



Ar n-eilean, ar dòchas

Tiree Childcare Feasibility Study

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1. Introduction

A community consultation was carried out in the spring and summer of 2022 with the lack of childcare in Tiree identified as a key priority. Residents cited the challenges they faced in returning to employment, which in some cases, has resulted in financial challenges and social inequality.

The first stage of the Trusts response was to commission a Childcare Feasibility Study with the remit of looking at what models other island and rural communities have put in place, and how those options might be managed here in Tiree. The aim of the study was to fully explore all possible Childcare options with an innovative and open-minded approach and undertaken over a 3 month period. Seeking the views of both residents and key stakeholders has been a vital part of this undertaking in partnership with input from additional professional agencies.

2. Current School Role and Births Registered on Tiree

These figures are correct as of March 2023.

Birth Rates		School Role			
2020	5	Pre-School	3	Secondary 1	15
2021	9	Primary 1	10	Secondary 2	8
2022	5	Primary 2	7	Secondary 3	5
2023	4	Primary 3	3	Secondary 4	6
		Primary 4	6	Secondary 5	6
		Primary 5	9		
		Primary 6	16		
		Primary 7	3		

The birth rates included were supplied by Rona Campbell (Registrar for Argyll and Bute Council Tiree office) however children registered on the mainland or children who have moved to Tiree would not be included in these figures. Tiree Tots runs a range of informal play sessions and is attended by 25 children aged from newborn to 2 years old, which gives a better indication to the number of children on the Island, in that age range.



3. Current and Previous Childcare Provision on Tiree

a. Tiree Primary School Pre 5 Unit

The service is registered with the Care Inspectorate for a maximum of 22 children, aged from 2 to not yet attending school, with no more than 10 children attending who are aged between 2 and 3 years of age. The current staffing model provides space for 16 children aged over 3 with places available for 2-year-olds if ratios allow, however for this age group the ratio drops to 1:5 and must be accommodated within the current staffing model.

b. Lisa's Little Lambs

Lisa Little Lambs was a registered Childminding service, ran by Lisa Gladwell, which opened in December 2018 and closed in April 2021. Prior to moving to Tiree, Lisa ran a successful childminding business on the mainland from October 2016. Lisa very much enjoyed being a Childminder, however the outbreak of Covid and her two regular children moving on to the Pre 5 Nursery Unit made the service financially challenging and she made the decision to close as the remaining children she cared for were occasional users. Lisa now works at the school both, in the Pre 5 Unit and the Primary School.

4. Other Island Childcare Models

a. The Fyne Den



The Fyne Den is based in Cairndow, which is a rural location with a population of 180 and faces many of the same challenges of Island communities. The Fyne Den is a not-for-profit registered charity, operated by Cairndow Community Childcare and is run for the community for the benefit of the community. Childcare is provided for 50 weeks per year from 8am to 6pm for children aged 12 weeks to school age and is a Partner Provider Nursery offering the 1140 hours free Government funded childcare hours and registered to accommodate a maximum of 24 children.

Childcare Fees

This information is correct as of February 2023.

Age	Staffing Ratio	Costs		Maximum Spaces
		Less than 6 hours	Full day	
12 weeks to 2 years	1:3	£38	£49	6
2 to 3 years	1:5	£36	£48	10
3 to 5 years	1:8	£36	£48	8



The community identified the need for a childcare provision and set up Cairndow Community Childcare in 2004, operating initially from the village Church Hall to demonstrate both the need for and the financial viability of the service. In 2019 they opened their own purpose-built building at the cost of £2 million with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, Argyll and Bute Early Years, An Suidhe Wind Community Fund and Cairndow Community Childcare's own fundraising efforts. The Childcare setting is complemented by an indoor play area, outdoor adventure zone and community meeting spaces. The outdoor adventure play zone can be booked for exclusive use for 2 hours at a cost of £55 and individual sessions range from £2.50 to £6.50 dependent on age.

