties at Glassgreen)

¹⁷ For example, some will care for children during evenings, weekends, and holiday periods.

5.2 Public sector

There is no mainstream government fund in place to specifically assist with childcare start-ups²⁰. Since "large numbers of the public expect the government and/or the local authority to provide childcare solutions for next to nothing" (Childcare Official Sept 09), this can come as a surprise. The Prime Minister recently announced intentions to increase free childcare numbers, but this is linked to the phasing out of tax relief on employer supported childcare (see Section 7 below).

The Moray Childcare Partnership, however, is presently supportive towards many of the providers in the Moray area (refer to Section 2).

The public sector has tried on several occasions to stimulate group childcare in Buckie (refer to Section 3).

5.3 Voluntary sector

The voluntary sector has historically provided Buckie with solutions to young person's facilities and continues to do so. With the increase of regulation and monitoring standards, it has, however, become harder for the voluntary sector to play a role other than through non-registered childcare, i.e. where parents remain responsible.

The voluntary sector can, nevertheless, continue to provide a meaningful contribution by providing support for mother and toddler groups, holiday groups, and ad hoc activities.

5.4 Available premises

There are numerous examples of properties in Buckie that would benefit from refurbishment and/or reuse. Some may be suitable for childcare and/or play centre facilities.

For example, there are some shop units, especially on the edge of the commercial core, that have become empty. They could provide scope for small-scale ventures, but their space will be limited. Slightly larger, and therefore possibly more suitable, premises can be found to the east and west of The Square. The former auction room on Cluny Terrace has a large shop frontage, and generous space and storage. The former health clinic on





20 The Labour government has declared his intentions for making childcare fee to those in real financial need.

Cathcart Grove, currently being investigated by the Milton Drive Community Project, has been purposely designed with good public access and has commodious space provision.

The Harbour area, meanwhile, has a range of properties that are either underused or now derelict. The Buckie Regeneration Group may work on a masterplan for this area and, especially if new housing is to be sited at the former shipyard, young person's facilities could be included in the plans for the future.

Next to the harbour, the former Drifter museum is a well-known candidate in the town for re-use. Certainly the Drifter meets two of the main criteria for a play centre with a climbing structure - i.e. ceiling height of minimum 4 m, and car parking for c.30 spaces²¹ – and could, on the face of it, be converted into a 'Fun House' for different age groups or all round 'family fun' with café facilities.

To the south east of The Drifter, the March Industrial Estate may hold possible premises solutions for childcare and/or play centre facilities, since the buildings in this area are relatively modern, large and flexible. There are however no vacancies, although some units appear to be underused.

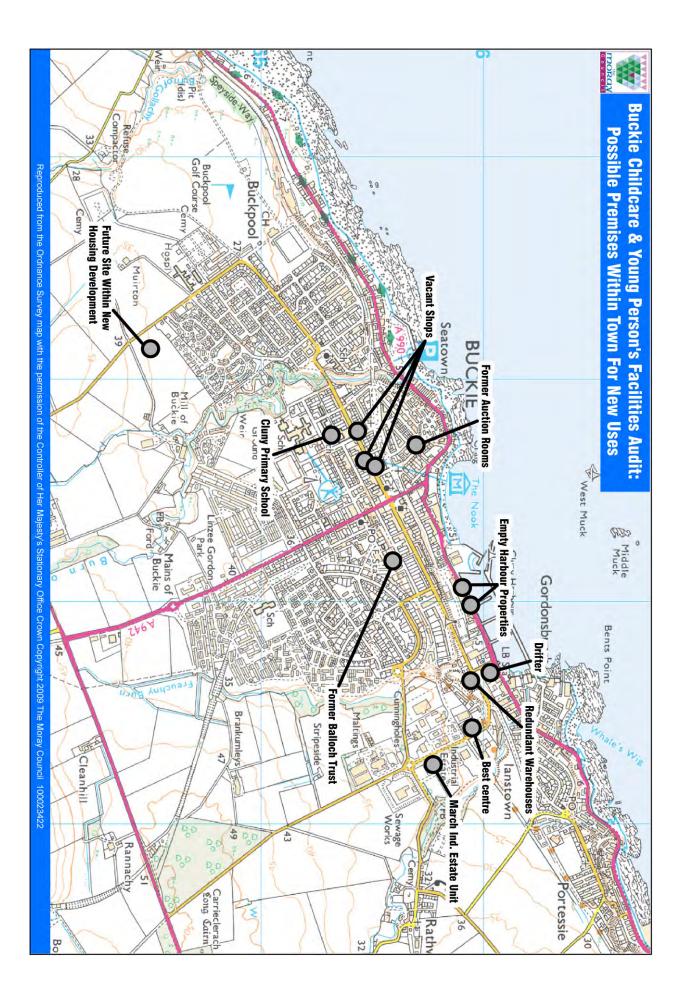
Meanwhile, there are potentially other premises in the town that are suitable to accommodate childcare and/or young person's facilities without the need for major refurbishment. For example, Cluny Primary School is conspicuous in its lack of nursery or playgroup provision. The Lady Cathcart Centre is now underexploited following the closure of VIP. The High School is having a new extension that could offer periodic active use for young people. The Aurora beachfront restaurant could provide indoor or outdoor play facilities with relative ease.

Finally, new premises may be provided as a result of new developments. For example, it is anticipated that premises will become available at Letterfourie Gardens. Similar premises might be provided in south east Buckie in the future.²²



21 It is known that Buckie is considering the need for a climbing wall. It is possible that this could be combined with a young persons' climbing frame facility.

