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Education and Lifelong Learning



The Scottish
Government

Review of Gaelic Medium Early Education and Childcare



Review of Gaelic Medium Early Education and Childcare

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The National Plan for Gaelic 2007-2012 contains ambitious targets for the expansion of Gaelic medium (GM) primary school education, aiming for 4000 children enrolled in P1 by 2021. GM early years education and childcare plays a crucial role in attracting parents to the 'Gaelic system' and the great majority of children who enrol in GM primary have experienced GM preschool provision at nursery or playgroup. If the target numbers entering GM primary school are to be achieved then there will have to be a considerable expansion in the preschool sector too, given that there were just over 700 children enrolled in GM nurseries for session 2008-09. The National Plan includes a specific commitment to review GM early years education and childcare. The study reported here is a response to that call. It aims to clarify existing provision, identify gaps and make recommendations for changes or developments needed to ensure that the goals of the National Plan are achieved.

The review set out to examine

- the current extent of GM provision for early years education and childcare
- the supply, demand and promotion of GM early years provision
- the strengths and weakness of current provision
- the changes or developments needed to improve and extend current provision.

Research methods

There were four linked and overlapping phases of the research. We began by **mapping** existing provision using a variety of online sources and publicly available statistics. We searched for local authority, private and voluntary sector provision and included education and care for children from birth to entry to primary school and out-of-school care for children during their primary school years. Providers identified through the mapping exercise were then invited to respond online or by post to a **survey** available in English and Gaelic. The survey was devised to be appropriate to the full range of provider types and covered questions about the nature and capacity of provision, demand and uptake, the way that Gaelic was used in the setting, staffing, costs and income, promotion of GM provision, collaboration with other agencies and suggestions for future improvements and developments.

In the third phase we **interviewed** 19 key informants who had responsibility for early years education, supporting the use of Gaelic or the regulation of early years provision. The final phase of the study consisted of the development of three **case studies** to exemplify and contextualise the issues emerging from the survey and interviews. In addition to the four study phases, we surveyed all local authorities about their involvement in GM early years and childcare and also conducted brief telephone interviews with providers who were willing to talk on the telephone but not to complete the full survey.

GM early years and childcare

We identified 127 providers of GM early years education or childcare, most of whom were located in Highland and in the Western Isles, although 12 other local authorities, across Scotland, also make some provision. Most provision is designed to offer preschool experiences (in local authority nursery classes and schools or voluntary sector playgroups) to 3- to 5-year olds. This provision is typically organised in up to five sessions per week, each lasting for between two and three hours per day. There is very limited wraparound or holiday care and provision for children under the age of three is usually at parent and toddler groups. There is little childminder provision through the medium of Gaelic. Most providers do not anticipate a growth in demand and few have plans to expand their provision. Although they publicise their services in various ways, they acknowledge word-of-mouth as the most effective way to recruit parents and children.

As the vast majority of children attending GM early years provision are from English-speaking homes, their time in the GM setting is their main opportunity to acquire Gaelic. The extent to which Gaelic is used varies considerably between settings. Some provision is Gaelic only, elsewhere both English and Gaelic are used and in some settings Gaelic is only used for specific activities such as singing. Recruiting staff who are fluent Gaelic speakers and trained early years practitioners was reported as challenging by many respondents. There is a lack of accessible professional development opportunities to support the development of early years practices which facilitate young children's acquisition of Gaelic.

Financial support for GM early years education comes from national and local government and, to a lesser extent from grants from umbrella organisations and public bodies. Playgroups and parent and toddler groups are dependent on income from fees. Wraparound and holiday care for all children is subject to fees, whether provided by local authority or private nurseries or childminders. GM providers typically report only low levels of contact with umbrella groups or support agencies, most commonly to seek help with specific funding requests or resources.

GM providers would like to see improvements in the supply of trained staff fluent in Gaelic, in professional development focussing on bilingual education and in the supply of high quality GM resources. They suggested that an increase in funding and support from national and local bodies and more effective ways of promoting their provision would help to achieve these goals but also sought enhanced opportunities for networking with other practitioners and providers.

Key issues for GM early years and childcare

This review has identified key issues in five areas.

1. *Language learning and teaching* including: effective approaches to support fluent speakers and learners in the same setting; achieving a Gaelic-only environment when not all staff are fluent speakers and English frequently encroaches; and ensuring that Gaelic immersion settings are sufficiently linguistically rich environments.

2. *Ensuring high quality experiences for children* including: ensuring that the training of practitioners equips them to deliver all the experiences and outcomes envisaged by Curriculum for Excellence in ways which integrate language learning; providing for continuity and progression and maintaining playroom practices and conditions for staff that promote a high quality learning environment.

3. *Supply of GM resources* including: overcoming the scarcity associated with current GM early years learning resources and finding ways to provide GM resources that are culturally appropriate and do not demand practitioner time for translation and production.

4. *Varying parental perspectives and expectations*: meeting the challenge of providing for children whose parents choose GM whether they are committed to Gaelic revitalisation or speak Gaelic at home, or seek to ensure that their children gain the benefits of bilingualism or are motivated primarily by the other social and educational benefits they associate with GM provision.

5. *Managing demand and promoting provision* including: understanding the varying levels of demand from parents, informing parents about GM provision without raising anxieties about language barriers for adults, finding effective ways to build an attractive local reputation.

Recommendations for change and development

The findings from this review have led to recommendations for action to:

- improve the initial and continuing professional development and training level of practitioners in GM provision and develop effective mechanisms for sharing knowledge and practice
- support GM provision through improving the supply of GM resources, extending provision for GM childcare and developing mechanisms to extend the opportunities that children have to use Gaelic at home and in the community
- grow the market for GM provision through a national promotion strategy focusing on the benefits of GM education and including access to a regularly maintained database and map of provision
- conduct further research into the outcomes for children, including their development of Gaelic as a result of attending GM early years provision and the efficacy of the various models of language development in operation
- conduct a Scotland-wide survey of parents to establish the nature of any unmet demand for GM provision.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Policy context

The 1891 census recorded 254,415 speakers of Gaelic (including both monolingual and bilingual speakers of the language), just under 7% of the population at the time. A question on Gaelic has been included in every subsequent census, showing that numbers have fallen over the twentieth century to 58,652 in 2001, representing 1.2% of the Scottish population. More recently *Growing up in Scotland* (a longitudinal cohort study, SEED, 2007) found that under 1% of families with young children reported using Gaelic at home in the period 2004-5.

In recent decades, there has been considerable interest in attempts to revitalise endangered languages by increasing the number of people who speak the language. Education clearly has a key part to play in revitalisation (just as the absence of educational opportunities in a given language plays a major role in its decline). Provision for education and care via the medium of the endangered language means that

- 1) children have opportunities for prolonged exposure to the language, can use it with peers as well as adults and beyond the domestic sphere;
- 2) they become literate in the language, something that is difficult to achieve if exposure is largely to spoken language at home;
- 3) the status, and therefore the survival, of the endangered language is raised within and outwith the community (Hornberger & King, 1996).

From the early 1980s onwards Gaelic early years and childcare provision has played a crucial role in the Gaelic education system and Gaelic development initiatives more generally. Attracting children and parents to the 'Gaelic system' from the earliest stage is essential if the downward demographic trends affecting Gaelic are to be reversed. The great majority of children who enrol in GM¹ primary education come up through GM playgroups and nurseries. Well structured, well co-ordinated, well publicised and high-quality GM early years and childcare provision, based on careful research and analysis, is therefore an important priority within Gaelic development policy.

Gaelic development policy in Scotland is framed by Bòrd na Gàidhlig's National Plan for Gaelic 2007-2012. Section 2 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 requires the Bòrd to produce a new plan every five years containing 'a strategy for promoting, and facilitating the promotion of . . . the use and understanding of the Gaelic language, and . . . Gaelic education and Gaelic culture'. The 2007-2012 Plan sets out the Bòrd's vision of Gaelic as 'the preferred language of an increasing number of people in Scotland, the mother tongue of an increasing number of speakers, supported by a dynamic culture in a diverse language community'. To move towards the realisation of this vision, the National Plan seeks progress in four key areas: language acquisition, language usage, language status and language

¹ We will use GM throughout this report to indicate Gaelic-medium provision.

corpus. Three of the four goals in relation to language acquisition relate to the early years:

- increase the use and transmission of Gaelic in the home
- increase the percentage of children acquiring Gaelic in the home
- increase the uptake and availability of Gaelic-medium education

The National Plan also contains a National Gaelic Education Strategy, which lists among its goals progress in the expansion of Gaelic childcare facilities and GM pre-school education.

The National Plan also sets out a number of targets of different kinds for 2021, 2031 and 2041. (It was felt that the 2011 census was too soon following the launch of the 2007-2012 plan to expect any positive outcomes). Targets set for 2021 include 4000 children enrolled in P1 that year (compared with just over 300 in 2006). There were 864 children enrolled in GM nurseries in 2008-9; if half of these are four-year olds progressing to GM primary schools or units, the P1 intake in 2009-10 will be somewhere in the area of 430, little over one-tenth of the target for 2021. Clearly, if the target for 2021 is to be reached, the GM preschool sector, as well as the GM primary sector, must undergo dramatic growth in the coming years.

Among the specific projects announced in the National Plan is a review of GM early years education and childcare. This study is a response to that call to clarify existing provision, identify gaps and make recommendations for improving provision.

1.2 GM early years provision

Preschool education and care (and out of school care for older children) in Scotland is available in a wide range of types of provision. All three- to five-year olds in Scotland are entitled to free preschool educational provision for 475 hours per year, typically provided over five half-day sessions throughout the school year. Parents may choose to use this entitlement in local authority provision or with a private or voluntary sector provider who has a partnership agreement with a local authority. Being in partnership with the local authority means that private and voluntary sector providers are committed to meeting expectations about the curriculum and the quality of practice offered. GM provision is currently offered in most parts of Scotland, although it is concentrated in the Highlands and Islands and in central urban areas, with significant geographical gaps in between.

Like English medium preschool education, GM preschool education for three- to five-year olds may be offered in local authority nursery classes attached to a primary school, in a local authority nursery school (a type of provision only available in some areas), in private nursery settings and in playgroups. Children attending local authority nursery classes or schools usually do so for five morning or five afternoon sessions per week and have the same holidays as the local schools. Private sector nurseries provide education and childcare across the day (typically from 8 am until 5 or 6 pm) and children may attend for the hours that suit their parents. These settings are usually open throughout the year and most accommodate children from about six months to five years old. If parents want their child to attend beyond the universal free entitlement then fees are charged in the private sector. Voluntary sector

preschool provision in English or Gaelic is dominated by playgroups managed by a committee of parents. The children attend for morning or afternoon sessions which are typically led by one or more paid playleaders. In some playgroups parents take turns to help during the sessions. Most playgroups operate during school terms only. A small charge is sometimes made by playgroups to cover the cost of snacks or new resources and there may be fund-raising events too.

For care (in English or Gaelic) beyond the free entitlement for three- to five-olds parents have to turn to all-day private providers, as described above, or seek out a childminder. Childminders offer all-day and year-round care from babyhood throughout the primary school years. Some local authority nursery classes and schools are able to offer care over lunch time, a 'paid for' place in addition to the free entitlement hours or care during extended hours at the beginning of the day or in the late afternoon. There is usually a charge for these extra hours and places are often limited in number. Some schools offer care for older children in after-school clubs: and there are examples of GM holiday play schemes supported by local authorities and voluntary groups.

Parent and toddler groups offer informal play and learning opportunities for children under three years of age. They are usually managed by a voluntary committee, sometimes with the support of a paid playleader during the sessions. Groups typically meet once or twice a week for one or two hours, sometimes in a village or church hall or in spaces made available by local authorities or schools. There are toys and activities provided for children and opportunities for parents to talk to each other and play with their children. Sessions usually include time for singing together. Parents pay fees to cover the cost of the playleader and any charges for rent or resources. In the case of GM groups some have been specifically designed to assist parents to learn Gaelic too.

1.3 Challenges for GM early years provision

The diversity of sociolinguistic, geographic and demographic settings in relation to Gaelic early years and childcare provision represents an important challenge. The circumstances and needs of children and parents vary across the country. Crucially, in most settings, the great majority of children attending will not hear Gaelic at home or in the wider community, and even in the stronger Gaelic-speaking areas a large proportion of the children will come into preschool with little or no Gaelic. GM early years provision increasingly, indeed now overwhelmingly, constitutes an 'immersion' experience rather than development of children's 'mother tongue', although it is critical that the small minority of Gaelic-speaking children also benefit from excellent provision that suits their needs.

Given that language acquisition tends to improve in more or less direct proportion to the extent of input, finding ways to extend children's contact with Gaelic is a key challenge for the development of the sector. Attending some form of GM provision beyond the free entitlement is one way of increasing children's exposure to Gaelic. Holiday play schemes could help to maintain contact with the language but changes to practice in the home and extended family can also make an important contribution.

Two other challenges merit attention. The first is to ensure that children attending GM provision experience high-quality early years education and care and, at the same time, excellent support in language learning. Meeting both these demands is likely to require the development of specific practices. The second challenge is to provide a supply of GM resources (particularly books, display materials and computer games and learning activities) that offers children the kind of variety and high production values available in English.

1.4 Review of GM early education and childcare

This review of GM early education and childcare was commissioned by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Scottish Government.² The review aims to describe existing provision for GM early years and childcare and to establish what changes or developments will be needed to ensure that the relevant goals and targets of the National Plan for Gaelic are achieved. The four research questions (RQs) posed by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Scottish Government have guided our choice of research design and have informed our data collection, analysis and the writing of this report.

RQ 1 What is the current extent of Gaelic medium provision for early years education and childcare, in formal and informal settings and in the public, private and voluntary sectors?

RQ2 What steps ensure that there is sufficient supply to meet demand; and that promotion of provision is effective?

RQ3 What strengths and weaknesses – in relation to staffing, financial resources, language needs, quality improvement and management support – can be identified?

RQ4 What changes or developments are needed to ensure that provision is adequate to support the National Plan's goal of a sustainable future for Gaelic in Scotland?

In Chapter 2 of this report we set out our research methods. Chapter 3 describes the extent of GM provision revealed by the mapping exercise (RQ1), then goes on to draw on the survey responses to describe the landscape of current provision (RQ1 and RQ3), issues of supply, demand and promotion (RQ2), sources of support for GM early years and childcare (RQ3) and the developments that providers would like to see (RQ4). In Chapter 4 we discuss key issues for successful GM early years and childcare (RQ3), illustrated and exemplified by data from key informants, telephone survey responses and the case studies. Recommendations for changes and developments (RQ4) are offered in Chapter 5.

² We will refer to the different kinds of provision using the terms set out in 1.2 above. The designation 'practitioner' will be used to refer to the adults offering education and care in nursery classes or schools. The adults working in playgroups are described as 'playleaders'. Adults offering care in their homes are referred to as 'childminders'.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The research design sought to utilise both quantitative and qualitative methods (i) to describe existing provision of GM preschool education for children aged 3-5 years and GM childcare for children from 0-14 years old and (ii) to understand the factors that facilitate or constrain the provision and expansion of these education and care services.

There were four linked and overlapping phases of the research:

Phase 1: Mapping provision

Phase 2: Surveying providers

Phase 3: Interviewing key informants

Phase 4: Conducting case studies

The research was conducted over a period of five months, between January and June 2009.

2.1 Phase 2: Mapping provision

The Scottish Government's annual preschool and childcare census provided the starting point for our mapping of existing provision. However, as this census covers only local authority and partnership providers, we extended our search to identify other providers who offer childcare or informal or voluntary services for young children and their parents at home or in out-of-home settings. We also searched for provision registered with the Care Commission and for services such as parent and toddler groups that do not have to be registered because of their restricted hours of operation. Our goal was to identify the nature and extent of each form of provision or service identified, including users, fees, capacity and availability. We also looked for gaps or inconsistencies in the data sources. Details of the online sources consulted are given in Appendix C.

Additional sources included statistics on the numbers of pupils in GM education, including nursery units, compiled annually by the Faculty of Education, University of Strathclyde, and responses to a questionnaire which we sent to each local authority. Contacts in the education departments of each local authority were asked to complete a short questionnaire on provision in their area, including provision that had closed or opened in the past year and plans for closures or new provision in the coming year. All but one³ of the 17 authorities with GM provision provided lists of or information on nursery classes, playgroups and parent and toddler groups, but none gave details of childminders. (See Appendix A for a summary of questionnaire responses, including information on demand, links with other authorities, and informal provision). Our provider survey (see below) included a question asking for any information about other providers in the area. A few respondents gave names of other providers, and those that were new to the review were subsequently contacted.

³ Clackmannanshire, which has limited provision that was not specified.

2.2 Phase 2: Surveying provision

Providers identified through the mapping exercise formed the basis for a survey of GM preschool education and childcare providers. Respondents were contacted by email initially and invited to participate either via the online survey form or by post. Respondents were also offered the choice of responding in Gaelic or in English.⁴

The survey was devised to be applicable to each of the main informant groups, covering registered and unregistered service providers across the public, private and voluntary sectors, local authorities and childcare partnerships. The survey document is included as Appendix B. In order to enhance the rate of survey returns, we issued targeted postal and email reminders and placed all entrants in a draw for vouchers to purchase preschool play equipment. We sought to increase the number of responses by sending email and postal reminders to those who had not returned the survey and followed this by telephone calls to encourage providers to respond. The final total of completed surveys was 43. A further 5 surveys were partially completed but the limited extent of the responses meant that we could not use these returns in the analysis. The survey findings described in Chapter 3 are based on the 43 completed returns, 34% of the total number of providers identified in our mapping of GM provision.

