

# Family Matters

An integrated family support and school aged childcare evaluation at Indigo

2022/2023



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group

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## Summary

The Indigo Childcare Group is a well-established charity in Glasgow. It aims to empower families to overcome poverty and its challenges through the provision of affordable childcare services (early years, out of school care, youth services, holiday cover) for children and young people aged 6 weeks to 16 years old.

The Family Matters service offered by Indigo provides subsidised/free school age childcare places and integrated holistic family support. It is currently funded by The Access to Childcare Fund (ACF) provided by the Scottish Government. The Fund was created to test innovative models of school age childcare for families most at risk of poverty. Indigo was one of 15 organisations awarded funding from 2020 to pilot new services which would address the barriers parents/carers experience in accessing childcare such as the cost, accessibility and flexibility.

This document is an evaluation of the Indigo Family Matters Model. The focus is to better articulate the characteristics of the model, understand what works well and what does not, and how Scotland can integrate a preventative model of whole family support into our national infrastructure for childcare. Funding was provided to The Indigo Childcare Group by the Scottish Government to conduct this evaluation. A researcher was contracted by The Indigo Childcare Group to conduct this work.

## Key Findings

### **The Family Matters model works.**

The Family Matters model is based on strong, value-based foundations. It benefits from getting the basics right: an understanding of the needs of the families and community that it serves, a collaborative approach with referrers and other service providers, a well-considered strategic plan with identifiable actions and ongoing data collection and service evaluation. The model places the support within the community and integrates it with school age childcare. The service is delivered by a reputable organisation already known within the community which allows for accessibility, familiarity and responsiveness. This results in high levels of engagement, trust and a service that reflects and respects the needs of those using it.

### **Family Matters makes a positive impact.**

Family Matters has had a demonstratively positive impact on the families engaged in the service - both in terms of their financial position and their wellbeing. It has enabled families to access affordable childcare, has led to an increase in family income and employment/education opportunities, and has improved family wellbeing and relationships.

### **The business model is scalable and replicable.**

In terms of the business model, the evaluation concludes that Family Matters is a viable model. It should be noted that this is in part due to the infrastructure already in place though Indigo, with shared overhead costs and operational support.

The potential is there for Family Matters to scale up and deliver or support delivery across more and different locations. With either model, it would be important to work collaboratively with existing organisations where there are synergies of culture and values, and where providers have good relationships with families and the wider community.

*Thank you to the families, children, and Indigo Childcare team who kindly gave of their time and shared their thoughts and ideas regarding Family Matters.*

*Thanks also to the stakeholders including referrers and Third Sector organisations who took the time to talk openly about their organisations and some of the successes and challenges relating to family support.*

## Methodology

The evaluation took place from February – April 2023. Quantitative and qualitative data was utilised to reach the conclusions outlined within the document.

This evaluation was delivered through:

- A review of relevant policy documentation, including Scottish Government and Local Authority papers
- Desk based research providing a snapshot of Local Authority approach to family support
- A review of Family Matters and Indigo documents
- Analysis of survey responses by parents/carers accessing Family Matters
- Analysis of survey responses by Family Matters parents/carers to Glasgow Promise Partnership survey
- Structured interviews online with parents/carers for case study purposes
- Consultation with children and young people
- Semi structured interviews with Indigo personnel
- Semi structured interviews with Third Sector Family Support Providers
- Semi structured interviews with other stakeholders
- Thematic analysis of stakeholder interviews



### Parent/carer survey and interviews

It should be noted that multiple projects considering the impact of ACF, childcare and family support took place at the same time as this evaluation. In order not to overburden families, it was agreed with Indigo that previous interview content for the Glasgow Promise Partnership would be utilised and interviews with the three case study parents would be performed in conjunction with Ipsos MORI Scotland.

### Consultation with Children/Young People

15 children/young people took part in an active consultation facilitated by Indigo in April 2023. The aim of the consultation was to get their perspective on school age childcare at Indigo, and the impact of their attendance. The children are not aware of the Family Matters funding model although many are aware of the family support service and the Family Support Coordinator.

## PART 1 FAMILY MATTERS OPERATIONAL MODEL



# Background

Indigo have worked in the Castlemilk area for 30 years. They know their community well. They know its demographic, its socioeconomic challenges, and its aspirations. They are clear that family is at the heart of what they do; acknowledging that a child does not exist in isolation but rather is shaped by family circumstance and community setting. Indigo has consistently set out its commitment to support families to find their own way forward, individualised to their needs based upon the approach, 'children, young people and their families are at the heart of every decision'.<sup>1</sup>

Indigo seeks to empower families to overcome poverty and its challenges through the provision of affordable, innovative, family informed, learning and childcare solutions from birth to 16 years. The specific pricing model has been created to maximise access to all services for all families, with a sliding scale of costs based on parent/carer circumstances. As a social enterprise, Indigo's values-based approach, coupled with a responsive and sensitive pricing model, helps them to reach and work with some of the most excluded families in the community.

There are currently 220 children registered at the Early Years Services, 181 children and young people registered in Out of School Care and Indi Youth Services, and around 330 families registered across all services.

## Family centred approach

Indigo recognises that a child/young person's experience in family life has a direct impact on their opportunities, and that the positive outcomes sought are only possible when the challenges and needs of the whole family are understood and supported.

As evidenced in *Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026, Scottish Government, 2022*<sup>2</sup>, the triggers for improving families experience of poverty include: employment, improved household income and management of costs, improved access to and/or receipt of benefits. Indigo has committed to support families to positively address these triggers and break the generational cycle of poverty. They have identified that to break this cycle, more action is required to support families to make long term and sustainable progress - support to improve general health and wellbeing, and to strengthen engagement with the community network.

## Tackling intergenerational poverty

Based on SIMD 2020, Castlemilk is the most deprived neighbourhood in Glasgow, when looking at the local share of 5% most deprived data zones in Scotland. 65% of the data zones in the Castlemilk neighbourhood are within the 5% most deprived data zones in Scotland.<sup>3</sup>

Indigo is acutely aware of the intergenerational poverty experienced in its community and the struggle families are having with multiple (and often interconnected) issues. Each year Indigo undertakes a survey with families to better understand their needs and inform service development. Utilising the survey results and personal accounts from families, Indigo identified that while some 71% of respondents are employed either full or part time, 63% of household incomes fall short of the Scottish National Average household income of £26,007.<sup>4</sup> This also falls short of the £24,756 figure defined as low in the recent Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *Poverty in Scotland Report, 2022*.<sup>5</sup>

Indigo's document, *Cost of Living, Beyond Crisis for Families* identified a multitude of barriers impacting families states:

*"We know that on average, families are facing seven different barriers that negatively impact their lives, whether that's housing, relationships, finance, food etc. Families do not experience only "fuel poverty" or only "food poverty", global poverty is impacting multiple aspects of their lives. 45% of parents/carers have some kind of chronic health issue and/or a disability, 41% of parents/carers experience poor mental health or issues with mental health, 38% of children have or have a pending diagnosis of some kind of additional support need."*<sup>6</sup>

In their experience, and demonstrated through their internal surveys, families often present with one problem, such as financial difficulties, but dig deeper and there are usually other issues impacting them, including housing issues and poor mental health.

Informal drop off chats with families opened up more formal discussions around barriers and gaps in support. Families acknowledged that nursery provision was helping their efforts to access employment and other opportunities but shared that in terms of school age childcare, their working day did not stop at 2.30pm for school pick up, nor could they stop work for 6 weeks during summer. Balancing funding for this childcare with other costs was proving challenging for many. Parents and carers highlighted a need for school age childcare that was accessible, affordable, and flexible for all families – *issues identified in the School Age Childcare Out of School Care in Scotland draft framework: consultation, Scottish Government, 2019*.<sup>7</sup>

One of the emerging themes from the discussion with families was the growth in school age children presenting with, or going through a diagnosis for, conditions associated with additional support needs. This often results in parents/carers struggling to find the support needed to navigate the system or provide school age childcare to meet the needs of their child.

While subsidised childcare was identified as a key component in providing the family with financial breathing space and with it an opportunity to reduce costs and increase the family income, there was recognition that this would address only some of the issues. Families themselves acknowledged that something else, some other support, was needed to lead to longer term progress and stability.

Prior to Covid, and in response to what was clearly a growing need, Indigo committed to incorporating a form of family support into their model of childcare.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.indigogr.com/aboutus>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-bright-futures-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2022-26/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/councillorsandcommittees/viewSelectedDocument.asp?c=P62AFQDNDX0GUTDNUT#:~:text=1.3%20Based%20on%20SIMD%202020%2C%20Castlemilk%20is%20the,the%205%25%20most%20deprived%20dot%20azones%20in%20Scotland>

<sup>4</sup> *Cost of Living, Beyond Crisis for Families*, Indigo Childcare Group, December 2022

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.jrf.org.uk/file/59294/download?token=0ApebtQy&filetype=full-report>

<sup>6</sup> *Cost of Living, Beyond Crisis for Families*, Indigo Childcare Group, December 2022

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/out-school-care-scotland-draft-framework-2019/>

## The Family Matters Concept

The Family Matters concept was established in response to the clear need of the families already involved and known to Indigo, but it was important to Indigo that the service was open to all families in Castlemilk. The concept was to follow their values-led approach as outlined in the Indigo Business Plan <sup>8</sup>: family centred, nurturing, inspiring and innovative.