22 Such premises could be a planning condition for development.



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6 THE COSTS

The costs of providing childcare and/or young persons' facilities can be looked at in terms of initial set up costs (capital) and running costs (revenue) for the provider, as well as costs to the customer (provider income).

6.1 Capital outlays

The capital costs will obviously depend upon the nature of the provision and the circumstances associated. For example, a childminder could start up in business with very little outlay; say £400 for any home improvements, insurance, registration etc. A voluntary committee, where parents remain responsible for their children, could also be established with relatively few sums for equipment and premises improvements; say £1000. A registered group provider may need in the order of £5,000 in order to meet the required standards. However, the cost of regenerating whole premises could readily cost in excess of £100,000.

Aside from the premises, climbing frames for soft playcentres cost between £20,000 and £200,000 depending on the size and complexity²³

6.2 Revenue costs

New legislation is promoting greater leadership and management at childcare centres and there is increasing need for centre managers to be in post with suitable qualifications (e.g. Childcare Degree and up to level 9). Other staff require to reach at least level 3 and carry out a required number of hours per year of continual professional development - this varies depending on the staff position²⁴.

"The most important resource is the staff that runs such clubs and groups. If they are dynamic and enthusiastic, well trained and able to cope with the much varied needs of different children, then any activity done will appeal to children and their parents". Anon Buckie mother

Such staff members obviously expect and merit appropriate remuneration. Annual staff salaries range from ranges from minimum wage per hour to around £8.50 per hour with most manager owners taking profit shares, where appropriate. The ratio of staff to children is also an important financial consideration. Each must have at least two members of staff at all times including a fully trained manager. A staff member must be responsible at all times for a baby, whilst another staff member is required for every five children aged 2-3. Consequently, most centres cater for three-year-olds upwards, since it is costly to cater

²³ Souce : Softset, from Somerset

²⁴ Degrees and/or levels 3-9 qualifications require significant time commitment, but can be achieved by various full time or part time study options. MCP supports further education and CPD training for childcare providers.

for younger children. Childminders, depending upon experience and each range of other children in the care, can profitably look after children under the age of three.

One provider pessimistically predicts that "the increasing amount of legislation could well kill off a number of groups where the margins are small".

Another said "It is getting so more difficult to work with children these days".

The cost of setting up the 'Jesters' childcare group (see Section 3) in 1999 was £12,000. By 2003, their running cost was £15,000 per annum. Funding from various charities was acquired over the years to sustain the provision, with the majority of the loss being occurred during the holiday periods. At its point of closure in 2004, it was operating at a loss of £8,000.

The cost of setting up a group childcare operation in 2009 is likely to cost a minimum of £25k each year. Based on this figure, a group setting provider will require around 10 spaces filled every hour in order to break even.

6.3 Income from users

Quality childcare is recognized as a substantial cost to families throughout Scotland. Research by the Daycare Trust shows that a typical cost for full-time nursery places per child under two in Scotland is £150 per week. A full-time place with a childminder is c.£8,000 per year. The typical cost of an after-school club is c.£50 per 15 hour week. For a child at a local authority run summer playscheme, the cost is about £95 a week.

The Kudos research group predicts that the cost of childcare, and the government's plans to change the current support system, may cause some parents to reassess their working habits and potentially reduce their working hours in order to save on childcare costs.

"Cost is a major factor for me. If you have more than one child at registered childcare, it is expensive. The Child Tax Credits are troublesome, and put people off" Anon respondent

However, a recent Mori poll suggests that working parents are still prepared to spend time and money on leisure and recreation. The cost of taking a child to a playcentre ranges from free of charge up to £4 an hour with supervision.





7 SOURCES OF EXTERNAL FUNDING

There are no sources of outside funding for childminders, other than support for training and possible qualifications. The users of childminding or other childcare services, however, may qualify for financial support. For example:

- a) Child benefit is paid to people bringing up children and is not affected by income.
- b) A Childcare voucher system is available for employer supported childcare. Many employers offer 'leapfrog vouchers' as part of an employee's salary. This allows part of care costs to be tax-free, up to £243 per month per parent, deducted from the employee's salary before tax and national insurance. Parent's pass vouchers on to childcare providers²⁵. The job centre plus can offer advice on this system.
- c) Tax credits. There are two types of tax credits: (i) the child tax credit, where 9 out of 10 families with children (where parents earn less than £57k p.a.) qualify up to £1845, although the average payout is only in the region of around half this figure; (ii) the working tax credit, which provides additional support for workers on low income with extra amounts for qualifying childcare (e.g. for lone parents, low wage earners, married parents where one parent is incapacitated). An extremely healthy number of questionnaire respondents (74%) indicated that they were already aware of tax credits (see Section 4.2). It is possible to get both tax credits based upon personal circumstances. Such people can receive around 80-85% credit support.
- d) HE/FE childcare fund students in full or part-time education can apply.
- e) New deal for lone parents provides advice on jobs, training, benefits and childcare support, with applications are available from the job centre.
- f) Sure start maternity grants- claimed through the job centre, these may be available for the extra costs of bringing up a baby. Eligibility begins after 29 weeks of pregnancy and lasts until the baby is three months old.

Whilst there is a range of offers to aid childcare users, there is a paucity of funding for supporting childcare in group settings. This is especially problematic in Moray, since group settings in small towns and villages generally do not make money, as experienced several times over in Buckie (see Section 3).