In 24 cases, respondents contacted by telephone told us that they did not have time to reply to the survey but they were willing to answer a much reduced number of questions on the telephone. We have included these responses in our consideration of the emerging issues and to illustrate particular points but they are not included in the account of the survey findings in Chapter 3. The combination of written and telephone responses brought the final response rate to 53% of the total population identified in the mapping exercise. This constitutes a good return rate for an unsolicited survey, where average return rates are generally expected to be between 25% and 30%. Table 2.1 shows the final response numbers for the different provider types identified.

Table 2.1: Responses by provider type

Type of provider	Survey returned	Telephone contact only
Nursery class or school	24	2
Private nursery	0	-
Playgroup	9	5
Parent & toddler group	4	10
Childminder	5	4
Holiday/after-school care	-	-
Combined provision	6	3
	48 of which 43 complete	24

⁴ Only 3 respondents chose to reply in Gaelic.

2.4 Phase 3: Key informant interviews

From telephone and face-to-face interviews or email responses from 19 key informants, we collected more nuanced and in-depth perspectives on provision than were possible from the survey. Our key informants were representatives of

- CNSA – Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Àraich⁵ (2 key informants)
- HMIE – HM Inspectorate of Education (3 key informants)
- CnP – Comann nam Pàrant
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- Scottish Government
- Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (2 key informants)
- CALA – Care and Learning Alliance
- Ross, Skye, and Lochaber Childcare Partnership
- Lews Castle College
- SCMA – Scottish Childminding Association
- Cothrom
- Glasgow City Council
- Highland Council (2 key informants)
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar – Western Isles Council

2.5 Phase 4: Case studies of GM provision in context

Three case studies were conducted in the course of the review in order to understand and represent the contingent nature of the factors influencing the provision and up-take of GM early years education and childcare. The aim was to exemplify and contextualise issues emerging from the survey and interviews. They provided opportunities to gather the perspectives of providers, parents and local authority representatives about GM opportunities in a specific area and to explore further factors which facilitate or inhibit good practice.

The three locations selected were chosen to represent the very different contexts in which GM education can be found: one island community where Gaelic is widely spoken; one small, northern town and one southern city, both locations where Gaelic is not widely spoken. When we describe evidence gathered from the case study locations we will refer to them as *Island*, *Small Town* and *City*. GM providers in each of the selected case study areas were interviewed about the nature of their provision, possibilities for expansion, barriers and facilitators and sources of support to improve sustainability or opportunities for growth. At each case study setting a sample of parents was identified and asked about their views on the setting, reasons for choosing GM provision and perceptions of the benefits of GM early years education.

⁵ During the course of this study the name of the organisation was changed to ***Taic, The Gaelic Family and Community Organisation***. However, as the organisation is still widely known as CNSA and our respondents used that name, we will use CNSA throughout this report.

3 GAELIC MEDIUM EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE: CURRENT PROVISION

In this chapter we will describe our findings about the current provision of GM early education and childcare. We will draw on the evidence gathered from the mapping exercise and the survey of providers, supplemented with data from brief telephone interviews with providers who did not return a survey but were willing to answer a few questions on the telephone, and publicly available information on support for GM early years provision. The chapter is arranged in four sections:

- GM early years and childcare: current landscape
- Supply, demand and promoting GM early years and childcare
- External support for GM early years and childcare
- Improving GM early years and childcare

Chapter 3 concludes with a summary of the main findings presented.

3.1 GM early years and childcare: current landscape

3.1.1 *The extent of current provision*

Our search of early education and childcare websites, data provided by local authorities and other bodies and suggestions from individuals and providers established a preliminary database of about 140 providers of early education or childcare who made some mention of GM provision. Through the survey, telephone calls to providers who did not respond to the survey and careful scrutiny of the database we produced a final list of **127** providers who say that they offer some degree of GM provision. Table 3.1 shows the provision available in each local authority area according to sector.

Table 3.1: Provision in Local Authorities by sector

Local authority	Public	Private ⁶	Voluntary	Total
Aberdeen	1		1	2
Angus	1		1	2
Argyll & Bute	7		3	10
Clackmannanshire			1	1
East Ayrshire	2			2
E. Dunbartonshire	1		2	3
Edinburgh	3			3
Glasgow	3		1	4
Highland	19	26	17	62
Inverclyde	1			1
North Lanarkshire	2		2	4
South Lanarkshire	1		2	3
Stirling	1			1
Western Isles	7	7	15	29
Totals	49	33	45	127

⁶ Private provision refers to private group settings and childminders.

The GM provision available from these 127 providers ranges from Gaelic-immersion nursery classes, through playgroups where only Gaelic is used or English and Gaelic are used in parallel, parent and toddler groups where Gaelic may be restricted to songs and rhymes and some tuition for parents, to childminders who 'have a few words [of Gaelic]' or are willing to ask someone else to help with Gaelic expressions, colours, counting etc. if parents request this. In Appendix D we have drawn on our case study field notes to provide sketches of the range of GM preschool environments and experiences across Scotland. It should be noted that neither providers, key informants nor case study parents mentioned GM provision for children with special needs, and we did not encounter any examples of such provision. Given the relatively small proportion of children who have special needs explicitly identified during the early years this is not unexpected.

A database representing provision as it stood on 10 June 2009 has been supplied separately to the Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig. The database includes details about the location of provision, type of provision, capacity, charges and local contacts where available. The criteria for inclusion in the database are set out in Appendix C, along with a list of factors that increased the complexity of the mapping exercise and which will have to be addressed if mapping is to be refined in the future.

In addition, a map showing the location of provision has been produced from the database and supplied, in the first instance, to the Scottish Government. The map is colour-coded by type of provider and shows the location of each provider on the database, the name of the provider, type of provision, capacity (where known), and address/contact details.

3.1.2 Use of Gaelic in GM early years and childcare





Respondents to the survey were all involved in early years provision that claimed to be GM to some extent. However, only one-third of the respondents stated that the language of the setting was Gaelic only. Just over half of the respondents indicated that all staff were fluent Gaelic speakers, although in a further 16% of settings most staff were fluent. Notably, 4 providers stated that *no* staff were Gaelic-speaking. The Gaelic language abilities of volunteers and parent helpers were more limited. In about 16% of the provision where volunteers were involved, most of them could speak Gaelic fluently but there were settings where none of the volunteers spoke Gaelic. Parent helpers were much less likely to speak Gaelic. Over half of the respondents reported that none or only a few of their parent helpers spoke Gaelic fluently. Only half of the survey respondents stated that Gaelic was used 'at all times and for all activities' by staff. However, around 20% of respondents stated that staff had a choice as to which language to use with children, while 30% of respondents stated that Gaelic was used 'regularly for specific activities'.

The use of Gaelic by staff in the early years setting is particularly important, as few children attending come from Gaelic-speaking homes: only 5 providers (12%) had at least half their children coming into the setting from such homes, while half the providers had 'a few' children, and one-third of the providers catered for children with no previous exposure to the language. In the majority of settings, children were encouraged to speak Gaelic at all times. A quarter of respondents indicated that

children could choose whether to speak in English or Gaelic and about half of the respondents agreed that they used Gaelic for specific activities (perhaps singing, stories or whole group discussions).

The language goals set by providers (Table 3.2) reflect the diversity of language backgrounds among children.

Table 3.2: Language goals of GM providers

Language Goal		Number of Providers n=43
To support the Gaelic language development of children from Gaelic-speaking homes:		24
To prepare children planning to attend Gaelic-medium primary school:		36
To enable children from non-Gaelic-speaking homes to become fluent in Gaelic:		27
To enable children from non-Gaelic-speaking homes to learn a little Gaelic:		26










The activities and resources used to realise these goals varied from setting to setting, but included using Gaelic for:

- all activities – across the curriculum
- action songs
- arts and crafts
- reading
- dancing and exercise
- outdoor play
- sand and water play
- role play
- snack time and lunch
- circle time
- colours and numbers
- greetings
- instructions.

Specific activities to develop spoken Gaelic included: circle time, stories, numbers and counting, arts and crafts, ‘news’, singing, daily changes to the calendar and weather chart, drama. Specific activities to develop written Gaelic included: Facal is Fuaim (phonics scheme), using information and communication technologies, pictures, reading time, arts and crafts.

There was a wide variety of resources used by the providers, as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Resources used in GM provision

Resource		Number of Providers n=43
Gaelic-speaking staff:		36
Gaelic-speaking visitors:		18
Visits to other settings where Gaelic is used:		12
Books in Gaelic:		41
Posters and other visual aids in Gaelic:		37
Puppets and other toys that children associate specifically with Gaelic:		21
Audio-visual resources in Gaelic (e.g. tapes, CDs, DVDs):		38
Gaelic websites for children:		15
Other technological resources in Gaelic (e.g. CD-ROMs, video games):		23

All nursery classes and schools and most playgroups observed children's competence in Gaelic during their time in the setting but this was less likely to happen in parent and toddler groups and in care settings. Most educational settings also assessed and recorded children's Gaelic language progress. Parent and toddler groups were seldom involved in passing on information about children's progress to other settings. Most nursery classes, schools and playgroups share details of children's competence in Gaelic in the transition record, although this was more likely to happen when children moved on to the GM provision.

3.1.3 Staffing, recruitment and training in GM early years and childcare

The issue of staffing received many comments from survey respondents, highlighting the importance of this area for providers. The 27 nursery providers who responded to the survey employed a total of 67 staff, many of whom were part-time only; over half the providers had two members of staff. One-third of respondents stated that they found it challenging to recruit staff with appropriate early years qualifications and experience, with a further third stating that this had been a problem in the past. Three-quarters of respondents struggled to recruit suitable Gaelic-speaking staff (only 5 providers stated this was not an issue). The most common qualifications for staff were an SVQ in childcare, usually at level 3 or above, teaching qualifications, and/or a HNC or HND. However, two-thirds of respondents also used volunteers and parent helpers, who are unlikely to be qualified.

Some aspects of staffing at the nursery settings raise questions. Only 7 providers employed full-time teachers, although some other providers did have part-time teachers for support; more significantly, fewer than half the respondents stated that the qualified teachers associated with their provision were fluent in spoken and written Gaelic. It seems likely that this will limit the extent to which these teachers are

able to model or support Gaelic language development practices. Time for staff to plan was also limited, with no non-contact/planning time available in one-third of the providers, and only 5 providers stating that planning time was available to staff daily or every other day. In terms of training and continuing professional development (CPD), accessible and affordable training was only attainable for half of the nursery providers. Most of the courses which respondents described attending covered basic requirements (such as First Aid and Child Protection) or were concerned with the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence. Providers did not list any courses held in or about Gaelic. As their initial professional education does not prepare practitioners specifically for GM provision and there is a lack of in-service courses in this area, most staff will have no specific training as language educators. Among those providers (across the sectors) who were able to describe their wage costs the bulk reported paying between £6 and £12 per hour. Pay scales were comparable to English-medium provision, indicating that fluency in Gaelic is not value-added in terms of salary. There was a fairly high turnover rate among the 27 nursery providers that responded to the survey: in the past year, 15 staff had left their positions, while 28 new staff had started. Only half the providers had not experienced any staff turnover.

Relatively few childminders responded to the survey, although those that did highlighted similar concerns about training and pay scales. Among the 12 voluntary providers that responded to the survey, 9 employed paid staff, with a total of 21 staff. Half of the voluntary providers utilised voluntary helpers, while the other half relied on parental help (and parents were sometimes required to stay throughout the session). Voluntary providers faced similar challenges in recruiting suitably qualified, experienced, and Gaelic-speaking staff.

3.2 Supply, demand and promoting GM early years and childcare

3.2.1 Supply and demand for GM early years education and childcare

Our survey questions were designed to yield data that would allow us to build a picture of current capacity, demand and scope for expansion through the use of specific indicators that would be amenable to economic analysis. However, the total size of the overall 'population' of providers limited the scope for this type of analysis and the need to differentiate within the sample, coupled with patchy responses to questions about costs and income, make this approach untenable.⁷ Where cell sizes are as small as in this study, more analytical statistical work is unwise and the power of any results compromised. As an alternative we will focus in this section on descriptive statistics that act as indicators of supply and demand and potential for expansion. These percentages are based on the 43 survey responses received.⁸

The majority of respondents offered sessional preschool education for children 3-5 years old, either in local authority settings or playgroups. This is typically offered five days per week (84% of responses) for sessions of between two and three hours,

⁷ It was not possible to discuss detailed financial issues during the brief telephone surveys.

⁸ It should be noted that local authority providers are over-represented among the survey respondents — 56% of responses came from local authority settings, while only 39% of the total population of 127 settings were local authority provision.

most often during the morning. Wraparound care is seldom available in GM settings, with only 4 out of the 43 respondents offering any extended hours. There is little provision for holiday care or play schemes. Only one respondent reported offering any holiday provision and this was for two weeks during the summer holidays. Most 0-3 year olds experiencing any degree of GM provision do so through time spent with a childminder or at a parent and toddler group. Only 16% of our respondents currently offered care to children under 1 year old and 33% to 1-3-year olds.

The number of children attending any GM setting is usually relatively low, with an average of 14 in preschool settings, 11 in playgroups and 6 at parent and toddler groups. Such numbers suggest that there may be capacity for expansion but there is no indication of burgeoning demand. The majority of respondents (79%) did not keep a waiting list as they did not think it was necessary. Just under half had experienced steady demand over the last five years and a similar proportion had experienced increased numbers. However, most anticipated that their numbers for the coming year would remain the same or rise only slightly.

Despite these indications of slow growth, two-thirds of our respondents had no plans to expand their provision (67%). For the 16% who expected their numbers to fall slightly and the 5% expecting a significant decline in attendance there was no case for expansion. Of the six (14%) respondents who planned some expansion at their setting, four aimed to expand the capacity of their premises but only two suggested increasing their opening hours. When asked how they would choose to spend any additional funding, the private and voluntary sector respondents expressed much more interest in obtaining more resources and increasing advertising than moving into larger premises or recruiting more staff. While there were reports of some difficulties recruiting practitioners (see below), these were problems experienced by existing provision rather than obstacles to further growth.

Our survey responses suggest that there is no evidence of unmet demand but it is necessary to offer two caveats. This survey was completed by providers, not parents, and while it is possible to argue that providers might be expected to be aware of and ready to respond to parental pressures, we cannot know from this study whether our respondents were accurately reading the demand for their services. By the same token we cannot know if there are pockets of demand for specific types of provision which differ from the nursery class and playgroup sessions which are so characteristic of current supply. The absence of what might be considered childcare (whether group out-of-school care or childminding) is striking in our data but this may be because there is no demand or there has been no attempt to stimulate demand. Alternatively, the small size of the total population likely to be interested in GM provision may mean that segmenting the market would result only in provision that was unsustainable or unattractive in business terms (particularly when there are alternative English-medium services available in most localities). It is interesting in this context to note that three-quarters of the respondents (79%) considered that they were not in competition with other local provision. With only 4 (9%) saying that they were in competition with other GM provision and 8 (19%) in competition with English medium providers, it is possible to argue that the existing supply has evolved to meet the typical demand in each area and that any changes in supply will only follow proactive attempts to raise demand for GM provision.

3.2.2 Promoting GM provision

Two-thirds of survey respondents stated that they would like to develop the promotion of their provision. Around one-third of respondents would like to be included on web search sites and local area directories, which were perceived as effective but were not commonly used. One-quarter would like to develop their own website for the provision; around 15% of providers already had a dedicated website. In terms of existing promotion, word-of-mouth was by far the most frequently used and most effective form of promotion, with around 85% of respondents utilising this method and a slightly higher percentage stating that this was how current families had found out about the provision. Although flyers on noticeboards, leaflet distribution, local authority websites, and local newspapers were all forms of promotion used by more than half the respondents, these forms were considered to be less effective in reaching parents than word of mouth. Notably, the Scottish Childcare website funded by the Scottish Government – marketed as ‘the one stop shop for childcare information’ and providing ‘free, impartial information on childcare and pre-school education services throughout Scotland’ – is only used by one-third of respondents, and providers thought that very few parents used it to find GM provision.

Promotion was frequently mentioned as one of the areas in which providers collaborated with other organisations, as well as being one of the areas for which providers requested more funding. Some of the specific comments regarding the perceived need for wider promotion were: ‘constant struggle to promote Gaelic-medium education in the area’, ‘need to educate parents on the benefits of a second language’ and ‘desire to increase awareness in the local community’. Nearly half of the respondents felt that Bòrd na Gàidhlig and The Scottish Government could provide more help with promoting provision, both by raising the profile of GM early years provision and by subsidising or covering advertising costs.

3.3 External support for GM early years and childcare

3.3.1 Financial support for GM early years provision

Financial support for GM early years provision comes from a number of different sources, principally The Scottish Government’s scheme of Specific Grants for Gaelic Education, local authority education funding, and different Bòrd na Gàidhlig funding streams, but also including one-off project funding of different kinds, support for the production of books and other resources, and payments from parents.

Specific Grants for Gaelic Education can be used by local authorities to fund primary and secondary school education and community education as well as preschool education. (As some local authorities (such as Argyll & Bute and Edinburgh) also fund playgroups which can cater for children under the age of 3, Specific Grant support for GM preschool education is not necessarily confined to nursery provision for 3-5 year olds). The total Specific Grants budget varies from year to year, increasing from £3.76m in 2005-6 to £4.4m in 2008-9, and annual allocations depend on individual bids from local authorities; as such, the amount spent on preschool provision within broader bids and allocations fluctuates. Typically, the Specific Grant provides 75% of funding and the local authority the remainder,

although this proportion is not always fixed (for example, Specific Grant funding covered only 42% of Stirling Council's expenditure on Gaelic education in 2007-8).

In addition to central and local government, the other principal source of support is Bòrd na Gàidhlig. The most important element of Bòrd funding for the sector is its annual allocation to CNSA (£153,000 in 2008-9). However, smaller-scale support for initiatives relating to preschool education has also been provided by the Bòrd's Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund and Taic Freumhan Coimhearsnachd scheme. These funds are based on specific bids and projects and thus necessarily fluctuate from year to year.