Indigo sought to address the issue of accessibility and encourage more families into the service, providing school age childcare that was affordable (subsidised/free for a period), and available for those who needed it, when they needed it. It was also important that it was not just providing funding as a sticking plaster. The funding was to provide opportunity: opportunity to access quality childcare, learning, play and social interaction, and opportunity to improve the financial situation and prospects through employment, increased working hours, access to education and training. It was also an opportunity for the community to support one another and for families to engage more proactively in the support available to them from within their own community.



In addition, there was the recognition that the issues faced were multifaceted and would benefit from external support, signposting and exploration to bolster other improvements. Support looks different to every family and while some might need a high level of intervention and advocacy, others might need a very light touch. Whilst the culture within Indigo saw key workers working directly with families in this way at drop off and pick up times, it became evident that the level of support families needed required an experienced Family Support Coordinator, one who shared Indigo's values and could work seamlessly with the Indigo team and wider community.

The funding support for childcare was intended to be short term, with the Family Support Coordinator working with the family to build to a level where they could move on from a funded or subsidised place. There was to be no pressure placed on the families – it was to be responsive to their specific situation and go at their pace. An important element of this was the support offered. There was to be no requirement to engage with family support to be afforded the

subsidised or free place. Working with the Family Support Coordinator was to be voluntary where support would be offered at the initial stage when funding is discussed, and the option would continue to be available throughout.

Family support was to be available as a stand-alone universal offering to those needing practical or emotional support. This is based on the premise that every family requires help sometimes and that if they ask for support, the service would do its best to provide it or signpost them to it. A crucial element in the initial service concept was the dignity of families: ensuring that they did not have to jump through hoops to access the support needed. This was in response to families who shared their poor experience, usually where service protocols are designed to protect services from the misuse of a small minority. Family Matters was designed to support the needs of the majority, protect their dignity, and empower families.

## Family Matters Core Values and Features

Family Matters was established as a whole family support structure, delivered through a preventative, asset-based community model which is flexible and reflects the needs of the families and children it supports - as well as the community in which it is based. The support provided is twofold: subsidised/free childcare places, and holistic family support.

### Core Values

The core values which have guided the model's design, implementation, and interactions with families are influenced by two key areas: Indigo's values as an organisation (focusing on a family centred, collaborative approach) and the needs and interests of the families.

The core values which underpin Family Matters:

**Family centred:** Recognising and respecting the family as a unit with its own unique dynamics, values, and needs.

**Respect:** Treating all families with dignity, empathy, and sensitivity.

**Strengths-Based Approach:** Focusing on the strengths and assets that families already possess rather than solely addressing shortfalls.

**Empowerment:** Enabling families to make informed decisions and take control of their own lives.

**Collaboration:** Partnering with families as active participants in the support process, valuing their input and experience.

**Inclusivity:** Welcoming and respecting families from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

**Trustworthiness:** Building and maintaining trust through clear communication and consistent interaction.

### Features

While the core values provide the underlying principles, there are several identifiable features that define how the Family Matters model operates:

**Universally available:** Providing a universal offer, open and accessible to all families within the area.

**Ease of assessment:** Limited bureaucracy and administration enabling ease of access and evaluation of suitability and need.

**Individualised planning:** Tailoring services and support to meet the specific needs and circumstances of each family, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.

**Holistic and flexible:** Consideration of all aspects of family needs and being open to adapting services and support based on changing family circumstances, preferences, and needs.

**Personalised funding support:** Funding support aimed at addressing short term issues with longer term solutions.

## Service, Staffing and Coverage

Funding from the Access to Childcare Fund enables the provision of:

- 32 full-time equivalent places of year-round out of school care. Currently this is:
  - 24 subsidized and free Out of School Care places, five days per week – breakfast and after school term time and full day service (7.30am – 6.30pm).
  - Eight subsidized and free Out of School Care places for young people through Indi Youth five days per week – including breakfast and after school term time and full day service (7.30am – 6.30pm).
- A snack in afterschool and two snacks (additional funding is secured to provide a lunchtime warm meal during holidays).
- Employment of a full-time Family Support Coordinator working across all five Indigo childcare locations and available to the wider community.

The Family Support Coordinator Role was developed and created in discussion with the Indigo management team, with advice from existing family support providers. As stated in the Family Matters Action Plan 2022 contained in Appendix A:

*“The role will coordinate, promote and take forward the commitments of the Access to Childcare Programme, to support priority families out of poverty by helping them access appropriate school aged childcare, facilitating support workshops and resources and establishing a network of local support to refer or signpost to or to support the family to engage with.”<sup>9</sup>*



The Family Support Coordinator focuses her priority on school age services however, given that families have children of all ages attending many different services in Indigo and beyond, the service provided by the Family Support Coordinator and the funded childcare offer are accessible to families across Indigo services and the wider Castlemilk community. This includes:

- Three school aged childcare services.
- Two Indigo nurseries.
- Four other local partner nurseries.
- Castlemilk wider community through a range of referral partners as listed on page 18.

This model sees one full-time Family Support Coordinator cover nine individual services and a community with an estimated 3,000 children under the age of 15 years.

Whilst the Family Support Coordinator is the lead individual carrying the caseload for family support and coordinating other family support activities, as part of the wider organisation she is supported by the service teams and senior management.

The whole family support culture across Indigo sees all staff assume a level of responsibility from within their own role for a base level of family support. The Family Support Coordinator leads on core delivery of the service with senior management colleagues supporting in a range of circumstances including:

- Particularly complex cases including additional support needs and child protection process
- Analysis of data for the development of Family Matters
- Provision of other services to support delivery of specific events at busy points throughout the year e.g., Christmas, which is a particularly intensive period

## Service Design

### Service Documents

Prior to launching Family Matters, the following documents were drafted in consultation with families, the Indigo management team, and stakeholders - providing an outline of the Family Matters Pathway, Referral Process, Service Offering and Support Plan Template.

**The Family Matters Pathway** outlined the overarching values of the service: family centered, partnership working, community connections, strengths based and flexible in approach. The document defines the route from referral to assessment, actions to review through to learning and analysis. That the service began with this directive ensured that all the stakeholders had a good understanding of the process as well as the value foundations.

**The Referral Pathway** provided a clear point of reference to internal and external referrers ensuring good understanding and communication between the referrer, the Family Support Coordinator, and Indigo Service Managers around suitability and capacity.

**Indigo Access to Childcare – Referral Scheme** gave a detailed overview that could be used internally in Indigo and externally in the community to describe the service offering, who can get support, and how referrals are made. This was shared with all referrers and its concise and clear format allowed stakeholders to use this as a basis to communicate the offering to families.

**Referring Partners** were services within the local community with whom Indigo already had a working relationship, which allowed for the development of a referral system that provided as many avenues as possible into the Family Matters service. Initial thinking was that most referrals would be internal through existing connections with Indigo families.

A **Family Matters Poster** was disseminated throughout the community which gave a brief but clear overview of the service and encouraged families to get in touch with the Family Support Coordinator to discuss their needs. This information was also shared via social media channels.

A **Family Support Plan Template** was prepared that would enable the Family Support Coordinator to work with the family to consider strengths, goals, and areas for development. This bespoke plan was also used as an evaluation tool for the family to consider what inroads they had made with their goals and to discuss how they were feeling about the support being offered.

### Family Matters Action Plan

The Family Support Coordinator, in collaboration with senior management, produces an annual strategic Action Plan. This provides a clear outline of the role, remit and objectives of family support, and links with Indigo’s vision and Business Plan.

The Action Plan outlines the specific functions of the service and activities to engage and support families through Family Matters. It also includes progress indicators to guide improvement.

The content of the Action Plan and the activities it describes was created based on feedback from families around the support they said was needed and details the four areas which Family Matters encompasses: family support, information, learning and engagement.



## Functions

**Family Support:** Ensuring families have access to affordable and flexible childcare and holistic, flexible family support. All families have access to support that adopts a family centred, strengths-based approach that works with them where they are at and supports them to where they want to be. This often results in a written Family Support Plan, or alternatively an informal focus on a key activity. There then follows a check-in with those engaging with Family Matters at a frequency agreed with the families. Practical family support and guidance can include supporting families to access individual funding grants for household items e.g., white goods, short breaks/respite funding for carers, and advocacy and emotional support. Everything is led by what the family needs and wants.

**Family Information:** Ensuring that families have access to the best information in a way that is accessible to them, when they need it, to support their children and young people and their parents/carers. Various tools are used to enable this function. Indigo has an app, Family which shares local and national information and opportunities for families including community events and free training courses. The Parent Zone on Indigo's website is an online 'library' where families can access and request information from Indigo top tips on energy and budgeting to Inclusion library resources. Information sheets are created based on information requests from families. These requests are then captured and analysed to provide a broader understanding of what families need.