The Buckie Regeneration Group has access to limited funds through the Moray Towns Partnership and, since this is locally devolved, some could be available for start-up costs.

Previously, childcare groups have successfully received start-up and pump-prime money from the public sector, or private trusts such as Lloyds Foundation, or the Robertson Trust and the Baxters Foundation. Individual entrepreneurs have successfully applied to Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Lottery, Children in Need, the Princes Trust and the Langelly Foundation for business start up. However, in times of recession, even these various benefactor sources are under severe pressure.

²⁵ It is known that some parents abuse of this system and do not pass the vouchers on to their providers.

Private investment is a potential source, albeit the international economy is still in the process of recovery. Despite this, Building Blocks in St Peters, and Springfield Properties at Letterfourie Gardens, both demonstrate that the private sector is well prepared to play its part. Buckie area businesses also continue to support childcare services as best they can through ad hoc sponsorships.

As well as investing in childcare groups, the private sector is best placed to deliver commercially viable solutions to meet the recreational needs and desires of young children in the form of ball pools, soft play climbing frames and outdoor play centres.

The time given by the voluntary sector, however, should not be underestimated as a measurable contribution to formally or informally meeting the needs of parents and their children in Buckie.



8 SUSTAINING THE EFFORT

Judging by past experiences in Buckie and elsewhere (see Section 3), the issue of funding is less to do with capital outlay and start-up costs, but more to do with revenue funding and sustaining the effort.

Buckie is fortunate in having a local culture with strong community support and family networks, but this hampers the potential for sustaining childcare groups. It is a town that, in recent decades, has experienced lower income levels which, coupled with the significant period of recession, is not a helpful situation towards sustaining childcare groups as businesses.

There may be an issue in Buckie that some people are not aware of the benefits of reaching the 16 hours work per week threshold that allows them to qualify for tax credit, but the questionnaire results indicate that the vast majority of people in the town are at least aware of the existence of credits (see section 7c).

Whilst the initial enthusiasm of individuals and the relative ease of attracting kickstart funding has led to several start-ups, the lack of revenue support, the lack of consistent numbers, the inability to raise hourly rates, the increase in regulation and legislation, the downward economic trend, the historic reliance on family networks, and the natural cycle of children growing up and moving on, has conspired against many of the areas groups during the past decade.

Worryingly, this trend could continue. Despite strong expressions of interest from potential users, the initial uptake of Building Blocks service provision has been poor. The organisation is still in its infancy, but it cannot sustain itself for very long at a loss with no outside funding available at present to support it.

"Buckie has a history of saying it needs childcare centres, but then not using them regularly enough when provided" Childcare Official Aug 09

The matter of seasonality adds to the financial vicissitudes. For example, childminders and childcare groups are usually quieter during holiday times; whereas play centres are generally busier. Ad hoc voluntary groups often come to the fore during holiday periods, but it can be increasingly difficult to get volunteers.

Long-term funding is a struggle for groups that operate throughout the year and these require constant marketing, if not constant fundraising efforts, e.g. soup and sweets; sponsored events; charitable donations.

On the other hand, experiences in the north east suggest that private ventures providing all year round play centres can operate viably over a number of years, especially if combined with another commercial function.

9 CONCLUSION

The findings of this report confirm that there is presently a lack of childcare services and things to do for a very young people in the Buckie area.

The findings also indicate that more people within Buckie would be more likely to either work or enter into training study programme as a result of improved childcare facilities.

Compared with other towns within Moray and Aberdeen shire, Buckie has a low number of childminders, an underprovision of flexible, all-day childcare, and a dearth of things to do for a very young people. Noting that : (i) the childminders in the area are generally full; (ii) 70+ questionnaire respondees cite the need for an after-school club or a playgroup, and (iii) Buckie parents are prepared to take their children long distances for recreational activities, it certainly appears that there is market demand in the town for more facilities.

Whilst there may be a general lack of registered provision for childcare in Buckie, - especially for the two to three-year-olds- it needs to be seen in the context of three previous closures in recent years (refer to section 3). A great deal of time and money was invested in these service provisions, but the lack of use compelled all three to shut down. Furthermore, at least three ad hoc providers have also shut down. There is therefore an understandable scepticism that the Buckie community is unable and/or unwilling to pay for childcare over the long term. In this respect, Buckie is not atypical of other communities, although it does appear to have a strong extended family network that is capable of providing a local solution. This situation may of course change in time, particularly with the demise of the fishing industry forcing people to look for work elsewhere, along with the proposed expansion of the town to the south and west.

The very recent start up of the Building Blocks nursery (in west north Buckie) will help to fill the gap in the registered group provision for two to four-year-olds, provided that it can be sustained. The proposed Springfield development (in west south Buckie) should further underpin provision up to nursery level, should it go ahead and also be sustained. The portents of previous schemes, however, in the town unfortunately suggest that the Buckie community requires to 'use or possibly lose' these new facilities.

The demise of previous childcare schemes in the town centre, however, leaves a current local service gap for central to east Buckie, but this could be filled by either (i) the development of Milton Drive Community Project, (ii) new premises within future developments to southeast Buckie, and/or (iii) a reconsideration of the use of the Lady Cathcart Centre as a possible 'family centre' (see Section 4.4. and 5).

