



Out-of-school care for children living in disadvantaged areas

United Kingdom

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Background and policy context

Introduction

This report provides information on the development and current position of out of school care provision in United Kingdom, with a particular focus on provision in disadvantaged areas. The report begins with an overview of the socio-economic and policy context in which out of school care operates. Thereafter, it focuses specifically on the development and operation of out of school care in disadvantaged areas, noting how such services impact at a local level. The report provides key recommendations for the development of out of school care in disadvantaged areas and three case studies.

Socio-economic context

In mid-2005, the UK population was 60.2 million. The population is increasing, in part due to in-migration, with 9% of the total UK population now composed of people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Most in-migration is from the new EU Member States and this trend is expected to continue. The population is an ageing one, and by 2024 approximately half the population will be aged 50 years or over. At present the average age is 38.8 years. On the whole, the UK has experienced a period of relative economic stability during the past decade, with the vast majority of people of working age in employment and ever-increasing rates of owner occupation people owning their own homes.

However, an overall picture of economic prosperity should not detract from the large numbers of children who continue to live in poverty. The number of children living in poverty had more than doubled over the two decades prior to 1997 (when a Labour government took over after 18-years of Conservative government). In 1997, it was estimated that one in three children was living below the poverty line. The current government has pledged to eliminate child poverty by 2020. Whilst good progress with a more than 20% decrease in child poverty since 1999 has been made, there is still a long way to go to achieve this ambitious pledge. In 2004, one in four children lived in a lone-parent family - many of which did not have any adult in paid employment. Lack of employment is a key cause of poverty in the UK, as elsewhere and lack of childcare, including Out of School Care, can be a barrier to employment.

Disadvantaged areas

'Disadvantaged areas' is not the current terminology used in the UK, although it will be used here to ensure consistency with the other European national reports. Separate indices are used to identify areas of 'multiple deprivation' at the small area level for each of the UK's four nations (Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England). They are broadly similar, in that each national index is based on the concept that distinct dimensions of deprivation - income, employment, education, access to services, health and crime - can be identified and measured separately. The data are aggregated to provide an overall measure of multiple deprivation.

Although not strictly comparable, there are some patterns that emerge across the United Kingdom. The most striking one is that evidence of multiple deprivation is found predominantly in the largest cities. Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Newcastle all fall within the top 10% of the most deprived areas in England, and parts of London also experience high levels of multiple deprivation. Over 50% of data zones¹ in Glasgow City are among the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland. Other Scottish local areas with high degrees of multiple deprivation are urban zones adjacent to Glasgow,

¹ Scotland has been divided up into 6,505 data zones that on average contain 750 people.

for example, Inverclyde, West Dunbartonshire, and North Lanarkshire. In Wales, the most deprived areas are located in the south with areas in Cardiff and Swansea dominating. In Northern Ireland, deprived areas are more spread around the country, although areas in Belfast are the most deprived.

This is not to suggest there are no disadvantaged rural areas in Britain. All four nations contain rural areas in which there are real and serious problems. It is worth noting that there has been, and continues to be, an internal migration pattern within the UK in which rural people of working age move to the bigger cities. Thus, to some extent, urban problems are transplanted rural ones – in other words, there is a connection between rural and urban deprivation.

Out-of-school care in the United Kingdom

Expansion of out-of-school care services

In recent years, there has been a rapid expansion in out of school care provision in the United Kingdom. For instance, in England in the early 1990s there were 350 clubs, rising to 5,000 by 2002 (Department for Education and Skills, 2003c). The provision has expanded for several reasons – initiatives that form part of the agenda to help reduce poverty by enabling parents to take up employment and training opportunities, in response to parental demands for more out of school care and to facilitate social inclusion and child development.

During the 1990s, the UK government supported the expansion of out of school care through the ‘Out of School Care Initiative’ that provided financial and practical aid to new and existing services with the aim of creating new childcare places. The initiative was delivered through the local enterprise organisations in each nation. The rate of development varied across the country. It proved vital that to establish successful schemes, contacts across a range of organisations were required, with the ability to mobilise a variety of resources and networks. Many schemes were found to have a substantial need for advice, information and support in addition to financial support (O’Brien and Dench, 1996).

These developments were strengthened with the introduction of the 1998 Child Care Strategy in England, with equivalent counterparts produced for each of the other three UK nations. This 10 year strategy, complemented by funding from the New Opportunities Fund (now called the Big Lottery Fund), sought in part to address the lack of out of school care provision and to support its creation, development and long-term sustainability. Priority status for funding was accorded to services in disadvantaged areas. The Fund has had a significant impact on the sector, with a total of over 555,000 out of school care places created across the UK and over half of all out of school care clubs have been supported by the programme (Big Lottery Fund, 2005).

This recent expansion of out of school care across the UK has also been substantially assisted by other government subsidies: through direct grants to local authorities, tax credits to parents (on a means-tested basis), tax-exempt voucher schemes through ‘salary sacrifice’ schemes and specific funding initiatives targeting particular groups or areas experiencing disadvantage.

Improving the quality of out-of-school care

Between 2003-2006, the four nations in the UK updated their childcare strategies, with Scotland being the only one to produce a policy document specifically relating to out of school care - ‘School’s Out: Framework for the Development of Out of School Care’ (2003). The introduction of the new strategies reflected shifting priorities in terms of the development of out of school care across Britain, with an emphasis on improving the quality of services and increasing the life chances of children. In England and Wales, the strategy was accompanied by a Green Paper, with the resultant Childcare Act 2006 placing local authorities under a statutory duty to secure sufficient child care (including out of school care) for working parents and to provide information about the services in their area.