**Family Learning:** Ensuring that families have access to opportunities that empower them to develop and build upon their skills, knowledge, and relationships. The aim is for families to feel confident in participating and leading in their children's learning and development at every stage. This includes the use of the Family app which provides learning activities and planned learning for the week, along with tips and ideas to extend the learning at home. In addition, individualised work with families establishes learning goals and allows for the sourcing of appropriate opportunities via networks and community partnerships. Monthly Family Matters Stay and Plays include a free play element, group activity, examples of activities in services and further information (e.g., things they can do at home, speech and language development, or about the organisation or wider community). The first Family Matters Stay and Play involved 17 families with 27 children and 21 adults.

**Family Engagement:** Providing meaningful family engagement opportunities that encourage co-production and empowers families to take part in creative thinking and decision making on service development and delivery. Family engagement is accessible for all families meaning that there is a broad spectrum of activities families can engage in, encouraging a sense of ownership of the service. This includes meaningful consultation and opportunities for families to participate in working groups, planning and delivery of Indigo based events, and the development of peer support networks – for example Carers Connect, which is a facilitated peer support offering. Engagement and feedback are used as part of the learning and development of family activities/resources. An annual equalities survey undertaken by Indigo has widened understanding of family circumstances and the data gained has provided evidence for successful funding bids which have directly benefitted families.

The Family Matters Hub: This offering has combined all the above elements to provide a central point of information, support, and activities for Castlemilk families and forms part of the universal family learning and engagement programme to support and help address the key areas highlighted by families.

The Hub is hosted at Indigo's base on Castlemilk Drive in the centre of the community and offers drop-in sessions prioritising lone parents, parents/carers with long term health conditions and/or disabilities, women with caring responsibilities, vulnerable young parents/carers, families with children under the age of 1, and families with 3 or more children. While there are priority groups, the Hub is open to all.

It is important to note that the Hub (and some other aspects of Family Matters, such as food and energy vouchers, Christmas hampers etc.) have been funded separately to ACF. The work of Family Matters (through ACF) made it possible to gather the necessary data which demonstrated need which in turn enabled Indigo to secure the funding for this impactful community offering. The scale of community level support is only possible if Indigo continues to secure additional grant funding beyond that of ACF.

### The Family Matters Hub provides:

- A warm space.
- A hot meal.
- Use of free wi-fi and devices with onsite support - Charging points (phones, tablets etc.).
- Sustainable clothes swap and pick up.
- Hot and cold refreshments.
- Access to more focused family support for signposting, referrals, foodbank and pantry vouchers and emotional support including intensive family support planning if needed.
- Opportunity to engage with a range of community services with different agencies on site each week, housing, health visiting, childcare.
- Baby items e.g., nappies, food etc.
- Support to access toiletries and personal hygiene items.
- Emergency food offer and recipe bag collection.



Each session includes a support activity e.g., cooking on a budget with recipe bags, building resilience and emotional wellbeing, housing support, speech, language & communication, parenting (PEEP sessions), accessing benefits, inclusion/carer support, no cost local play experiences, digital inclusion, energy advice, repair skills (sewing, basic DIY etc.).

The offer is promoted as a fun activity for parents and children with the support options in the background if people choose to engage in that way. This approach was informed by families highlighting that due to financial restrictions, the first saving considered was any costs associated with family leisure time. These sessions provide families with an escape from the multiple challenges they are experiencing, some fun activities they can enjoy together, and time to socialise with other families. If that quality time together gives them a little more energy to engage with workshops or learning experiences, that is their choice. This approach has seen the numbers attending and engaging increase.

Feedback from families who have attended Hub events:

*"This was great as I found there wasn't enough places in the area for my youngest child to go, it also helped me to develop my confidence and mental health again and meet people who were so understanding. My children enjoyed the activities, and I liked going myself during my break ..... I get to meet new people in the same situations and the toiletries section was an amazing help to us as getting to a food bank with my youngest child's issues can be very hard when having no support, so this helped us massively."*

*"It was wonderful that there where nappies and sanitary products if needed, also the snacks were great."*

*"I found the Family Hub such an amazing experience when I was struggling with my mental health, they went that extra mile such as helping out with family hub time on areas of support for me and the family which we have been struggling with for four years and feel we are finally on a good path with finding this amazing group. I hope it continues as it's given me the focus to get back to work."*

# Family Matters ACF Financial Model

## Family Matters Investment

The Access to Childcare Fund has invested £137,856.99 in funding period 2022 - 2023 in Family Matters. This investment is broken down as follows:

|                                  |                          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Family Support Coordinator costs | £29,943.84 (incl. costs) |
| Cost to deliver 32 FTE places    | £107,913.15              |

This equates to a weekly cost per place of:

- c£65 without Family Support or
- c£86 with Family Support

However, it must be noted that Family Matters is not a stand-alone service. The service and these figures benefit from being part of a wider group of services where back-office overheads can be shared, other savings can be achieved through economies of scale, and multiple benefits exist from being part of a group of services covering the whole age range of 6 weeks to 16 years.

Specific examples of these benefits which positively impact the financial investment include (impacting school age services only):

- Core funding support from Glasgow City Council Communities Fund of £153,000
- Letting Subsidy for voluntary sector organizations equivalent to c£37,000
- Additional Funding secured by group to support resource and activity costs c£60,000.

Benefits via the wider Indigo Group:

- Shared overhead costs of senior management and all other infrastructure costs of running an organization, IT/Insurances etc.
- Shared expertise and staffing which avoids high costs of buying in specialist support or bank staff.
- Business support from specialist colleagues shared across the organization to promote services and maximize occupancy throughout the year.
- Transitions systems in place to maximize transition across services and maintain optimum occupancy levels throughout the year.

Whilst the benefits from the wider group are more difficult to quantify, a modelling exercise was carried out removing the above benefits and replacing them with projected costs. This resulted in the following weekly cost per place:

- Including Family Support - c£122
- Excluding Family Support - c£106

These weekly costs reflect a flat rate across 50 weeks to spread the cost of holiday childcare and an occupancy level of 85% throughout the year. They also assume a break-even position rather than any material surplus. Such a surplus would be essential for a standalone business/charity in order to build reserves for good governance purposes or future investment, given that OSCR recommends reserves equal to 3 months' running costs for charitable organisations.

It would therefore be reasonable to suggest that the stand-alone weekly cost per year-round place without

family support would be in the region of £106 and including family support around £122.

These unit costs, however, are subject to a wide range of variables all of which influence the overall investment requirement. These include, amongst others:

- Occupancy level of the childcare services – an underoccupied service may require greater levels of financial support.
- The number of registered places in the childcare service (figures are based on average registered capacity of 40FTE).
- Level of uptake of the family support model.
- Type of additional support offered beyond subsidised childcare, family support planning and signposting.
- The range of services available in the community to which families can be signposted – fewer services available to signpost could drive demand on delivery from family support service.
- Whether the family support service costs, infrastructure, governance and line management can be split across multiple services or not.

## Indigo Financial Model

The Indigo financial model is based on a wealth distribution principle whereby services that can be charged at a more commercial rate support services where the charging policy requires greater subsidy.

School Age Services at Indigo are integrated within the financial model of the wider Indigo Childcare Group which consists of:

- 2 Partner Nurseries
- 2 Out of School Care
- 1 Youth Service
- Mobile Creche Provision

The multi-age range of this financial model allows for a smooth transition between services as the child grows, supporting and developing family relationships for a significantly longer period than single site/service models. For parents, it also reduces the stress of changing providers and establishes a longer-term relationship with families that can be crucial to family support.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of impact have been critical to the ongoing evolution and development of the service.

The Family Support Coordinator captures the number of referrals, source of referrals, service capacity, issues being considered, as well as data pertaining to the families presenting. Additional monitoring and evaluation tools have been added to gather as full a picture as possible. This includes: the financial progress of families, number and type of interventions and level of family support required by families. It also looks at the reasons why families may have required longer-term support for subsidised fees or had to return to subsidised fees after a period of independent fee paying.

### Evaluation Tools

- Family Matters Tracker
- Common themes and barriers tracker
- Family Support Plans



- Family Log Sheets
- Family feedback
- Children and Young People Care Plans
- Surveys
- Staff observations and feedback.

Using these various tools, the impact of the service is evaluated based on:

- Family equalities data
- Changes in family circumstances such as employment, education, wellbeing, finance
- Changes in fee paying – ability to sustain own childcare payments
- Common themes and barriers that families are experiencing
- Common actions/interventions.

The impact of the service is measured against the following:

- Increased numbers of families with access to affordable school aged childcare
- Increased numbers of families able to contribute to the costs of childcare
- Increased numbers of families with increased family household income
- Increased sense of family wellbeing across families.

It was agreed that qualitative data gathered through 1:1 discussion, group work and specific case studies would provide further evidence of impact and include the progression status of families and instances of families who have regressed following a period progression.

## Referral Strategy

The referral strategy first looked to test response from internal school age services and external partners – when asked. This was then extended to include internal early years referrals. The current phase continues with the internal referral process and seeks external promotion through referral routes, proactively looking for them to refer families not engaged with Indigo.