The geographical mapping of play centres in the area (see section 3), together with the findings of the interviews and questionnaires, readily indicates the lack of recreational facilities for the very young. There are various opportunities in the town for the private sector to either expand existing businesses or create new ones to help fill this gap.

9.1 Recommendations

The scope of the report and its research findings result in the following recommendations to the Buckie Area Forum Regeneration Group and its partners:

- 1) In order to increase flexible all-day care provision, take appropriate action to advertise the scope for around 4 to 5 more childminders operating in the Buckie area.
- 2) In order to sustain the town's embryonic childcare groups, **consider a watching brief** and/or business mentoring role for Building Blocks and/or Portessie Playgroup (and possibly) Letterfourie Gardens at least during the life of the Buckie Action Plan. Investigate the longer term potential of using the Lady Cathcart Centre as a onestop-shop, multi-functional Family Centre.
- 3) Investigate the longer term potential of using the Lady Cathcart Centre as a one-stop-shop, multi-functional Family Centre.
- 4) Invite the Milton Drive Community Project to consider the expansion of its Mothers and Toddlers group provision, subject to it moving to larger premises
- 5) Invite the Council and partners, including the voluntary sector, to consider additional activity classes, e.g. health and fitness; homework clubs; reading and drama, in order to enhance and expand things to do for young people.
- 6) Advertise and promote the scope for private sector provision of a soft play/ climbing frame/outdoor centre for the very young (possibly combined with a climbing wall facility for older children).
- 7) Work with local partners to increase the marketing and accessibility of up-todate information on 'What's available in Buckie for young people', e.g. newspapers; community radio; wider availability of newsletters, leaflets, CDs, web material.

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www.taxcredits.inlandrevenue.gov.uk

www.the play barn at green fields.co. uk

www.torridoneducationgroup.co.uk

www.williamsons garden centre.co.uk

Appendix 1

Types of childcare services recognised by Scottish Government:

Childminders

Home environment. Support families as children grow up. Decide on their working hours as Self employed. Some will work early mornings, evenings and weekends. Can take your child to a playgroup, pre-school or school as part of the routine.7.30am to 6pm. Most weeks in the year. Up to age 16 years old. Six children aged under 12 of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 1 year old.

Nurseries

Opportunities for children to learn and play with friends. Usually geared to the needs of children with working parents. Some nurseries offer free, preschool places for children aged three and four. Some nurseries have places for babies and toddlers. Some are part of childcare schemes, which also provide childcare for older children.8.30 am to 6pmMost weeks in the year. Children under 5 years. Between 26 and 40 children.

Out of School Clubs

Children can learn, relax after school and have fun with their friends. Variety of activities. Geared to the needs of children with working parents. Out of school hours. Normally between 5years old and 11 years old. Some provide places for 3 and 4year olds. Between 10 and 40 children.

Playgroups

Your child can enjoy learning and playing in a small group. You can meet and get to know parents in your area. Usually open 2½ hours for 2 to 5 sessions per week 2½ to 5 years old.

Childcare Agency

Provide carer service in child's own home. Flexible hours, including weekends and are available in rural areas. Put you in touch with other parents so that childcare can be shared.7 ~10.30 pm (but can be flexible –including weekends) most weeks in the year. Up to 16 years old

Extract from Scottish Executive Childcare leaflet 2001

Appendix 2

Registered Provision within Buckie during recent years

[Note (F) – indicates 'Council funded places' available. (P) – indicates 'local authority preschool education partner']

Child minders (spring/summer 09) for the Buckie catchment area:

- 1) Maree Geddes, Buckie 835242
- 2) Linda Weir, Portessie 836028
- 3) Heather Grant, Buckie 839918
- 4) Lisa Riddoch, Buckie 839356
- 5) Kerry Bolton, Buckie 833555
- 6) Wendy Hay, Cullen 841319
- 7) Kay Smith, Buckpool 832354
- 8) Miriam Ferrie, Portessie 834819
- 9) Debbie Thomas, Buckie 831080
- 10) Sally Wright*, Buckie 839828
- 11) Jacqueline Moore, Buckie 834669
- 12) Toni Gill, Portknockie 840927
- 13) Carmen Stillie, Buckie 835178
- 14) Kerry Reid, Buckie 835511

(*Sally is the contact for the Buckie Childminding Group. The Group is supported by the SCMA Development Officer, Marie Buchan).

Buckie Area Holiday Playscheme

This group is located at the Buckie Community High School (tel number 832605) and caters for children between the years of 5 to 12. It only functions during selective periods of the school holiday times between the hours of 1000 to 1500 and provides for up to 25 vacancies. It caters for special needs and diets but offered no transport arrangements. Its provision includes a quiet zone, arts and crafts, dancing, sports and games, and various away trips. Due to limited uptake, its future is currently uncertain.

Buckie Eagles Club

Provides specialist care and activities at the Burnie Centre for children with disabilities.

Mobile Creche

The Moray Council used to provide childcare services at BCHS but, when this stopped in 2006 due to poor financial viability, the Council ran a mobile crèche which provided ad hoc services at certain times on certain days for the under fives whenever local need and funding became available. This made it difficult to plan for. Services were provided by private agency, but had to be withdrawn on economic grounds.

Cluny

There is no LA funded nursery at the Primary School and most of those in need go to the nearby St Peter's nursery. (see below).