Each nation has a regulatory framework, requiring the registration and inspection of out of school care services. National Care Standards exist in each nation with registration and inspection undertaken in a way that ensures the standards are met. In England and Wales these standards are ‘minimum’ standards, and quality should not fall below the standard. In Scotland, the standards are applied differently. If a standard is not met, enforcement action will be taken by the Care Commission, often commencing with a legal ‘requirement’ to ensure the provider acts to improve the service.

Requirements for staff qualifications and training are also set out in the National Care Standards. Organisations in each nation in the UK have been established to complement the work of regulatory bodies to help improve access to training and staff development opportunities and to register particular groups of staff. For instance, from October 2006 the Scottish Council for Social Services required managers of out of school services to register with them and abide by a Code of Practice.

The regulatory framework has been less developed for some services than others. For instance, out of school care services provided only for children over the age of 8 have been less regulated than services for younger children in most areas, with carers requiring state 'approval' rather than registration. However, the Childcare Act 2006 will phase out this system in England and Wales and require registration for all out of school care providers. In Scotland, out of school care providers running services for children up to the age of 16 have had to be registered since 2003, with no distinction by age.

Development support is available to out of school care services in each of the four nations, through national voluntary sector organisations. For instance, in Northern Ireland, a voluntary sector organisation named Playboard is the main supporting body for out of school care providers. It provides advice and assistance with securing funding. It has a dedicated School Age Childcare Team, which is tasked with distributing and managing government funds. In Scotland, the Scottish Out of School Care Network provides research, information and development support to out of school care services. It has for instance, produced a step-by-step guide on how to set up an out of school care service called 'Step into Out of School Care: A start up guide to out of school care'.

Out-of-school care in disadvantaged areas

Out of school care services are provided by a diverse combination of the private, public, voluntary and informal sectors in the United Kingdom. There is a wide variety of provision, although the main types are: childminders and home based services, after school clubs, breakfast clubs, out of school learning clubs, holiday clubs and informal provision. Services are generally provided for children aged five to 14, although are mainly used by children under 12.

These have already been described in the United Kingdom's report on *Employment Developments in Childcare Services for School-aged Children* published in 2006 for the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and therefore, will not be explained in detail here. Rather, this section will focus on out of school care developments that exist in disadvantaged areas. Some initiatives are targeted at all children or those living in disadvantaged circumstances, rather than for areas as a whole. Children living in deprived areas will also benefit from these -- and so, they will be referred to where relevant.

The nature of provision in disadvantaged areas

The provision of out of school care is broadly similar across the UK, in that evidence of each type of service noted above can be found in each of the four nations. . However, the extent of each type of service can vary substantially between nations and local areas. The first point to note is that the greatest amount of provision can be found in areas of high economic activity and relative affluence, in particular the south east of England. Less provision is available in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland – even though they have a proportionately greater number of disadvantaged areas.

Second, the provider type varies according to area. In areas of disadvantage, it is more likely that the national or local government will either partly or wholly fund out of school care provision. For instance, in Scotland up to half of out of school services are run by local authorities in disadvantaged areas in comparison to one third in wealthier areas. This is in contrast to the situation in England where the majority of schemes are run by the voluntary sector, schools and private businesses.

In addition to agency-led provision, a good number of out of school care services are parent-led by a voluntary Management Committee or Board. Many of these clubs have developed from a group of parents being unable to secure childcare and joining together to develop provision for themselves and others (Big Lottery Fund, 2005). For instance, in Perth and Kinross in Scotland – a predominantly rural area - the Council manages 25 of the 32 clubs in the area with the remaining seven being run independently, managed by voluntary management committees of parents and carers.

Funding specific to disadvantaged areas

In addition to other forms of subsidy for out of school care outlined above, funding in the form of specific national government grants to support development of out of school care and other services to children in disadvantaged areas exists in each of the four UK nations:

England – The Children's Fund was created in 2000 and is distributed through 149 Children's Partnerships. It aims to identify at an early stage children and young people aged five to 13 at risk of social exclusion, and provide services to help them achieve their potential. It funds a wide range of services, including out of school care services, operating from a variety of locations ranging from schools to community centres, sports centres and other local venues.

A national evaluation of the Fund indicates that overall there has been a positive effect on children's well-being (Department for Education and Skills, 2004). For instance, Lancashire Children's Fund supported a one-year partnership between the Burnley Good Food Project and Burnley Borough Council Health Lifestyles to tackle childhood obesity. Piloted across four primary schools, the initiative was targeted at children aged between 9 and 10 years and was delivered

as an integrated package of food education, nutrition, physical activities and gardening. 149 children took part during the school day and 102 in after school activities. An evaluation showed that children who took part were more active in their everyday lives, consumed a healthier diet and were less likely to become overweight.

Wales - The Cymorth Fund builds upon a range of strategy developments affecting children and young people and provides targeted preventative support in the areas of family support, health, play, participation, information and child care. The funding is distributed through local Children and Young People Partnerships to support projects working with children and young people in disadvantaged areas.

For example, the Clybiau Plant Cymru Kid's Clubs was set up in 2006 (with Cymorth funding and match funding from the Big Lottery Fund and the European Structural Fund) to provide start up and ongoing support to out of school care services and to provide resources for activities. It employs over 60 staff members including development officers, support workers, trainers and project managers to enable support to over 1,300 clubs. It also aims to set up more than 100 new childcare clubs with 1,700 places over two years.