### Referral Scheme – Guidance

The referral guidance is discussed and shared with all referring partners. This gives an overview of the service, priority groups for referral, and the referral pathway. While there is an eligibility criteria based around the tackling poverty risk factors, there are families who do not meet these but are struggling. Such families are considered on a case by case basis.

### Referral Partners

#### Internal

Internal referral was identified as a key referral route. The Family Support Coordinator links in with all services across Indigo to familiarise staff and families with the role and the offering. All Indigo staff are briefed on the referral process which points them to speak with their manager as a first step should there be a family within Indigo who they think could benefit from subsidised childcare and/or family support.

The finance team are a regular referral source as they are often first to identify potential problems with families struggling with childcare payments, and can instigate a referral to Family Matters. As with their practitioner colleagues, their observation of anomalies can prove instrumental in timely intervention.

#### External

External referral partners were identified through known links in the community: Castlemilk Joint Support Team (including schools, Social Work, Health Visiting), the Health and Social Care Partnership for South Glasgow, The Jeely Piece Club and the Castlemilk Youth Complex. The list of referring agencies and partners continues to evolve as new connections are made and relationships develop.

#### Self-Referral

As the Family Matters service has become more established within the community, more direct self-referrals are being recorded. Posters advertising the service have been placed in prominent community areas, but it is believed that social media, word of mouth and the Family Matters Hubs have played a bigger role in directing families to contact the service.



## PART 2 FAMILY MATTERS ANALYSIS



## Analysis of process focused learning - thematic analysis based on interviews with staff and stakeholders

### Model and features

Indigo staff believe that the Family Matters Model and its features provides the right blend of access and support for families, with integration within the childcare setting providing the ideal platform for the service offering and the normalisation of family support.

*“Family Matters is asset based, needs led, flexible and innovative with a set of core values that puts family at heart, with demonstrated care and commitment - led by the family and their needs and aspirations.” CEO, Indigo*

There is also agreement that providing subsidised funding of childcare combined with family support offers families the best chance to break the cycle of poverty and improve their wellbeing in a sustainable manner.

The staff’s belief that the Family Matters integrated model is working is reinforced by families who share that the entry point was a discussion relating to childcare fees and accessibility of childcare, with further entry points related to a need for support with food shopping or energy costs. Families report that these discussions arose because the support offering was integrated with a familiar community setting where they felt comfortable to discuss difficulties.

*“I honestly only felt as if Indigo has been the only kind of place, I don’t want to say easy, but it has been easy to access to support.” Parent*

Families also appreciated the independence of the service and welcomed that it was not linked to social work or other statutory services where their confidence levels are lower due to previous experiences.

*“I’ve needed support here (Family Matters), but outside like social work I don’t go to them anymore.” Parent*

### Approach

Indigo staff reference Indigo’s values which underpin the features of the Family Matters service, highlighting respect and the importance of the whole family approach to its successful engagement with families and positive impact.

*“Family Matters and the support fits with our values. We have always focused on the family, but this is just a step further – looking at wellbeing holistically, including financial wellbeing and take some pressure off of the family. I see this integrated support as a natural progression.” Manager, Indigo*

Referrers also acknowledge the values-based approach and the depth this brings to the service.



*“This is an excellent service with an excellent team of staff around this service, which at its centre is built on principles of values that guide and shape the service to be an asset to local children and families, the community and external statutory agencies.” Referrer*

Families report that an open approach allowed them to discuss challenges and accept offers of help. Families report no stigma attached to receiving help and attribute this to the compassionate approach of the Family Support Coordinator and the Indigo team.

*“I always knew about Indigo in the area but hadn’t needed it. I didn’t know about the funding, (the Family Support Coordinator) explained it all to me and completed the forms – made it easy. There was no stigma and she made me feel comfortable.” Parent*

## Referrals

Indigo staff feel well briefed around the referral process but acknowledge that it has taken time for practitioners to adjust from being the sole provider of support. Internal referral figures remain higher than any other referral source, with staff putting this down to the childcare setting, family contact, good relationships, and trust.

*“There are now a constant flow of referrals and people understand what they can deal with and what the Family Support Coordinator can help with; they know it’s more than a listening ear.” Manager, Indigo*

Indigo staff state that one parent households and households with a disability (parent/child/both) are the most prevalent referral groups.

Staff share that they continue to assess what works in terms of external referring partners. There are several organisations that regularly refer and others who have yet to refer a family. Local schools have been identified by staff as not engaging with the service. Indigo staff did not identify any specific reason for this. One of the issues that has been highlighted is that connections are made at a personal level rather than organisational level.

*“The connection is more dependent on the individual rather than the organisation - you see the drop in referral if that person leaves...” Family Support Coordinator, Indigo*

Indigo staff state that they have reached out to referrers to engage across organisations, sharing information and contacts and encouraging more external family referral. This has been acknowledged by referrers who work with the Indigo team to disseminate the information.

*“I have now extended knowledge of the service and provisions to spread awareness to colleagues of this service.” Referrer*

From discussion with referrers, a key positive for the referral process is the clarity around the criteria and the simplicity of the pathway – which leads to an identifiable individual. The quick response to a submitted referral was also praised as being helpful.

Families share that linking in with the service is seamless, with no family reporting issues around referral or



raising questions about the referral process – whether they have been an internal/external or self-referral. Families describe having been provided with clear information about the service and the role of the Family Support Coordinator. In addition, no family reported any pressure to participate in family support.

## Importance of Holistic Support

The broad range of practical and emotional support and advocacy offered is welcomed, with families reporting that they are often uncertain at the start of their family support journey just where they need or want help.

*“It’s hard because you don’t know what’s out there, to just go searching for help, I didn’t know where to start.” Parent*

The holistic approach ensures that all avenues are explored with the family, and it is here that families and the Family support Coordinator report that additional or underlying issues are unearthed.

*“(The Family Support Coordinator) has been brilliant and keeps in touch. She has shared other support resources. Practical help like vouchers, food parcels. But also, she lets me talk, express worries. If I need to talk, (Family Support Coordinator) has been there.” Parent*

Indigo staff report an understanding of the multiple challenges that families are facing and that the holistic offer of support is the only way to make long term changes.

*“Our families face a multitude of challenges. Some of the time they are not aware of just how many issues they are trying to deal with. We help them to pause, look at where the challenges lie and help them navigate a way forward with as many different tools of support as is needed.” CEO, Indigo*

## Potential for the future

Staff have highlighted the importance of family support going forward and are of the view that this model could make a positive impact across Scotland. Indigo staff members support the concept of an integrated family support service available in all communities across Scotland as they believe it could make significant progress in closing the attainment gap, improving health outcomes, support families to work their way out of poverty and provide for happier, healthier children.

*“Family Support is vital. I don’t think we can tackle the aims that we have as a country – coming out of this crisis, if we don’t go within each community and put something in place that is accessible to families when they need it. We need to break the cycle. The whole family needs support.” Manager, Indigo*

Indigo staff are clear that support must be responsive to the needs of the community and local area, and it should be delivered by organisations that are trusted and known and involve looking at what a community needs, what networks are there. The staff could not emphasise strongly enough the importance of doing the groundwork to get the right structure in place to suit that community.



## Analysis of outcomes and impact

The outcomes have been considered utilising Indigo’s evaluation documentation, survey response, case studies and interviews. Figures and feedback demonstrate that the service is meeting the ACF outcomes against which it is measured:

- Increased numbers of families with access to affordable school aged childcare
- Increased numbers of families able to contribute to the costs of childcare
- Increased numbers of families with increased family household income
- Increased sense of wellbeing across families.

### Families – headline figures

Figures taken from Indigo’s document, Access to Childcare Fund Phase 2 Final Reporting, March 2023:

- 97 families have been referred to Family Matters, 82 families engaged in the service.
- 83 children were directly supported with school age childcare.
- 30 children with ASN were directly supported with school age childcare.
- 60 families reported an improvement in family wellbeing.
- 47 families reported an improvement in family finances.
- 59 low-income families were able to access childcare through Family Matters.
- 43 families reported an increased ability to access/maintain work/learning.

It should be noted that while 83 children have had direct support, 148 children in total have benefitted from the whole family approach of Family Matters, experiencing improvements to their family wellbeing and finances.

Indigo’s aim of supporting families with children with ASN is also being met with 36% of the children supported through Family Matters having an ASN.

### Financial Impact

Many families report that engaging with Family Matters has improved their situation though a combination of the subsidised fee offering and the family support. This, they say, has provided them with financial breathing space and practical support to improve their current position and outlook.

71% of families involved with Family Matters receive/d subsidised or free school age childcare . Those surveyed and spoken with recognise the positive impact the removal of this cost has made to their financial wellbeing and/or their employment and education opportunities. From their perspective, having this financial support - provided without judgement or prescriptive conditions - has been enabling.

*“It has been a massive weight off my shoulders. If I was paying for it all, it wouldn’t be financially viable (going to work).” Parent*

*“I wouldn’t be able to probably be in the job that I’m in just now, not able to change jobs and get a better career and stuff so that’s the main thing that’s why I went to Indigo in first place because I was wanting a career change.” Parent*

Families report that they value the up-to-date knowledge provided regarding benefit entitlement, energy grants, cost of living support, etc. which results in them maximising their income. Families also state that they are appreciative of the local knowledge and community connections of the Family Support Coordinator

and wider Indigo team who can signpost effectively and efficiently to many organisations within the local community and beyond.