Several public bodies and charitable organisations have awarded project funding for different kinds of initiatives relating to Gaelic preschool education. For example, in 2004 CNSA received £91,000 for its Family Language Plan Project from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skye and Lochalsh Enterprise and LEADER+ (with a further £25,000 coming from Bòrd na Gàidhlig). On another front, Theatre Hebrides received £30,000 from the Big Lottery Fund's New Opportunities for Quality Childcare Programme for its ArtsPlay initiative to provide training for artists and childcare workers to deliver GM arts activities.

Funding for the production of books and other resources represents another important stream of support for GM early years. The principal bodies here are Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig, which produces materials for preschool education as well as primary and secondary and which is supported by The Scottish Government and by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and the private publishing company Acair, which receives funding from the Gaelic Books Council and Bòrd na Gàidhlig. The Gaelic Media Service and the BBC also fund the production of television programmes for preschool-age children.

For the local authority providers who made up the majority of our survey respondents, income was not a matter of concern for the individual settings. They managed budgets and staff allocations decided by the authority. The question about per capita allowances received a small number of responses; three respondents said that they could not answer, and where amounts were given these ranged from £70 to £26. On the other hand, payments of fees and charges by parents represents an important source of income for playgroups, childminders and parent and toddler groups. For those who reported their fees per hour the average cost was £3.50. The most frequently reported cost for a playgroup session was £4. Charges given for meals or snacks ranged from £0.50 per week to £2.50 per week. During our telephone conversations with providers who did not complete the survey, we encountered examples of groups (but not childminders) obtaining grant income in addition to fees income. Sometimes this was temporary financial support to help with playleader wages or rent when budgets were overstretched. On other occasions groups made bids for funding for particular projects they wished to pursue.

3.3.2 The role of local authorities

Current GM providers receive institutional and financial support from local and national bodies. Some local authorities have developed Gaelic language plans or policies that make explicit commitments to supporting GM early years education and

care. For instance, Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan for 2007-2011 includes the stated goal of increasing the number of localities where GM preschool is available by 10% by 2011 and expanding the availability of GM childcare and groups for children under three years old. Highland Council employs a Gaelic Childcare and Family Resources Officer who works in the Gaelic Development Team and in close liaison with the Childcare Team. The remit for this role is concerned with Gaelic language acquisition for 0-3 year olds and expanding GM childcare options for older children.

The development of specific Gaelic language support initiatives varies across the authorities and the kind of support they choose to offer also varies. In Glasgow, the consultation on the council's draft Gaelic Language Plan ended in November 2008 and the final plan is now in preparation. Glasgow's involvement in support for GM early years provision already includes nursery class provision at the GM school and two other GM nursery settings in the city. Elsewhere, support for Gaelic early years may take the form of help with resources (e.g. Argyll and Bute are currently working to produce a CD of Gaelic songs and rhymes) or specific programmes. For instance, in North Ayrshire a peripatetic Gaelic Nursery Assistant provides play-based Gaelic input at settings on Arran while in East Ayrshire a Pre-5 project for parents and toddlers offers Gaelic language and cultural experience for a small group of 0-3s and their families with a focus on outdoor, physical play in 2008-9. Appendix A gives details of the provision for GM early years across all local authorities.

3.3.3 Support groups and agencies

GM providers have a number of agencies which they can turn to for advice, support with project funding or training. The agencies typically divide into those with a focus on early years provision in general (operating through the medium of English) and those which are associated with supporting and developing Gaelic language and services through the medium of Gaelic.

All GM early years provision is subject to an appropriate inspection process (usually through the medium of English) which monitors service delivery and is also a source of advice and guidance about the development of appropriate early years practices. The Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care and HMIE both have a role in assuring the quality of early years and childcare provision. Local authorities offer training in early years matters and support with quality assurance issues to practitioners in their own settings and in partnership provision in the private and voluntary sector. The Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) offers childminders a range of services which include advice, help to access funding for specific purposes (e.g. for start-up costs), local training and support to set up a local network. The Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) offers a range of services relevant to early years providers in the private and voluntary sector, including a staff bank and specifically tailored training for practitioners and managers. Through their toddler project they can help parents to establish a parent and toddler group and to shape the provision with the help of a CALA facilitator. Playleaders in playgroups can access advice and support for practice from the CALA practice development team and voluntary committees can obtain advice on employment issues, policy development and specific issues such as support for children with additional needs. CALA also provides members with access to insurance packages, the Disclosure

Scotland processes and management support services or a direct management programme for groups without a working committee. Local authority training and the services of SCMA and CALA are available to GM providers but are delivered in English.

Amongst the Gaelic agencies supporting educational provision in general (e.g. Comann nam Pàrant), CNSA has a specific remit to offer services to young children and their families. The organisation aims (i) to advance the education of preschool children (in groups, childcare and family facilities) through play and the medium of Gaelic and (ii) to support the education of parents and other adults to develop the use of Gaelic in everyday life and to pass Gaelic on to their children. CNSA has a direct role in supporting the establishment of parent and toddler groups, playgroups and pre-birth groups of parents. Field officers facilitate and initiate voluntary groups and are involved in the delivery of CNSA-designed Gaelic language courses for parents and their children.

In the survey we asked which umbrella organisations providers were involved with and what kind of support they sought. Most survey respondents never worked with umbrella groups or did so only sometimes. Those who did report some collaboration most commonly mentioned specifically Gaelic organisations. However, collaboration even with Gaelic organisations was not a regular occurrence. About half of the respondents never collaborated with CNSA, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comunn na Gàidhlig, or Comann nam Pàrant. The vast majority of respondents never collaborated with English-medium organisations. The Care and Learning Alliance was accessed by only 6 providers (14%), the Scottish Pre-school Play Association by 5 providers, and the National Day Nurseries Association by only 1 provider. However, some respondents did refer to contact with local authorities and childcare partnerships as well as local schools with GM provision, and, for childminders, the Scottish Childminding Association.

When providers did turn to any umbrella organisations it was mostly to obtain funding or help with promoting their provision. Among our respondents 13 gave examples of turning to CNSA for help with advertising, information for parents, advice about policies or practice and obtaining insurance. Of the respondents who gave examples of their contact with Bòrd na Gàidhlig the majority did so to seek funding. Nursery providers were the least likely to report collaborating with CNSA or Bòrd na Gàidhlig (only about 30% mentioned occasional contact). On the other hand, 57% of the playgroups who responded to the survey sometimes had contact with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and 64% sometimes with CNSA.














3.4 Improving GM early years and childcare: perceived needs for funding, resources, training

Survey respondents were asked several questions relating to their needs as GM early years providers. In addition to the multiple choice questions, respondents were able to write in responses and there was a high degree of overlap in the write-in sections. Questions were asked about improving Gaelic provision, about changes desired, about future plans, and about the help that would be needed to realise these changes and plans. The survey data shows a strong desire to implement changes that would lead to improvement of the sector.

In terms of improving the provision of Gaelic, around half the respondents wanted to recruit more staff fluent in Gaelic, send existing staff on training courses for bilingual educators, and obtain more classroom resources for supporting children's Gaelic; two-thirds of respondents wanted more language learning opportunities for staff to improve their Gaelic skills; and three-quarters felt there should be more opportunities for parents wanting to learn Gaelic or developing their language skills. Three-quarters of the respondents specified the resources they would need, which included: books (particularly Big Books), visual aids such as posters, children's music, CD-ROMs (especially computer games) and DVDs specifically for Gaelic early years, simple games and information packs for parents and terminology guides for parents and staff. Respondents also identified practitioners as an important resource and restated their desire for more trained, fluent staff, especially playleaders.

Survey respondents were keen to share their future plans. Their responses are to the areas listed in the survey are detailed in Table 3.4. In terms of what respondents wanted to change about their provision, the most common write-ins were: increasing capacity (by extending premises or opening hours), increasing the amount of Gaelic spoken, accessing more training, and obtaining more resources and equipment. In order to make these changes, respondents felt that they needed: funding for most of these areas (especially staff recruitment and training, resources, and advertising), support and advice, and better promotion.

Table 3.4: Future plans of GM providers

Future Plans⁹		Number of Providers n=43
Training in supporting language learning:		22
Financial support:		23
More suitable premises:		9
More Gaelic-medium resources:		28
Training for preschool education:		19
Training for playwork:		11
Training for childminders:		5
More play equipment:		16
More practitioners with preschool qualifications:		15
More Gaelic-speaking adults:		18
Access to advice through the medium of Gaelic:		10
Access to advice on Gaelic usage and acquisition:		15
Website with discussion opportunities for Gaelic-medium preschool and childcare providers:		15








⁹ Respondents could select more than one option.

Respondents were also asked to detail their plans for the next three years. These plans aligned closely with the changes that providers wished to make, and included specific goals, such as ‘develop parent partnerships’, ‘increase confidence of parents in speaking Gaelic’, ‘develop into a family centre’, ‘provide after-school care for under-12s’, and ‘ask the council to take over management’. Several providers stated that their plans were to continue as they were. Again, the help needed was mainly financial, but with funding focused on acquiring more staff (including advertising and training costs), obtaining more resources, and promoting the provision. There were some concerns over sustainability; and there was also a perceived need for increased, increasing numbers attending GM settings, raising awareness in local communities, and expanding provision to more areas, linked with GM primary units and schools.

Finally, survey respondents were asked how Bòrd na Gàidhlig and other government initiatives could enhance their provision. Their responses are given in Table 3.5.

Respondents also wanted to see much more networking taking place, on several different levels. They felt that collaboration should be encouraged between GM settings, not just early years settings in general, even where such collaboration would necessitate crossing local authority boundaries. In order to do this, it was stated by several providers that they needed information on what other groups were running locally and nationally, and support for establishing and maintaining networks. One provider suggested ‘an umbrella body for Gaelic pre-school provision that might take on a management/finance/personnel role’ – all areas revealed by the survey as needing further attention.

Table 3.5: Support sought by GM providers

Support sought ¹⁰		Number of Providers n=43
Financial support to establish premises:		7
Financial support when numbers attending drop temporarily:		10
Help to promote provision:		20
Improved grants for Gaelic-medium resources and other play equipment:		23
Innovative schemes to increase the number of staff with preschool or childcare qualifications who also speak Gaelic:		21
Improve opportunities for in-service training in ways to support the use of Gaelic:		26
Improve opportunities for in-service training to enhance preschool and childcare practices:		17

¹⁰ Respondents could select more than one option.

3.5 Summary of findings

These are the key points from the survey phase of the review.

1. GM early years and childcare: current landscape

Extent of provision

- We identified 127 providers of GM early years and childcare
- Most provision targets children aged 3 to 5 who attend local authority nursery classes or schools or playgroups. This provision is typically organised in up to five sessions per week, each lasting between two and three hours per day.
- There is very limited wraparound or holiday care.
- There is limited provision for babies and toddlers and most under 3s experiencing GM provision do so at parent and toddler groups.
- Private provision is very largely supplied by childminders but the extent of their GM provision is very limited
- The average numbers of children per setting is low.

Use of Gaelic

- The extent to which Gaelic is used as the medium of communication, care and education varies considerably, from Gaelic-only playrooms to Gaelic used only used for specific activities.
- Providers reported difficulties in recruiting Gaelic-speaking staff. 60% reported that all staff in the playroom were fluent speakers of Gaelic. The proportion of Gaelic-speaking adults is significantly lower in settings where volunteers and parent helpers are involved.
- As the vast majority of children attending GM provision are from English-speaking homes, GM preschool is likely to be their only or main opportunity to acquire the language.

Staffing, Recruitment and Training

- Public, private and voluntary sector providers all reported difficulties in recruiting and retaining paid staff or volunteers with expertise in early years education and care, and in Gaelic.
- Recruiting staff with appropriate early years qualifications is or has been a problem for two-thirds of the survey respondents; while recruiting Gaelic-speaking staff is or has been a problem for three-quarters of them.
- Staff turnover also appears to be high, a finding that is likely to have negative implications for the quality of provision which children experience.
- There is no financial recognition for Gaelic language competence.
- Access to professional development opportunities is a challenge for around half of the survey respondents; and there appears to be little or no professional development specifically targeting the needs of staff in GM provision.

2. Supply, demand and promotion

- Providers do not anticipate a significant surge in demand for GM places in the immediate future and few have plans to expand, either in terms of capacity or of extended hours.
- Word of mouth was regarded by respondents as the most effective form of promotion, though there was some interest in more publicly visible means, ranging from local directories to websites.
- Many respondents thought that national bodies should be more proactive in promoting the benefits of GM provision to prospective parents; and that this would be a way of raising awareness, possibly leading to increased demand.

3. External support for GM early years and childcare

Financial support

- Financial support for GM early years education comes from national and local government and, to a lesser extent from grants from umbrella organisations and public bodies.
- GM playgroups and parent and toddler groups depend on income from parents although some also have support in kind from other bodies, e.g. low rental charges by local authority

Local authorities

- Some local authorities have developed Gaelic language plans that include initiatives to support GM early years and childcare.
- Support for GM early years and childcare varies considerably between local authorities.

Support groups and agencies

- Most respondents never or only sometimes collaborated with any Gaelic or early years umbrella organisation.
- When collaboration was reported it was most likely to be with Gaelic organisations such as CNSA and Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Collaboration with English-medium organisations was unusual.
- The most common reasons for collaboration were to seek help with funding or resources.

4. Improving GM provision

- Respondents identified the key areas for improvement as: recruitment of more staff fluent in Gaelic; access to professional development focusing on bilingual education; and the availability of a wider range of Gaelic resources.
- To improve provision respondents said they needed: additional funding, support from local and national bodies, and more effective promotion of their provision. They also sought enhanced opportunities for networking and the establishment of an umbrella body supporting and promoting the interests of this sector.

4. KEY ISSUES: DISCUSSION

The first phases of this review identified a number of key issues for the successful delivery of GM education and care in the early years. In this chapter, we have grouped these issues under five main headings:

- language learning and teaching
- the nature of children's experiences in GM provision
- resources for Gaelic medium
- parental perspectives
- management and promotion of provision

We discuss the implications of our findings in each case, using the data gathered through interviews with key informants and from our case studies to expand on the issues emerging from the mapping and survey phases. Where appropriate, we also draw on the literature on pre-school education, on bilingual learning and on earlier studies of GM provision in the primary sector; and make reference to relevant policy documents. Each section begins with a summary of the issues to be discussed. Recommendations arising from these discussions are presented in Chapter 5.

4.1 Language learning and teaching

Summary

The rationale for GM education provision is to ensure that children become fluent and literate in the language. This is particularly important as the number of 'native speakers' of Gaelic continues to decline: language revitalisation therefore depends on the recruitment of children from non Gaelic-speaking homes.

Full immersion – where the playroom is a Gaelic-only zone, where practitioners use Gaelic all the time and where children are encouraged and supported to do the same – is the model most likely to ensure that children make rapid progress in the acquisition of Gaelic. However, providers find this difficult to sustain because:

- maintaining a Gaelic-only environment is a challenge which few practitioners have been trained to meet
- it is difficult to ensure that immersion playrooms are sufficiently linguistically rich environments
- the external environment may repeatedly facilitate shifts to English

The aim of GM educational provision is to ensure that the next generation of children growing up in Scotland have opportunities to become fluent Gaelic speakers, literate in Gaelic and able to learn in every area of the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic. The greater children's existing competence in Gaelic when they start primary school, the quicker they will attain these goals.

The early years therefore play a critical role in ensuring that children have the best possible start in the language. All providers – childminders, parent and toddler groups, playgroups, nurseries and wraparound care providers – have the potential to contribute to children's growing competence and confidence with the language, through conversation, daily routines, social activities, songs, games, stories and other early literacy activities, and support for group discussion, problem-solving and

collaborative work of various kinds. From our survey data, it is clear that most providers share these policy goals for GM education: over five-sixths (84%) saw themselves as helping to prepare children for GM primary education, a task that will entail support for children from Gaelic-speaking homes to develop their Gaelic and also enabling children not from Gaelic-speaking homes to become fluent.

However, the current context presents some specific challenges which providers and policy-makers need to recognise and to address strategically. Throughout the GM sector, the number of children who come from Gaelic-speaking homes is decreasing. This partly reflects the continuing decline in the 'native speaker' population, but partly also the success of the GM initiative: as more pre-school and primary provision is made available, particularly in areas where Gaelic is not widely spoken, it becomes increasingly common to find groups or settings where only one or two children – or indeed none at all – already speak the language. Our survey data indicate that the vast majority (88%) now fall into this category, while a small proportion (12%) are mixed, with around half the children coming from Gaelic-speaking homes. Key informants and case study participants confirmed this picture:

*Only one child in the group has a Gaelic-speaking parent.
(Practitioner, Small Town)*

Families have mixed language backgrounds – a small proportion of parents are native Gaelic speakers, the largest proportion of families have one parent who speaks Gaelic, others have a grandparent who speaks Gaelic, others have no Gaelic at home. (Head, City)

[Preschool] only has children for a limited time and with limited language using possibilities. The language used between children who are learning Gaelic in [preschool] settings is likely to be English. (Key informant)

Given the limited number of contact hours in GM preschool settings (rarely over 20 hours a week, and typically much less), the potential for significant Gaelic language acquisition is necessarily limited.

This means that providers need to adopt an overt language development strategy to ensure that children acquire competence in Gaelic, as this is unlikely to happen 'naturally' – as might be possible if only a few of the children were not from Gaelic-speaking homes. Our survey findings show that different models are in operation. At one end of the spectrum is *full immersion*, based on Gaelic-only environments, where practitioners speak Gaelic all the time and encourage children to respond in Gaelic, using a variety of strategies actively to support their language learning. At the other end is *limited exposure*, where the use of Gaelic, among practitioners and the children, is limited to specific activities, such as songs, the learning of specific vocabulary (e.g. numbers and colours) and the rehearsal of certain daily routines (e.g. regular discussion around days of the week, weather, appropriate activities at certain times of day). Our survey data show that a third of providers describe themselves as using a 'Gaelic-only' approach while two thirds describe themselves as 'bilingual'. There is likely to be considerable variation in bilingual provision, however, ranging from providers where the staff speak Gaelic all the time but

children choose to use English or Gaelic, to those where Gaelic is only used for certain activities.