Scotland – The Working for Families Fund is an initiative set up by the Scottish Executive (national government) to assist parents to access training or employment by removing childcare as a barrier, including out of school care. Initially available in ten local authority areas, this has recently been extended to include another ten areas. Funding is targeted at parents on low income and those with other stresses in the household such as disability, drug and alcohol problems or mental health issues.

In North Lanarkshire, the fund has been used to enhance sustainability in the out of school care sector with the Council working in conjunction with North Lanarkshire Childcare Partnership to purchase places in out of school care and expand a sitter service.

Northern Ireland – The Children and Young People Funding Package was set up in 2006 with the aim of reducing social, health and educational differentials and give children and young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds the best start in life. The majority of the funding is going to schools to help develop the Extended Schools Initiative (see below).

An integrated approach to the provision of out-of-school care

Children's and integrated centres

In disadvantaged areas in many parts of the UK, there has been an emphasis on the development of a coordinated range of services provided at one site. These enable a 'one-stop' approach to the receipt of services by families, primarily with young children, living in disadvantaged areas. In England 'Children's Centres' and in Wales 'Integrated Centres' have been established, initially in disadvantaged areas but ultimately the objective is to enable access for all families with children. The Centres provide integrated education, care, family support, health services and support with training/employment for parents.

These Centres offer a wide range of early years and out of school care services to benefit both children and their parents, and have been funded using 'Sure Start' funding – an early years initiative targeting families in disadvantaged areas in the UK. Most Children's Centres will be developed from earlier Sure Start-funded settings and other existing providers – including nursery schools, primary schools and other local 'early years' settings operated by the voluntary and private sectors.

Integrated Centres in Wales are, like Sure Start Children's Centres in England, building on many of the programmes set up in the early stages of the National Childcare Strategy. They bring together, under the same roof, childcare, early years provision and a range of other family services in the most deprived areas of the country. By the end of 2004, there were seven centres in Wales.

The first integrated school to open in Wales was the Caerphilly Integrated Children's Centre in New Tredegar. This brought together a range of services to support children and their families' including a playgroup, nursery, breakfast club, after school club for four to 11 year olds, family services for example, baby massage and open access play in a 'garden of excellence'. The Centre is part of a wider £18.5million regeneration scheme for this disadvantaged area, which includes a new school and community wing and environmental works. The Centre was funded by the New Opportunities Fund with the Welsh Assembly Government funding the post of Centre Coordinator. High levels of community involvement and ownership have been identified as key factors contributing to its success.

The Centres can be used as a base to benefit children receiving other forms of out of school care. For instance, in many parts of England and Wales registered childminder networks liaise with Children's/Integrated Centres to achieve high quality home-based childcare for all ages. These networks can be set up by a local authority, employer, health trust or other organisation. Generally, no more than 40 registered childminders work together in a network. Supported by a full-time Network Coordinator, network members work to quality standards and registration requirements. Networks play a key role in workforce development and sustaining childminding in the local community, with over 70% of childminders saying they are more likely to remain in childminding because of network membership.

'Extended Schools Initiative'

Since 2002, in England and Wales, school governors have had the power to run schools on an 'extended schools' basis. This means they can develop the role of the school to become centres for the community by offering services and learning opportunities before and after the traditional school day, so extending it to operate between 8am and 6pm. The underlying ethos of the extended school is that a school as an educational environment alone is insufficient to tackle multiple disadvantage and social exclusion. There is no single funding stream to develop schools in this way and often multiple sources are used. Children's Centres and Extended Schools can operate on the same school site, and are perceived by families to be a centre that offers a range of services to all age groups, rather than being seen as two distinct projects.

One version of the model is for several schools to work in partnership to offer extended services. For instance, Solihull Childcare Cluster is a cluster of five primary schools in the West Midlands region of England. These schools working in partnership to offer year round early years and out of school care services for children up to the age of 12. The hub of the cluster is Coleshill Heath Primary School, which runs a full range of extended services, including, a day care and a before-school/after school club based on its premises. A child and family worker operates in each school to help manage and develop the services. The head teachers of the five schools meet regularly to discuss progress and development and share good practice, as do other staff involved in the extended services. The clubs are open from 7am to 6pm with places charged at an hourly rate. Older children pay slightly less. Nearly all of the children are from families that receive family tax credits.

In Northern Ireland, a version of the extended school model was introduced in 2006 and has been closely linked with 'Neighbourhood Renewal' areas. Neighbourhood Renewal is the UK government's strategy for regenerating disadvantaged areas. Funding allocation is based on criteria that children must live within or the service draws children from these designated areas of deprivation. Funding in Northern Ireland is provided by the Children and Young People Funding Package.

Other related initiatives and developments

Home-based out of school care

In recent years, there has been an expansion of home-based out of school services, mainly as a result of the recognition of the flexibility that these services can offer. In addition, regulations have changed and parents can now claim financial help towards the cost through the Working Tax Credit or childcare vouchers.

A carer working in the family's home can offer a range of benefits to families experiencing difficulties or disadvantage. For instance, it can be a cost-effective solution if there is more than one child in a family, it can meet the needs of families whose parents work irregular hours which in the UK is not unusual for workers on low incomes and it can be the most appropriate care for some children with special needs. The first such service in Scotland was set up in the late 1990s by a voluntary organisation, One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS), initially to provide lone parents with respite from their care responsibilities. This service has been used to develop others, with the government funding to advise and assist organisations wishing to set up similar services in Scotland.

