# The impact of out of school care: A qualitative study examining the views of children, families and playworkers

John Barker, Fiona Smith, Virginia Morrow, Susie Weller, Valerie Hey, Judith Harwin

# The impact of out of school care: A qualitative study examining the views of children, families and playworkers

John Barker, Fiona Smith, Virginia Morrow, Susie Weller, Valerie Hey, Judith Harwin

The Out of School Care Research Unit
Department of Geography
Brunel University
Uxbridge
UB8 3PH
01895 274 000

The Child-Focused Research Centre
Brunel University
Osterley Campus
Isleworth, Middlesex
TW7 5DU
0208 891 0121

**Acknowledgements**

**Table of contents**

**List of Tables**

**Abbreviations used throughout the report**
EYDCPs     Early years development and childcare partnership
NOF        New opportunities fund
OOSC       Out of school care
SEN        Special educational need

**Executive summary**

**Social impact on children**
- The research indicates that out of school care has a generally positive social impact on children. It provides a safe, dedicated and well equipped space for children's 'free play'. For many respondents, these opportunities were unavailable elsewhere, due to busy family lifestyles, lack of resources at home (such as equipment or space) and fears over safety in public space.

- The opportunity to establish new friendships and to strengthen existing ones was seen by children and parents as a key positive impact of out of school care. Children were able to spend time with friends, and also make new friends from a wide variety of backgrounds, ages and sometimes schools, as well as benefiting from relationships with playworkers.

- Over one half (59%) of respondents stated that the service contributed to children's self confidence and social skills, through the opportunities it offered in terms of making friends and trying out new activities.

- However, some parents believed out of school care made no difference to the level of their child's self confidence. Parents are also keen to stress that it is difficult to isolate the impact out of school care makes compared with other factors, such as school and family.

- A minority of parents, especially those with younger children, were concerned about tiredness. A minority of children were concerned that attending the club meant they had less time to spend with family or friends.

**Educational impact on children**
- Whilst most clubs do provide space to complete it, few children (16%) carried out their homework in the club. Generally, children, playworkers and some parents saw homework as a task to be completed at home, under the guidance of parents not playworkers.

- Over half of parents (56%) stated that their children learn through play, and 55% stated that the club helped to foster a more positive attitude to school.

- However, many children and parents also thought out of school care had no effect on children's attitude to school. The parents and children taking part in this research did not believe that out of school care has a direct impact on educational achievement.

**Economic and non-economic impact on families**
- Most parents (67%) were using out of school care whilst they are in paid employment. Over one third (36%) of respondents reported a positive labour market impact, most of whom state these changes would not have occurred without the club.

- The service gives parents greater peace of mind during the working day which helps them to concentrate at work, and reduces the need to rush home from work. Some respondents also commented that the service enabled them to make future career plans.

- There are also a number of ways in which the service offers practical support to parents. For some, it provides regular respite care or time out for families and their children, whilst for others it provides a short term solution in times of crises.

**Minority ethnic children and their families**
- Minority ethnic families reported similar impacts from out of school care as other families, in terms of friendships, relationships with playworkers, opportunities to play, social skills and self confidence and learning through play. Minority ethnic families reported additional

benefits, as some clubs attempt to respond to different cultural needs and also promote wider cultural diversity.

- Some clubs made a concerted attempt to reflect the cultural needs of specific groups and encouraged multi-culturalism through a variety of strategies. These included employing playworkers reflecting the ethnic background of families, promoting diets and festivals from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds, and purchasing equipment reflecting the ethnic diversity of users.

**Children and families in areas of deprivation**
- Out of school care has a significant role to play in helping families in areas of deprivation. One particularly significant impact was providing resources, equipment and a safe place for children to play. Families also report positive economic impacts from using the service, and it is clear out of school care can have a role to play in lifting families out of poverty. Almost one quarter of the whole sample (22%) were benefiting from the WFTC.

- Families also reported a wide variety of significant non-economic impacts to families in areas of deprivation. These included families using the service to help cope with immediate crises, such as health problems or bereavement, or over a longer term to provide respite care. Playworkers were also seen as less authoritative and more approachable than school teachers, and provided both emotional and practical support and advice regarding a range of issues and other services.

**Children with special educational needs and their families**
- Out of school care has a wide range of potential benefits to children with special educational needs (SEN). It can help to widen children's social circles and offer them more time to play in a well resourced environment. Respondents stated it can also have a positive impact in terms of improving self confidence and social skills. Integrated care also has a positive impact for both SEN and non SEN children, who gain from their experiences and friendships with SEN children. The service provides valuable respite care which benefits parents and siblings.

**Barriers to access**
- Whilst the service has a clear and positive impact on the lives of parents and children in general, this research suggests its greatest potential impact is upon minority ethnic families, families in areas of deprivation and families of children with special educational needs. However, there are a number of significant financial and non-financial barriers which prevent these families from accessing and benefiting from the service:

    - This small scale study identified at least two ethnic minority groups (Somali and Bangladeshi families) who are not accessing the service. The research identified both financial barriers (many were non-working families and others refugees with no financial support to access the service) and non-financial barriers (the club may not be seen as an appropriate resource for specific ethnic minority groups).