A meeting was held with a member of the Committee, who stated that although the service is providing a much-needed service and support to the community they have faced and are experiencing on going challenges. The initial 3-year Business Plan overestimated the income that the play zones would generate, however due to Covid they were unable to open, and this could not be predicted. Their rural location has resulted in additional pressures in recruiting and retaining staff and added unexpected costs to the initial build. Although the nursery is a Partner Provider nursery, they struggle to retain the children once they become eligible for a place at the local School Nursery as the Council preference is for children to attend.

b. Apple Tree Nursery

Apple Tree Nursery is in Rothesay, with a local population of 4390, on the Isle of Bute. The nursery is open from 8am to 5.30pm and operates 50 weeks of the year providing care for children from 12 weeks old to starting school. Apple Tree nursery is registered for a maximum of 40 children and is a partner provider nursery offering the 1140 hours free Government funded childcare hours.

Apple Tree Nursery is a community, not for profit organisation, with charitable status, which initially opened in October 1990 and, due to consistent increased demand for places, opened larger purpose-built premises in January 1989. The organisation was able to purchase land from Argyll and Bute council for £1 and received funding from the National Lottery, AIE and ERDF.



Childcare Fees

This information is correct, as of February 2023.

Age	Staffing Ratio	Cost				Maximum Spaces
		Adhoc per hour	½ day (4 hours)	Full day	Week	
12 weeks to 2 years	1:3					6
2 to 3 years	1:5	£6.40	£18.75	£36	£180	10
3 to 5 years	1:8					24

A meeting was held with Lesley-Anne Lee (Manager) who indicated that the Nursery was a thriving business with waiting lists, particularly in the baby room, for places. The Nursery is very involved in the community, taking part in local events and attending groups and is well supported both through practical support and fundraising efforts.

c. Little Pearls Childminding

Little Pearls is based on Islay and is run by Joanna Becket with support from her parents who are registered as assistants with the Care Inspectorate. The service has been registered since June 2017 and was in response to the private nursery in the area closing, where Joanna worked. Little Pearls operates from Joanna's parents' house in a converted garage, providing a large play area, kitchen facilities and direct access to toilet and changing areas. The children also have access to the living room and dining room within the house.

The service is registered for a maximum of 6 children under the age of 16, of which a maximum of 6 can be under the age of 12, with 3 not yet attending school and no more than 1 child under the age of 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of the childminder's own family.

Childcare Fees

Charge per hour	£5
Pickup and drop off	£2
Meals	£1

Joanna shared many of the same challenges that Lisa Gladwell faced and stated that without the additional assistant which she employs, she would find it difficult to offer a



pickup and drop off services and to run at full capacity, which she needs to do to ensure financially viable.

While setting up the service Joanna received excellent support from Argyll and Bute Council and the Scottish Childminding Association, however, has since experienced a lack of financial support with training and is self-funding her BA Childhood Practice degree with a view of opening her own nursery in the future.



5. Potential Childcare Models

a. Childminding

The Care Inspectorate defines a Childminder as “professional childcare workers who work from their own homes to provide a childcare service for other people’s children in a family setting”. All Childminders must be registered with the Care Inspectorate with the initial registration process taking between 3 and 6 months. During this time Childminders are expected to complete the Childminding Induction Support Programme, which takes approximately 7.5 hours and can be completed through eLearning or interactive workshops. The programme is run by the Scottish Child-Minding Association (SCMA) at a cost of £200 with funding available through ITA (Individual Training Accounts) and grants from the Business Gateway. The SCMA is currently running a recruitment campaign and during this time the course is fully funded, and a £700 start-up grant is available. This information has been circulated through Tiree Facebay with one individual coming forward to request more information

Childminders are required to meet/ensure the following standards/requirements are in place prior to application