Home-based care or 'sitter' services (as they are called in Scotland) have been a relatively recent addition to the range of out of school care services. The number of sitter services in Scotland is currently small – only seven were identified as part of an evaluation published in 2003 (Wilson, 2003). In contrast, in 2006, Northern Ireland introduced a national scheme called 'Home Childcarers', administered by local Health and Social Services Trusts. People wishing to become home carers must apply to, and be approved by the Trusts who will undertake a police check and an interview as part of the approval process. They must apply for renewal annually.

Out of school learning opportunities

There has been a considerable investment by national governments in the UK in out of school hours learning or study support organised at school level. This allows children to take part in a range of activities, such as homework and study clubs, sports and adventurous outdoor activities, creative ventures and information computer technology. All nations in the UK have this provision in a significant proportion of schools, in particular secondary schools.

Last year more than half of the pupils at St Colm's - a secondary school in Belfast, Northern Ireland – chose to participate in an out of school learning programme. The school serves a very disadvantaged area of Belfast, in which there are a disproportionately high number of lone parent families. From Monday to Thursday, two teachers offer after school vocational and non-vocational courses, as well as one-on-one tutoring to help students succeed in school. It has both academic and personal benefits for students, who find the experience motivational and perceive it to have positive impacts on their in-school experiences and attainments.

Genesis Wales

'Genesis Wales' is another project being part funded by Cymorth, with match funding from the European Structural Fund. It builds on an earlier Genesis pilot project in Rhondda Cynon Taff that enabled nearly 2,000 local people – mainly parents – to access free childcare including out of school care, advice and guidance in order to take up learning, training and work opportunities in the local area. Genesis Wales is a three-year project that aims to remove the barriers which parents face when returning to work or training, particularly in areas of economic disadvantage. The project offers free or subsidised childcare to eligible parents accessing training. It also increases the amount of good quality affordable childcare places across Wales through a package of support measures including increased childminder recruitment, and mobile childcare.

Impact of out-of-school care in the UK

There is only a small body of literature evaluating the impact of out of school care in the UK. A literature review of the available evidence is provided in the Department for Skills and Health research report RR446 (see bibliography for details). A wide range of research on out of school care has been undertaken by staff at an Out of School Care Research Unit based at the Department of Geography, Brunel University, Uxbridge.

Provision of out of school care services generally impacts positively on both children and their parents. It has been found that for children, there are social benefits. There can be greater opportunities for safe 'free play' than they would otherwise have access to due to busy family lifestyles, lack of resources at home or fears over safety in public places. Children are able to make new friendships with children of different backgrounds and ages, and also to strengthen existing ones. In one study, over half of respondents stated the service contributed to children's self-confidence and social skills, through the opportunities to make friends and try out new activities - benefits found to be particularly pronounced in disadvantaged areas (DfES, 2003c).

In addition, in disadvantaged areas, families report a wide variety of significant non-economic impacts to families. These include families using services to cope with immediate crises, such as health problems or bereavement or over the longer term to provide respite care. Out of school care staff are also perceived by families in these areas as less authoritative and more approachable than teachers. Families are therefore more likely to seek emotional and practical support and advice from them.

In order to be successful, and for families to engage with out of school care in disadvantaged areas where employment may for some not be the primary motivation for using out of school care, research indicates that services must take a 'bottom up' approach. Services need to be designed and delivered in a way that is sensitive to the needs and lifestyles of families in disadvantaged areas, with user consultation and feedback seen as integral to the service (DfES, 2004b). Without such an approach there is a danger that families will not use services intended for them.

A clear benefit for parents is the ability to access employment as a result of their children having access to good quality, affordable, accessible out of school care. One third of families have reported an increase in income as a direct result of using out of school care provision. However, as discussed in deprived areas this is not always the primary motivation. Indeed, in some deprived areas, there is evidence of more affluent parents using out of school care services located there. Although this can have a number of benefits, for instance, providing much needed income for the service and enabling a wider social mix of children, it can make it more difficult for low income families living nearby to access the service.

There is little evidence relating to whether out of school care alone has a positive impact on educational attainment, although small scale studies suggest many teachers believe out of school care can generate an improvement in behaviour at school. Further, an evaluation report published in 2001 covering schools in England and Scotland operating out of school learning opportunities demonstrated that children who participate in such activities do better than would have been expected in academic achievement, attitude to school and attendance at school (MacBeth et al, 2001). Breakfast clubs have been shown to increase attendance level at school and there is anecdotal evidence that they have a positive impact on behaviour and performance in the classroom.

Sustainability of out-of-school care services

The vast majority of clubs manage to sustain operation in the medium to long term, with 80% of clubs funded by the New Opportunities Fund (now the Big Lottery Fund) continuing to run after several years. However, certain types of provision are not always viable. To illustrate this, breakfast clubs have high staffing costs and overheads, sometimes

combined with low numbers using the service. However, an alternative to the market-led model has been adopted in Wales for breakfast provision. Seeking to improve the health of children, the Welsh Assembly Government has made funding available to local authorities to provide free breakfasts in all primary schools on a discretionary basis. By autumn 2007, it is estimated that over 40% of primary schools in Wales will offer this service to their pupils.