*“For the family, it’s just kind of been you (Family Support Coordinator), you’ve forward me to the carers centre for the family holiday and the kind of grants and that stuff.” Parent*

Figures contained in Indigo’s Cost of Living, Beyond Crisis for Families Report, delve deeper into the financial impact that involvement with Family Matters has had on families:

- 15% of families have increased the benefits they are accessing.
- 43% were able to find a new job as a result of having access to subsidised childcare.
- 15% were able to increase the hours they worked by having access to subsidised childcare.
- 64.5% of families accessing family support have required either free or subsidised childcare.

With access to the right support regarding benefits and subsidised or free childcare:

- 73% of families have been able to increase their household income.
- 53% of families reported financial wellbeing improvement.
- 50% report the support being essential to maintaining or improving their employment status.
- 40% of families have been able to progress to contribute to full/part payment of fees.

### Wellbeing Impact

There is also the recognition that family support has played an almost unexpected role in supporting their sustained progression and improved wellbeing. The majority of those involved with Family Matters reported an improvement to their mental wellbeing.

*“I’m in a lot better place now than when we first met - that’s having support.” Parent*

Families also report improvements in terms of their children’s wellbeing, confidence, and social interactions through accessing school age childcare. Families with children with ASN who have received help though Family Matters talk in terms of being a lifeline, that having access to mainstream school age childcare has supported the child and the family immeasurably.

*“Going into it I was just looking forward to a bit of time to myself, I didn’t think it would have that impact on the kids...I didn’t even think about the benefits that they would get; it’s been life changing for them, they’ve developed so much for it.” Parent*

*“It has helped them socially and emotionally it has a knock-on effect for everything else.” Parent*

*In addition, families also report improvements to children and the family as a whole because of being in a better financial and emotional position themselves.*

*“(This family support help)...makes you a great parent to your kids.” Parent*

Referrers acknowledge the role that Family Matters has had to play in supporting their work and achieving positive outcomes for the families that they have referred.



*“This has been a key resource of support to myself as a statutory agency and has provided the direct 1-2-1 support in the lives of children I have supported to reduce risks to the children, of a child protection nature.” Referrer*

Information collected from an online survey of parents/carers involved with Family Matters in February 2023 identifies outcomes relating to wellbeing, parent/child relationships and child outcomes. Participants reported the following:

- 72.7% of parents know where/who to ask for support.
- 63.6% of parents know how to manage their stress more effectively.
- 54.5% of parents report feeling less stressed.
- 27.3% of parents feel more connected with their community.
- 63.6% of children report improved friendships.
- 45.5% of children and parents report being happier.
- 36.4% of children state they have access to more activities.
- 27.3% of children/parents report children getting on better at school.

### Indigo Perspective of Impact on Families, the Organisation and Community

The Indigo staff is confident that the Family Matters service is having a positive impact on the families who engage and that there are demonstrable positive outcomes in terms of finance, health and wellbeing, parental confidence, and relationships. There is consensus that the service has successfully delivered the agreed ACF outcomes.

*“Yes, we have hit the ACF outcomes and then some.” CEO, Indigo*

*“I love seeing how many have benefitted from the service – that’s when you realise the impact. When you get that report that shows how many families have engaged, how they’ve been supported, how they are progressing – that’s how we know that it’s making a difference.” Manager, Indigo*

In addition to the direct positive outcomes for the beneficiaries of the service, Family Matters also saw positive impacts on both the organisation and the community.

The organisation saw increased occupancy of school aged services against the general trend, providing a more stable financial base for the organisation and data collection from Family Matters gave breadth and depth of evidence to continue to develop family centred services.

The childcare practitioners also report that Family Matters has enabled them to focus on their core activities, with time to upskill and develop as practitioners.

The Family Matters Hubs have been well received in the community, with many families connecting with Indigo for the first time through these events, and connecting with additional support and each other.

The growth in self-referrals from non-Indigo using families would also suggest that families are responding to the offer and feel comfortable with Indigo offering an additional family support service.

## Quantitative Measures

### Referral Sources

As of March 2023, 97 families have been referred to Family Matters, 82 families engaged.

Referrals have been predominantly internal. External referrers include Castlemilk Family Learning Centre, Place2B, The Jeely Piece Club, Social Work, Health Visitors, Housing Associations, Castleton Primary School. The second phase of the programme saw a marked increase in self-referrals, which suggests an identifiable need in the community and an increasing awareness and confidence in the service.

|         | Internal Referral | External Referral | Self-Referral |
|---------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Phase 1 | 78.5%             | 21.5%             |               |
| Phase 2 | 50%               | 16%               | 34%           |

Source: Family Matters Tracker, Indigo Childcare Group, March 2023

### Family Matters Uptake

The table below outlines maximum occupancy levels across each Indigo service and the wider population of children in the Castlemilk community c15,000.

The second line in the table illustrates the number of families who have taken up family support from each of these services.

This shows that from a community with 3,000 children and an average family size of 1.7 children, an average of 3% under 15s were in a family being supported by Family Matters.

The table overleaf on page 26 describes the average daily usage of the services and the usage of families using both school aged childcare and family support services during the period from April 1st 2022 – March 31st 2023.

According to the Understanding Glasgow website which collates community statistics for various communities across the city, Castlemilk has a population of c3000 young people under the age of 15.

The uptake of family support services only from the wider community, (i.e. families who do not and have not previously used Indigo Childcare services) during this period totaled 48 families. It is helpful to understand this number in a community of this size, in order to have confidence in offering a universal rather than a targeted service. Indigo had some concerns in the early days around capacity and ability to cope with demand, however even in a community of this size at a very challenging economic time these numbers have been manageable - even with broad reach recruitment and referral systems.



## Family Support Service Uptake

| Service                                                                                               | Castleton OSC | St Bartholomew's OSC | Indi Youth | Castlemilk Early Years | Garrowhill Early Years |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Occupancy (average no. children attending daily)                                                      | 51            | 31                   | 20         | 81                     | 60                     |
| *Average number of children attending school aged childcare whose parents also access family support. | 18            | 7                    | 7          | 7                      | 3                      |
| % Uptake of family support of the number of children using the service.                               | 35%           | 23%                  | 35%        | 8.6%                   | 5%                     |

Source: Family Matters Tracker, Indigo Childcare Group, March 2023

**\*It is important to note that whilst the average number of children attending school aged childcare whose parents also access family support totals 42, the total number of school aged children across the community (including those not using Indigo school aged childcare) is 90. Some of those children will also progress into school aged childcare.**

These figures show the new uptake numbers for the funding period in question, with a total of 90 families being supported. It should be noted, however, that this is only the second year of running the service and Year Two saw an almost doubling of uptake in Year One. Whilst it is expected that the growth in numbers of families will increase as the service becomes more understood in the community, it is not expected to continue to see this rate of growth each year and of course with successful outcomes, families do move away from needing support.

| Age range of children | No. children using childcare services | No. children using childcare whose parent/carer is also using family support | % of children using childcare whose family is also using family support |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5-10yrs               | 82                                    | 25                                                                           | 30%                                                                     |
| 10-16yrs              | 20                                    | 7                                                                            | 35%                                                                     |
| Under 5's             | 141                                   | 10                                                                           | 7.1%                                                                    |

Source: Family Matters Tracker, Indigo Childcare Group, March 2023

In terms of uptake of family support, the table above shows:

- An uptake from families with children under the age of 5 of 7%
- An uptake from families with children aged 5-10yrs of 30%
- An uptake from families with children aged 10-16yrs of 35%

This illustrates a significantly higher demand from families with school-aged children. It also illustrates the lower demand in the area of lesser deprivation (Garrowhill). The data reviewed also showed no requirement for intensive support from families in this area and of the 3 families who did use the service, all have progressed out of the support system with the cases closed within 4 months or less.

## Family Matters Engagement

The table below illustrates the high engagement levels following referral and identifies lone parent families as being the most prevalent group in the service.

| Families                             | Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Total Project |
|--------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------------|
| No. of families referred/enquiries   | 54      | 43      | 97            |
| No. of families engaged              | 42      | 40      | 82            |
| No. of existing indigo families      | 29      | 13      | 42            |
| No. lone parent Families             | 33      | 27      | 60            |
| No. families with 3 or more children | 3       | 7       | 10            |
| No. families of parents under 25yrs  | 1       | 1       | 2             |
| No. families impacted by Covid       | 23      | 13      | 36            |
| Disabled Person in Household         | 23      | 23      | 46            |
| Minority Ethnic Family               | 1       | 5       | 6             |

Source: Family Matters Tracker, Indigo Childcare Group, March 2023

## Family Matters Level of Support

All families require a different level of resource - from basic signposting through to intensive daily support, and therefore it was agreed in the early stages not to implement a maximum caseload number. Most families require significant support in the first week or so, perhaps daily, until life settles somewhat with most moving on to weekly check-ins and/or signposting. A small proportion (c.5%) sit in the intensive space for several weeks until either life settles down or a more appropriate intensive family support resource is identified.

|                        | No. Families using Funded Childcare only | No. Families using Ad Hoc One Off Support | No. Families using Low Level Support | No. Families using Medium Level Support | No. Families using Intensive Support |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| At point of referral   | 27                                       | 19                                        | 13                                   | 12                                      | 18                                   |
| One month update point | 29                                       | 31                                        | 12                                   | 11                                      | 6                                    |

Source: Family Matters Tracker, Indigo Childcare Group, March 2023

These numbers demonstrate that most families requiring intensive support do not remain at this stage for significant periods of time. This is an important factor in terms of resourcing. The table also shows that most people at point of referral do so in search of support with childcare costs and many progress within one month to only requiring ad hoc support from the Family Support Coordinator. The Family Support Coordinator has reported that she is currently at capacity in terms of caseload and intensity of support, which has resulted in a review of maximum caseload.