- Fire safety regulations
- Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) and criminal record checks, which includes everyone over 16 years of age who lives at the address
- Undertake first aid, food hygiene, food safety and infection control and prevention training
- Have business car insurance, if transporting children
- Self-employed status requirements with regard to tax
- Ensure the home environment meets the standards of the Care Inspectorate document Space to Grow
- Provide a financial declaration of suitability, physical and mental health

Start Up Costs

- Care Inspectorate Registration Fees - £28
- Childminder’s PVG - £59
- Disclosure Scotland Checks for all over 16’s in the household - £25 per person
- SCMA membership which includes Public Liability Insurance - £112 (or free if the Childminding Introduction Support Programme is completed)
- Information Commissioner’s Office registration fee - £40

The expected income, based on national averages is £5.79 per hour, however the rate is set by the individual at their discretion. A Childminder’s own children are included in the total number of children who can be cared for and includes children who they are related to.



Viability

The childminding model is relatively straight forward to set up and for parents a home from home environment is particularly appealing, allowing for flexibility, with parents paying for the hours they need, rather than per session/day. Childminders are able to set the days/hours they are open which could potentially work around other part time work or family commitments.

It could however be potentially difficult for the Childminder to have a consistent income or financially plan ahead due to the uncertainty around the future uptake of places or inconsistent demand. Providing care from within the home can be restrictive and challenging particularly for other family members, and potentially isolating for the Childminder.

Childcare Organisation – Day Care of Childcare

- Full Day Nursery Provision
- Pre School children After Nursery Care
- Primary children After School Care
- Holiday Care

Registration Process

The Care Inspectorate gives a timeline of around six months from application submission to the granting of the registration certificate. An application fee of £28 and annual fee of £17 is charged for services which employ the equivalent of 3 full time members of staff and an application fee of £220 and annual fee of £165 for organisations which employ more than 3 full time members of staff. The same requirements are in place for Childcare organisations as Childminders with the addition of the following:

- Prior to submitting an application a suitable Manager must be appointed and they must hold a level 7 qualification and be willing to obtain the required degree qualification within 5 years.
- A business plan and a three-year financial forecast may be requested along with a self-declaration as to the proposed companies' current financial viability.
- The Care Inspectorate will, in line with the Space to Grow document grant registration dependent on the children's proposed access to indoor and outdoor space and this must be clearly evidenced by the provider.
- A requirement of Partner Provider Nurseries is that hot lunches are available.
- All staff must register with the Scottish Social Service Council (SSSC) and undertake relevant qualifications.



Qualifications

The SSSC cites the following qualifications as the most direct and desirable, however other qualifications may be accepted at the discretion of the SSSC. In most circumstances the training cost are met through SAAS (Student Award Agency Scotland) or the employer with courses costing around £2000 and taking around 18 months to complete. Another potential source of funding for training and qualifications is from the Misses Nisbet Educational Trust.

- Childcare Manager – BA Childhood Practice or PDA level 9 Childhood Practice
- Practitioner – SVQ level 7 Social Services (Children and Young People) or HNC Childhood Practice

Modern apprenticeships are open to 16- to 25-year-olds (25 to 29 years old with a disability and/or care experienced) and is an opportunity to gain a qualification while working and receiving a salary which is usually around the minimum wage and is fully funded. This would be a great way to offer local young people an opportunity to further their educational journey and provide long term career progression.

Salaries

The figures below give an indication of salaries which have been taken from current positions within Argyll and Bute and are based on full time salary equivalents.

	Hourly Rate	Annual Salary
Childcare Manager		£38000 - £48000
Practitioner		£20000-£23000
Bank Staff	£10.50 - £11.00	

6. Potential Premises Explored

a. Tiree Primary School and High School

A meeting was held with School Management to explore potential options – such as expanding provision within the school service, or working in partnership to operate a community-run additional service for wrap-around provision (e.g. a wider breakfast club and/or after school club). School management informed us that it is only possible to use school facilities, during the term time, if they are run by school staff for the children who attend the school – this is apparently due to rules set higher up in Argyll and Bute Council. They also indicated there would be practical/logistical difficulties with using certain facilities that needed to be prepared ready for the next school day. Solutions to these issues would need to be explored, as well as engaging at a higher level with Argyll and Bute Council to agree alterations to the current restrictions to facilitate any potential solution based at the school.