Sustainability is a particular issue in disadvantaged areas, with more clubs likely to use grant funding or local fund-raising as a way of generating income than is needed in out of school clubs in more affluent areas. Many out of school care clubs struggle to survive using parental fees alone, particularly in disadvantaged areas. For instance, CASC Childcare Project in Castlemilk, a disadvantaged part of Glasgow in Scotland, struggles to fill all its after school club places due to the cost of the service. They have capped the price at £50 a week, which provides only one-third of the income required to be financially sustainable. The remainder is obtained through the Childcare Strategy and Community Regeneration Fund.

Some clubs are beginning to take a more business approach to the way they deal with fees, and many now run systems requiring parents to pay monthly through their bank. Some try to spread the cost by working out a total annual cost and then charging a monthly average, so parents do not have to pay more during holiday times. This can assist families to budget more easily.

Clubs in rural areas often find it hard to attract sufficient numbers of children to make group care provision financially viable. This may mean the out of school club having to provide transport or extend hours to allow parents to travel to collect their children (Big Lottery Fund, 2005). To ensure the provision remains available, in some rural areas, local authorities provide the majority of out of school clubs for example in Perth & Kinross and Fife Council in Scotland).

Lessons learnt and conclusions

Summary

In the past decade, there has been a rapid expansion of out of school care provision across the four nations of the United Kingdom. On the whole, the out of school care sector has expanded to enable parents to take up employment and training. However, it has also proved useful for families in terms of providing respite and to promote the wellbeing of children, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Since the 1990s in the UK, there has been an increasing governmental emphasis on childcare policy -- including out of school care. Initial efforts focused on ensuring availability of provision. More recently, policy and funding have concentrated on improving the quality and range of out of school care offered to children.

To summarise, the overall aim for the development of out of school care in the UK has been based on the following principles:

- choice and flexibility;
- availability;
- quality;
- affordability;

At government level, there have been variations in the particular emphasis given to the development of out of school care provision in each of the four nations. For instance, in Wales, the government has supported the availability of free breakfasts for primary school children whilst in Northern Ireland; the government has set up a national scheme of home childcarers. Scotland has, as yet, to develop the 'extended school' model to any significant degree compared to the other nations.

Lessons Learned

Based on evidence gathered from the development and provision of out of school care in disadvantaged areas in the UK, significant lessons emerge about the best ways of encouraging the sustainability of services in disadvantaged areas. There are clearly other ways that out of school care services can be encouraged to develop, for instance, through the provision of start up and ongoing advice and guidance and through good management and leadership. However, as these will benefit all out of school care services, not just those in disadvantaged areas, they are not considered here.

- Out of school care should aim to improve the overall well-being of family members. Services should not simply aim to provide a service for working parents, but rather seek to aid family well-being as well. For instance, out of school care can benefit certain parents, such as lone parents or those who are ill, when used as a respite from caring. Additionally, staff should be trained to recognise, and respond to, the additional needs parents may have for advice, guidance or emotional and practical support.
- A range of services available to family members and others living locally, provided alongside out of school provision, can enable an integrated approach to local service provision and enhance a sense of community and civic pride in areas of disadvantage. Such an approach can also provide a 'one stop' approach to services, and prevent the need for multiple visits to attend appointments, meetings, classes and services.

- In order to encourage take up, out of school services should be based on consultation and engagement with families. This is particularly pertinent for older children. Providers need to ask families what type of services and activities they would like, and design services to meet their expressed wishes. Evaluation of the use of services should also include the views of children and parents in accordance with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Out of school care in disadvantaged areas is likely to require some form of public or employer subsidy directed to the provider. For instance, services can be provided on a cluster basis, so that those operating in prosperous areas can subsidise those in disadvantaged areas.
- At the service level, places can be made available to families living out of the area who can afford to pay fees, but with places reserved for those living locally. This allows providers to maximise income from fees whilst also enabling the provision of a service to families in disadvantaged areas.
- Ways should be found to ease the fee burden to families with low incomes. For instance, fees could be free or capped for those on no or low incomes, or increase incrementally for those just returning to work. Fees could be charged monthly rather than as one large payment per term, or spread evenly across the full year, to avoid paying more during holiday periods.
- Out of school care in disadvantaged areas should be flexible to enable access to families whose needs are not met by the usual range of provision. Sitter or home carer services can provide such an approach.

Conclusions

In the United Kingdom, out of school care provision has expanded to meet increased demand. It is largely a success story demonstrating that a broad societal agreement about the need for, and value of, out of school care can be translated into a widespread reality in a relatively short period of time.

A mix of service delivery models and providers means out of school care can be sustained across the UK and is not solely dependent on government subsidy. However, there are particular challenges in areas of disadvantage, with fewer parents in employment or in employment that has good pay, terms and conditions to provide funding. In such areas, the ethos of out of school care services tends to be more welfare driven and holistic in orientation, with services frequently directed towards the family not just the child. Services in disadvantaged areas often require some form of subsidy to continue, from the government, the provider or other parents. Services can be run successfully in disadvantaged areas and indeed have been found to offer an important and well valued resource for families who experience economic and other forms of hardship.

Case study 1: England

Goddard Park Community Primary School

Introduction

Operating in a deprived urban area in England, this primary school offers a wide range of early years services, ‘wrap-around’ out of school care for children and community-based services. It provides various integrated facilities run in conjunction with other statutory services, such as health and social services, and has official ‘children’s centre’ status from the English government.

Area

The School is located near the centre of Swindon in the eleventh poorest Ward in the south west of England. This places it among the 20% most disadvantaged Wards in England. Thirty per cent of children receive free school meals, an indicator of the level of poverty in the area. A significant number of the families in the area are single parent families. The out of school care provision at Goddard Park Community Primary School is the only one of its kind in the area. Several registered child minders also operate here.