# Families – Case studies

Information gathered in conjunction with Ipsos MORI Scotland online interviews, March 2023

## Parent / Carer Case study A

### Background

Mother (C) and son (D) aged 8. D attends after school care four days a week and attends the holiday service too. He has been part of Indigo since May 2022.

C is a single mum who wanted a new career which offered increased income and opportunities for her family. She went to college, qualified and was successful in getting a new role. However, her new working day finished at 6pm so C needed childcare to be able to do the job.

D is autistic and has bladder issues which made C hesitant about him attending out of school care. C knew of Indigo and its childcare provision in the community and knew of the out of school care as D attended the school where it was based. C states that speaking with Indigo about their needs was easy and that on the first meeting with the school aged care team the Family Support Coordinator discussed the service and Family Matters with her, and all agreed that it was a good fit both in terms of the subsidised funding offer and the family support element.

*“I always knew about Indigo in the area but hadn’t needed it. I didn’t know about the funding, (the Family Support Coordinator) explained it all to me and completed the forms – made it easy. There was no stigma and she made me feel comfortable.”*

### School age childcare

One of the plus points that C highlights is the accessibility of school age care for D; that it is in D’s school, a place that he knows well and is comforting to him. C also praised the flexibility of the service – in particular the school holiday cover, where she is able to drop D off at any point in the morning which she states as very helpful given that D always asks to go early as he enjoys it so much.



C also praised the Indigo team, including the Family Support Coordinator, for really getting to know D and their family. C states that the Indigo team have developed an individualised care plan for D and have taken the time to get to know him and understand how to support him to make the most of his time at Indigo.

Communication is also something that C states that Indigo does well. The team listen to D and take on board his thoughts and ideas, and they also talk directly to C about D and his progress or any concerns that they have. They utilise Family app to share what the children are doing daily, and they also use the app to connect with parents/carers to get their views – sending short and easy surveys. The app allows interaction with other parents too which C has found to be useful support.

C describes D as flourishing at Indigo – that he enjoys activities she never thought of trying with him and has developed socially, making some lovely genuine connections that go beyond out of school care.

*“D loves afterschool care. He is autistic and it has brought him out of his shell. Has really developed relationships there – with those who work there and friendship with other children. His confidence has really*

*developed. He gets to try lots of new things, things I would never have thought about trying.”*

The only downside in relation to the care provision that C identifies is that it shuts over Christmas and New Year. C also raised concerns about the funding potentially stopping. C is able to change her working hours so does not need the same afterschool care, however she acknowledges that she sees the benefit to her son and his love of Indigo so will be cutting it down to what she can afford but feels unable to remove it completely.

*“I couldn’t afford the 4 days. But D loves it so much, I can’t stop it. He got really upset he doesn’t want to leave so...”*

### Family Support

While C did not attend Indigo initially for the family support, she is clear that it has become a valuable support system. C states that it has been so responsive to her needs which has helped her mental wellbeing and her ability to parent. C explains that the Family Support Coordinator checks in regularly and has helped to signpost, advocate and provide practical help as well as a listening ear. The flexibility and accessibility was praised, as was the emotional support provided.

*“(Family Support Coordinator) has signposted and spoken with my doctor about D’s incontinence and helped with forms. Has provided me with emotional support. Has provided signposting for rent and financial support. They are easy to get hold of, always returns calls/texts. (Family Support Coordinator) has been a great help I can speak with her anytime. She’s being really really good - she’s managed to get some food packs and stuff she’s been great so she’s really good to talk to and stuff.”*

Asked to summarise what having Family Matters has done for C and D:

*“I wouldn’t be able to probably be in the job that I’m just now, not able to change jobs and get a better career and stuff so that’s the main thing that’s why I went to Indigo in first place because I was wanting a career change so it’s helped a lot and it’s help D massively. He has friends made through ASC and connects with them online and outside. Helped his mental wellbeing and confidence. They do lots there that I wouldn’t do with him – he tries new things there/new foods and doesn’t do it at home. I think just seeing my son happy and enjoying it it’s helped me a lot and even just being able to speak to (Family Support), I’m not the kind of person who speaks to family and friends about my problems.”*

When asked how important the family support element of the service was, C talked about the help provided, a feeling of being understood.

*“(The Family Support Coordinator) has been a great help, like a massive help, just being able to speak to her and been able to talk to you about your problems and she’s got an answer for everything so it’s never uncomfortable to speak to her - it feels as if you talking to her friend when you talk till she’s just she’s really really understanding and she always points you in the right direction. She’s my first point of contact. (Family Support) if she wasn’t there in that role wasn’t there to help yeah it would be a different experience.”*  
Parent / Carer

## Case study B

### Background

Dad (J) and son K (12) and daughter E (14).

J is a single dad in full time employment. K attends Indi Youth 4 days a week as well as attending the school

holiday service. E used to go but of an age where she prefers to be with school friends.

J is not local to the area and heard about Indigo during the pandemic as a key worker who was entitled to free childcare accessed at Indigo. Post Covid, he put the children into Indi Youth and had to borrow money to fund this. One of the Indi Youth workers shared that there was ACF funding and additional family support that could help families when finances were not great and going through some challenges. J was grateful for the support which continues to provide 3 fully funded days.

*“It has been a massive weight off my shoulders. If I was paying for it all, it wouldn’t be financially viable. Payment is in chunks – can’t afford that.”*

*“Didn’t think it was fair that I was using this place – I just take what I need. While I don’t tell anyone about it, there is no stigma from Indigo. When I can, I want to give back and donate so other kids can have the same help.”*

### School age childcare

K is awaiting testing for autism. J has shared this with the team, and they tailor how they work with him. J reports that the activities are really varied, and K enjoys going. J states that attending Indi Youth has made a real impact and improved K’s social skills and confidence as well as relationships with adults and children his own age. He adds that it has helped both of his children to progress in their adolescence. J feels that the team have taken time to get to know K as an individual and what he needs in out of school care.

*“K is a bit different, but Indi Youth and the other kids see his unique qualities.”*

J reports that the service and staff are so flexible and try to accommodate extra coverage or changes. It is also convenient – based in the heart of the community and near where they live. Communication is a key positive, with staff taking the time to share how K is and flagging up any issues. J describes the benefits for K which centre around connection and positive relationships which have given K confidence and improved socialisation.

*“When first started going he (K) was distant, took a while to build relationships. He is now far more confident; staff think of him highly – asked to help with the younger children transitioning into Indy youth – Primary to Secondary. I’m so proud that he has been asked, given responsibility.”*

The alternative to attending after school care at Indigo would be the library. J is not comfortable with this option and shares that K has been involved in some altercations in the area and he would be concerned about K waiting in the library and having to walk home from there.

*“For parents, knowing that child is safe and well, I’ll forever be grateful.”*

J states that in the summer he could not do without the service because he needs to work, and he would not leave the children home alone all summer.

### Family Support

J describes the family support service as being of practical and emotional help. The Family Support Coordinator has provided food and food vouchers and signposting to additional financial assistance but has also provided a listening ear and supported his wellbeing.

*“(The Family Support Coordinator) has been brilliant and keeps in touch. She has shared other support resources. Practical help like vouchers, food parcels. But also, she lets me talk, express worries. If I need to talk, (Family Support Coordinator) has been there.”*

J also references the practical and emotional support provided when a family member passed away. When asked what makes Indigo special, J describes that it is not just childcare, the support offered alleviates stress and through understanding and acceptance improves emotional wellbeing. He also praises Indigo for the positive impact that it has had on his children.

*“It’s been a lifesaver for me.”*

### Parent / Carer Case study C

#### Background

Mum (P) two children - (M) 11 attends indigo 2 days a week.

P has two children, both of whom are awaiting an autism diagnosis. P had a full-time job but has had to dramatically cut her working hours to focus on supporting her children. She states that no two days are the same and getting M to attend school can be really challenging.