Jesters

The Jesters Club operated successfully for 7 years before it was shut down in 2003/04 for financial reasons. It was initially set up and supported by the Council's Community Learning and Development team and benefited from kick start funding and rent free premises. It offered extensive quality services Mon-Fri between 2.30 and 5.30pm, including holiday periods, and was adding in a Breakfast Club just before its closure. Despite having over 60 children registered and with capacity to care for up to 34 spaces, there was never more than a dozen using the facilities at a time. With annual costs rising in 2003 to c.£15k, the club became increasingly in deficit during its final two years.

Lady Cathcart Centre

Now a 'childcare information point' following training of the Centre Co-ordinators.

Lady Cathcart Centre Teddy Bear Playgroup (F)

This constituted group was set up in 1985 with a voluntary committee at the Lady Cathcart Education Centre (tel number 831522) and operates during term time 1000-1200 Mon, Wed and Fridays. It provides for 0-4 year old special needs children who must be referred by either the Council or the NHS. In spring 2009, there were no vacancies. The playgroup caters for special needs and diets, but offers no transport arrangements. Its provision includes soft play, and a games hall, a climbing frame, a sensory play area, a kitchen, and away trips.

Millbank Nursery (F)

A Council run nursery at the local primary school for 3-5 year olds Mon to Fri between 0900-1100 and 1230-1500, including an enclosed outdoor play garden.

Portessie Nursery and Playgroup (FP)

This group, which functions with an independent volunteer committee, is located at the primary school in the East End of Buckie (tel number 834091) and caters for up to 17 children between the years of 3 to 5. It takes on Council funded places and is open during term time on Mondays to Fridays between 0915 -1145 and 1300-1530. Its provision is similar to that of St Peter's (see above). The Playgroup started offering places for 2-3 year olds in October 09 and is full with 40 children attending per week Mon-Fri 1300-1500.

St Peters Nursery and Preschool Playgroup (F)

This group is located at the St Peter's Primary School in the west end of Buckie (tel number 831339) and caters for children between the years of 3 to 5. It takes on Council funded places and is open during term time on Mondays to Fridays between 0900-1130 and 1300-1530. Its provision includes a climbing frame, a games hall, access to IT, play area, kitchen, music facilities, a quiet area and away trips. It is planning to expand its service provision in autumn 2009. A local private provider, Building Blocks, has very recently leased a room and operates a new facility for up to 15 children.

VIP Childcare

The Buckie VIP Childcare group was a branch of the social enterprise unit based in Elgin and sought to provide prestige childcare for under-threes between 8a.m and 5.30pm. However, the service closed down this year on economic grounds.

Non Registered Provision within Buckie

BCHS, Mothers & Toddlers Group

This Committee-led group meets in term time on Tuesdays and Thursdays 1000-1200 occasionally opens during the easter and/or October holidays.

Buckie Churches Holiday Playscheme

This scheme is run voluntarily by Buckie's Church of Christ Community and is free of charge for school age children during mornings of the first weeks of the summer holiday. The Salvation Army (which has its own young persons club 6-7pm on Tuesdays) delivered a similar programme in the afternoons later in the summer. This year more than 200 children took part over the two weeks programme.

Buckie Church of Christ Mothers and Toddlers

The Church provides for a group meeting on Tuesday afternoons. It also has a club for school age children between 6-7pm on Sundays.

Lady Cathcart Rain or Shine

The Mothers and Toddlers group for the pre-fives used to meet in a local church but moved to Lady Cathcart in recent times. The group meets each Wed 10-1130 and Fri. 1315-14.45. Sessions cost £1.50.

MDCP Cheeky Monkeys

This informal group is based at Milton Drive and provides a mother and toddler meeting place for up to 25 children on Mons and Fridays between 9.30-11.00a.m. It operates throughout the year and charges £1.50 per session including a snack. Although the sessions are interactive, the group is limited by the space available.

Monkey Mayhem

This Buckie-based provider contracted out services on as needs basis and has been used by both the private and public sector. It has a flexible approach to its services and caters for a wide range of young persons' needs. Its emphasis is on action packed nativity classes, including craft work. With changes in personnel, the provider lacked the level of qualifications now required by regulation. The provider shut down in late October 2009.

Portessie Mothers & Toddlers

This group meets on Tuesday mornings in the local Public Hall.

Appendix 3

Registered Provision out with Buckie but within a 20 mile radius

[Note (F) – indicates 'Council funded places' available. (P) – indicates 'local authority preschool education partner']

Banff Childminders

There are currently 10 registered childminders operating within a 15 mile radius of Banff.

Banff Pre-School Centre (F)

A Council supported Playgroup for 2-5 year olds and a Nursery for 3-5 year olds operates at the local primary school. They each offer two daily sessions Mon-Fri during term time at £3 per session, and there is a waiting list for the nursery. There is also a Mothers and Toddlers club at the primary school on Mondays and Fridays for 0-3 year olds at £1.50 for a 2 hour session. An After School Club (Scoobys) is also located at the primary school. Although it offers care during term time Mon-Fri between 2.45-6pm for up to 24 children aged 4-12, it currently has no vacancies.

Cullen Nursery (F)

This Council nursery at the Primary School caters for up to eighteen 2-5 year olds.

Cullen Play Centre (F)

This Committee-led group was established in the late 1990s and, after starting life at the Community Centre, moved adjacent to the Primary School, and then back to the Centre. The group was disrupted when key personnel changes occurred in 2006/7, but it survived until cut backs controversially threatened to close it in 07/08. The Playgroup now currently

provides for 2-3 year olds and charges £5 for a 2.5hr session Mon – Fri. The Centre also offers pre-school education services for 3-4 year olds.