Development and description of the service

In 1999, the school, with considerable volunteer help from parents, established a pre-school service. Shortly afterwards, out of school care services were set up using start up funds from the Training and Enterprise Council. These services were run by the school’s teaching assistants and consisted of a breakfast club and after school club.

In 2001, Goddard Park applied for ‘early excellence centre’ status from the government. Following a visit from the Inspectorate, this status was awarded in April 2003. Consequently, the School gained capital and revenue funding to cover existing early years provision and the before and after school clubs, as well as to begin to offer daycare and lifelong learning. A new wing was built to house day care, offer integrated provision for 0-11 year olds and facilities for adult learners.

The out of school service comprises ‘wrap-around’ care for up to 24 children aged between four and 11 years of age. It is provided from 8.00am – 8.40am, offering breakfast, and from 3pm-6pm. A charge of £2.50 is made for attendance in the morning, and up to £7.00 for the full afternoon/evening session. A range of activities are provided in the after-school club, including art and craft, puzzles and games. A snack is provided to the children without additional charge.

The out of school care service is available to parents with child at the school and also to parents living outwith the immediate area. It is self-financing in that it is paid for through fee income rather than from direct government subsidies. The ability of parents to claim Child Tax Credit from the government is vital in enabling them to use the service, for instance, low-income parents can reclaim up to 80% of their costs.

In 2004, the school became one of the first three ‘Children’s Centres’ to be located in Swindon. These centres offer a range of services to children including child care, holiday clubs, family support and outreach, a positive parenting course, adult education, speech and language therapy and help obtaining employment.

As a community facility, the school aims to provide a ‘learning campus’ for all families in the community, not just its regular pupils. Thus, Goddard Primary has a single governing body that covers both the School and Children’s Centre - and all the extended services offered through each of them. An Extended Services Governors’ Committee has been created to monitor the work and related activities. Government funding is channeled through the local authority. The

local authority then has a Service Level Agreement with the Governors that sets out both funding levels and services to be provided.

The campus is expanding its community services all the time. For example, a cyber café used by parents and the local community is about to include family ICT sessions as well as an initiative to ensure wider use of laptops for pupils in Primary five and six. A full time community worker is to be employed to work with local young people developing street football teams.

Ethos of the service

The primary intention of the out of school service is to enable parents to work, as well as to attend employment training, further education or family/parent initiatives run by Goddard Park Community Primary School. Additionally, the School has sought to expand its provision to include a wide range of preventative services (e.g., health promotion schemes) to engage with children as early as possible, and to work in conjunction with the local community to offer valuable resources from which all residents can benefit (such as safety-related training).

Evidence of impact

The School has a focus on continual improvement through close monitoring and evaluation. The emphasis is on raising standards and engaging with the community. Regular audits are undertaken to identify progress and suggest areas requiring further attention. The senior leadership team also meets weekly to monitor progress. Their decisions and plans are 'data driven'. Accordingly, the School has three data points a year that they share with parents.

Ofsted – the governmental body that inspects education services in England and Wales (and child care services from April 2007) - recently evaluated Goddard Park Community Primary School's out of school care services. The evaluation was very positive. For instance, Ofsted commended the school on its links with the community and noted that the out of school care services had promoted better liaison with parents. Leadership and Management were considered 'outstanding'.

Comments received by the inspectors encouraged the school to undertake qualitative research with the families. This research revealed that parents who use the service have increased in confidence and are facilitating learning in their children – for instance, by listening to them read on a regular basis.

Children are felt to have access to high quality care and to enjoy themselves. The out of school care service enables children to become better learners in a number of ways. The provision of breakfasts enables children to not have hunger interfere with applying themselves to their classwork. The Ofsted inspection also highlighted that the breakfast club has reduced lateness and improved attendance among pupils. In the after school club, children develop cognitive skills beyond those cultivated during school classes.

There are social and educational benefits, too. Children gain more experience of interacting and engaging with a range of children and adults of different ages. No children have been excluded from the Goddard Park Community Primary School for over three years – highly unusual for schools in England's disadvantaged areas.

Lessons learnt

There is a consistent demand for the after school service, and there is a waiting list which indicates the need for such services. The community nature of the school has helped more residents in the area to recognise, and use, a range of services sometimes scorned or avoided by parents in disadvantaged areas. As the result of such factors as good leadership and teaching, high expectations, behaviour management techniques and extended provision, children are engaging better with the curriculum and increasing proportions of children are improving academically.

Out of school care provision in disadvantaged areas requires government subsidy to make it affordable for parents. Where wages are low, the provision of Tax Credits of up to 80% of out of school care costs to parents is vital. The mixture of a market led approach combined with government support directly to parents is felt to have worked in terms of sustaining and expanding quality provision of out of school care.

Scope for transferring the initiative

The model has been a successful one that is expanding continuously at the School itself. A multi-agency approach around a prevention agenda appears to be working well with vulnerable children and their families in this disadvantaged area. Goddard's success has inspired these agencies to roll out similar initiatives elsewhere. A 'one stop shop' approach (whereby a wide range of services are provided in one location) has proved popular with families. The model of using a school to have an integrated approach to early years education, out of school care, lifelong learning, health and family support services, is one that could be emulated elsewhere.