Having moved schools, M asked if she could go to indigo as one of her new friends attended. P states that it was easy to get information about Indigo and that initially she paid for M to attend. When her financial circumstances changed, she was able to speak with the Family Support Coordinator who identified that M would be a good candidate for ACF. Having a funded place for 2 days was, P states:

*“A huge weight off my shoulders.”*

Due to M’s anxiety, she often feels unable to attend after school care which left P concerned that they would lose the place at Indigo. P states that Indigo was supportive and reassuring that M would not lose her childcare place which put less pressure on the family which in turn placed less pressure on M to attend after school care. This had the effect of reducing her anxiety and led to increased attendance which enabled P the few hours respite needed. P appreciates the flexibility and accessibility of the service for M and the family.

P states that without the funding they would struggle to have M attend given the increase to their household budget due to the cost-of-living crisis and would have to rely on elderly relatives for support – which does not benefit M or the relative.

#### School age childcare

M has recently started at Indi Youth and while she enjoys it when she is there, sometimes her anxiety is such that she does not want to go. She is still getting to know the team at Indi Youth, but P feels that the team have taken their time to get to know M.

M enjoys the range of activities and that she gets to choose what she does. M does not like activities that mean going somewhere by public transport which limits some of the outings that she goes on, particularly in the summer, but as Indi Youth share what they are doing in advance they are able to plan around it.

Going to school age care has built M’s confidence and social skills. She sees it as different from school, with much less pressure and structure, she can enjoy more of what she likes to do but also tries new things on her





own terms.

*“It’s built her confidence up. Has built up her social skills. Yeah, it’s really brought her on.”*

P states that while it started for M’s benefit, attending Indigo benefitted the whole family and provided her with respite.

*“It gives me a break.”*

## Family support

P describes the family support element as hugely important to her and her family.

*“(The Family Support Coordinator) is my right-hand man. She’s such an asset to the company.”*

P states that she receives practical support such as helping to complete forms and providing signposting to Money Advice. The Family Support also provides information guiding P to access help she did not know was there – for example, referral to the Carer’s Centre, which has now provided her with support.

Other practical help like recipe bags which provided food for the family – some new foods they had not tried before, and an opportunity to make something with M. P did not realise that M would enjoy it as much. Christmas Eve boxes, Christmas gifts – all thoughtful and eases some of the pressure and financial stress.

*“(This help)...makes you a great parent to your kids.”*

P also describes the benefits of the Wellbeing sessions that she has attended through Family Matters, where she was given tools to help her to look after herself and introduced to other parents and carers. The peer support instigated through the family support continues to help and play a role for P.

*“I get lifted from having the support. It helps me with my caring role.”*

While P is grateful for the practical support, she is most appreciative of the positive communication and emotional support. The family support coordinator texts P to let her know about useful events, sends reminders. P states that just knowing that someone is there to listen, and help has made all the difference - Indigo has become her community rock.

*“Indigo. First people I think of above Citizen’s advice...”*

P states that this support and the small, simple things are what makes an impact, such as having sanitary products available, as well as basic toiletries to take away. P also appreciates that there is no stigma attached:

*“They don’t make you feel any less.”*

The confidential, sensitive nature of the service provided through family support builds trust and is hugely appreciated.

## Impact on Children

The children are unaware of their funding status or if their family are receiving family support – unless the family brings it to their attention. All financial interaction is completed away from the childcare service, and family support is offered in a manner sensitive to the needs of the family – again, away from the actual service. There is no difference in terms of the experience provided for children who are funded through ACF and those who are not.

The perspective of the children was important as it enabled insight into how they felt about the school age childcare at Indigo – many of whom have only been able to access it through funding support.

Their perspectives were obtained through a short survey and a face-to-face consultation facilitated by the team at Indigo. Direct observations were made with the opportunity to explore responses more fully. 15 children participated in the consultation ranging in age from six to 11 years of age. All attended school age childcare, with one attending Indi Youth.

From observation and from the children’s responses, all get on well with the staff and each child is well known to the team. The children have 100% positive feelings about the Indigo team. The children’s responses are listed below:

- they do loads of things with us that i like
- beacase, they make fun activatese
- the staff are very caring and loving and always find a time to give you what you need or want anything :)
- they make me feel happy because they included me in all the activites
- they are kind and caring they make up fun games to play
- they always make sure your okay if you’re hurt
- they always take care of everyone equally and are really funny
- they support me by always cheering me up when i am sad and always taking care of us proberly

83% responded positively to being asked how they felt about school age childcare.

- whenever I started it made me have joy
- I like it because it is in my school
- i feel happy because i get to see my friends and play with my big sister and get to draw a lot
- rooly happy
- its a fun place to be at and you can make loads of new friends
- i like after school care because it is fun
- the reason I feel happy because I can relax

Speaking with the children who said that they did not enjoy attending, they commented that they were tired and just wanted to go straight home some days. They did acknowledge that there were quiet spaces available in out of school care where they could have quiet time.

When asked if they would change anything, most children said they “liked it how it is...,” although one child did suggest they could be stricter, and another would like access to sand.

The children were able to list many activities that they enjoyed including football, basketball, gardening, play dough, cooking, arts and crafts, and music. They described many outdoor activities and enjoyed playing outside, gardening, and getting messy. The children described trying new things and being encouraged to learn new skills. In terms of activities, the children feel very comfortable asking the staff for certain activities and help plan what they do. The younger children were very clear about what they did and did not like and

that the staff listened to them.

- we get to make videos of activity ideas
- we can write idea on paper and give them
- we tell them

In terms of the food, the children were very clear that food formed an important part. Some commented that it is important to have food as they are not getting picked up until 6pm and they get hungry. They often have the same food at home – wraps / pizza / toast and they tell the staff what food they really like and the staff listen.

The children like that schools are used for out of school care because they are familiar with them and have large spaces to play. Indi Youth was described as a brilliant place to attend out of school as there were lots of areas to “hang out and lots to do.”

What came across was how much the children valued the relationships with the staff and the friends at school aged childcare which they carry through to friendships outside. The responses from the children highlight a strong positive impact, with children able to access many activities and learning experiences that they otherwise would not have, and reporting feeling safe, comfortable and happy at school age childcare.

## PART 3 LEARNING, RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE FUTURE



# Learning, Recommendations and the Future

## Learning

### Model

- A values led approach is crucial where the family is treated with dignity and the service offering starts from a point of trust with the child/family at the centre.
- Ideally, family support needs to be built into services like Indigo that are already established within communities – building on trusted resources already familiar to service users.
- A model that is part of an existing service for families provides a clear gateway of positive support.
- Collaboration at community level prevents duplication of efforts and makes best use of the resources available.
- Family support works well when it is led by the needs of the families it is serving and is connected to the community in which it is delivered.
- There are consistencies across family support services around some core aspects of what is delivered, but format and to what extent varies significantly.
- Data collection and analysis are crucial not only to aid understanding how best to help individual families, but also to develop the service and influence systemic change.
- Family support is working well as an independently provided service where there is no fear that what is said during sessions can impact other areas of their lives.

### Operational

- Family support works well alongside childcare provision where it is accessible, and support is normalised.
- The process should be made as easy as possible for families and remove unnecessary administration/ form filling.
- There is an optimum number of cases determined not only by the number of cases but also by the level of support required.
- There is a need to hold the support space to ensure longer term stability. Even when the financial situation changes and families are then able to pay fees, this does not automatically mean they can move on. Continued support may be required for a time to stabilise and build resilience, reducing the risk of quickly reverting back into crisis or a heavily supported situation.
- Child protection highlighted through family support is an area that must be sensitively and expertly handled. Building the depth of trusting relationships with the adults caring for the children can make dealing with and/or reporting a child protection situation more complex than usual.
- The early years practitioners instinctively offer a form of family support. It can take time and education for them to understand the deeper role that the Family Support Coordinator can play and foster a willingness to extend the relationship they have nurtured.
- Where a service is expanded to incorporate family support, there is work to be done to make sure the role integrates well with existing roles and that other practitioners understand how or if it changes their role.
- The culture of the existing service affects the ease in which family support is integrated.
- Family support works hand in hand with inclusion support at Indigo to provide different elements of support. Inclusion support refers to the support provided to parents of children with ASN to allow the child to access the service alongside their peers.
- Family Support service is of value to, and strengthens the practice of, other staff members who utilise the knowledge and expertise to support inclusion work.

## Referral Systems

- It is important for referral partners to have a clear understanding as to the role that family support plays and can differentiate it from other services.
- Confidence in referring grows with familiarity with the service and the Family Support Coordinator.
- A simple, straightforward referral system is important with minimal barriers and paperwork.
- Families benefit from a self-referral option, this reduces the need for involving more people than necessary and presents fewer barriers to accessing the support, giving families ownership of their own support.
- A referral system is smoother when there is a strong and positive working relationship and understanding between the organisations.
- Working closely, on site, with the children and the families also gives the referrer insight into who could benefit most from Family Matters.
- More work is required to integrate the Family Matters service within school communities – referrals to date have been limited from this source.

## Financial Model and Funding

The learning below is based on the area of Castlemilk, a SIMD 1 and 2 area with a population of under 15's of around 3000.