Clearly, these different models produce different results, with *full immersion* approaches most likely to produce not only the greatest level of fluency among children who are not from Gaelic-speaking homes but also the most support for children from Gaelic-speaking homes to develop their linguistic competence. Why, then, do only a third of providers adopt a Gaelic-only approach? Our research suggests that there are a number of constraining factors:

- **Maintaining a Gaelic-only environment is a challenge which few practitioners have been trained to meet**

Immersion models to support the development of high-level competence in a second language have been in operation for some 50 years. (Lambert & Tucker, 1972, describe and evaluate the first Canadian experimental models, devised in the 1960s.) This approach is now widely accepted as not only being extremely effective in terms of second language acquisition, but also as supporting the maintenance of the first language, and for this reason is increasingly popular not only in Canada but in many European countries (notably Spain and Germany) where parents want their children to become highly fluent in English as well as in the national language (Johnson & Swain, 1997). However, precisely because of the status of English as a 'world language', there has been very limited interest in adopting this approach in the UK. The only example of a Canadian-style immersion programme in Scotland has been the French immersion programme at Walker Road Primary School in Aberdeen (Johnstone & McKinstry, 2008), but this has now ceased operation. Thus there is little awareness in Scotland of the specific skills required for this approach and training opportunities specifically focusing on immersion education or on approaches to bilingual education more generally, are very limited, particularly for early years practitioners.

As a result, practitioners largely have to work out themselves how to support children's second language acquisition. Some of those we talked to have given the matter considerable thought, and are aware of how far they have progressed since they first began to work in GM pre-school provision. The Head of our City case study nursery commented:

When I first became involved with this nursery, I just saw sand as sand – but now I see it as a language learning opportunity.

She was able to provide quite a detailed account of the language learning strategies she uses: for example, using gesture and other visual clues to support children's understanding, and systematic planning to ensure linguistic progression over time:

When I first arrived, children were learning Gaelic in a random way. I felt this had to be more focused. We decide what aspects of language we are targeting that week – might be prepositions, colours, numbers – and then we think about how can use learning experiences for this. So, for example, we might make jelly and use this as a way of talking about colours and other sensory experiences.

In this case, the practitioner was supported by the local authority Gaelic development officer, but the availability of specialist support of this kind appears relatively limited.

Without pre-existing training or specialist support, practitioners can find it difficult to work out how to integrate language learning into the preschool curriculum. A particular challenge is the perceived tension between the child-centredness of the curriculum and the need to ‘impose’ Gaelic:

When I first came, I thought that the language learning was too dominant – as a preschool practitioner, I was focused on ensuring that provision was child-led and the emphasis on language learning made it seem more like P1. (Head, City)

In some respects it isn't really possible to enforce a totally Gaelic environment; for example, 'free play' is a designated area of activity and by definition the children have to do this on their own to a considerable extent – there are only three staff present to supervise and interact. (Practitioner, Island)

It's hard to do it all – we have to teach the language and do the rest of the work, sticking to the same timetable as English medium. [...] There is a danger of scunnering the children with all this emphasis on language learning – so circle time can be dominated by the need to practise the language rather a chance to share. (Principal Teacher, Small Town)

- **It is difficult to ensure that immersion playrooms are sufficiently linguistically rich environments**

It is important that the immersion playroom is a linguistically rich environment, particularly when this is the only context in which children encounter the language they are to acquire. But this is difficult to achieve, in view of the lack of training which practitioners have had in bilingual education, and also because of the limited resources available in Gaelic. A number of the key informants we interviewed expressed concern about linguistically impoverished playrooms:

In nurseries, Gaelic use is not always spontaneous – richness may be lacking. For example, practitioners often feel that health and safety issues or the comforting of distressed children needs to be done through English. (Key informant)

I have questions about the effectiveness of provision [in the immersion context]. In some of the island nurseries, children may be fluent in Gaelic when they come in, but here, at the playgroup and the nursery, the vast majority are just taught Gaelic words – they do not get the breadth of preschool experiences in Gaelic. (Key informant)

I have doubts about the quality of provision in both English and Gaelic – but more so in Gaelic. . . . We need to add richness and breadth,

particularly for children learning through Gaelic. (Local authority quality improvement officer)

In one island nursery, the lead practitioner worked hard to address these issues and to model good practice which was then adopted by other staff. For example, when applying sun-screen to all children before they went outside to play, she commented in Gaelic on the reasons why sun-screen was necessary and where it needed to be applied, using repetition and visual clues to reinforce meaning. While the children put on their shoes and hats to go outside, she recounted, as if to the other staff – but in a loud voice – an incident which had occurred earlier when she had looked everywhere at home for her coat only to find that she had left it at the nursery the day before. This was a simple conversation but reinforced certain basic vocabulary (clothes, parts of the body, the weather) and also linguistic functions, in terms of the kinds of conversations people might have about daily events. It was noticeable in this nursery that other younger and less experienced members of staff replicated this approach with the children, using Gaelic at all times – not just for specific language oriented activities but for the routine and mundane events of the day – using simple, clear *and audible* language.

This contrasted with some other playrooms we visited, where staff spoke quietly, so that often their Gaelic interactions with children were not audible over the general hubbub of activity; where they shifted into English when something required quick action (e.g. to avoid an accident, or simply to get things cleared up quickly); and where they sometimes talked among themselves in English, despite being native speakers of Gaelic.

At *City case* nursery, practitioners sought to enhance children's exposure to a range of Gaelic speakers and cultural experiences associated with Gaelic: they had invited Gaelic storytellers to the nursery, took children on trips to traditional music festivals, and brought Gaelic-speaking musicians to the nursery. They took part in an arts initiative to support young children's linguistic development (in this case in Gaelic) through music, drawing on funding and support from their associated GM primary unit. Opportunities to link language development to other areas of early years development, such as creative and aesthetic experiences, are likely to be particularly valuable, and indicate that when thinking of the kinds of resources required to create a linguistically rich environment, practitioners can go beyond books, tapes and CD-ROMs – which tend to be the main focus of discussion – to live experiences, drawing on the skills and interests of the local Gaelic-speaking community, in whichever part of Scotland they are located.

- **The external environment may repeatedly facilitate shifts to English**

Many practitioners who were committed to ensuring that the playroom was a Gaelic-only environment found their efforts frustrated by the all-pervasiveness of English as soon as the playroom door was opened. Features which regularly prompted shifts to the use of English included the need to communicate with parents who do not speak Gaelic, the fact that janitors, administrative staff and some specialist practitioners (e.g. PE instructors) do not speak the language, and the need to share provision with English-medium counterparts in the same building – so that, for example, shared lunchtimes or playtimes lead inevitably lead to a shift to English.

Other structural features are also problematic. In some contexts, children start attending at several different points in the year, meaning that staff have to start from scratch with new children several times over, while newcomers with little or no Gaelic can disturb the fragile Gaelic-only environment practitioners seek to create. Other providers encountered similar difficulties when some children attend less frequently than others – for example for one or two sessions a week, when others are attending for five sessions a week. Loss of linguistic competence over school holidays is also a commonly reported problem.

As a result of these kinds of problems, some providers questioned whether the limitations on the amount of time children attend GM provision along with the encroaching English environment meant that the goals set for this provision are achievable. In other cases, providers seek to minimise these problems by requiring parents to enrol their children for a minimum of five sessions, or by encouraging them to practise vocabulary, songs and other language activities at home (providing worksheets and CDs in some instances). But providers are aware that their relationship with parents is not easy to negotiate as they have different motives for sending their children to GM provision and different expectations.

For all these reasons, then – the lack of training in bilingual education methods, the difficulties in creating a linguistically rich environment and ongoing pressures to revert to English – providers find it hard to maintain a *full immersion* approach. In considering ways forward for GM preschool provision, policy-makers need to consider how to overcome some of the hurdles we have identified, in particular, we suggest, addressing the dearth of training opportunities, given that better informed and more highly skilled practitioners would be better prepared to tackle some of the other problems.

Another issue, which has not been directly raised by participants in the research but which nevertheless needs to be addressed, is the question of appropriate provision for children who are already fluent in Gaelic. As we have seen, these children are now a minority group within GM provision. It is not clear whether their language development needs are well-catered for in provision aimed principally at learners of the language, and recent work in Wales (Hickey & Lewis, 2009) and Ireland (Mhic Mhathúna & Mac Con Iomaire, 2009) indicates that greater attention to this group of learners is needed.

4.2 Children's experiences in GM provision

Summary

Curriculum for Excellence will bring changes to all sectors of Scottish education, and presents specific challenges and opportunities for GM preschool providers seeking to ensure that children have access to the full range of experiences and outcomes set out for the Early Level, while being educated and cared for through the medium of Gaelic. These include:

- integrating language learning within the broader curriculum
- ensuring the practitioners have access to the kind of initial education and professional development which will enable them to deliver the new curriculum while supporting children language learning and development
- addressing issues of continuity and progression
- maintaining and developing the quality of the preschool learning environment

This is a time of curriculum change for all involved with the education of children in Scotland from 3 to 18 years old. The introduction of *Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)*, which provides detailed recommendations about the kinds of experiences and outcomes made available to learners at every level of the education system, is set to change pedagogies and practice in all sectors, and presents particular challenges – but also significant opportunities – for those involved in GM early years provision:

- **Integrating language learning within the broader curriculum**

CfE includes expectations about experiences and outcomes in literacy for Gaelic learners, with the emphasis on exploring and experimenting with Gaelic during the Early Level; and an alternative set of expectations for children whose first language is Gaelic. The great majority of children who attend GM preschool provision are Gaelic learners, so the challenge for practitioners is to offer opportunities for them to experiment and explore using Gaelic while also having access to the same breadth and richness of curricular experiences as children learning through the medium of English. Reflecting on this, one respondent argued that GM provision should aim to be attractive and successful, able to compete well with English-medium provision and ‘producing children that leave with high levels of attainment and achievement’. In addition, given that fluent speakers and learners are found in the same playrooms, practitioners have to find ways of offering appropriate opportunities to both groups of children.

The evidence from our case study settings, key informant interviews and telephone surveys with providers suggests that there is a tension between those whose focus is on supporting children’s language learning and others for whom access to all curricular areas (as defined in the Curriculum Framework for children 3 to 5) is the key indicator of quality.

The authority is aware that they need to develop the curriculum – add richness and breadth. We have real concerns in the authority that the Gaelic providers have a different focus. . . [I] [h]ave heard staff say that they are there to teach children Gaelic but . . . they are paid to deliver the curriculum. (Local authority quality improvement officer)

There is a need to develop an understanding of the curriculum for children aged from 3 to 6 years old and the distinct early years pedagogy from within the community of GM practitioners. Our respondents tended to talk of the curriculum and language learning as distinct educational practices, as layers which can be given greater or lesser priority. While there is no doubt that supporting the language learning of young children requires appropriate pedagogy and resources, there will always be some inherent tension between priorities unless there is a developed sense of curriculum and pedagogy for GM preschool provision.

- **Initial education and professional development for GM preschool practitioners**

The introduction of *CfE* has been accompanied by extensive professional development for staff in all education sectors, at local and national level, as well as instigating changes in initial education and training. However, the training currently

available to preschool practitioners has not taken into account the needs of those working in GM playrooms. There is no initial or continuing preschool or early years professional education available in Gaelic; and none which addresses ways in which the new curriculum can incorporate the specific needs of these settings. For this reason, providers have, in the past, typically sought practitioners with early years qualifications (SVQs, HNDs or teacher education) who happen also to be Gaelic speakers or learners but without any training in issues relating to early bilingual education. Furthermore, in areas with remote and scattered populations, practitioners without preschool training have been employed because they are native Gaelic speakers. In many cases these practitioners go on to train through the SVQ route but we have found evidence of some resistance to engaging in training. It will therefore be a challenge to ensure that practitioners currently in post – and those currently in training – merge the demands of the new curriculum with effective practices promoting early language education.

If we are to avoid concerns such as ‘interactions are too adult-directed’ (local authority respondent), it is necessary to find ways of ensuring that all children are cared for and educated by practitioners whose initial and continuing professional education equips them to observe children’s interests and current competencies and plan to extend their learning and engage in responsive pedagogical interactions. In rural areas where GM provision is often only part-time it is difficult to sustain a full-time career as a GM early years educator and even in urban areas opportunities for career progression are currently very limited. It will be important to find ways of offering career continuity and progression for practitioners who develop expertise in GM early years education if specialist training and experience is not to be lost to Gaelic educational provision.

Some of our key informants suggested that additional specialist Gaelic medium preschool education SVQ modules or options in initial teacher education would go some way to meeting the evident training needs, but there is also a need for more local initiatives and staff development practices. For example, one local authority representative described an induction programme that she would like to be able to offer to all staff beginning to work in GM provision. There is some criticism among key respondents about development officers who may have expertise in supporting Gaelic language learning but not early years or who are expected to meet the needs of an extensive range of organisations. Access to a specialist development worker who can advise on early years practices and supporting language development would facilitate quality improvement in some settings, as would access to appropriate staff development resources through GLOW (the intranet for education developed by Learning and Teaching Scotland).

Some also argued that that opportunities to observe practice and networks of contacts in other GM settings or English-medium settings would be of benefit and allow staff to compare their practices to those developed elsewhere and to experiment with ideas about good practice. It would be important for these opportunities to be accompanied by practitioner meetings to articulate the reasons for retaining current practices or changing to alternatives observed. Our *City* case study setting had developed a process for ongoing staff development that, although not conducted through the medium of Gaelic, did offer equitable opportunities for

staff working in Gaelic and English to contribute to the quality of practice in the setting and to their own development as effective practitioners.

City Case

English- and Gaelic-medium practitioners meet together at the end of each session to review the activities and children's responses. The aim at *City* is to offer the same child-centred and holistic approach to all children, regardless of language medium. Planning is done together but the Head was keen to stress that for the GM provision it was always necessary to be explicit about how the curricular *and* language goals for the children could be met. The practitioners plan to use particular resources and activities to support an area of curricular development and also consider the opportunities for language learning the activity affords. They seek to avoid a more 'P1' like focus on language features such as the alphabet, explicit phonics or whole word learning. Evaluation of practice is also done jointly with staff from both the English- and Gaelic-medium streams meeting in small groups to review video recordings of practice in all the playrooms.

- **Continuity and progression**

The establishment of the Early Level in *CfE* has implications for continuity, progression and transition for all involved in early years education. We have encountered instances of good continuity arrangements between GM early years providers in one of our case study locations and of a lack of communication between the GM playgroup and nursery in another. The shift to the Early Level is an opportunity for practitioners across settings to work together with a focus on the educational trajectory of children in their area.

- **Quality of the preschool environment**

The message from the early years literature is that the impact of early education depends on the quality of the provision and learning opportunities offered to children (e.g. Peisner-Feinberg and Burchinal, 1997; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), 2005; Sammons et al., 2004). The design of this study did not allow us to examine directly the quality of children's experiences but, as discussed above, the evidence from some informants suggested that there was scope for improved practices. However, we were able to collect survey data on a number of structural features that have been found to be positively associated with good-quality environments for children (e.g. Goelman et al, 2005; Phillipsen et al, 1997). These features include the level of staff education and qualification, wages, staff turnover rate, amount of non-contact time and training and professional development opportunities. As we have described in the survey findings and discussed here, GM practitioners do not have good opportunities for training and professional development, wages are not high (most frequently between £6 and £12 per hour), the rate of staff turnover is considerable in some settings and not all practitioners have non-contact time for planning and recording. These findings suggest that there is a need to improve the ways in which practitioners are able to work and develop their practice if children attending GM provision are to be assured of high quality early years experiences.

4.3 GM resources

Summary

Finding, acquiring and using appropriate resources is a major concern for all providers. Two key issues have been reiterated throughout this review:

- resources are expensive and difficult to find;
- provider-made translations of English language resources are commonplace, raising questions about their cultural relevance, and about the additional demands this makes on practitioners' time.

The dearth of suitable resources to support young children learning Gaelic is a widespread source of frustration for practitioners. Most frequently, they compare their situation unfavourably with English-medium settings, and seek to have a comparable range of resources, in some cases seeking the same resources, but translated into Gaelic. A more challenging question is whether different kinds of resources are needed, reflecting the different cultural traditions represented by Gaelic and English, and also the fact that most children in GM pre-school settings are learners of the language rather than fluent speakers.

• Resources are expensive and difficult to find

Books (and, most acutely, factual rather than story books) are distinctly limited in number and diversity, and matters are even more difficult in relation to other resources such as posters, music CDs, DVDs, computer games and Big Books used to read to groups of children.

Resources for pre-fives are limited. . . We have to go to websites to find songs . . . At Christmas last year we struggled to get books to give to the children . . . At Christmas and Easter we look really drab as we have nothing to use for wall displays as they don't have them in Gaelic. (Practitioner, City)

Mainstream outlets tend not to carry Gaelic resources, although a major online bookseller does offer a range of Gaelic books for young children. Some providers may not be aware of the existing specialist outlets, and, in any case, these may have distribution difficulties. Materials distributed through local authorities, in connection with Specific Grant funding, may not be readily accessible to all providers and parents.

A particular source of frustration is the fact that certain resources are restricted to primary schools, and preschool providers are prevented from acquiring them:

Our playleader was at a seminar which had a stall full of useful resources, but these are only available to [primary] teachers. Books are expensive and new books and materials are always needed to keep the children occupied. (GM playgroup provider)

There is a lack of new posters. [We] emailed Stòrlann who said they did not have resources for preschool. (GM playgroup and parent and toddler group provider)

The lack of ICT resources is exacerbated because many settings do not have access to the internet in the playroom and therefore to games and learning activities on GM sites.