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Case study 2: Scotland

Childcare 4 All

Introduction

This service was set up in 2004 and operates across Aberdeenshire; a large rural area in northeastern Scotland. The fundamental goal is to support childcare providers to include children with additional support needs in their services. Childcare 4 All works with a wide range of early years and out of school care providers, including out of school clubs, nurseries and child minders. Workers provide practical assistance and advice to such providers on how best to interact with, and assist, children with additional support needs. A mobile resource vehicle also offers equipment, toys and resources on loan to providers who work with children with additional support needs.

The local area

Aberdeenshire covers 2,437 square miles in the north east of Scotland, representing 8% of Scotland's overall territory. The landscape varies from mountainous Cairngorms, through rich agricultural lowlands to rugged coastline. Traditionally, it has been economically dependent upon the primary sector (agriculture, fishing, forestry) and related processing industries. Within the last 30 years, the emergence of the oil and gas industry in the North Sea -- and the development of the service sector -- have broadened Aberdeenshire's economic base, leading to rapid population growth. There is low unemployment, with many workers commuting to Aberdeen City (a different local authority) for work. However, geographical access to services can be problematic for many, reflecting its mountainous and coastal rurality. Deprivation tends to be concentrated in five communities within this local authority region.

Development and description of the project

Capability Scotland (a national non-governmental organisation) and the Aberdeenshire Childcare Partnership worked together to set up Childcare 4 All in response to an expressed need by local mainstream childcare providers seeking to extend the reach of their services to meet the need of all members of the community. Capability Scotland is a leading provider of flexible, person-centred services for children and adults with a range of needs and disabilities. Three-year funding was obtained from the Big Lottery Fund and the Aberdeenshire Childcare Partnership to set up and run the project. The aim of the project is to increase the number and quality of childcare places for children with additional support needs in Aberdeenshire.

Capability Scotland lead and manages the project Following their induction and training, support workers were able to both help children and provide training to staff members in mainstream childcare situations. Induction training included epilepsy awareness, disability equality, autism awareness, safety issues and assistance, as well as effectively managing challenging behaviour among these children.

A mobile resource vehicle was purchased and stocked with equipment, books and resources which can be driven to where childcare services operate. This means that childcare providers can borrow various equipment and toys to ensure that they have an opportunity to test out the relevance of a particular piece of equipment before committing finances to large, often expensive pieces of equipment. It also ensures that a variety of stimulating items are available to all for short term loan on rotation. Additionally the resource is stocked with items to raise disability awareness amongst children who are not disabled.

Childcare 4 All supports the inclusion of children with additional support needs, from birth to age 16. Thus, it covers both pre-school and out of school care across disadvantaged areas of Aberdeenshire. Children using the service may have a range of needs including autism, Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), challenging

behaviour, cerebral palsy and epilepsy. Families can be referred to the service by agencies, professionals or through self-referral

A support worker works with staff at the identified childcare provision on a reducing dependency basis to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence of staff to support the child. Following a period of assessment and review, the support worker will withdraw from the mainstream service, whilst maintaining support, advice and guidance from a distance to staff on an 'as needed' basis.

Ethos of the service

The service is committed to equality of opportunity, recognising that all children have a right to access mainstream services and be adequately supported whilst doing so. This has been enshrined in the Additional Support for Learning (Education) (Scotland) Act of 2004. This law started being implemented in November, 2005.

Equally, parents of children with additional support needs have a right to employment, and should not be prevented from working, if they so choose, because of the need for out of school care. A key rationale behind the service is to enable parents to return to, or continue to, work or study. The project also facilitates greater inclusion within society by allowing children with different needs, behaviours and interests to find out more about each other and to socialise together. As one parent notes: *'My daughter is now starting to mix more with her peers, rather than spending time alone'*.

Evidence of impact

To date, the support workers have supported a total of 54 children and 69 providers. The mobile resource unit has been used by approximately 2,000 children, including over 170 with additional support needs. An evaluation of the project has been undertaken by Aberdeenshire Childcare Partnership (one of the funding bodies). As part of this evaluation, the Childcare Partnership wrote to families and providers that had used the service and asked for their views of the service.

The findings show that parents feel more confident that their child could now access quality out of school care and had greater opportunities to mix with other children. Some reported that their home life also has improved -- particularly where the project had assisted in dealing with behaviour problems and had introduced activities, strategies and techniques that also could be used at home. Providers, too, appreciated the support that had been given to them, and reported being more aware of disability issues and more able to take other children with similar needs in the future.

Key findings and lessons learnt

As a model for supporting the inclusion of children with additional support needs in mainstream childcare and out of school care, the project has been a successful one. Indeed, Childcare 4 All has expanded and now operates similar services in other parts of Scotland (see below). Children, parents and providers all report finding the experience of participating in this project beneficial. Children and parents have access to life opportunities that they may otherwise not have had -- children to meet other children and experience new activities and parents to take up employment or training.

The initial three-year funding is due to finish at the end of February 2008. Already, Aberdeenshire Childcare Partnership has agreed to fund the project for a further six months (which will enable to project to run until the end of August 2008). Longer-term sustainability of the project is being considered and pursued -- and it is hoped that a long-term funding source can be obtained.

Scope for transferring the initiative

This capacity building model has extended to other parts of Scotland, including Inverclyde, Edinburgh City and Perth and Kinross, albeit with minor variations according to differing local partnerships and needs. In Edinburgh City, for instance, Childcare 4 All has supported a greater proportion of children with autism, as it is run in conjunction with the Lothian Autistic Society.