- Financially, it is more cost effective to base the family support service within an existing service than to create a standalone service.
- It is also more cost efficient if the service can support a geographical area rather than an individual service. To clarify this in terms of scale, the capacity for one full-time Family Support Co-ordinator in an area such as Castlemilk sits around 100 families with 18% of those requiring intensive support. Intensive support has been classified as more than 2 contacts per week.
- Family Matters data suggests that the geographical area covered by a service could be larger where the area is more affluent.
- When Family Matters was extended to Indigo's early years' service in Garrowhill, an SIMD 4 area, the support uptake was both lower and less intensive.
- In Garrowhill, only 5% of families engaged with family support and all were one-off support conversations. In Castlemilk, 8.6% of families were accessing family support with most requiring either medium or intensive support.
- The rates outlined in the financial section are based on salary grades consistent with those in the third sector and a real living wage employer. Salaries, terms and conditions vary dramatically within the sector (and compared with ELC sector where there is some cross-over) which creates challenges around recruitment and retention. Indigo had 3 vacancies unfilled for longer than 2 months in school aged services.
- Given the current issue in staff recruitment/retention and the learning from ELC expansion, scaling up the school aged childcare workforce would require a robust review of workforce remuneration and terms and conditions to ensure a robust workforce upon which to build.
- An additional budget of around £16,000 per annum could support the provision of vouchers, toiletries, Christmas support, etc. which could be used to support initial approaches from parents not already using base service.
- The business perspective is based over the first two years in an environment where universal family support is a reasonably new concept. As the service establishes itself and the concept is normalized, the number of engaged families may become higher.
- The combination of family support and ACF funded places has contributed positively to the sustainability of school aged services (particularly through the Pandemic period). Without ACF support, numbers would have been lower and service delivery may have to have been adapted to reflect that.

- Interaction with family support and ACF has introduced new families to Indigo, some of whom are progressing on to pay fees.
- As numbers reach maximum occupancy levels, close monitoring of the number of ACF places v the number of Parental Fee places will need to be monitored, particularly while the funding is in pilot phase. Too heavy a weighting towards ACF places puts a pressure on financial viability should funding be discontinued.
- Any statutory funding offer would require review of the cost of a place closer to time. Analysis of service charging and costing models would be needed to ascertain both the cost of a statutory funded place and the sustainable number of statutory places.

### Needs of Families

- Families are dealing with on average 7 issues, not just food poverty or fuel poverty. It is very rare to find a family who only needs support with the cost of childcare.
- Families do make progress with co-ordinated, trusted support and subsidised childcare.
- Listening and responding to the needs of the families lies at the heart of the service – it is important not assume what the issues are.
- Families with a parent or carer working in health and social care represent a significant proportion of families that are being supported.
- Families with someone with additional support needs and/or disability represent a significant proportion of families requiring support, and may take longer to make progress due to the complexity of circumstances and challenge to obtain further signposted support.
- Short term funding at crisis is very useful but longer-term support leading to self-reliance is more important.



### Impact on Children

Children/young people say they:

- have fun
- enjoy socialising and playing with friends
- enjoy having a say in designing the activities they participate in
- enjoy taking part in new activities
- Their experience with out of school care positively influences their physical and emotional wellbeing and evidence tells us that this can lead to a positive influence on their capacity to learn and participate in learning opportunities.
- Anecdotal evidence shows children/young people benefit from the all-round progression of the family position. Parents say that children are happier, are socialising better with more friends and are participating in more new and additional activities than they would otherwise have been able to.
- More evaluation is required of outcomes specific to the children/young people to quantify the impact for them as individuals, within their family and in terms of their growth and development.

## Recommendations

### Universal Family Support Model

Family Support should be a universal offer, open and accessible to all families. It should be accessible where children and families already spend time and where robust, supportive relationships already exist.

The principles that currently exist should be expanded to include the principle of universality and deemed 'national family support principles'. These should be strengthened with a set of values that will support values led delivery of dignified, ambitious, respectful family support across the country. There should be agreement around a basic level of core family support and best practice based around these guiding principles and values, to which all involved with family support delivery sign up.

Guidance should be provided to illustrate the core functions of family support and give examples of the range of successful interventions: a version to support service delivery and a version that supports improved understanding of family support for all.

Consideration should be given to existing services and pathways within communities, looking at what could be connected or expanded. Local Authorities should then be encouraged to use this to produce Whole Family Wellbeing Support Plans which align with these guiding principles and values and delivers on the aims outlined in the Child Poverty action plan.

The Family Matters model of integrated support should be utilised as a model of best practice.

### Challenge and change the perception of Family Support

Be very clear that the service offering is universal. This would help families that need help as a one off, those that are worried about the stigma, as well as those who have had previous family support through social work and who want to shake off that perception. The language around family support should encourage discussion and normalise participation. This should be promoted through a communications campaign that delivers key messages to 'normalise' universal family support.

Consideration should be given to presenting universal Family Support in such a way as to incorporate current universal offers from antenatal care through to transitions to adulthood, to normalise the wider universal whole family support offer. Acknowledgement should be made to the difference between universal and intensive support, by basing the service offering away from Social Work.

### Provide Holistic Support

Family Support must be offered from a base point of trust and dignity with few barriers and a simple application process. The holistic offering should provide for timely access to multidisciplinary support. The capacity of the specialist services that are key to holistic support must be considered when seeking to expand family support service provision.



## Monitoring and evaluation to inform policy and action

Agree the primary information that would be helpful to collect to inform both individual services and systemic ongoing development at regional and national levels. This should include discussion on how best to evaluate the specific impact of family support for the child, in terms of social, emotional and cognitive development.

Guidance should be established around primary measures for data collection with examples of tools and resources to assist collection and analysis. Data collection, monitoring and evaluating should be kept simple and good practice shared. This wider data collection should be utilised to inform policy discussion and action going forward.

## Additional Funding

Funded school age childcare for the eligible families must be seen as a step on the way to an overall vision of universally funded school aged childcare. It should be free at point of access for families, as with ELC, to overcome the challenges parents face.

Family Support funding requires to be delivered on a 3–5-year timeframe as a minimum. Funding the Universal Family Support offer as described is additional to the more targeted family support provided from a social work perspective.

Additional funding is required to support the transition of children with additional support needs inclusively and seamlessly into safe, quality school age services – this might require additional staffing or access to specialist training. The significant increased recording and incidence of children with ASN, in particular those who are neurodiverse, makes this even more important.

Consideration needs to be given to whether funding of family support should be treated separately to funding of school aged childcare. Whilst combined funding has worked for Family Matters, this may be different community to community.

Work is required to define the financial requirement for delivery of the core role, with recommendations on how and where to access additional funding for community specific needs.

Local authorities should establish local level guidance illustrating tools and resources at local authority level that can be utilized to support delivery of the service and reduce service delivery budget. Given the level of variables impacting the financial performance, tailored support should be made available for the childcare sector to prepare financially to participate in and support the roll out of a statutory offer, with or without family support. A regular funding review point should be built in, based on the level of support required in each area.



## Potential for the future

This evaluation has highlighted the valuable impact of the Family Matters model and provided learnings around family support more generally.

The potential is there for Family Matters to scale up and deliver or support delivery across more and different locations. With either option, it would be important to work collaboratively with existing independent organisations where there are synergies in terms of culture and values, and where providers have good relationships with families and the wider community.

To support scale up, in addition to the appropriate funding, the following key elements are recommended:

### Define and follow principles.

Continuity in terms of the quality-of-service provision is encouraged using principles that are recognised and applied to universal family support. The principles outlined by in Holistic whole family support: routemap and national principles, Scottish Government, 2022 should be considered as the basis of this, with the principle of universality added. Emphasis should also be placed on the independent nature of the offering so that families are encouraged to engage.

### Identify core functions of a universal family support service.

Identify the needs of families in terms of a universal offering and how that translates to the delivery of core functions of preventative family support. It is important to note that not all services have to be delivered by the provider – but that it is important that they are well informed and connected within the community to be able to signpost effectively and work collaboratively with other providers.

### Instigate a cultural change exercise and communicate effectively.

Increase understanding around family support, outlining functions of family support and positive outcomes. General, preventative, and intensive support all have a role to play, but more understanding around preventative support and its normalisation through a universal offering would help to shift the stigma at times connected to family support.

### Agree a measurement tool.

Agreement around what positive impact looks like would assist with ensuring quality of provision and the outcomes as sought in Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026, Scottish Government, 2022 - would seem to be a sensible measurement that could be used by all providers.

### Acknowledge the importance of data collection.

Data collection and evaluation is a crucial function. This ensures that services are responding to what families really need and the information can be used to further develop and expand the service at a community level and a national level.

Appendix available electronically

- Appendix A** Family Matters Service Design Documents
- The Family Matters Pathway
  - The Referral Pathway
  - Indigo Access to Childcare – Referral Scheme
  - A Family Matters Poster
  - A Family Support Plan Template
  - Family Matters Action Plan

- Appendix B** Monitoring and Evaluation Tools
- Family Matters Data Tracker
  - Common themes and barriers tracker
  - Family Survey example

- Appendix C** Referral Documents
- Referral Form
  - Poster for Referrers

Supplementary material contained in separate document, available on request.

- National policy context
- Access to Childcare Fund
- Desk based evaluation of Family Support
- Overview of a range of Family Support Models
- Third Sector Family Support Learnings





the  
**indigo**  
group

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