We have a PC at playgroup but don't use it because we have nothing Gaelic on it and no DVDs. . . . Now there is a Gaelic TV channel with children's programmes, but we don't have an internet connection. Surely DVDs of these could be made available?
(GM playgroup and parent and toddler group provider)

Computer facilities aren't very good and the lack of computer games is regrettable. (Practitioner, Small Town)

- **Provider-made translations of resources are commonplace**

In many cases, English language resources are translated into Gaelic. This is a widespread practice with books, where the translation is often pasted on top of the English words. Practitioners often also produce their own posters, labels and signs.

We have self-translated books [but] that means double work.
(Head, City)

We have three Big Books – two translated by me [with words pasted over]. (Practitioner, City)

Many resources are home-made. We are trying to encourage sharing.
(Principal Teacher, Small Town)

Perhaps more surprisingly, musical material, such as words for action songs and ring games are also translated from English into Gaelic. This arguably gives rise to issues of cultural authenticity and appropriateness as well as a considerable workload for practitioners.

Because of the need to support children's learning of Gaelic outside the playroom, and to encourage parents to become involved in their children's language learning, practitioners feel obliged to produce worksheets and other materials, such as song sheets and CDs – with translations for non-Gaelic-speaking parents, in addition to resources for classroom use. This work clearly has an impact on practitioners' workload, compared with their counterparts in English-medium provision, and is particularly challenging, given that so few practitioners are trained language educators.

4.4 Parents' perspectives and expectations

Summary

Parents have different motives for enrolling their children in GM provision:

- some are committed to the revitalisation of Gaelic
- some are aware of the benefits of early bilingualism
- some are attracted by other types of social and educational advantages

Catering for the different expectations associated with these various motives represents a major challenge for providers.

Our research indicates that there is considerable variation in parents' motives for enrolling their children in GM provision. Most of the parents we talked to in the course of the research were enthusiastic supporters of GM education. In some cases this was because they were committed to the revitalisation of Gaelic for personal or family reasons – they themselves, or other close family members, were Gaelic speakers and wanted to ensure that the language was passed on to the next generation. Others have chosen this provision because they are keen for their children to benefit from an early opportunity to become bilingual. In other cases, their choices are made for reasons largely unconnected to language learning, but rather on the basis of what they identified as social or educational advantages offered by GM provision. This means that their expectations of the outcomes of the provision are also very different, and makes it difficult for providers to engage them in supporting children's linguistic development in the ways they might wish to do.

• Awareness of the benefits of early bilingualism

Some parents are keen for their children to become bilingual. They were not necessarily committed to bilingualism in English and Gaelic but because GM provision is the only kind of bilingual provision available, they have opted for this. Many of these parents were well aware of the kinds of benefits bilingualism brings, citing, for example, the greater opportunities to become fluent and confident about speaking another language that are likely to derive from traditional forms of language teaching.

However – perhaps particularly if they themselves did not speak languages other than English – they were not necessarily well-informed about what language learning entails, or what kinds of outcomes it might be reasonable to expect. For example, some parents firmly believed that fluency in another language is best achieved if children start young and were therefore keen for their children to attend a GM nursery. However, in some cases, they then planned to send their children on to English-medium primary education, convinced that the benefits of an early start would by then have been achieved.

We don't speak Gaelic at home, and I haven't sent any of my older children to the Gaelic medium unit, but they have all been to this [Gaelic-medium] nursery and I know that when they have to learn other languages later on at school, they'll find it really easy. My oldest daughter started secondary school this year and is doing Gaelic again

now and it all just came straight back to her. When they're young, they just soak it all up like sponges. (Parent, Island)

The research on early language acquisition suggests that such practices will not be effective. Although there is some evidence to suggest that younger language learners have certain advantages over older learners, principally in terms of the acquisition of more 'native-like' pronunciation, there is also evidence of certain disadvantages: younger learners have limited metacognition and metalinguistic awareness, which effectively means that they are more disorganised in their approach to learning and typically need greater exposure to the new language and more opportunities for repetition than older, more experienced language learners (Johnstone, 2002). As Nikolov & Djigunovic (2006) have pointed out, following an extensive review of the literature on early second language acquisition, the main advantage of starting to learn a second language early is that this gives the learner more time to learn and consequently greater proficiency in the long run; but the advantage is only available to those who have high quality teaching from the outset, in the context of a programme where progression is a key feature. Placing children in an immersion programme in the preschool years but then returning them to primary provision through the medium of their first language is therefore unlikely to produce fluent bilingualism: children will have had neither the length of exposure required nor sufficient opportunities to progress.

- **Attractions of other social and educational advantages**

For other parents, the choice of GM provision was not on the basis of opportunities to learn the language but because the provision was regarded as 'better' in some way than the English-medium alternative. In some cases, parents cited smaller classes in the primary school and a consequent increase in teacher attention to their children as being the key motivating factor for selecting GM provision, of which preschool provision was therefore the first step:

*They have small class sizes throughout the primary school.
(Parent 1, Small Town)*

You get the benefit of small groups. From P1-7 they are a really close group who know each other well. (Parent 2, Small Town)

*This is a unique, small-scale, attentive environment.
(Parent 3, Small Town)*

I like it that the P7 teacher knows my daughter who has just started and who her brother and sister are. (Parent 4, Small Town)

Others found the social mix more attractive:

*The Gaelic-medium groups are nice groups – the people who have made that decision are a certain kind of people. There is a whole social thing.
(Parent 4, Small Town)*

In urban areas particularly, choosing Gaelic medium can be an escape from problematic local provision:

We live in a regeneration area but come here for the education. I was worried that I would be raising my children as fire-raisers in the local school. (Parent, City)

These parents are likely to be very supportive of the provision in general terms but not necessarily of the commitment to acquisition of Gaelic. One parent who was keen for her child to become fluent in the language was critical of parents with other motives:

I've noticed a change in the use of Gaelic in the playgroup. The playgroup staff are wonderful and it has a good reputation but it has been victim of its own success and now many parents want their children to attend even if they are not going on to the Gaelic-medium unit. There now seems to be less Gaelic going on in the playgroup than there was when my older son was there. They're trying to rectify this by having special sessions only for children going on to the unit. I think that the playgroup needs to decide whether it is offering Gaelic-medium or childcare. I hear parents saying that their child has said such-and-such in Gaelic and complaining that they don't understand what it means and I wonder then why they are coming to this playgroup. (Parent 6, Small Town)

- **Responding to parental expectations: a challenge for providers**

These different reasons for choosing GM provision and different understandings of what it takes to become a fluent speaker of a second language make it difficult for providers to insist that parents play a role in supporting their children's acquisition of Gaelic. Some providers ask parents to help their children to learn Gaelic by undertaking certain activities at home, and as we have seen in section 5.3, some practitioners spend a lot of time developing resources for this.

[We] send home vocabulary – in Gaelic, phonetically and in English. . . [We] have a Gaelic lending library for children and Play Along Maths¹¹ sacks in Gaelic and English. These are really popular. (Head, City)

[We] offer a CD of games and songs in Gaelic [to parents] (Practitioner, Small Town)

Some key informants also commented on the need for parallel initiatives to promote Gaelic language acquisition and use among parents. It was emphasised that even when one or both parents can speak Gaelic, this does not guarantee that the child will have significant exposure to Gaelic in the home; parents may need more concrete encouragement to use the language at home.

¹¹ Simple maths activities for parents to do with their children, working on concepts such as big/small; more/less.

There is a particular need to develop family language plans if only one person in the family speaks Gaelic. [But] the focus on parents and children learning Gaelic for use in the home seems to be thinking 'outside the box'. (Key informant)

Where parents do not speak Gaelic at all it is difficult to know how they can support their children's acquisition of the language. Some providers would like to make it a requirement that parents of children in GM education commit themselves to learning the language too, so that they can support their children's learning, but it is clear that some parents would be unable to make this commitment, either because they are not confident language learners themselves or because they would argue that they do not have the time or the money. Such a requirement would be likely to reduce the number of parents prepared to send their children to GM provision and could therefore threaten the survival of some playgroups or nurseries. Indeed, as is discussed in the next section (5.5), in many cases, providers feel obliged to reassure parents that they will *not* have to speak or learn Gaelic if they enrol their children in GM provision, because they believe that this is a barrier for prospective parents.

4.5 Managing demand and promoting provision

Summary

While most providers expect demand to remain stable, they are still concerned to

- meet existing demand as fully as possible
- ensure that prospective parents are aware of provision in their area, and that there are no barriers to enrolment.

Support at national level for the promotion of GM provision would be widely welcomed.

Survey responses indicate that few providers anticipate a significant increase in numbers of families seeking to enrol their children in GM preschool provision in the immediate future. Although most expect demand to be relatively stable or to rise slightly, as has been the case over recent years, they are still concerned to maintain numbers by ensuring that prospective parents are aware of what is available, and supported in making the choice to have their children educated in Gaelic.

• Meeting demand

Local authority respondents (both direct providers and those responsible for Gaelic development in their area) are concerned to understand what the level of demand is and what kind of provision is required (e.g. opportunities for families to learn Gaelic together, wraparound GM provision or sessional preschool education). In urban areas the respondents focused on meeting the existing desire for established provision rather than on creating additional demand. Some local authority providers would like to offer more all-day provision (meeting the needs of parents who work or have to travel considerable distances to access GM) but have to balance this with the realisation that it would reduce the total number of children who can have access to GM at their setting as they have no scope for expanding numbers per session.

Evidence from childminders suggests that they see little demand for a GM childminding service as requests are infrequent and parents seem to be satisfied with very limited use of Gaelic. In our *City* case study there were reports of unmet demand for GM childminding but this has not stimulated a supply, perhaps because demand is unpredictable or parents turn readily to English as an alternative or because there are few Gaelic speakers able to consider offering this service. Given the high cost of running day care provision for young children, and for babies in particular, it seems unlikely that there is sufficient demand to make costs affordable.

- **Promoting provision**

Responses from playgroups and parent and toddler groups suggest that there is an awareness of the need to inform prospective parents about the existence of the GM provision if their setting is to be sustainable or expand. Indeed, there were indications that the voluntary sector groups see promoting their setting as a cyclical and regular activity.

[We] need promotion after the summer holidays to boost numbers again after some go up to nursery. The playgroup has got money for advertising so the parent and toddler group are working with them on promotion. (GM playgroup and parent and toddler provider)

*[We've] been discussing up-dating the brochure.
(GM playgroup provider)*

[We] plan to advertise on [local area website] late in summer holidays, publicise in area, advertise in local paper. (GM playgroup provider)

The survey data show a concern to ensure that interested parents can find out about their provision (via early education and childcare websites) and link to a description of the setting through a dedicated website. Some respondents would like additional funding to support promotional work or specialist advice or support from an umbrella agency.

Providers have described the various methods that they use to publicise their provision but there is a paradox present in their responses and the responses of the parents we talked to at the case study settings. Despite their formal efforts at promotion, providers and parents agree that the most effective way of attracting families to GM services is through word of mouth (passing on a message about a positive reputation within a local area) or personal contact and invitation.

People are most likely to go to a group if they know others there. Word of mouth would be the most effective. (Key informant)

People tend to come through word of mouth . . . not many come without hearing about it from someone else. (GM playgroup provider)

This kind of promotional activity cannot be readily manipulated or developed. Reputations are built over time and depend on the quality of experiences being offered to children and their parents and the match between the expectations of

families and the kind of provision available. Nevertheless, if the power of reputation and personal contact is as strong as our evidence suggests, then this is an area of promotion that warrants attention. Developing a local profile as an established, consistent provider of high quality preschool education or childcare is an important challenge, particularly for voluntary sector provision.

Where numbers have declined or new provision is planned more innovative methods may have to be adopted to stimulate demand. The teacher at one newly established urban provider has used Gaelic television and radio to promote the provision. The approach adopted by a parent and toddler group concerned with dwindling numbers is described below.

Small Town Case

A parent and toddler group (Ceuman Beaga) meets once a week and offers opportunities for play and songs and rhymes led by a Gaelic-speaking play leader. The parents on the committee do not speak Gaelic but have worked hard (with external funding) to compile a pack of songs and other materials in Gaelic. This pack can be used as a resource in the setting and by parents who want to gain some vocabulary or become familiar with the songs their children are learning. Workshops about using music with toddlers were also part of the project and are used as a means of attracting more families to the group. Numbers have risen slightly but the committee would like to extend their reach to other nearby villages and offer workshops about Gaelic music and story telling to English-medium parent and toddler groups in the area.

Some respondents have mentioned concerns about Gaelic being perceived by non-Gaelic speakers as difficult and anxieties or misapprehensions about the way in which Gaelic will be used (e.g. parents feeling that they will not be able to understand anything said at a parent and toddler group).

We want to advertise more but [we] are frightened that the Gaelic banner will put people off – they will think it is all Gaelic.

(GM parent and toddler group provider)

People are often put off by it being Gaelic, they think it will all be Gaelic but are usually pleasantly surprised when they do come along and then stay. (GM parent and toddler group provider)

Parents don't realise that they don't need to speak Gaelic themselves to put [their] child through GM provision.

(GM parent and toddler group provider)

They thus saw a need for public information about what parents and children can expect to experience at GM provision and the ways in which Gaelic and English will be used. Some voluntary sector providers called on Gaelic umbrella organisations like Bòrd na Gàidhlig to increase their efforts to raise the profile of Gaelic, by drawing attention to the benefits of maintaining the language and the value for individuals of GM education. They argued that these efforts would ensure the sustainability of their provision, making both parent and toddler groups and playgroups on the edge of viability more confident that they can carry on.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Our research has revealed a number of areas in which action is needed to improve the quality and uptake of provision and thereby make GM early years provision more effective within the broader context of Gaelic language development policy. These include professional development, support needs, the promotion of provision, and further research.

5.1 Professional development

A number of steps in relation to the professional development of early years practitioners seem appropriate. All have resource implications, some more significant than others.

- **Develop dedicated national training which combines early years and language development for GM provision**

It is crucial that GM early years settings strive for excellence both in terms of overall early years practice and also in relation to targeted language development. Combining these two elements is a complex and sensitive task and dedicated training in this area (both initial and continuing professional education) would be extremely valuable. Currently, it appears that initial education or professional development for early years professionals, at all levels, omits the issue of bilingual development entirely, meaning that GM early years practitioners may have no formal, structured knowledge in this critical aspect of their work.

Action: colleges and universities offering initial early years education and professional development for this sector should collaborate with those providing initial teacher education for Gaelic medium to identify the most appropriate and most accessible approaches to providing initial education and professional development for this sector.

- **Raise the qualification/training level of all GM early years practitioners and the quality of children's experiences**

In most instances, early years practitioners (other than nursery teachers and managers of provision) are trained only to SVQ3 level, and in some cases their training may be a number of years out of date, such that they are no longer in touch with recent developments and innovations in the field. In addition, opportunities for in-service training are often limited and tend to have no special Gaelic element. Improving the skills base for GM practitioners could have important consequences for improving the quality of children's experience, thereby contributing to the overarching goal of excellence in provision. Sensitivity would be needed in this area, however, as several interviewees suggested that the imposition of significant new training requirements might lead to an exodus of experienced and hard-to-replace GM practitioners.

Action: Managers, employers, local authorities and others with responsibility for staff development should collaborate with colleges and universities to identify the most appropriate and effective approaches to professional development, and encourage and support practitioners to take up opportunities available.

- **Develop effective mechanisms for sharing knowledge and practice**

In many cases, GM practitioners appear somewhat isolated, having little or no contact with other GM providers and thus having limited opportunities to share their knowledge and experience, to learn from each other, and to benefit from the diffusion of innovation and 'best practice'. Structured networking workshops or conferences, on a regional or national basis, as well as less formal, but more flexible mechanisms such as on-line discussion groups, could make a useful contribution here. Existing structures and approaches developed in the primary schools sector (e.g. A' Chuisle and Gàidhlig Air-loidhne) could serve as an appropriate model in this respect.

Action: Local authorities and national bodies such as CNSA, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Learning & Teaching Scotland should run networking events locally, nationally and virtually, to encourage shared knowledge and practice.

5.2 Support needs

Action is needed in relation to a number of areas involving support needs. Again, there may be significant resource implications involved.

- **Develop supply of GM resources**

It is evident that the resources for GM early years are inadequate in many respects. The range of products available is limited in number and scope, and there are difficulties with distribution, so that some providers and parents may not be aware of, or able to access, the materials that are available. Development of materials should be closely connected to the Early Level of Curriculum for Excellence. Crucially, audio-visual materials of all kinds and new technology resources need to be developed; the shortfall here is much more pronounced than in relation to books.

The extent to which materials should be translated from English (or indeed other languages) is difficult. Arguably, a 'Gaelic' environment in which only the words and grammar are 'Gaelic' undermines the entire enterprise. However at present, with some important exceptions, material drawn from Gaelic tradition and culture appears to be rather underused in existing products.

Action: A new injection of dedicated funding seems necessary here, and either a new body should be charged with special responsibility for developing early years materials or Stòrlann should be given additional resources to develop further the range of pre-school materials it produces. Learning & Teaching Scotland could provide a dedicated site

for GM Early Years resources and encourage practitioners to share those they produce for their own playrooms.¹²

- **Support growth of GM childcare**

The limited availability of GM childcare (including private childminders) for under 3s and older children either beyond their preschool free entitlement or primary school hours was an important finding from our research. Although the providers responding to our survey did not report a mismatch between supply and demand, it may be that parents have a different perspective. In urban areas such as Glasgow and Edinburgh, it has been suggested that GM provision tailored more closely to the needs of working parents (i.e. all-day/‘wrap-around’ care) could lead to significantly increased enrolments. Increasing the number of hours provided would involve a range of operational issues, most obviously the need to recruit additional staff with appropriate qualifications and Gaelic skills (although arguably, such expansion could also make GM early years more realistic and attractive as a ‘career option’). In addition to group-based settings, private Gaelic-speaking childminders could play a significantly increased role. Again, there appears to be a mismatch between demand and supply.