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Case study 3: Northern Ireland

Sunnylands Primary School

Introduction

For several years, Sunnylands Primary School has operated a range of out of school care services in conjunction with Barnardos, a key children's non-governmental organisation. Initially, programmes were offered to parents with crèche facilities provided. Thereafter an after school club was introduced and a breakfast club was opened for children five days a week.

The local area

The Primary School is located in a long-established housing estate in Sunnylands, a Ward in Carrickfergus Borough Council in East Antrim, on the coast to the north of Belfast in Northern Ireland. Carrickfergus is home to 39,200 people, many of whom experience significant disadvantage in terms of income, employment, housing and social welfare. During the 1980s the town experienced a period of economic decline with the closure of several key industries and has struggled to re-establish itself. It ranks among the 20% most disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland.

Traditionally, Sunnylands Primary School was the only primary school in the area offering out of school care although several others are now in the process of developing facilities using funding from the Government's 'Extended Schools' initiative (see below).

The development of out-of-school care

In response to the high proportion of children and families in need of support (over 50% of the vulnerable children known to statutory services in Carrickfergus attend the school) the Headteacher developed links with Barnardos. Using European funding -- and with Barnardos acting as lead agency -- two full-time project workers were employed and based in the school. A needs assessment was conducted, including ascertaining the views of parents and children, and a programme of activities established. The programme was available free of charge to families in the local area and beyond. Activities included 'Parenting Matters' classes for parents with children in various age groups, behaviour management courses and infant massage. A crèche was also provided for pre-school age children to facilitate attendance by carers.

Building upon the success of these early programmes, further funding was obtained to set up an after school club three days a week. The club runs between 2-3pm for four to seven year olds and 3-4pm for 7 1/2-11 year olds. The purpose of the club was to raise the confidence and self-esteem of the children through experiencing a range of recreational activities, such as arts & craft and games. In addition, help was given with homework. The children also had access to the school's ICT suite. More recently, a French club and a fitness/dance club have been added as after school activities. A breakfast club has been set up to offer children a nutritious start to the day with a small charge being made for this service.

Programmes continue to be run in addition to these clubs.

For instance, funding was used to establish a bereavement counselling service for children. The service operates on one afternoon per week and is run by a trained counsellor. A special programme was run for Japanese mothers and their children. This aimed to assist their integration into the community following their temporary relocation in the area as a result of their husbands' work. The school also ran a Pyramid Plus club targeting Year Five children who were not as self-confident as their peers.

Funding sources have altered with much European funding coming to an end. Money now is provided through two main national government initiatives – one to reduce social, health and educational differentials of children in disadvantaged areas and the other to extend out of school care provision ('Extended School's' initiative).

Ethos of the out-of-school care service

In contrast to much out of school care provision in other parts of the UK, the primary objectives of services offered by Sunnylands School have been to support the welfare of families, encourage a positive parenting role, develop the self-esteem of children and improve children's life chances. Thus, the key purpose is not purely to facilitate employment of parents, but rather to work with the whole family to overcome structural barriers caused by deprivation, civil unrest and poor educational experiences of many parents. This approach has resulted in a holistic, needs-led service developing and expanding incrementally over time.

Evidence of impact

The after school service is relatively new, having only been in operation for several years. It has not been objectively evaluated to date. Initiatives that aim to tackle entrenched deprivation and marginalisation in society are unlikely to produce immediate and clearly identifiable results. However, teachers and others working with the families who use the service have observed:

- an increased sense of confidence and wellbeing amongst children and their parents;
- parents going on to further training or taking up voluntary work subsequent to using the programmes; and,
- a positive change in the attitudes of many of the children towards their education and work.

Parents who attended the courses were asked to complete an evaluation of the programme. Parents identified various changes in their attitudes and behaviours:

- I am calmer (49 references from 55 parents)
- I shout less (44 reference from 55 parents)
- I communicate better (41 references)
- My approach has changed (39 references)
- I am more assertive (33)
- I have more skills (31)
- I play with them more (29)

The subjective impression of those involved with Sunnylands Primary School is that families benefit greatly from the out of school services run. They also report that the children themselves enjoy the programmes on offer. This is confirmed by the strong demand for available spaces from students.

The Sunnylands staff members have been effective in drawing other services into the school, with each service further extending the capacity for parent support. It has established an effective working partnership between the school and Barnardos. It is hoped that in the future the partners can work together with other services to create a potential model

for a ‘full service school’ approach, i.e., one in which the whole community comes together to pursue common social and educational goals. This could remove barriers to learning and teaching, as well as raising social capital.

Key findings and lessons learnt

Out of school care services adopting a welfare ethos – as exemplified by Sunnylands Primary School -- must work *alongside* families, supporting parents in their role as the primary carers for their children. Providers should operate as partners in the process of assisting child development and avoid assuming total responsibility for the task. Providers should recognise the need to work holistically to strengthen family care and support.

Approximately one in five children at Sunnylands Primary School has an identified special educational need and many parents have had negative memories of their own childhood experiences of education. By providing services that families have indicated *they* want – as well as by providing first-rate out of school experiences that children want – Sunnylands has engendered a much more positive view of school in this disadvantaged community. That is an important result.

Scope for transferring the initiative

The fundamental success of the Sunnylands out of school care service is perceived to rest upon the provision of services that families have chosen and that children enjoy. This is particularly pertinent in areas of high deprivation where parental engagement can be difficult to achieve. Such a participatory practice could work elsewhere if services are developed using a ‘bottom up’ approach. Overly bureaucratic approaches with imposed objectives and unchosen activities are far less likely to succeed in areas of high deprivation.

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