    - In some areas of deprivation, services are used predominantly by more affluent families. The financial realities of running a club without on going funding means that despite additional funding streams for clubs in deprived areas, access to the service often rests on ability to pay, rather than need. This is compounded by the fact that non-working families (who represent a significant proportion of users in areas of deprivation who could particularly benefit from using the service) cannot access the same financial support (e.g. WFTC) as working families. In some cases, providers' policies requiring full time attendance is also a barrier.

    - The research suggests for special educational needs children there are still many financial and non-financial barriers to use. Many clubs remain inaccessible to

wheelchair users and children with other disabilities, and many clubs lack specialist equipment or specialist trained staff. In many cases, these resources are absent due to financial limitations. Some respondents suggested that special educational needs provision requires on going financial support.

- Therefore, whilst these groups have the most pressing need, they are often the least able to pay the market rates for services. Furthermore, although this research suggests the service has its greatest potential positive impact in supporting these groups, they may often be the most excluded from accessing it.

**Children aged over 8**
- It is debatable to what extent clubs for 4- 11 year olds are responding to the needs of children aged over 8. These children are often in a minority, and have less children of their own age to mix with. Children aged over 8, especially boys, are generally less positive about their experiences of the service, and less positive about relationships with playworkers, who are sometimes seen to lack the training and confidence to facilitate their needs. Playworkers with a youth work background seem to be more effective in the ways they work with children aged over 8.

- Thus, whilst the research identifies a wide number of potential impacts of out of school care, it is debatable to what extent older children benefit from these impacts. Whilst many parents still require care for children aged over 8, many also question whether out of school care in its current form is appropriate.

- The research also observed an example of good practice for services for older children aged 11-14. However, rather than parental employment motivating parents to send their children to the club as is usual in most schemes, the young people themselves opted to attend because of the opportunities it afforded them.

**Schools**
- Schools are becoming increasingly significant sites for the location of after school clubs. Some schools are recognising the added value of out of school care, including an increase in potential applications to the school, and fostering a more positive relationship with school.

- This research has mapped out the complex dimensions which indicate a variety of possible relationships between school and club. Whilst some clubs remain relatively autonomous with distinct philosophies, administration, staffing and day to day practices, others tend to reproduce those that operate within the school day. Whilst neither model is preferable, there needs to be a positive, productive and communicative relationship between school and club to maximise the potential impact of the service.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Policy context

Since 1997, there have been a broad range of Government programmes which have sought to target new services towards children and young people, as part of the Government's drive to eradicate child poverty. A significant minority of children and young people (up to 4 million of the 11 million children in England) are still facing multiple deprivation and social exclusion in many different forms, including poverty, educational achievement, health, housing and criminal activity (Aldgate and Statham, 2001). Particular groups of children and young people at risk of social exclusion may include minority ethnic children, children of lone parent families, children with SEN and refugee children. These children and young people face many barriers to their emotional and physical well being and participation in education, culture and society. For some families, this perpetuates the cycle of deprivation across generations. Thus, a number of individual programmes have been developed in response to these growing concerns, including (but by no means limited to):

**Surestart-** an inter- departmental programme to ensure the physical, intellectual and emotional development of young children aged 0-3, especially those disadvantaged, to ensure they reach their full potential. This has been the cornerstone of the drive to tackle the cycle of poverty and deprivation among young families.

**The Children and Young People's Unit** has been developed in order to join up and co-ordinate the wide variety of policies affecting children and young people, with a particular emphasis on policies which help to raise children and young people out of social exclusion. A 3 year programme focuses on preventing children aged 5-13 from suffering the effects of poverty and exclusion.

**Out of School Hours Learning**- creating a wide range of regular educational activities outside of formal school hours, in up to half of all secondary schools and one quarter of primary schools.

**The National Childcare Strategy** including the out of school hours childcare initiative, aiming to provide out of school childcare (hereafter OOSC) for up to 1 million children aged 4-14. The programme also has a particular emphasis upon the development of OOSC for families at risk of social exclusion and within areas of deprivation. The programme has recently been extended, to provide additional support and places for OOSC in the most deprived wards in England.

## 1.2 Children's participation

With these new policy initiatives comes increasing recognition that children and young people are not just the benefactors of services but also stakeholders. Thus, an increasing number of policy initiatives are consulting with children and young people over the development of services, and creating mechanisms for them to participate in decision making. **The Children and Young People's Unit** promotes the active involvement of children and young people as citizens in the design, delivery and evaluation of activities and services. Thus, the unit aims to ensure not only that children and young people are consulted, but that consultation mechanisms are effective, sustained over time, and are promoted with wider strategic planning and development of services. These principles have been adopted in the development of **the Local Network Fund.** Individual programmes such as **the National Childcare Strategy**, and the **National Standards** for out of school care contain guidelines requiring early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) to consult with children over the development of services.