Action: A national co-ordinating body such as CNSA, CALA or SCMA could play an important role in encouraging new carers into the system and linking them with interested parents. Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Scottish Government have a strategic responsibility to make links between plans for expansion of the preschool sector, in the context of the National Plan for Gaelic, to practical developments of this kind.

- **Develop mechanisms to ensure that GM children have opportunities to use the language at home and in informal contexts**

At present, the great majority of children in GM early years settings have little or no contact with the language outwith the structured GM environment. It is axiomatic that their language acquisition will improve in direct proportion to the extent of input. Where one or both parents speak Gaelic, mechanisms (and indeed policies) should be put in place to encourage them to use the language as much as possible and as early as possible. For parents who do not speak Gaelic, structured, accessible learning opportunities should be made available, and, as noted above, parents should be made aware of the key role of parental involvement in successful child language acquisition.

In endeavouring to be as accessible and open as possible, GM early years provision serves a wide range of parents, who may have varying understandings and expectations of the purpose of GM early years provision and GM education more generally. In some cases, parents may not be

¹² On the existing Early Years site, some useful materials have been uploaded by East Ayrshire, but in a section on ‘foreign language learning’ which practitioners in GM provision might not think to look at for Gaelic resources. (www.ltsotland.org.uk/resources/d/genericresource_tcm4401784.asp?strReferringChannel=earlyyears)

prepared for the demands of a language immersion setting and the extent to which successful outcomes depend on rich and diverse linguistic input. While parents should never be discouraged from putting their children into a GM setting, the Gaelic immersion strategy should be clear from the outset, and parents should be strongly encouraged (and enabled) to learn and use as much Gaelic as possible.

Action: Organisations such as CNSA and Comann nam Pàrant should develop information packs for parents and prospective parents of children attending GM preschool, and ensure that these are as widely disseminated as possible (on paper and electronically). Gaelic teaching organisations should develop provision specifically for these parents and ensure that this is widely accessible, in a suitable format for time-pressed parents.¹³

5.3 Promotion of provision

Existing provision is not promoted as effectively as it should be. Several measures could improve awareness and uptake.

- **National promotion of GM provision**

It is apparent that promotion of GM provision tends to be carried out at a local, indeed often setting-specific, level, with ‘word of mouth’ playing a central role. While this can doubtless be effective, and indeed preferable in some respects, there is clearly scope for a more co-ordinated national promotion strategy and an authoritative, central source of information concerning GM options. At present, many parents (at least those outwith Gaelic-speaking areas) appear simply to be unaware of the GM option or assume that it caters only for children who come from Gaelic-speaking homes. ‘Growing the market’ for GM early years provision is clearly essential if the ambitious targets in the National Plan for Gaelic are to be met.

Action: Two types of action are required. Firstly, an up-to-date national database of preschool provision should be made publicly available so that parents considering GM preschool for their children can identify the most suitable provision in their area, or request provision if nothing suitable is available. The map produced for this review could be regarded as the starting point for this database, but would require maintenance and regular updating. Bòrd na Gàidhlig may be the most appropriate body to take responsibility for maintaining the map or it could be incorporated in the annual statistical review of early years carried out by the Scottish Government. Secondly, a national promotion campaign should be undertaken, encouraging parents to consider the benefits of GM education – starting at the preschool stage – stressing both the cultural contribution which Gaelic makes to Scotland and the benefits of early bilingualism. Promotional campaigns of the type

¹³ The model developed by *Coffee Break Spanish* – a daily 15-minute lesson available as a podcast – could be worth extending to Gaelic, if targeted specifically to the needs of parents: see www.coffeebreakspanish.com

mounted in Wales could form the starting point for their development. Bòrd na Gàidhlig should take primary responsibility for this work, in collaboration with other local and national bodies.

5.4 Further research

In accordance with our brief, the scope of our research was limited and specific, with a clear emphasis on practical, structural issues. In the course of this review, however, we have discovered that more complex underlying issues also require attention, and that resolution of these issues may in fact determine the overall success and impact of GM early years provision. These would require additional investigation and different kinds of research instruments and methods.

- **Further research into outcomes of attending GM provision for individuals and development of Gaelic language**

It is apparent that there is currently no clear understanding of the expected and actual linguistic outcomes of attending GM early years settings. For example, in the case of an English-monoglot child entering a GM nursery at age 3 with no previous exposure to the language, how many Gaelic words (and what kinds of words) would he or she be expected to use actively and understand passively at the end of his or her time in nursery, and what grammatical structures should have been acquired? What would be the principal stumbling blocks in terms of grammar and pronunciation? At what point might children be expected to begin using Gaelic actively, and in what circumstances? At present, there are no clear answers to questions of this kind, even though a better understanding would be very valuable from a pedagogical standpoint.

- **Research efficacy of language development models**

There is evidently a diversity of practice at present in relation to the extent and range of Gaelic input in 'GM' settings, and this diversity is often based on underlying differences in principles and philosophy among settings and providers. There do not appear to be clear, structured models in relation to staged Gaelic language input. There is, however, an extensive body of research in relation to other languages which could be effectively applied to the Gaelic context. Research could show the most effective and suitable approaches for Gaelic education.

- **Parental perspectives on supply and demand**

From our survey responses, it appears that there is currently little unmet demand for GM provision; but as discussed above, it may be that providers are not best placed to establish the full picture. A Scotland-wide survey of parents of preschool children would help to establish whether there is unmet demand, perhaps in areas where there is currently no provision, or perhaps for other types of provision than are currently available. Also, given the need to increase demand in order to meet National Plan targets, such a survey could help to

identify the kinds of arguments or incentives that would encourage larger numbers of parents to opt for this provision.

Action: the key bodies funding research into Gaelic – the Scottish Government, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Scottish Funding Council – should consider whether existing or new research funding streams can support work in this area

5.5 Conclusion

This review of GM early years and childcare provision has established a database of 127 providers offering GM provision in a range of settings in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Provision for 3-5 year olds is predominantly in group settings (nursery classes, schools and playgroups), where they attend for up to five half-day sessions per week during the school term. Younger children are mainly catered for by voluntary sector parent and toddler groups. There is little childcare available for all-day provision or care throughout the year. Nevertheless, providers did not indicate any expectation of expansion. If the targets for growth set in the National Plan for Gaelic are to be achieved, it looks likely that there will have to be substantial efforts by responsible bodies such as Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Scottish Government to increase the demand by promoting the benefits of GM provision and bilingual early education. There will have to be corresponding efforts around a well researched and incentivised plan to increase the supply of GM provision, well trained Gaelic speaking early years practitioners and effective GM resources. If the expansion of GM provision is to be of an appropriate quality that fulfils the expectations of the regulatory authorities and Curriculum for Excellence and develops fluent and confident Gaelic speakers then it will also be necessary to develop an enhanced understanding of the pedagogy that supports Gaelic language learning for young children and learning across the curriculum.

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APPENDIX A

GM PROVISION ACROSS THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES: QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

As an addition to the original research plan, the Education Analytical Services Division of the Scottish Government emailed a letter to the directors of education in each local authority asking them to nominate a contact who would be able to provide information on Gaelic-medium early years and childcare provision in their area. Bòrd na Gàidhlig also provided contact names for some authorities. At least one contact for each LA was identified. Their responsibilities varied: officers or managers for Early Years and/or Childcare; Gaelic Education Officers and Gaelic Development Officers; Education Officers; and officers or managers for Quality Improvement. Initial contacts sometimes passed on the query to others, including head teachers at primary schools with GM and one Gaelic teacher in primary and secondary schools. Some reminder emails and phone calls were required.

All contacts were emailed and asked to complete a short questionnaire on provision in their area. All but two of the 32 authorities returned questionnaires or provided by email or telephone information that answered the questions. No information was returned by Fife (although the questionnaire was passed on to Early Years), but we have found no indication of any provision in the authority. The Orkney contact replied briefly to say there was no provision. Multiple responses were received from three authorities, Dumfries and Galloway (four), Highland (two), North Lanarkshire (two). Dumfries and Galloway circulated the questionnaire to all primary school heads, four of whom responded.

1. LISTS OF PROVISION

From the questionnaire activity, we established that 17 local authorities offer GM preschool provision: these are Aberdeen, Angus, Argyll & Bute, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Highland, Inverclyde, Moray, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire, Western Isles. All but one of these provided lists of or information on nursery classes, playgroups and parent and toddler groups, but none gave details of childminders. The exception was Clackmannanshire, where there was no list because 'the scope of provision is limited', but this limited provision was not specified. The remaining 13 authorities that responded to the questionnaire in detail stated that they had no provision: these were Aberdeenshire, Dumfries & Galloway, Dundee, East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Midlothian, Perth & Kinross, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Ayrshire and West Lothian. The Fife contact passed on the questionnaire to the Early Years team, but it was not returned. Renfrewshire noted that 'in the information available on the childcare information service no providers have indicated that they speak Gaelic'.

2. CHANGES IN PROVISION

LA contacts were asked about provision that had closed or opened in the past year and plans for closures or new provision in the coming year. Three authorities gave information about provision having closed and/or opened in the past year, and others gave information on a longer time-scale.

Aberdeen said that no provision had closed in the last year, but a group for two-year olds had previously closed because of lack of numbers. The LA contact (Gaelic education officer) also highlighted the impact of the national trend for most mothers with young children to return to work. Mothers working full-time need all-day provision, so a morning-only nursery (as at the one GM nursery class in the city) is not practical for them. This means that some pupils go straight into GM P1 without being in GM preschool provision first, which would be preferable. Low numbers do not allow the nursery class to expand to be full-time, but the Gaelic education officer felt that it was a 'chicken-and-egg' situation: she reported that a colleague at an Edinburgh nursery said their numbers had doubled/tripled when the nursery became full-time.

In Glasgow, Sgoil Àraich Lyoncross (nursery school) opened in 2008 because of parental demand. The other GM facilities at Sgoil Àraich Rowena and Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu (Glasgow Gaelic School) have had very healthy intakes, with some sessions completely full. Little Scholars nursery at Langside College closed in May 2009, because the entire site is being redeveloped and there will no longer be accommodation for GM preschool provision there.

Several changes were noted in the Highland region. Several cròileagain (playgroups) in the Inverness area, including the one at Kinmylies Primary School, had closed because of the opening of the nursery class at the new Bunsgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis (Inverness Gaelic School) in August 2007. It was thought that groups run by CNSA in Culloden and Tomatin had closed, because of the lack of a playleader in the latter case. Later contact with the groups found that both had been without a Gaelic-speaking playleader for the last year or so; Culloden was therefore about to close, while Tomatin was continuing in the hope of getting a new playleader. One of the Highland contacts also commented that: 'The demand and interest is still there but it needs an organisation to put in the work to get them up and running. CNSA ceased to be interested in pre-school education a number of years ago and even then was lacking in know-how and ability.'

Although there had been no closures in the past year in the Western Isles, it was noted that a number of groups had closed in the past because of very low numbers. Groups with very low numbers are regularly monitored, and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has a policy to top up funding for these groups provided they meet certain criteria.

The general pattern of provision in Argyll & Bute had not changed in 2008-09, but the level of Gaelic language input to each unit had changed, for example at Tìree Primary Gaelic Pre-Five Unit, and Strath of Appin Gaelic Pre-Five Unit. These changes to provision are 'related to the general issue of the availability of personnel with sufficient language competency to work with very young children'.

Four authorities discussed future plans. In Argyll & Bute, from 2009 onwards, the Early Years section at registration for Preschool Education records parental interest in GM provision. As part of the establishment of the pattern of provision of Preschool Education the need to develop GM provision is also considered and opportunities explored. Establishing a Gaelic Pre-Five Unit at Colgrain Primary School in Helensburgh is currently being considered. Edinburgh is currently looking into possibility of partner provision with the private sector, prompted by greater demand for pre-school provision, especially for childcare below age three. In Highland, it was hoped that a Ceuman Beaga group in Aviemore would be starting very soon. In Inverclyde, CNSA was trying to establish a carer and toddlers group.

3. DEMAND

Authorities were asked whether there was unmet demand in their area and if so what kind of provision was required.

Six authorities said there is unmet demand in their areas. Demand for wraparound care and all-day provision was mentioned by three (Aberdeen, Glasgow and Highland). Glasgow has some demand from parents for an all-day GM service (i.e. continuous provision from 8.00 to 6.00). Highland reported that a voluntary group, Curam Chloinne Inbhir Nis, are presently developing proposals for a Pre-5 Centre in Inverness catering for all under 5s, located opposite the existing Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig and offering full-time wraparound care through the medium of Gaelic and an After-School Club. This was seen as a very positive development, because there has been unmet demand for Gaelic childcare in Inverness for at least 15 years.

Highland also said that there is a demand for all types of Gaelic childcare and out of school clubs. Both in areas where there already is GM provision and in areas where there is no GM education, the question of whether it is a suitable area for the development of GM needs to be considered: 'If it is a potential GM area then the development of pre-school groups is important in creating the grassroots interest and developing awareness'. Childcare is also an area of unmet demand in some parts of the Western Isles and there is difficulty recruiting childminders and sustaining childcare in very rural areas.

Argyll & Bute said that unmet demand for preschool education is recorded, and commented that: 'Generally speaking in order to quantify demand for other childcare services the council would require to raise expectations which potentially it cannot meet'. Inverclyde mentioned demand for a Carer and Toddler Group.

22 authorities indicated that they were not aware of any unmet demand or that there was no unmet demand at present: Aberdeenshire, Angus, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries & Galloway, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Midlothian, Moray, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire, Shetland, South Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire, and West Lothian.

Inverclyde noted that there was no unmet demand for GM preschool education and that at present only 56% of places are filled. Aberdeen also said that demand for preschool education is met.

Two authorities noted increases in demand. Edinburgh noted that provision was approaching capacity, and East Ayrshire stressed that: 'Although the number of children attending the nursery class has increased there is no unmet demand as we have a statutory responsibility to provide a pre-school educational place for every child whose parent wishes one'.

Two authorities are currently reviewing provision or are planning to do so. As part of its draft Gaelic Language Plan, Glasgow is proposing to review provision in this area with a view to ensuring provision is adequate. Perth & Kinross was gathering information about all aspects of demand for Gaelic in spring 2009.

Stirling commented on the nature of provision in its only Gaelic nursery class: 'Riverside nursery offers Gaelic input as a part of the existing nursery class sessions. Pressure groups indicate that Gaelic provision classes within primary should be linked to a Gaelic provision nursery, but 2004 consultation by Head of Riverside Primary evidenced that at that time parents preferred Gaelic input into the existing nursery session'.

4. COLLABORATION

Following on from the questions on demand, authorities were asked what they did if they could not meet requests for GM provision.

Seven authorities said they had been/were currently able to meet such requests: Angus, East Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, Stirling, Western Isles.

Five authorities said they referred or would refer parents to neighbouring authorities: Clackmannanshire to Stirling; East Renfrewshire to Glasgow or East Ayrshire; Edinburgh to Glasgow; West Dunbartonshire to Glasgow Gaelic School with support for transport costs; West Lothian to Edinburgh. Aberdeen said that children from Aberdeenshire, which has no GM provision, were referred to Aberdeen.

Argyll & Bute said that GM was a preference rather than a requirement: 'Preschool education parents who indicate an interest in Gaelic generally name Gaelic provision in their area or put English medium providers as their option. Very few parents demand Gaelic as a must — it is mostly expressions of interest.'

South Lanarkshire said that parents would be supported through the Childcare Information Service if demand exceeded places available. Highland noted the importance of the local context: 'It depends on various factors. As a community worker I would not raise the issue of GM education in an area without first having thought through whether or not it was an area where it was likely to be supported by the Council.' Western Isles said that the council continues to provide incentives to encourage individuals to register as childminders. Renfrewshire said the childcare information service occasionally gets calls about transport.

15 authorities said they were not aware of any such requests having been made, or answered N/A: Aberdeenshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Lothian, Falkirk,

Midlothian, North Ayrshire, Perth & Kinross, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, Western Isles.

5. INFORMAL PROVISION, PARENTS' GROUPS AND OTHER PROVISION AND SERVICES

Authorities provided information on a range of informal provision and on groups of parents who meet to speak Gaelic or promote the use of Gaelic with young children.

East Dunbartonshire mentioned Keith Scammell of CNSA, 'an organisation which promotes Gaelic from birth to aged 3 in the Dumbartonshire area'.

Parents/family

East Ayrshire, Edinburgh and Glasgow all mentioned Comann nam Pàrant, described by the East Ayrshire contact as 'a group of mainly non-Gaelic speaking parents who send their children to Gaelic Medium Education, meets on a quarterly basis and are vigorous in their support for GME'. Inverclyde had a parents' group on Friday mornings organised by the Gaelic Community Development Officer. Highland noted that staff in the Ceuman Beaga groups are employed by the Council but there is usually a parent committee who help with the development of the group. Clackmannanshire mentioned that parents with an interest in GM education are part of a parent group operating in the neighbouring authority of Stirling. North Ayrshire mentioned a group in Largs a few years ago who had an interest in Gaelic provision, but could provide no details; a contact provided by CNSA said that a group in Largs had closed in 2007 because of lack of demand, and it is likely that this is the same group.

Aberdeen reported a conversation class for parents in the school at the same time as the nursery class, and noted that this does not suit all parents because many are working, so some go to adult evening classes. East Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde mentioned evening/adult classes, but it was not clear whether these were aimed specifically at parents.

Highland mentioned Curam Chloinne Inbhir Nis, a committee of parents who are currently trying to establish a Gaelic wraparound facility project.

Two authorities noted the role of families, in particular, of grandparents. Argyll & Bute said that 'Informal Gaelic input is also occurring in some areas where personal contacts are strong between childcare providers and a Gaelic speaker, e.g. Granny!'. Western Isles reported that Gaelic-speaking grandparents provide a childcare service.