b. An Talla

A meeting was requested to explore potential options. An Talla Hall Committee declined to meet to discuss the matter - however they informed us by email that they did not think that An Talla would be a suitable venue for childcare, suggesting this would conflict with the use of the facility by other groups. Further investigation of this option would only be possible if there is a change of position by the owners/operators of the hall.

c. Heylipol Church



Heylipol Church is currently being refurbished to create a community space at the back of the main church. The proposed facilities will comprise of a sectioned off kitchen space, seating area with tables, chairs and sofas with work expected to be completed by May 2023. There is a huge amount of grass play space outside, which extends around the whole building and is fully enclosed by a stone wall. The Church is on the West end bus route and has ample parking outside. Representatives of the

congregation were very happy to meet to discuss possibilities and are very open to further discussion.

Viability

As the space stands it would not meet Care Inspectorate requirements and would need extensive renovations to do so, however it could be suitable for pilot provision offering after school care for children attending the current Preschool provision and Primary School. Services which operate for less than 2 hours are not required to be registered with the Care Inspectorate and care could potentially be offered for Preschool children from 2.30pm to 4.30pm and Primary School children from 3.30pm to 5.30pm. Transport would need to be organized and John Kennedy Transport who are open to further discussions around this.

d. Millhouse



Millhouse is currently being used as holiday accommodation and is situated in Cornaig. Downstairs the building comprises of an open plan kitchen, which is semi enclosed, and a large dining area with patio doors giving access to the garden. There is a cloakroom and two further rooms downstairs measuring approximately 4ft x 5ft, a disabled toilet, an individual toilet and two shower rooms which have the potential to be turned into toilets, there is also a washing/drying room. Upstairs there are two large rooms measuring approximately 6ft x 5ft with sloping roofs and Velux windows.

Viability

A initial meeting was held with the owners and they have indicated that they are open to further discussions. The Millhouse space offers a potentially very attractive opportunity for wraparound care, capable of housing a full day nursery with space for after school care for both the Preschool and Primary children. Much of the existing facilities would be directly useful or are likely to be relatively easily adapted (although more detailed feasibility analysis of this would be important to confirm this.) The location of the building would readily allow for children to be walked or wheeled the short distance (around 600m by road) from nursery/school which eliminates the potential need/cost of transportation. There is also good parking provision on site, and a garden area (though some works to ensure safety of outdoor areas would obviously be required).

e. Baugh Church



Baugh Church comprises of a large hall space with a fully fitted kitchen adjoining the hall and the provision of one large disabled access toilet. There is ample parking, and the building is enclosed by a fence and gated. Baugh Church have indicated they would be open to further discussions but have limited availability due to other current user groups. Lets are charged at £7 per hour, with a condition that if the Church requires the building, this takes priority over bookings.

There are plans in motion to add an annex, creating a further two toilets and two rooms each with sinks - the stated timeline for completion is anticipated to be within 2/3 years however this is dependent on continued fundraising efforts.

Viability

This provides an opportunity to be involved in the development of a purpose-built setting as Baugh Church would be happy to discuss adaptations to the plans to meet Care Inspectorate requirements. The intended use of the annex is for a Sunday School and as such there would be no clashes with other users. A joint funding bid would allow the project to move forward but anticipated completion date would still be at least 2 years in the future.

f. Tiree Library



The library consists of the main library area, an office space with laptops, free Wi-Fi, and printing facilities. There is a separate room which can be used by groups, a kitchen area, 2 toilets, one of which has disabled access and a garden area with play equipment. A let would be required through Live Argyll and a hourly rate would be charged.