**1.3 Aims of the Project**

Working with families currently using the service, the primary aims of this project were to:

- *Gather qualitative evidence with children and young people which highlighted and explored their views of the OOSC services they use.*

- *Investigate with children and parents some of the possible impacts that OOSC may have upon children.*

- *Explore the diversity of needs and experiences across a variety of groups of children, including older children, children with special educational needs, minority ethnic children and children living in deprived areas.*

- *Collect background information about the families of these groups of children.*

The research conceptualises children as the primary users of OOSC. Although the possible impacts may be diverse and wide ranging, it is difficult and problematic to establish a direct causal relationship between OOSC and educational and non-educational impact upon children. Rather, this research aimed to explore in depth with children and parents the wide range of perceived benefits as suggested by them. To provide a framework for the research, we drew upon the potential impacts as suggested by Munton et al (2001a). These include focussing upon the impact on children's social skills, self esteem, attitudes to learning, creativity and problem solving skills and behaviour. Furthermore, as children are not an homogeneous group, it was also important to recognise the diversity of children's experiences of OOSC and to explore how childcare needs and expectations vary amongst different groups.

## 2. Review of the literature

**Summary**

- OOSC has witnessed unprecedented expansion since the 1990s as a response to the increasingly significant role women with children play in the labour market and as a means to combat child poverty and social exclusion. As such it has been supported by a range of Government initiatives that provide start up grants for new schemes and develop existing provision.

- The profile of families using OOSC is diverse but lone parents head a significant proportion of families. The majority of families use OOSC to support parental employment, education and training whilst a significant minority use schemes to provide social opportunities for children and young people.

- There are several barriers to uptake of services including: a lack of available places, cost, opening hours, a lack of local, accessible provision, a lack of information, concerns over quality.

- Research on childcare both within the UK and internationally suggests that possible impacts of OOSC on children include: the opportunity to play and make new friends in a safe environment, the development of social skills and social competence, improved self-confidence, potential improved mental health outcomes, a reduction in problem behaviour within school, more positive relationships with schools and possible benefits in terms of raised educational attainment. However, it must be stressed that much of the research highlights the problematic nature of trying to prove a direct causal link between OOSC and any of these potential impacts due to the number of other significant variables impacting upon a child's life.

- OOSC has a clear positive labour market impact. Research suggests that as a result of using the service, up to 50% of families have been able to increase the number of hours worked, and up to 22% of parents have entered employment. One third of families report an increase in earnings as a direct result of using OOSC. These labour market impacts appear to be most significant among lone parents, families from minority ethnic groups and families with low incomes.

- OOSC provides peace of mind, and reduces the need for unplanned absences from the workplace. Parents also report increased levels of concentration and job satisfaction. Labour market additionality is high and more than half of all parents currently using the service anticipate a negative labour market impact if their club were to close.

- OOSC also supports parents by providing respite care for children and by enabling parents to carry out other responsibilities.

**2.1 The development of out of school care**

*2.1.1 The changing nature of the labour market*

Across the UK, women with dependent children are playing an increasingly important role in the labour market (Statham et al, 1996, DHSS et al, 1999). Over two thirds of women return to paid employment within one year of the birth of their child, and 78% of women with primary school children are economically active (Millar and Ridge, 2001). Consequently, demand for formal childcare services is increasing (La Valle et al, 2000, Woodland et al, 2002). However, the lack of accessible and affordable childcare is still a major barrier to the employment of women with dependent children (Sanderson and Percy-Smith, 1995, Smith and Barker, 1998, 2000b, CELTEC, 2000).

*2.1.2 The expansion of out of school care*

In response to these labour market developments, there has been an unprecedented expansion in the provision of OOSC, from 350 clubs at the beginning of the 1990s, to an estimated 5000 in England in 2002 (Smith and Barker, 2000a, SQW and NOP, 2002). OOSC is a diverse service providing both formal childcare requiring forward booking and payment as well as open access drop in services for children (Mayall and Hood, 2001) with differing emphasis on care, play, education and study support.

The primary focus of this literature review is OOSC, although relevant evidence from the other forms of out of school services will also be considered where appropriate. OOSC provides safe, adult supervised childcare before and after school, and during the school holidays, to groups of children aged 4-14 in settings explicitly offering creative play opportunities. The service currently has as estimated capacity of 170 000 places, with approximately 325 000 children attending OOSC in England alone (SQW and NOP, 2002). Table 1 overleaf provides a summary of key features of the service:

**Table 1: Key characteristics of out of school care**

| Feature | Notes |
|---|---|
| **Providers** | Most significant is voluntary sector provision, accounting for one third of schemes in England (Smith and Barker, 2000a). Schools and private businesses are increasingly significant providers, whilst the remainder are run as community businesses, or by local authorities, or employers (ibid). |
| **Regional variations** | Provision is most developed in urban areas, most notably the South East of England, with lower levels of provision in Wales and Northern Ireland (DHSS et al, 1999, Statham et al, 1996). |
| **Cost** | Pricing policies vary markedly, both between and within localities (Smith and Barker, 1999b). Price may depend as much upon local wage rates and perception of quality, as much as the cost of providing a place (Gatenby, 1998, Moss et al, 1998). Initiatives such as the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) can provide financial assistance for childcare costs. |
| **Patterns of attendance** | The average occupancy rate is approximately 78% (Gatenby, 1998), although a significant minority of clubs are full, with up to 19% having waiting lists (Smith and Barker, 2000a, Callender, 2000). Most users are part time, an average of 3 days per week (Adamson and Jones, undated). The vast majority of users are aged 4-11, with 14% of clubs also providing services for children aged 12 or over (SQW and NOP, 2002). |
| **Premises** | Almost one half (49%) of clubs are located on school premises, with the remainder using community centres, nurseries, and youth centres (CEDA, 1999a, Gatenby, 1998). Only 8% of schemes have purpose built premises (Smith and Barker, 2000a). The majority of clubs (51%) receive subsidised rates for premises, whilst 14% pay nothing. Only one third of schemes pay the full market rate (Gatenby, 1998). |
| **Government funding initiatives** | The expansion of OOSC across the UK has largely been fuelled by initiatives encouraging the development of new schemes and places, most notably the Out of School Childcare Initiative (1993-96), and the New Opportunities Fund's Out of School Hours Childcare Initiative (1999-2003). The Programme funds projects which provide good quality childcare, meet the needs of parents, and fit in with local strategic planning (NOF, 1999). |
| **Sources of income** | Parent fees are the main source of revenue, providing between 52% and 100% of total income (O'Brien and Dench, 1996, Dench and O'Regan, 1998). However, up to 90% of clubs cannot be sustained solely through parental fees, and are supplemented by start up and ongoing grants from statutory agencies, employers and charities (Training and Employment Agency, 1999, DHSS et al, 1999). Fundraising activities organised by clubs are often small scale and provide a low percentage of total income (CEDA, 1999b). |
| **Training and support** | Clubs also receive support, training and advice, most significantly from EYDCPs, local authorities, and schools (Gatenby, 1998, CEDA, 1999b). Training, support and advice are offered on a variety of topics, including staff development (notably practical childcare training for playworkers), marketing, personnel, financial management, customer care and business planning, and counselling (SQW, 1995, Sanderson and Percy-Smith, 1995). |
| **Parental involvement** | Local organisations including schools, community groups, charity groups and parents' groups, are often involved in the establishment of OOSC, in many cases in response to parental demand (Sanderson and Percy-Smith, 1995, SQW and OSCRU, 2002). However, most parents are not directly involved in the day to day management of clubs (Sanderson and Percy-Smith, 1995). Those that are involved have high levels of commitment, participate in fund raising and administration, and have often previously been involved in schools or another community based activity (SQW, 1995, CEDA, 1999a). |
| **Reasons for use** | The majority of families using the service (estimated between 67% and 84% of parents) are in employment, training or education (SQW 1996, Adamson and Jones, undated). Over one third of families report income gains, although higher income families are more likely to report income gains and larger gains (SQW and OSCRU, 2002). Estimates suggest that between 20% and 40% of families use the service to provide social opportunities for their children or respite care (Smith and Barker, 1999b, Petrie, 1999b). |

Existing research has identified a number of barriers to the use of OOSC. Table 2 below summarises these barriers:

**Table 2: Barriers to using out of school care**

| Barrier | notes |
|---|---|
| Demand and supply | Some areas have greater levels of provision than others (La Valle et al, 2000). Up to 24% families have reported difficulties in finding a local childcare vacancy in the past year (Smith and Barker, 2000b, Woodland et al, 2002). Furthermore, 19% of clubs in England and Wales have waiting lists (Smith and Barker, 2000a). |
| Cost | Cost is a barrier for up to two thirds of parents that have been prevented from using the service (Smith and Barker, 2000b, La Valle et al, 2000, Petrie, 1999b). |
| Opening hours | Up to one third of parents identify the lack of appropriate opening hours as a major barrier to childcare (Smith and Barker, 1998, 2000b). A significant minority of parents (up to 10% of current users) require OOSC beyond '9-5' (Dench and O'Regan, 1998, La Valle et al, 2000). |
| Location | Up to 29% of parents that have been prevented from using childcare services identify location as major barrier (Smith and Barker, 1998, 2000b). Location is a particularly significant issue for rural communities, as distance is often a barrier to the use of OOSC. |
| Information | Lack of information has been identified as a common barrier to the uptake of childcare services (Moss et al, 1998, Smith and Barker, 2000b). |
| Quality | A minority of families (between 5-9%) identify quality as major barrier to using OOSC (Smith and Barker, 1998, 2000b). |

### 2.3 Children's perspectives of out of school care

There is a small but growing body of literature concerning children's experiences of OOSC (Millar and Ridge, 2001). The evidence suggests that most children enjoy OOSC (SQW, 1995, Petrie, 1999b), whilst 86% of children say they like spending time in OOSC (Smith and Barker, 1999c), for the following reasons as identified in table 3.