Support/activities offered by local authorities

Several authorities mentioned specific support or activities that they offer.

North Ayrshire has a peripatetic Gaelic Nursery Assistant, based at Children's Services in the Arran High School, who visits all pre-school establishments on Arran and provides play-based Gaelic input for the children.

Highland Council has a jobshare post in Gaelic Community Learning and Development for the whole Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey areas; part of the post's remit is to organise GM out of school provision, i.e. summer activities (mountain biking, canoeing, etc) through the medium of Gaelic. Inverclyde mentioned their Community Gaelic Development Officer.

Argyll & Bute are currently trying to produce a CD of the songs and rhymes in Gaelic for the 'Play at Home' books circulated to families of under fives through the GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) agenda, although the books have not been translated into Gaelic.

West Dunbartonshire has run or been involved in various one-off short-term family activities: two after-school family learning activities with primary pupils in P4/5 who are currently learning Gaelic and their parents or carers, with a further one planned for this year; a Gaelic trip for 8+-year olds and their parents to Inchcailloch on Loch Lomond with a programme of songs, stories, cartoons and games; a Gaelic weekend at the Gateway Centre of Loch Lomond National Park.

East Ayrshire said: 'Our Pre-5 Project - Parent and Toddlers continues to provide a Gaelic language and cultural experience for children 0-3 years through an immersion programme designed to encourage receptive and productive use of the Gaelic language. Six children were involved in the 2007-2008 session. Parents are supported to work with their children whether they come from a Gaelic or non-Gaelic speaking home. The focus this year has been language development through physical outdoor play'. East Ayrshire's Learning and Development Service also offers Gaelic tuition to parents and the 'Gaelic in the Home' provision encourages parents of young children to use their Gaelic with their children.

21 authorities said they were not aware of any such provision: Aberdeenshire, Angus, Dumfries & Galloway, Dundee, East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Midlothian, Moray, North Lanarkshire, Perth & Kinross, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire, West Lothian, and Western Isles.

APPENDIX B

WELCOME TO THE GAELIC-MEDIUM EARLY YEARS PROVISION PROVIDER SURVEY

Gaelic-medium Early Years and childcare provision plays a crucial role in the Gaelic education system and Gaelic development initiatives. The National Plan for Gaelic has set ambitious targets, and achieving them will depend on attracting children and parents to the 'Gaelic system' from the earliest stages of education.

This survey is part of a review of Gaelic-medium Early Years provision in Scotland. The work was commissioned by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Scottish Government. It is being carried out by the Stirling Institute of Education and the department of Celtic & Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Our study aims to chart existing Gaelic-medium preschool services and childcare provision. We want to find out what changes or developments are needed to ensure that demand for provision can be met, and also how Gaelic-medium Early Years provision can be effectively promoted. The information that you will give us on this survey is an important part of the review. We need to know as much as possible about current Gaelic-medium Early Years provision if we are to make effective recommendations for future developments.

Each completed entry will be placed in a draw for 4 vouchers to spend on play equipment or resources for Early Years provision at the Early Learning Centre or Comhairle nan Leabhraichean (the Gaelic Books Council).

There are 9 sections to the survey; you need to complete 7 of these (one page has three sections for the different types of providers). We have tried to make completing it as easy as possible. Usually all you have to do is tick the appropriate box or boxes, but at other times we ask you to fill in some numbers or invite you to write a brief description. Your answers will be confidential to the research team. We have asked you to give us your name and the name of your provision so that we can record responses carefully and make sure that we cover a wide range of respondents. However, we will not disclose individual responses to the funders of the survey or anyone else.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. The closing date for completion is 22nd April 2009. If you have any queries about the survey or the review please contact Christine Stephen: christine.stephen@stir.ac.uk or 01786 467 630.

The survey takes 20-30 minutes to complete and can be saved part way through. There are three types of question: circles or 'radio buttons' to click, squares to tick, and boxes to type text into. Please note that once you have clicked on the 'continue' button at the bottom of each page you cannot return to review or amend that page.

Details of Provision

About Your Provision

1. Your name:

2. Name and location of the provision you are describing in this survey:

3. What type of provision do you offer?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Nursery class
- ☐ Nursery school
- ☐ Private nursery
- ☐ Before- or after-school care
- ☐ Holiday care or play scheme
- ☐ Childminding or day care
- ☐ Playgroup (cròileagan)
- ☐ Parent-toddler group (Pàrant is Pàiste)
- ☐ Other (*please specify*):

4. Is your provision:

- ☐ Public - local authority?
- ☐ Private?
- ☐ Voluntary?

5. Is your provision registered with the Scottish Care Commission?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. Is your provision in partnership with your local authority to offer government-funded preschool education places?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

a. If in partnership, how many children take **all** their preschool education sessions at your setting?

b. If in partnership, how many children take **some** of their preschool education sessions at your setting?

7. How many weeks of the year is your provision offered?

- ☐ Year-round
- ☐ Term-time only
- ☐ Holiday care

Please give approximate number of weeks per year.

8. On what days of the week is your provision offered?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Monday
- ☐ Tuesday
- ☐ Wednesday
- ☐ Thursday
- ☐ Friday
- ☐ Saturday
- ☐ Sunday

9. When is your setting open for children to attend?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Morning session only
- ☐ Afternoon session only
- ☐ Morning and afternoon sessions
- ☐ Full day
- ☐ Evenings
- ☐ Wraparound care (early mornings, lunch times, late afternoons)

10. How long is each session in your provision?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ 1 hour or less
- ☐ Between 1 and 2 hours
- ☐ Between 2 and 3 hours
- ☐ Between 3 and 5 hours
- ☐ Between 5 and 7 hours

- ☐ Between 7 and 10 hours
- ☐ 10 hours or more

11. What is the age capacity of your setting?

	<i>Please indicate how many children you can take in each age group.</i>
a. Babies (approximately 1 year and under)	<input type="text"/>
b. Toddlers (approximately 1 to 3 years)	<input type="text"/>
c. Preschoolers (approximately 3 to 5 years)	<input type="text"/>
d. Primary school children (approximately 5 years and over)	<input type="text"/>

12. In what type of accommodation does your provision take place?

- ☐ Local authority: purpose-built or part of primary school
- ☐ Local authority: owned and adapted by authority
- ☐ Private purpose-built
- ☐ Private adapted
- ☐ Private house
- ☐ Shared use, e.g. village or church hall, or space in a local school
- ☐ Other (please specify):

13. If you offer government funded preschool education places, how have you adapted your provision to meet the increased hours required? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Made sessions longer but no changes in shifts/staffing
- ☐ Made sessions longer and changed shifts/numbers employed
- ☐ Opened for more days each year and employed the same staff for more days
- ☐ Opened for more days each year and employed more staff to cover
- ☐ No changes needed

Details of Demand and Uptake

Current Demand and Uptake

14. How many children currently attend on a regular basis? *Please fill in numbers for all services you offer.*

	Number of children:
a. Preschool education sessions	<input type="text"/>
b. Playgroup sessions	<input type="text"/>
c. Parent-toddler sessions	<input type="text"/>
d. Full day	<input type="text"/>
e. Extended hours	<input type="text"/>
f. Childminding	<input type="text"/>
g. Holiday clubs	<input type="text"/>
h. Other	<input type="text"/>

15. How many children currently attend in each age group? *Please fill in numbers for each age group.*

	Number of children:
a. Babies (approximately 1 year and under)	<input type="text"/>
b. Toddlers (approximately 1 to 3 years)	<input type="text"/>
c. Preschoolers (approximately 3 to 5 years)	<input type="text"/>
d. Primary school children (approximately 5 years and over)	<input type="text"/>

16. How common is it to have siblings attending your setting?

- ☐ None
- ☐ Very few families with multiple children attending
- ☐ Some families with multiple children attending
- ☐ Many families with multiple children attending
- ☐ Some families with siblings who attended in the past

17. Do you keep a waiting list for interested families?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No, there is no need

How many children are currently on the waiting list?

18. In the last five years has the total number of children attending your setting:

- ☐ Increased
- ☐ Remained about the same
- ☐ Decreased

19. What is your projected demand for next year?

- ☐ Numbers will drop significantly
- ☐ Numbers will drop slightly
- ☐ Numbers will stay about the same
- ☐ Numbers will rise slightly
- ☐ Numbers will rise significantly

20. Do you have any plans to expand your provision?

- ☐ No plans for expansion at present
- ☐ Yes, plans to expand hours/weeks that setting is open
- ☐ Yes, plans to expand capacity of setting
- ☐ Would like to expand but not possible at this time

What factors are constraining your plans to expand?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Lack of space in current premises
- ☐ Lack of suitable premises
- ☐ Difficulty recruiting staff
- ☐ Lack of sustainable demand
- ☐ Lack of funding (loans, grants, etc.) to expand
- ☐ Cost of expansion
- ☐ Other (please specify)

:

Details of Promotion, Collaboration, and Competition

Promotion, Collaboration, Competition

21. How is your provision currently promoted?

	Please indicate if you use this type of provision.	If a website or newspaper, please specify.
a. Paper signs on noticeboards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
b. Leaflets or flyers distributed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
c. Listed on local authority website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
d. Listed on Scottish Childcare website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
e. Listed on Gaelic-specific website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
f. Listed on own website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
g. Mentioned on Radio nan Gàidheal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
h. Advertised in a local newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
i. Word-of-mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>

22. How do families who use your provision usually find out about it?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Paper signs on noticeboards
- ☐ Leaflets or flyers distributed
- ☐ Listed on local authority website
- ☐ Listed on Scottish Childcare website
- ☐ Listed on Gaelic-specific website
- ☐ Listed on own website
- ☐ Mentioned on Radio nan Gàidheal
- ☐ Advertised in a local newspaper
- ☐ Word-of-mouth

23. What else would you like to do to promote your provision?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Nothing - happy with current arrangements
- ☐ To develop own website
- ☐ To be listed on web search sites

- ☐ To be included in local area directories
- ☐ Other (please specify):

What kind of support would you need to improve promotion of your provision?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Technical support
- ☐ Financial support
- ☐ Expert help

24. Do you consider your provision to be in competition with other local provision?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ No, not at this time
- ☐ Yes - with other Gaelic-medium providers
- ☐ Yes - with other English-medium providers

25. Do you work in collaboration with other providers?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ No, not at this time
- ☐ Yes - with other Gaelic-medium providers
- ☐ Yes - with other English-medium providers

26. Do you work in collaboration with any umbrella organisation that promotes or supports Gaelic-medium provision?

	Please select the appropriate response.			What kinds of things do you collaborate on?
	Regularly	Sometimes	Never	
a. Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Àraich	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. Bòrd na Gàidhlig	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c. Comunn na Gàidhlig	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
d. Comann nam Pàrant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

27. Please list any other Gaelic organisation that you work with.

28. Do you receive support, advice, or training from any English-medium organisations?

	<i>Please select the appropriate response.</i>			What kind of support/help do you get?
	Regularly	Sometimes	Never	
a. CALA (Care and Learning Alliance)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
b. SPPA (Scottish Pre-school Play Association)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
c. NDNA (National Day Nurseries Association)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>

29. Please list any other organisation you work with.

30. What role does the local authority play in your provision?
For private and voluntary sector providers only
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Not involved
- ☐ Provides funding only
- ☐ Provides accommodation
- ☐ Provides support (e.g. finding accommodation, advertising opportunities)
- ☐ Provides training opportunities and advice
- ☐ Other *(please specify)*:

Details of Staffing

Questions for private nurseries, local authority nurseries, and nursery classes

Childminders and voluntary sector providers please proceed to the appropriate section.

31. How many staff are employed at your setting?

a. How many staff are full-time?

b. How many staff are part-time?

32. Do you find it a challenge to recruit enough adults with early years training or experience to maintain the necessary ratios of staff to children?

☐

Yes

☐

Occasionally; has been a problem in the past

☐

No

33. Do you find it a challenge to recruit enough Gaelic-speaking adults to maintain Gaelic-medium provision and meet the necessary ratios of staff to children?

☐

Yes

☐

Occasionally; has been a problem in the past

☐

No

34. How many staff have the following qualifications?

	<i>Please indicate the number and specify the qualification.</i>
a. Childhood studies degree	<input type="text"/>
b. SVQ in childcare	<input type="text"/>
c. Gaelic language qualification	<input type="text"/>
d. Teaching qualification	<input type="text"/>
e. Playgroup/childminder training	<input type="text"/>

f. Playworker training	<input type="text"/>
g. HNC/HND	<input type="text"/>
h. NNEB/SNNEB	<input type="text"/>
i. Other	<input type="text"/>

35. Do you have voluntary helpers?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ No
- ☐ Occasionally e.g. for special event or trips
- ☐ Volunteers look after specific activities e.g. organising book lending, preparing resource
- ☐ Volunteers help in the setting occasionally
- ☐ Regular rota of volunteers to help in the setting
- ☐ Volunteers involved in fund-raising
- ☐ Other (please specify)

:

36. If your provision offers preschool education, do you have a teacher who is:
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Available throughout every session and works with children?
- ☐ Available part-time to work with children?
- ☐ Available part-time to work with staff on planning and recording?
- ☐ Fluent in spoken Gaelic?
- ☐ Literate in Gaelic?

37. Is non-contact/planning time available to staff?

- ☒ Yes, daily or every other day
- ☒ Yes, weekly
- ☒ Not at this time

38. Do staff have access to training and opportunities for continuing professional development?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Yes; options are accessible and affordable
- ☐ Yes; limited choice of options
- ☐ Yes; but not accessible due to distance

- ☐ Yes; but not accessible due to cost
- ☐ Not at this time

Please list courses attended by staff since January 2008.

--	--

39. How many staff are employed at the following pay scales? Please use **either** hourly rate or annual salary.

	<i>Please indicate.</i>
a. Minimum wage	<input type="text"/>
b. £6-£7.99 per hour	<input type="text"/>
c. £8-£12 per hour	<input type="text"/>
d. £10-14,999 pa pro rata	<input type="text"/>
e. £15-20,000 pa pro rata	<input type="text"/>
f. more than £20,000 pa pro rata	<input type="text"/>

40. How many staff left your setting between January 2008 and February 2009?

41. How many staff began work at your setting between January 2008 and February 2009?

Questions for childminders

Voluntary sector providers please proceed to the next section.

42. Do you have a spouse, partner, or older child who helps to care for the children? If so, is he or she also registered (if applicable)?

43. Do you employ others to help in your setting? If yes, how many staff do you employ?

44. Do you find it a challenge to recruit enough adults to maintain the necessary ratios of staff to children?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Occasionally; has been a problem in the past
- ☐ No



45. Do you find it a challenge to recruit enough Gaelic-speaking adults to maintain the Gaelic-medium provision that you offer?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Occasionally; has been a problem in the past
- ☐ No

46. Do you and your staff/colleagues have access to training and opportunities for continuing professional development?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Yes; options are accessible and affordable
- ☐ Yes; limited choice of options
- ☐ Yes; but not accessible due to distance
- ☐ Yes; but not accessible due to cost
- ☐ Not at this time

Please list courses attended by staff since January 2008.

47. How many staff (including yourself) are employed at the following pay scales? *Please use **either** hourly rate or annual salary.*

	<i>Please indicate.</i>
a. Minimum wage	<input type="text"/>
b. £6-£7.99 per hour	<input type="text"/>
c. £8-£12 per hour	<input type="text"/>
d. £10-14,999 pa pro rata	<input type="text"/>
e. £15-20,000 pa pro rata	<input type="text"/>
f. More than £20,000 pa pro rata	<input type="text"/>

Questions for voluntary sector providers

48. Do you employ anyone to work in your setting such as a paid playleader?



Yes



No - all adults are volunteers

a. How many staff do you employ?

b. Please indicate where your employee(s) are on the following pay scale. Use **either** the hourly rate or the annual salary. Indicate multiple staff at the same pay scale under the 'other' option.

(select all that apply)



Minimum wage



£6-£7.99 per hour



£8-£12 per hour



£10-14,999 pa pro rata



£15-20,000 pa pro rata



more than £20,000 pa pro rata



Other (please specify):

49. Do you have voluntary helpers?



Yes

☐ No - rely on parents staying with their children

How many non-parent helpers do you have at each session?

50. Do you find it a challenge to recruit enough adults to maintain the necessary ratios of adults to children?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Occasionally; has been a problem in the past
- ☐ No

51. Do you find it a challenge to recruit enough Gaelic-speaking adults to maintain the Gaelic-medium provision that you want to offer?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Occasionally; has been a problem in the past
- ☐ No

Details of Costs and Income

Fees and funding

52. What fees did you charge for attendance in 2008-2009? *Please indicate all fee structures that apply to your setting.*

	<i>Please detail fees and structure</i>
a. No fee	<input type="text"/>
b. No fee - all preschool education places funded	<input type="text"/>
c. Fee per hour	<input type="text"/>
d. Fee per session	<input type="text"/>
e. Fee per hour of wraparound care (before/after nursery or school, over lunch)	<input type="text"/>
f. Fee per day of holiday play scheme	<input type="text"/>
g. Other fee structure	<input type="text"/>

53. Do you have any other regular additional fees?

	<i>Please indicate fee charged per week</i>
a. Snack or meals	<input type="text"/>
b. Resources	<input type="text"/>
c. Fund for special events and outings	<input type="text"/>

54. For local authority provision only: What is the per capita expenditure you are allocated for each preschool child this year?