Elgin, Bishopmill Preschool Centre (FP)

Run by the Torridon group, the centre is open Monday to Friday and operates a breakfast club for two to 12 year olds, a playgroup costing £15 for 3 to 5 year olds between 0900-1130 and 1230-1500, and an after-school club from five to 12-year-olds between 1500-1730.

Elgin, Cherry Tree

This private sector childcare provision is delivered by Ark childcare (contact Jo Maunder Tel 01343 551664/567857) and is located within a purpose-built NHS outbuilding at Dr Gray's. It was originally established as a provider for children of NHS staff, but this did not generate enough need. Childcare has been provided to the general community throughout the year since summer 2007 for one to 12-year-olds and can accommodate up to 36 children. The group claims to be the only childcare centre to open at weekends in Moray. Open 0700-2000, the group operates a flexible booking system and childcare provision includes meals and transport to and from school. The Cherry tree has a security system, waiting-room soft play area, a garden climbing frame and offers away trips. This provider has 8 staff (6 F/T; 2 P/T) including kitchen staff. The numbers of users varies, with a significant dip occurring during the holidays.

Elgin Childcare Centre (Funshine)

This private sector venture provides for 0-12-year-olds Monday to Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Contact Liz Wood 01343 552067

Elgin, Jack N Jill Preschool Centre (FP)

this group operates from Kinder house in Elgin and provides a range of services Monday to Friday for three to 14 year olds between 07.45 and 17.45. This includes a breakfast club (£4 p.d.), playgroup, and an after-school club (£8), as well as a holiday playscheme (£20). The centre also offers pickup at Greenwards Primary School.

Elgin, Ladybird Development Nursery

This Nursery provides services to children with special needs (compare with Keith and Buckie equivalents).

Elgin, Lilliput PlayNLearn Centre (P)

This private centre in Main Street, Elgin provides care services in term time to 2 to 3-yearolds on Mondays Wednesdays and Fridays within 2 hr morning and afternoon sessions costing £2.50 per hour. It also offers a 0-2-year-old toddlers session on Tuesdays. It has a range of facilities to offer and currently has 8 vacancies.

Elgin, Magic Roundabout (FP)

This community-run venture is located in New Elgin Hall and was established in 1994. This provider has around 20 staff and caters for up to a hundred 0-14 year old children per day between 7:15 p.m. and 6 p.m. It offers flexible care including: swimming, outings, learning opportunities, outdoor playing, and also takes government funded places. Its nursery for 0-5 -year-olds costs £30 per day. The centre provides a pick up service from all local schools.

Elgin, Moray College (FP)

The college has its own dedicated Nursery mainly from the use of for part-time students with dependent children. It operates during term time Monday to Friday between 0830 and 16.30. It can offer a range of facilities including access to IT and student training.

Elgin, Moray Leisure Rainbow Centre (FP)

This quasi-public sector provider is located within a former squash court building next to the main Moray Leisure Centre at Morriston, Elgin. The separation of the two buildings allows a high level of security at the Rainbow Centre, but the association with the main centre increases the range of activities on offer. The facilities are made available to 0 -14 year olds and all children must be registered. The Breakfast Club for 2 to 14 year olds runs from 7:30 a.m. until 9:30 a.m. The Rainbow Castle - a three tier soft play and ball pool centre - is open seven days a week and is available for private parties. The Toddlers Group, for two to three-year-olds, is open from 2:15 p.m. until 3:45 p.m. on Mondays Wednesdays and Fridays. The Pre-School Nursery, which is for Council funded places only, is open Monday to Friday during term time between 9.30am - noon and 1 p.m.-3:30 p.m. The Creche is available Monday to Friday 10 a.m.- noon, and an open door policy prevails. A Holiday and In-service Club has a programme offering sports, outdoor activities, arts and crafts and so on, for up to 40 children Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. The After-school Club, operating Monday to Friday between 2:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., is available to 5-14 year olds and includes a taxi pickup service. An all-day childcare package is available for 2-5 year olds between 7:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. As well as offering some of the usual outdoor and games activities, this centre has the bonus of a nearby swimming pool and ice rink to utilise.

Elgin, New Elgin (F)

A Council run nursery at the local primary school for 3-5 year olds.

Elgin, Seafield Primary School Nursery (F)

This Nursery based at the primary school has a register of playgroup for 3-5-year-olds during term time Monday to Friday between 0900-1130 and 1245-1515. It is currently advertising 16 vacancies.

Elgin, Step by Step

Based at the Elgin youth café, this group offers a toddler session for 0-3 -year-olds on Fridays between 1000-11.30.

Elgin, St Sylvester's Nursery (P)

Based in the Abbey Street Hall, this Nursery offers sessions for 2-3-year-olds Monday to Friday during term time between 0850-1530 costing £18.50 per day. It also offers playgroup for the 3-5 -year-olds.

Elgin, VIP Childcare (FP)

This is a social enterprise venture based at Elgin Community Centre and is targeted at under 3 year olds. The enterprise aims to be a model of excellence and a flagship of prestige childcare where kids are nurtured and their development needs fully met. It offers a range of facilities between 0800-17.30, including access to a gym and sensory room.

Findochty Nursery (F)

A Council run nursery at the local primary school for 3-5 year olds.