**Table 3: Children's views of good quality out of school care**

| Reasons for enjoying the service | notes |
|---|---|
| Spending time with friends | For many children OOSC provides the opportunity to make new friends (Gladwin, 2001), and is one of the few opportunities to mix with children of different ages (King, 2000). For children in rural areas, OOSC may provide the only space after school in which they can spend time with friends outside school (Smith and Barker, 2001). |
| Activities | Children clearly state that they enjoy the choice of activities in OOSC (Gladd and Cable, 2000), particularly when they can try new activities not available at home (Smith and Barker, 1999c). Children's favourite activities include making things, drawing and painting, playing games, computers and sports (Smith and Barker, 1999c, Gladd and Cable, 2000, King, 2000, Gladwin, 2001). Only a minority of children (between 6 and 33%) do homework at the club (Smith and Barker, 1999c, Gladwin, 2001). |
| Outdoor activities, and trips offsite | Most children state the service provides access to a safe, outdoor play environment (Gladwin, 2001). Children also enjoy the opportunity to go on offsite trips to places they would otherwise not go to (for example the countryside for urban children and the city for rural children) (Smith and Barker, 1999c, Gladd and Cable, 2000, Gladwin, 2001). |
| The physical environment | Children state that the physical environmental of the club is important, and enjoy spending time in clubs which are clean and bright, comfortable and cosy, with appropriately sized furniture, and criticise clubs that are drab, uninspiring and uncomfortable (Smith and Barker, 1999c, Gladwin, 2001). |
| Playworkers | Good playworkers should help out, be kind, cheerful, funny, playful and fair, whilst bad playworkers are bossy, shout, and are cross, grumpy or boring (Smith and Barker, 1999c). Significantly, many boys prefer male playworkers, whilst girls overwhelmingly prefer female playworkers (Gladwin, 2001). Boys comment that many (female) playworkers need to develop skills at facilitating boys' play (Smith and Barker, 1999c). |
| Rules | Children identified the most important rules as respecting all, being safe and playing safely, and no violence or abuse (Gladwin, 2001). In a minority of clubs, children are involved in making club rules (Smith and Barker, 1999c). |

In summary, children have been involved in previous research to identify what they perceive to be a good quality club. Children's perceptions of good quality highlight activities, relationships with staff and other children, the physical environment, rules and behaviour, and participation (Gladwin, 2001).

## 2.4 Evidence of the impact of out of school care on children

There is a very small body of literature on the impact of OOSC in the UK. However, there is wider literature available, both in the UK focusing on pre-school and out of school learning support, and internationally on pre-school and OOSC. This section thus brings together this diverse set of literature to provide some indication of the kinds of impacts that OOSC *may* have upon outcomes for children, both in the short and longer term. However, as Munton et al, suggest, the question should not be about whether OOSC does impact upon children, but rather *''under what circumstances' can it have a positive or negative effect*?' (Munton et al, 2001a, p43).

### 2.4.1 Safety

One of the most significant benefits of OOSC is that it provides a safe place for children to play. Ninety one per cent of parents stated that children benefit from the safe, caring environment (Sanderson and Percy-Smith, 1995, SQW, 1995). When using OOSC, children are not exposed to other potentially dangerous situations in streets, on estates or in parks. Research from the US suggests that children and young people not attending after school activities in deprived areas are at greatest risk (Pettit et al, 1999).

### 2.4.2 Play opportunities

Over two thirds (70%) of parents state that clubs provide play opportunities that children could not otherwise experience (SQW, 1995), and indeed children themselves value OOSC because of the unique play opportunities on offer (Smith and Barker, 1999b). These opportunities are particularly significant in rural areas, since there are often few alternative play opportunities and facilities for children (CEDA, 1999a, Smith and Barker, 1999a).

### 2.4.3 Social skills and social competence

Through encouraging friendships, OOSC can be seen to improve children's social skills and social competence (Howes et al, 1994). There is evidence linking attendance of various forms of day care, breakfast clubs, and OOSC to an improvement in children's social skills and social competence (Lamb et al, 1988, NICHD, 1998). Children attending formal OOSC have higher levels of social competence than those not attending (Pettit et al, 1997, Vandell, Henderson and Wilson, 1988). OOSC provides social stimulation for children, allowing children to mix in non-school environments, and helps combat isolation (CEDA, 1999a, O'Brien and Dench, 1996). Howes et al 1994 also discuss the positive impact on children who develop friendships and social skills to communicate with adult playworkers.

### 2.4.4 Self confidence

In increasing social skills and social competence, researchers have identified that OOSC can help to boost self confidence. Use of breakfast clubs has led to a reported increase in self esteem, and independence amongst children (UEA, 2002), whilst parents perceive that children become more confident from using an out of school club (King, 2000).

### 2.4.5 Mental Health

There is a dearth of information on the relationship between childcare and children's health. The only relevant research identifies that children of women suffering from maternal depression are more likely to suffer their own neurosis and depression. Childcare for these children improves mental health outcomes for both mother and child (Bagley, 1988).

### 2.4.6 Behaviour

Many studies have focused upon the outcomes of OOSC on behaviour (NICHD, 1999). Small scale research in the UK suggests that 40% of teachers perceive that OOSC improves children's

behaviour (King, 2000). Attendance at breakfast clubs is also seen to improve behaviour, both at home and at school (UEA, 2002). Breakfast clubs are seen by parents and teachers to smooth the transition between home and school (ibid). Research on after school activities in the US also suggests that children attending formal after school activities have fewer subsequent behavioural problems (Pettit et al, 1997). This leads Munton et al to suggest:

*'At least for certain groups of children, the availability of supervised after school activities can reduce the risk of poor adjustment and incidence of problem behaviours'* (Munton et al, 2001, p42)

### 2.4.7 Building more positive relationships with schools
OOSC is seen to help build a more positive relationship with school for individual children and wider communities. This role is seen to be especially significant within disadvantaged areas where greater educational attainment may be encouraged (O'Brien and Dench, 1996). In one study, between 25-45% of parents thought OOSC made children more motivated to go to school (King, 2000). Moreover, breakfast clubs were seen to encourage attendance and punctuality at the beginning of the school day (UEA, 2002). In King's research, 55% of teachers thought that attendance at out of school clubs raised educational motivation and confidence. Teachers also state that attendance at breakfast clubs increases concentration through the direct effect of eating breakfast (UEA, 2002).