55. For private and voluntary sector providers only: What are the costs for providing your service?

	<i>Please list amount and specify period (week, month, or year).</i>
a. Accommodation	<input type="text"/>
b. Utilities	<input type="text"/>
c. Insurance	<input type="text"/>
d. Wages	<input type="text"/>
e. Organisation registration fees	<input type="text"/>
f. Resources/consumables	<input type="text"/>

56. For private and voluntary sector providers only: What funding does your provision currently receive?

	<i>Please identify source and amount</i>
a. Local authority	<input type="text"/>
b. Government funding	<input type="text"/>
c. Grant from Bòrd na Gàidhlig	<input type="text"/>
d. Grant from umbrella organisation	<input type="text"/>
e. Grant from charitable body	<input type="text"/>
f. Supplements from voluntary fundraising	<input type="text"/>

57. For private and voluntary sector providers only: How would additional funding enable you to improve your provision?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Recruit more staff
- ☐ Move into larger premises
- ☐ Obtain more resources
- ☐ Increase advertising
- ☐ Other (please specify):

Details on Use of Gaelic

Use of Gaelic in Your Provision

58. Is your setting:

- ☐ Monolingual? (Only Gaelic is used)
- ☐ Bilingual? (Both Gaelic and English are used)

What are the approximate proportions of Gaelic and English currently used in your setting?

- ☐ Mainly Gaelic
- ☐ Gaelic and English are used equally
- ☐ Mainly English

59. What proportion of the adults working with children in your setting are Gaelic speakers?

	<i>Please indicate which proportion of each relevant group can speak Gaelic fluently</i>					
	All	Most	Some	A few	None	N/A
a. Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Parent helpers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

60. When do the adults working with children in your setting currently use Gaelic?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Staff speak Gaelic at all times
- ☐ Staff can choose to speak in Gaelic or English

- ☐ Staff regularly use Gaelic for specific activities or sessions
- ☐ Staff occasionally use Gaelic for specific activities or sessions

61. How many of the children currently attending your setting come from homes where Gaelic is spoken?

- ☐ All or most
- ☐ Around half
- ☐ A few
- ☐ None

62. Which of the following statements describe the children's use of Gaelic in your playroom?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Children are encouraged to speak Gaelic at all times
- ☐ Children can choose to speak in Gaelic or in English
- ☐ Children are encouraged to use Gaelic during specific activities (e.g. greetings, news time, stories, singing)
- ☐ Children are encourage to use Gaelic during occasional activities (e.g. visits from musicians and storytellers)
- ☐ Other (please specify):

63. Which of the following statements describe the current Gaelic language goals of your setting?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ To support the Gaelic language development of children from Gaelic-speaking homes ☐ To prepare children planning to attend Gaelic-medium primary school
- ☐ To enable children from non-Gaelic-speaking homes to become fluent in Gaelic
- ☐ To enable children from non-Gaelic-speaking homes to learn a little Gaelic
- ☐ Other (please specify):

64. What kinds of activities are currently offered to achieve these goals?

	<i>Please give examples of activities</i>
a. Adults use Gaelic at all times and for all activities, and children are encouraged to do the same	<input type="text"/>

b. Adults organise specific activities to teach and develop spoken Gaelic	<input type="text"/>
c. Adults organise specific activities to teach and develop written Gaelic	<input type="text"/>
d. Other activities	<input type="text"/>

65. What resources do you currently use to promote the learning and use of Gaelic in your setting?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Gaelic-speaking staff
- ☐ Gaelic-speaking visitors
- ☐ Visits to other settings where Gaelic is used
- ☐ Books in Gaelic
- ☐ Posters and other visual aids in Gaelic
- ☐ Puppets and other toys that children associate specifically with Gaelic
- ☐ Audio-visual resources in Gaelic (e.g. tapes, CDs, DVDs)
- ☐ Gaelic websites for children
- ☐ Other technological resources in Gaelic (e.g. CD-ROMs, video games)
- ☐ Other (please specify):

66. When do you observe, assess, and record children's competence in Gaelic?

	<i>Please indicate</i>			
	Not at all	On entry to setting	During time in setting	On exit from setting
a. Observe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Assess	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Record	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

67. How do you share details of children's competence in Gaelic when they leave your setting?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ We do not share details of children's competence in Gaelic
- ☐ We share details of children's competence in Gaelic with the other settings they attend concurrently or on transfer to another setting
- ☐ We share details of children's competence in Gaelic in their transition record if they go on to a Gaelic-medium primary setting

- ☐ We share details of children's competence in Gaelic in their transition record if they go on to a English-medium primary setting

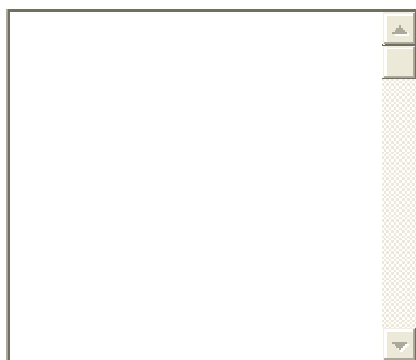
68. What would help you to improve the provision of Gaelic in your setting?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Recruitment of additional members of staff who are fluent in Gaelic
- ☐ Language learning opportunities for staff wishing to improve their own Gaelic language skills
- ☐ Professional development opportunities for staff wishing to improve their skills as bilingual educators
- ☐ Opportunities for parents to learn or improve their Gaelic so that they can help their children learn the language
- ☐ More resources for supporting children's use of Gaelic in the classroom
- ☐ Other (please specify):

What kinds of resources do you most need to improve provision of Gaelic in your setting?



69. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to current provision for Gaelic in your setting?



Details of Future Plans

Details of future plans

70. Which of the following would you like to have in the future?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Training in supporting language learning
- ☐ Financial support
- ☐ More suitable premises
- ☐ More Gaelic-medium resources
- ☐ Training for preschool education
- ☐ Training for playwork
- ☐ Training for childminders
- ☐ More play equipment
- ☐ More practitioners with preschool qualifications
- ☐ More Gaelic-speaking adults
- ☐ Access to advice through the medium of Gaelic
- ☐ Access to advice on Gaelic usage and acquisition
- ☐ Website with discussion opportunities for Gaelic-medium preschool and childcare providers

71. Is there anything you would like to change about your provision? *Please describe.*

▲

■

▼

72. What would help you make these changes? *Please describe.*

▲

■

▼

73. What plans do you have for your provision over the next three years? *Please describe.*

▲

■

▼

74. What help do you need to put these plans into operation? *Please describe.*

75. What could be done to make your Gaelic-medium provision more sustainable? *Please describe.*

76. How could Bòrd na Gàidhlig or other government initiatives enhance your provision? *(select all that apply)*

- ☐ Financial support to establish premises
- ☐ Financial support when numbers attending drop temporarily
- ☐ Help to promote provision
- ☐ Improved grants for Gaelic-medium resources and other play equipment
- ☐ Innovative schemes to increase the number of staff with preschool or childcare qualifications who also speak Gaelic
- ☐ Improve opportunities for in-service training in ways to support the use of Gaelic
- ☐ Improve opportunities for in-service training to enhance preschool and childcare practices
- ☐ Other *(please specify)*:

77. We are keen to ensure that we include all Gaelic-medium providers in our survey. Please help us to do this by listing any other Gaelic-medium preschool education or childcare provision in your area.



The Survey is Complete

Thank you for your participation in this survey. Our project is due for completion in summer 2009; please look out for details on the Stirling Institute of Education website. If you have won our draw, we will contact you to determine which voucher you would like to receive. Thank you again for your time.

APPENDIX C

COMPILING THE DATABASE AND MAP

1. ONLINE SOURCES

A wide range of online sources were consulted in order to construct the map, and the following were found to be the most useful.

- The Scottish Childcare website <http://www.scottishchildcare.gov.uk/> is the most comprehensive source of information on childcare available in each authority, providing central contacts and details of individual schools, nurseries, playgroups, parent and toddler groups and childminders. However, it is noted that 'not all childcare providers in an area choose to display their details on this website'. We found information on Gaelic provision listed under 'Religious/cultural provision' and/or 'Other information'.
- The Comunn na Gàidhlig website <http://www.cnag.org.uk/> provides statistics on numbers of nurseries, pupils in Gaelic medium education, and a list of primary schools with Gaelic provision, including contact details. However, it does not include any list of nurseries or other early years provision.
- The website of Comann nam Pàrant <http://www.parant.org.uk/> (organisation for parents of children in GM education) gives contact details for local groups and details of local playgroups and parent and toddler groups.
- The Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Àraich (CNSA) website <http://www.gaelicworld.co.uk/> provides basic generic information about the range of provision available, but does not include locations or contact details for the preschool groups (playgroups and parent and toddler groups) which the organisation supports. Users are asked to email for more information, and lists were supplied for this review.
- Many council websites provide information on playgroups and parent and toddler groups as well as school nursery classes.
- The HMIE website has over 30 inspection reports on different kinds of Gaelic pre-school facilities on-line at <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/SelectEstablishment.aspx?typeid=1>
- The Care Commission website refers users to the HMIE site for reports.
- Google searches for key terms such as 'Gaelic playgroup', 'cròileagan', 'Pàrant agus Paiste', produced hits on the websites of local Gaelic organisations, for example <http://www.invernessgaelic.org/> <http://www.inbhirnis.org/> or <http://www.gaelic-edinburgh.net>

- Potentially useful in future is the Childminder Search Service, currently under development, of the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) website <http://www.childminding.org>

1. CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION

Providers who did not respond to the initial letter about the survey or the survey itself were contacted by telephone or email where possible. Unless it could be ascertained with reasonable certainty that the provision no longer existed or did not currently offer any GM, providers were retained in the database.

Primary schools that have GM nursery classes in principle but that are not operating at June 2009 because of lack of children/pupils have been omitted (Bonar Bridge Primary School and Tongue Primary School). Little Scholars nursery at Langside College in Glasgow closed in May 2009 because of redevelopment of the site, so was omitted.

Saturday family learning groups and youth clubs run by Sradagan were not considered to be within the remit of this review.

2. DATA INCLUDED

Because names turned out to be such a complex issue in compiling the database, we have generally included both Gaelic and English names. Where both seem to be regularly used, these appear with a slash, e.g. Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu/Glasgow Gaelic School; where only or mainly Gaelic names are used, English translations are given in brackets, sometimes with the place name added for clarity, e.g. Cròileagan Car a' Mhuiltean (Tollcross Gaelic Parent & Toddler Group), Pàrant 's Pàisde (Kilmarnock Gaelic Parent & Toddler Group).

Whether or not providers are registered with the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care is only included in the database if this information is known from the survey or the Scottish Childcare website, but nursery classes in schools are automatically classified as registered. Playgroups and Parent and toddler groups are assumed to be voluntary unless otherwise stated.

Information on fees is taken from survey responses where provided, or from the Scottish Childcare website or other sources if available. Numbers of children attending are taken from survey responses where provided and from the Strathclyde University 2008/09 figures, if available, where not. Where these figures differ (sometimes considerably), the survey response figures have been used rather than those provided by the Strathclyde survey.

3. FACTORS INCREASING THE COMPLEXITY OF THE MAPPING EXERCISE

The mapping exercise was made complex and inexact for several interrelated reasons.

- **There is no universally agreed definition of what can or should be included as ‘Gaelic medium’ provision.** For instance, our telephone calls to childminders in the Highland Council area revealed that most who included the possibility of catering for GM care in their listing did not speak Gaelic or had a very limited vocabulary.
- **Not all provision is listed**, even on the most comprehensive of websites.
- **There are considerable changes in what is on offer over time**, even from local authorities. Nursery classes may be amalgamated or moved to other schools (for example, Morar to Mallaig); parent and toddler groups come and go within the space of a few years, particularly in areas with small target populations; several playgroups have been taken over by the local authority, especially in the Western Isles.
- **Information is frequently out of date.** New provision may be added to websites and lists, but closed provision is often not deleted. Websites are dependent on the information given to them by providers or local authorities, but the websites of local authorities are themselves not always reliable. For example, although the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles) website¹⁴ has a comprehensive list of *cròileagain* and *sgoiltean àraich*, it includes several that have closed up to two years ago, e.g. Carloway, Eriskay, Eubhal, Scalpay. Several other local authorities’ websites also list groups that have not existed for a couple of years or moved to other premises several years ago.
- **Local authorities vary in the provision they included in their lists.** Some list the full range of provision available (whether or not it is provided by the authority) while elsewhere childminders, and parent and toddler groups were not included. Contacts’ awareness of different types of provision may be influenced by whether they work in the context of Early Years or Gaelic language development.
- **The information held by umbrella organisations varies.** For example, several groups listed by CNSA are not listed on the Scottish Childcare website, and many do not seem to appear on the internet at all. Furthermore, the nature of the information included for each setting varies across organisations. The Scottish Childcare and other websites usually give the group’s meeting place but often no direct contact details. As playgroups and parent and toddler groups often meet in shared premises it is difficult to ensure contact with the appropriate person. In contrast, the lists provided by CNSA do not give details of where their member groups meet, but they do give contact details of committee members.
- **Contact names and addresses change frequently**, particularly for voluntary sector parent and toddler groups and playgroups. Even the information held centrally by CNSA is out-of-date in many cases, with some contact phone numbers dating back to 2004 or 2005. The difficulties are indicated by the

¹⁴ <http://www.w-isles.gov.uk/education/inclusion/csd.asp>

comment from one regional development officer for the organisation that the membership of one local group committee had changed several times in the past year alone.

- **Names of providers are sometimes in Gaelic, sometimes in English**, and it can be difficult to clarify whether these refer to the same or different providers. The list held by CNSA is only in Gaelic, whereas the Scottish Childcare website has a mixture of mainly English and some Gaelic names. The Strathclyde University statistics give only place names for many providers (e.g. Airdrie) and the school/nursery name is not always immediately obvious. Names can vary from source to source and change over time, in both languages. A range of Gaelic names is used (e.g. Ceuman Beaga, Rionnagan Beaga, Casan Beaga) as well as the descriptive terms *pàrant is pàiste* and *cròileagan*. Such groups may be known locally but are difficult to locate in a nationally based search such as that carried out for this review. There is variation in the usage of terms. In particular, the most widely used Gaelic term, *cròileagan*, is used by some groups to refer to a playgroup, by others for a parent and toddler group, and by still others for groups with both types of provision or even for a nursery.

APPENDIX D

CASE STUDY GM PROVISION

The following descriptions have been compiled from field notes made during our case study visits and are offered here to illustrate the GM learning environments and experiences children may encounter.

1. Island Case

The private sector nursery offers all-day childcare through the medium of Gaelic for children aged 3 months to 12 years in new purpose-built premises. Holiday care is also available, as are breakfast and after-school/homework clubs. The nursery is open 48 weeks a year from 8 am to 6 pm but is not yet filled to capacity. All practitioners at the nursery are qualified to at least SVQ3 in Child Care, are fluent native speakers of Gaelic and speak Gaelic to the children and to each other throughout the day. They maintain an immersion (Gaelic-only) environment, although few children come from Gaelic-speaking homes. Practitioners think that some families are attracted by the wraparound care rather than for the Gaelic-medium provision.

The nursery setting is large and bright, with several distinct areas: a cloakroom, toilet area, kitchen, baby/toddler room with separate sleeping room, computer/library room (with double doors), and large playroom which is subdivided by furniture. Wall displays are a mixture of commercial and hand-made, most are displayed at the child's eye-level and all are labelled in Gaelic. Drawers, storage boxes and pegs are labelled in Gaelic, accompanied by photographs. The library has a small selection of children's books in Gaelic, including some Big Books. The computer/library room has one computer and a television, and there is a second computer in the main playroom. Both computers have internet access. The setting has stocks of materials for art and craft activities and props for role-play such as theatre, dressing up clothes and a play kitchen.

2. Small Town Case

Just across the car park from the community centre where the parent and toddler group meets is the GM playgroup. The playgroup is very well established and is held in high regard in *Small Town*. One of the play leaders has worked in the playgroup for 20 years. Two of the three staff are native Gaelic speakers and have completed SVQ3 Child Care while the third has no qualifications yet and has only a little Gaelic. Many of the children progress from the playgroup to the GM nursery class in the local primary school. The teacher responsible for the Gaelic stream in the school visits the playgroup throughout the year and playgroup practitioners take children on transition visits to the nursery class.

The playgroup has sole use of the adapted old building which offers one large and one smaller room, toilets, an office and a kitchen. There is child-sized furniture throughout and each room is divided into distinct activity areas. In the small room there is a computer (which does not function well), a table where puzzles are displayed and another for table top games. In one corner is a gathering area for

whole group stories and singing and show and tell. In the large room there is an area for craft work, a home play area, a display table, road map rugs and vehicles, a book corner (with books in Gaelic and English), construction sets and a selection of dinosaurs and a model landscape are ready for the children to play with as part of their current dinosaur topic. The playgroup has no direct access to outdoor space but can access a small garden area. There is no space for gross motor activities outside.

3. City Case

In *City* we visited all of the GM local authority nursery settings but focused our attention on one which is located in the grounds of an English-medium primary school. This nursery has three playrooms – two offer English-medium provision and one provides GM provision in morning and afternoon sessions. There are a limited number of all day places available across the playrooms. As staff share lunch duties supervision is usually in English but the teacher and nursery nurse who staff the GM room are both native Gaelic speakers and maintain a Gaelic immersion environment. Toilets are shared and each playroom has timetabled access to the school gym hall. The peripatetic gym teacher does not speak Gaelic but the GM staff translate for the children.

The GM playroom is divided into distinct curriculum areas. There is a maths area with sorting and shape games, a computer and selection of Beebops, a selection of table top and floor games stored on shelves alongside floor space and a table for Duplo play. On one table is a collection of natural objects for sorting and another has drawing resources. There is a small space set aside for playing with large wooden blocks, an easel, a water tray and a sand tray. In the book corner there is a puppet theatre, soft toys and persona dolls and a selection of books all in Gaelic. The nursery class has a lending library of Gaelic books which children can take home and story sacks and maths sacks for home use too. The playroom has direct access to a small outside play area, mostly hard surfaced with a small area of soil for growing plants. The outdoor area is shared with the English-medium playrooms. When learning activities are planned for outside the GM practitioners often schedule these for a time when they will have sole use of the space in order to maintain the Gaelic-only environment.

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