Fochabers, The Magic Roundabout (FP)

Based in the Milne's Primary School annexe, the Magic Roundabout Centre provides a range of playgroup and out-of-school care services. The 2-3-year-olds meet during term time Tues to Fri 1300-1430, with the 3-5-year-olds coming for a 0915-11.45 session. The after-school club for 5- 12 year olds operates 1500-1800. The centre offers a wide range of facilities, including a climbing frame, sensory room, specialised play area, and a Rainbow Castle. Services include travel arrangements and catering for special needs. The centre is currently advertising up to 15 vacancies. The nursery at the Primary School for 3-5-year-olds operates two daily sessions between 0900-1130 and 1235-1505.

Fochabers, Parents and Toddlers

This group meets during term time on Wednesdays 0915-1100 at the Fochabers Public Institute and offers a limited range of facilities for 0-4-year-olds, including soft play area. There are currently no vacancies.

Garmouth and Kingston Playgroup and Nursery (FP)

Led by a voluntary committee with professional staff. this group is 30 years old now! In the summer local village hall and during term time provides services for 2-3 year olds between 0945-1145 Tues-Thurs and for 3-5-year-olds 0930-1200 Mon to Fri.

Keith Nursery (F)

A Council run nursery at the local primary school for 3-5 year olds.

Keith Playcentre and Strathisla preschool centre (FP)

These previously independent groups merged in 2008 and operate from the Keith Community Centre. They provide for 2-12 year olds incorporating a breakfast club during term time Mon-Fri 0730-0845, a toddlers group (Rugrats) on Weds 1230-1400 @£3.50, a playgroup 12.45-1415(Nippers) and an after-school club Mon-Fri between 1430-1800 for 3-12 year olds. Open between 7:15 a.m. and 6 p.m., they provide for up to 20 children all day and all year round. They are currently full and operating waiting list, and presently work with Moray College to provide two students with practical training. A feature of the group is their 'walking bus', and they are also conveniently situated adjacent to local swimming pool. Their holiday playscheme for three to 12 year olds operates Monday to Friday 1400-1600.

Keith, St Thomas RC (F)

A Council run nursery at the local primary school for 3-5 year olds.

Keith Sunshine Development Playgroup

This playgroup for 0-5 year old children with special needs meets at the Simpson Trust building between 1000-1200 each Monday Wednesday and Friday (compare with Buckie teddy bear group).

Lhanbryde Nursery (F)

This council-led nursery group based at the local primary school operates during term time Monday to Friday and provides services for 3-5-year-olds into sessions between 0900-1130 and 1230-1500.

Mosstodloch Playgroup (FP)

This group based at the local primary school operates during term time Tuesday to Thursday and provides services for 3-5-year-olds into sessions between 0910-1140 and 1220-1450. It has a range of facilities including soft play and access to a swimming pool.

Mosstowie, Woodside Steading (FP)

This private sector childcare provision is delivered by Ark Childcare (contact Jo Maunder Tel 01343 551664/567857) and is housed in a converted farm steading just five minutes west of Elgin. Childcare is provided throughout the year for one to 14 year olds and caters for up to 85 places Monday to Friday between 7am-7 p.m. The group takes in a number of funded preschool education places and states that "demand for places is extremely high, especially for baby places". The group claims to offer an integrated childcare package that caters for all ages, which includes transport between Elgin and the steading. There is a preschool day nursery, special baby rooms, a toddlers group and an out-of- school kids club after school and during the holidays. Services include an individual creche at £10 per hour available during evenings, weekends and holidays.

Newmill and District Playgroup (P)

This registered group is located in the Newmill Village Hall and with two staff caters for 8 children. It currently offers two sessions a week for 2-3-year-olds on Mondays and Wednesdays 1245-1445.

Portgordon Nursery (F)

A Council run nursery at the local primary school for 3-5 year olds.

Portgordon Breakfast Club and After School Club

This club ran from 2006 until autumn 2009 but closed down due to lack of support.

Portknockie Playgroup and Nursery (FP)

This group is located at the Portknockie primary school approximately 5 miles from Buckie approximately (tel number 841825) and caters for children between the years of 2 to 5 ½. It takes on Council funded places and, in spring 2009, there were 4 vacancies. The group caters for 2-5 years olds with special needs and diets, but offers no transport arrangements. It is open during term time on Mondays and Wednesdays between 1230 and 1430 at £4.50 per session. Its provision includes a playroom, a climbing frame, kitchen, a garden, and a TV/video room.

Portsoy Nursery (F)

A council run nursery located at the local primary school. Only provides morning sessions Mon-Fri during term time.

Portsoy Playgroup and After School Club (FP)

These groups are located at the local Community Centre. The Playgroup provides a morning session Mon – Fri 09.20-11.50 for 3-5 year olds, and only has one vacancy. The After School Club has 20 places for 4-12 year olds at £2.70 per hour and has 5 vacancies.

Spey Bay Toddlers Group

Meeting in the local village hall during term time on Thursdays 1300-1430, this group provides for 0-5-year-olds at a cost of £1.70 per session.

Urquhart Parents and Toddlers

This group meets in the local Parish Hall and offers a Monday session 0930-1100 for 0-4-year-olds at £1.50 per session.

Whitehills Mother and Toddlers

The group meets in the local Public Hall on Tues and Thurs 10-1130 and provides services for 0-3 year olds at £2 per session.

Whitehills Nursery and Playgroup (F)

A Council supported service for 3-5 year olds during term time Mon –Fri mornings only. There are currently no vacancies.