### 2.4.8 Raising educational achievement
There is considerable debate as to whether OOSC has a positive effect on educational attainment. The evidence is mixed. Posner and Vandell (1999) found measurable differences in academic performance attributable to out of school provision (Posner and Vandell, 1999). In other research teachers have stated that they believe attending OOSC may raise achievement (King, 2000). However, Munton et al concluded having reviewed the relevant literature:

*'none of the studies found evidence of direct links between after school care arrangements and academic performance'* (Munton et al, 2001a, p42).

Moreover, the literature also identifies how the impact of OOSC may vary between different groups of children, and children living in different environments. The section below considers how the impact may vary between the four different groups targeted by this research project:

### 2.5 Impact on older children
There is little evidence concerning the impact of OOSC on older children. Only 14% of clubs provide services for those 12 or older (SQW and NOP, 2002). Existing research has identified that older children (especially those aged over 8) perceive OOSC as failing to meet their particular needs (Smith and Barker, 1999c, Gladd and Cable, 2000). This research has suggested that playworkers need to develop more appropriate skills for working with older children and facilitating older children's play (Smith and Barker, 1999c).

There is more evidence regarding the impact of out of school hours learning for older children. Fifty per cent of secondary schools, one third of primary schools and nearly 50% of special schools have taken part in the New Opportunities Fund's Out of School Hours Learning Programme, with its particular focus on schools in disadvantaged areas, and disaffected young people (NFER, 2002, Mason et al, 1999). The evaluation of formal study support schemes suggests it benefits all children who take part, and raises educational attainment at GCSE level (Mason et al, 1999, MacBeath et al, 2001). In addition to this, study support also has a favourable effect on attitudes to school, and school attendance, as well as raising self esteem, confidence and motivation (Mason et al, 1999). Particularly significant to its success is the choice and voluntary nature of the schemes, and the services' informality, with children and young people engaging with adults in different ways to mainstream school (MacBeath et al, 2001, NFER, 2002).

**2.6 Impact on minority ethnic children**
Minority ethnic children represent 10% of British children but constitute 20% of all children in poverty (Millar and Ridge, 2001). There is only limited evidence of the role that OOSC plays in the lives of minority ethnic families and it needs to be stressed that there is significant diversity amongst minority ethnic groups in terms of their use of childcare provision (DHSS et al, 1999). There are many cultural and financial barriers to access, including cultural reluctance to use formal childcare and issues of language (Smith and Barker, 1999b, Petrie, 1999a). African-Caribbean parents have low expectations about how OOSC may be of use to black users (Petrie, 1999b). Moreover, parents perceive that anti racist practices have not been developed adequately (Petrie, 1999b). This finding is backed up by other research which identifies that in many clubs, equal opportunities policies are not being implemented fully (Smith and Barker, 1999b). However Smith and Barker also identified some examples of good practice in OOSC, including the celebration of events and festivals, the food provided and activities facilitated to reflect the ethnic diversity of the area (ibid). Furthermore, it is estimated that over one quarter of clubs (28%) now have a minority ethnic member of staff, an increase from 10% in the 1990s (SQW and NOP, 2002).

**2.7 Impact on children in areas of deprivation**
Up to one third of children in Britain are growing up in poverty (Millar and Ridge, 2001). Poverty and social exclusion are seen to have significant outcomes on children's lives both in the short and long term, across a variety of physical, cognitive, behavioural, emotional and economic outcomes. Children living in poverty are more likely to suffer low self esteem, do less well at school, and are more likely to suffer unemployment, low pay and poor health in adulthood (Ermisch et al, 2001, White and Murphy, 2002). However, there is also a diversity of experiences of families in poverty, mediated by class, employment, family structure, ethnicity, number of siblings, ill health and disability (Ermisch et al, 2001, Millar and Ridge, 2001).

Affordable, accessible and adequate childcare is key to helping families out of poverty (Millar and Ridge, 2001). The *Out of School Hours Childcare* programme directly focuses on key areas of disadvantage, in order to help combat social exclusion and provides up to 3 years of funding for clubs in the top 20% of deprived wards in England (NOF, 1999).

However, families on low incomes are less likely to be using childcare services than families on higher incomes (Smith and Barker, 1998, 2000b). Those in low paid occupations are most likely to be unable to afford childcare (Statham et al, 1996). The Working Families Tax Credit is seen as a tool for enabling more parents on low incomes to use childcare to improve their material circumstances. There is, however, very little research examining how OOSC impacts specifically upon those children in poverty or at risk of social exclusion. Most research evidence concentrates upon the impact upon children through improving the financial circumstances of families.

**2.8 Impact on children with special educational needs**
There are a variety of OOSC services for children with special educational needs (hereafter SEN), including integrated care, and specialist services (Davis, 2001). However, parents of SEN children often report difficulties in accessing appropriate childcare (DHSS et al, 1999). Only 16% of OOSC clubs in England and Wales have children with SEN attending, whilst less than half of clubs are accessible (Smith and Barker, 2000a).