Viability



As the building was previously used by the Tiree Pre 5 Nursery Unit, it is anticipated that it would meet Care Inspectorate requirements, however issues could arise around it being a shared space. It does have potential to house the suggested pilot Preschool Club, from 2.30pm to 4.30pm as this would eliminate the need for transport given the location directly adjacent to the school.

g. Modular Buildings

Modular Buildings are available pre-fitted for use as childcare facilities – these are often used e.g. in settings where temporary expansion or alternative provision is needed during building works for existing facilities. Lee Dolman from Portable Units was contacted, and suggested that a 3 bay unit would be the best option for a nursery setting for 24 children, creating an open plan space of 90sq/m, kitchen, toilet and office space. The company would ship the units to Tiree and arrange for either their own or local contractors to lay the foundations and complete the installations. The company have given a rough and initial figure of around £200,000 however additional costs could include, if necessary, a pre inspection site visit, contractor accommodation and travel costs if local contractors are not available.

Planning permission would be required and delivery/installation time is typically 12/14 weeks if all goes to plan, and no issues arise. The company have recently delivered and installed a unit to Skye. The organization has been contacted to see how if they experienced any Island location related challenges.

Viability

Lee is working on some more accurate calculations, as there are many additional factors to consider due to our location, with weather and transport issues highlighted as contributing factors. The modular units would fully conform with Care Inspectorate requirements and are insulated to a high standard. The concern would be potential delays and unexpected costs, however as the Trust already has land and planning permission at Crossapol the nursery could be situated in a central location and on the school bus route.



7. Moving Forward – recommendations for further feasibility work

There appear to be several potentially viable options, some of which are better suited to the shorter term, others for the longer term.

In the more immediate term, it may be prudent to further explore attempting the recruitment of Childminders with information sessions and more targeted advertising to promote the benefits, potentially boosted by an offer of Trust involvement to facilitate/support this from the initial registration stage, and with training and development. In line with the startup grant already offered, the Trust could add to this and potentially put in place a guarantee of income to offer surety to potential applicants. If this succeeds it could meet much of the current demand – if not it would be useful to be able to demonstrate the attempt when seeking funding support for other options. There is considerable doubt expressed by the consultation group as to how viable this approach is likely to be given the barriers and uncertainty involved – but general agreement that it may be worth trying.

In the medium term: A pilot for Pre School and Primary aged children would gauge demand and test viability as well as addressing an immediate identified need, particularly for Pre School parents. It would also be relatively straight forward to put in place, however, would require a financial commitment from the Trust (and/or immediate funding to be secured) as it is unlikely that an affordable level of childcare fees will fully cover staffing and initial resources costs.

The concern, regardless of which option is explored further, is the uncertainty of the uptake of places and ultimately how financially viable such as project would be. Childcare is beyond doubt needed; however, there is a significant unknown element in terms of how many parents would actually commit to ongoing payment of fees if offered, when some do have access to family support and may financially struggle to afford the fees. The Trust would have to make a considerable and long-term financial commitment which may impact on other projects and must be considered before moving forward. Recent announcements of potential increases to Government funding of childcare provision may have a significant impact on potential viability and should be monitored closely – a properly set up service would be able to access that funding which might result in a much wider uptake of the service.

Longer term – the Milhouse property potentially ticks all the boxes for a highly suitable long term location for a service - with options for expansion and an opportunity to generate additional income from the house, or to use it as staff accommodation. Further discussions would need to take place with the owners to confirm if they do intend to sell, what the asking price would be and how the Trust would be able to compete with other buyers if it were placed on the open market.



The modular units are also a strong option and would meet all Care Inspectorate requirements, however as previously mentioned a concern may be escalated costs and delays due to weather and transport complications.

The case for either of these longer term options would be much enhanced by a pilot project that could demonstrate demand and establish a base from which to build the required skill set and registration requirements.

Further discussion would be needed about how such a service would interact with the current nursery provision at the School, and what options might be available for working in partnership with the existing service. Clearly setting up effectively competing services would be less likely to succeed, splitting the available funding and staffing capacity, etc.