Non Registered Provision out with Buckie but within a 20 mile radius

Elgin, Brewer's Fayre

There is a soft play area within Brewers Fayre in Elgin. This area is unsupervised and there is no charge; however adults are encouraged to sit in the adjoining cafe area with children are playing. The two storey soft play structure was built several years ago and it functioned as a semi independent unit with paid supervisors and charged entry but, when the building changed hands, the provision was scaled down to its present form. Despite this, the area is still well used and obviously retains economic gain for a company.

Elgin Bowling Alley

There is supervised soft play area at the Bowling Alley within the main warehouse building. The Alley however has closed due to flooding problems.

Findochty Parents and Toddlers

This group meets on Tues 1000- 1200 and on Fri 1330-1530 in Findochty Town Hall.

Lhanbryde, The Playbarn

This private venture is located at Greenfields near Lhanbryde, east of Elgin. The project is part of farm diversification initiative that includes an adjoining horseriding shop and restaurant. The playbarn itself is built within a modern air-conditioned warehouse and it has separate, controlled access. The playbarn is open every day 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and provides different levels of fun activities of children aged 0-13 years, with a separate area for little ones. The main feature of the playbarn is an 18 x 6 x 5.5m three-storey soft play structure. Play is unsupervised, but parents and guardians are encouraged to sit in the adjoining servery area and purchase some of the various snacks available. It is possible to book the area for private parties at off-peak times.

Portgordon Mothers and Toddlers

A group currently operates from the Community Centre, but numbers have been variable.

Appendix 4 – List of consultees

Helen Andrew – Local Health Visitor Gillian Bailey – Buckie Community Support Unit Elaine Brown – founder of Cullen After School Club Marie Buchan – Scottish Childminding Association Claire George - owner of St Peters Playcentre Ivor Lee – Council Local Integration Support Officer (Children and Young People) Jo Maunder – owner of Ark Childcare John Main – Springfield Properties Morag Nye - owner of Monkey Mayhem Gillian Rose – Buckie Area Forum Alison Vass - Portessie Primary School Headteacher Sally Wright – Buckie Childminding Group Staff at Moray Childcare Partnership 8 primary schools 1 secondary 7 nurseries Parents and toddlers Playgroups Libraries Health Centres **GP** practices Access Point Leisure Centre – swimming pool **Buckie paper** Northern Scot

The Buckie Regeneration Group Invite You to

'Help us improve facilities for our children in Buckie'

As part of an action plan to boost Buckie's economy and general well being, The Buckie Regeneration Group seek your input on facilities for young children (0-12 yrs). Please take some time to complete this questionnaire adding any relevant information you think might be of interest using the back of this page if required. Please place a tick or a cross in the boxes provided.

General:									
1. What age group does your child / children fall into?									
Baby 1-3 yrs 4 - 5yrs Primary 1-3 Primary 4-7 Secondary									
Childcare:									
1. Do you use childcare services? Often Occasionally Never									
2. If you require childcare, what services would you pay to use?									
Registered									
Birth – 3 Group 2-3 Nursery / Playgroup									
3 – 5 Nursery / Playgroup Childminder									
Breakfast / After School Club 🗌 Crèche									
All Day Childcare Other (Please give details)									
Non-registered									
Holiday Club Homework Club									
Health/Fitness group 🗌 Family / friend									
3. Are you aware of tax credits to assist registered childcare? Yes No									
4. Would new facilities allow you to work or take a study course? Yes 🗌 No 🗌									
Things to do for the very young:									
5. Does Buckie need more facilities? Yes No									
6. If yes to Q5, what sort of things are needed?									
7. If 'yes' to Q5, what kind of facilities would you pay to use?									
Ball pool Outdoor play centre									
Soft play area Other (Please give details)									
Contact details (optional):- Name:									

Appendix 6 – questionnaire results

General:

1. What age group does your child / children fall into?

Baby 30 1-3 yrs 86 4 - 5 yrs 40 Primary 1-3 69 Primary 4-7 90 Secondary 34

Childcare:

Registered

1. Do you currently use childcare services?

Often 14% Occasionally 13% Never 59%

2. If you require childcare, what services would you pay to use?

	Birth – 3 Group	12%	2 – 3 Nursery / Playgroup					31%		
	3 – 5 Nursery / Playgrou	5 Nursery / Playgroup 23% Childminder						24	24%	
	Breakfast / After school	ast / After school Club 33% Crèche for occasional use					al use	21%		
	All Day Childcare		8%	Other				19	1%	
	Non-registered									
	Holiday Club		23%	Homework Club				14	14%	
	Health/Fitness group		13%	Family / friend					52%	
3.	Are you aware of tax credits to assist registered childcare? Y 78% N							Ν	10%	
4.	Would new facilities allow you to work or study? Y 54%						Ν	28%		
	Things to do for the very young:									
5.	5. Does Buckie need more facilities? Y 74% N							Ν	7%	
6. If yes to Q5, what sort of things are needed? Various (see report)										
7. If 'yes' to Q5, what kind of facilities would you pay to use? (tick as many as you want)										
	Ball pool 41%	0	utdoor play c	entre	64%					
	Soft play area 69%	0	ther		5%					

* Based upon 218 completed questionnaires from Buckie school catchment area (Oct 09)



Contact: Dr Nick Brown 33 Ellieside, Lintmill Cullen, Buckie AB56 4XQ Tel/Fax: 01542 842847 Mobile: 07900 352879 email: nbplanning@aol.com











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