OOSC enables parents to address the particularly acute challenge of juggling economic activity with caring for children with SEN (Millar and Ridge, 2001). However, many parents of SEN children use OOSC for respite care, thus providing emotional rather than economic support (Millar and Ridge, 2001). Thus, these services provide valuable 'time out' for parents, children and their siblings (Smith and Barker, 1999b). Attendance at clubs provide parents with respite care, whilst also providing enjoyable social interaction with children (Davis, 2001). Many parents would like their SEN child to spend more hours in OOSC, but are often limited by funding, or over subscription of good quality OOSC services (ibid).

Furthermore, integrated OOSC provides a good example of introducing both SEN  and non SEN children to difference and diversity (Davis, 2001). Children with SEN are very positive about spending time in a club stating it provides them with an opportunity to have fun and take part in similar activities to children with no SEN (ibid).

## 2.9 Some qualifying points

### 2.9.1 Identifying the impact of out of school care rather than other variables
Although many studies identify outcomes with particular pre-school, daycare or after school care services, many also recognise that these are but one variable in children's experiences. There are many other predictors of outcomes for children, such as maternal education, cultures of mothering, family and school (Wadsworth, 1985, NICHD 1999). These may influence outcomes more strongly than any form of childcare (Lamb et al, 1988, Rigby et al, 1999). Proving that OOSC is the sole determining influence on these outcomes is problematic to say the least (Munton et al, 2001a, p53).

Furthermore, investigating the impact of OOSC also requires a consideration of the various types and features of OOSC services available at present (Munton et al, 2001a). Research needs to consider the number of hours per week a child attends the service, and any other childcare arrangements they may experience. Furthermore, as Posner and Vandell (1999) comment, it is not adequate to simply consider whether a child attends OOSC, but what children do in these settings.

### 2.9.2 Quality
Quality of childcare has consistently been identified as an influence on predictors of outcomes (NICHD, 1999). Thus the quality and appropriateness of OOSC will affect the extent to which it impacts upon children, parents and families (Pettit et al, 1997). The type of provider, its aims, resources, facilities, and staff, as well as issues of accessibility, environment, and parental need will influence possible outcomes of the service (Munton et al, 2001a, p43). However, in England, only 16% of clubs have taken part in formal quality accreditation schemes (Munton et al, 2001b). Despite clubs' lack of involvement in quality assurance, parents are very positive about the quality of schemes. Surveys identify that between 96% and 76% of parents think their childcare is of a very good standard (Woodland et al, 2002, SQW and OSCRU, 2002).

### 2.10 The impact of out of school care on parents

### 2.10.1 Parents, employment and the labour market
An examination of the impact of out of OOSC on children needs to consider the wider impact of the service upon families and communities. Benefits to parents through for example, increased incomes, may well have indirect positive impacts upon children. Table 4 illustrates the different economic impacts identified by existing research:

**Table 4: The economic impact of out of school care on parents**

| Impact | Notes |
|---|---|
| Extent of positive labour Market impact | Between 26%-50% of parents experience a positive labour market impact as a result of using OOSC (SQW, 1996, O'Brien and Dench, 1996, SQW and OSCRU, 2002). The greatest potential labour market impact is within inner city areas, and for parents who have been using a club for at least a year (O'Brien and Dench, 1996). |
| Entering the labour market | Between 6%-22% of parents state they have entered employment as a direct consequence of using OOSC (SQW, 1996, SQW and OSCRU, 2002). Others (6%-25%) have entered training or education (SQW, 1996). Labour market impacts are most significant for lone parents, minority ethnic parents, and low income families (CEDA, 1999a, Hutchinson, 1999, SQW and OSCRU, 2002). |
| Increasing hours of employment | Many evaluations suggest that parents already in employment, rather than those unemployed, are most likely to benefit from OOSC, by increasing the number of hours in paid work (Sanderson and Percy-Smith, 1995, Adamson and Jones, undated, p8). Between 21%-50% state they have increased the number of hours in employment as a direct result of the service (SQW 1996, Dench and O'Regan, 1998, CELTEC, 2000). |
| Income gains | 17% of families using OOSC are accessing the childcare component of the WFTC (SQW and OSCRU, 2002). Lone parents are twice as likely as other parents to make use of WFTC (McKay, 2000). Over one third (35%) of all families report increased earnings, an average of which is more than £82 per week (SQW and OSCRU, 2002). However families earning over £20,000 per year are more likely to report income gains, as well as reporting higher income gains (ibid). |
| Reliability and stability | The vast majority of parents (82%) state that OOSC provides peace of mind, and 75% state that it is more reliable than other forms of childcare (SQW, 1996). The majority of parents state that OOSC reduces the need for them to rush away from employment or training, and a significant minority (27%) state it has resulted in less unplanned absences from work (Adamson and Jones, undated). |
| Building more positive relationships at work | Over half of parents (54%) state that using OOSC has resulted in a more positive attitude to work and has improved concentration (SQW, 1996, O'Brien and Dench, 1996). Approximately 30% of parents report increased levels of job satisfaction (Adamson and Jones, undated, O'Brien and Dench, 1996) and more than half (54%) state that using OOSC has enabled them to make future work/ training plans (SQW, 1996). |
| Labour market additionality | At least two thirds of parents state that they would not have experienced a positive labour market impact without OOSC (SQW, 1996, CELTEC, 2000). Furthermore, without OOSC between 8%-21% of parents currently in employment would be forced to discontinue working, and between 20%- 33% would reduce their hours of employment (Adamson and Jones, undated, Dench and O'Regan, 1998). Only 20%- 30% state it would have no impact upon their employment patterns (SQW 1996, Hutchinson, 1999, CELTEC, 2000). |

### 2.10.2 Other impacts on parents
Successive evaluations throughout the UK report very high levels of parental satisfaction with OOSC. Between 69% and 90% of parents are very happy/ satisfied with their OOSC service (Adamson and Jones, undated, CELTEC, 2000, SQW, 1996, Hutchinson, 1999).

OOSC also supports parents in a variety of activities, such as carrying out wider caring responsibilities or voluntary work (Sanderson and Percy- Smith, 1995) and providing respite care for children in need (SQW, 1995, Moss et al, 1998, CEDA, 1999b).

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Defining a sample

The researchers worked with EYDCPs to identify six clubs considered to be examples of good practice. It was important to research high quality clubs to ensure that the research explored the fullest potential impact of the service. In order to reflect the diversity of OOSC (see section 2.1.2) the six clubs chosen represented clubs from a variety of providers, funded by a number of sources, and using a variety of premises. Furthermore, the six clubs were also chosen to reflect the target groups. Due to the short time scale of the research, our visits were restricted to after school clubs, since there was no major holiday provision during the period of data collection.

**Table 5: The Six Sample Clubs**

| Location | Organisational structure | Children with SEN attending | Age range | Minority ethnic children attending | Inner city/ suburban/ rural | Indexes of deprivation (out of 8474)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inner London | Local authority | minority | 4-11 | Mainly minority ethnic | Inner city | 376 |
| Outer London | Voluntary committee | none | 4-11 | Mainly minority ethnic | suburban | 2264 |
| South West | Voluntary committee | minority | 4-11 | Some minority ethnic | Inner city | 1407 |
| East of England | Voluntary committee | minority | 4-11 | Mainly white | rural | 5125 |
| East of England II | school | none | 11-14 | Exclusively white | rural | 5341 |
| South East | Voluntary committee | many | 4-14 | Mainly white | suburban | 1890 |

*where 1 is most deprived, 8474 is least deprived

### 3.2 Ethical considerations

Parents were informed by playworkers that the research was taking place in the club, leaflet and a leaflet was provided for all parents (see appendix 1) asking them to discuss the project with their child, and asking them to inform playworkers if they did not wish to take part. A leaflet was also provided for children (see appendix 2). Researchers discussed the project with volunteers, and answered any questions they may have had. Children chose their own pseudonyms, and the clubs taking part are not identified in this report. Photographs and drawings were returned to children, and informal feedback was provided to clubs as soon as possible. Priscilla Alderson's (1995) work on ethical research practices with children informed this process. Researchers undertaking the data collection had been cleared by Criminal Records Bureau checks.

### 3.3 Fieldwork with children

The researchers spent a week in each of the participating clubs. All children from whom we had both parental and child's consent were invited to take part in the following methods:

**Table 6: Research Methods with Children**

| Method | notes |
|---|---|
| Photography | enables children to highlight the activities and places in the club the children liked/ disliked |
| Drawing | Activities to explore children's perceptions of the service and how it impacts upon their lives |
| Group discussions | To record children's views about their out of school club and its impact upon their lives |

Within the given time constraints, this enabled as many children as possible to take part in the research. These methods highlight the importance of moving beyond traditional adult dominated

research methods toward more children focused ones and the need for multiple methods to engage with as many children as possible. Each method focused on the themes of exploring children's *experiences* of the club, their perceptions of the club's *quality*, and exploring the possible *impacts* it may have upon their lives (see appendix 3 for copy of group discussion schedule).

**3.4 Fieldwork with parents**

i) A questionnaire survey (appendix 4) was given to parents of children attending the six sample clubs to ascertain why they use the service, their views on it and to provide socio- demographic information about the families taking part in the research. The survey was also designed to ascertain parents' perceptions of the impact of the service on their lives and those of their children**.** In total 144 surveys were distributed and 74 returned, giving an acceptable response rate of 51%.

ii) In addition to the survey, the researchers also collected in depth accounts of parents' perceptions of OOSC through both group discussions and individual interviews. The interviews were themed (see appendix 5 for interview schedule) to identify:

a) description of the role of the service within child's/ parents daily life
b) parents evaluation of child's experiences of the service
c) impact of the service upon the lives of children/ parents/ families

A total of 55 parents took part in these discussions

**3.5 Fieldwork with playworkers and other club staff**

To provide a context to each club and to give some information about the purpose and running of each club, an interview was carried out with at least one playworker (usually the playleader) from each club (see appendix 6 for interview schedule). In addition, two headteachers/ deputy headteachers were also interviewed to explore their perceptions of having a club located within their school.

**Table 7: Summary of sample size**

|  | Number involved |
| --- | --- |
| Children- photography | 80 |
| Children- drawing | 45 |
| Children- group discussions | 50 |
| Children- total | 120* |
| Parents- interviews/ discussions | 55 |
| Parents- questionnaire survey | 74 |
| Playworkers/ playleaders | 6 |
| headteachers | 2 |

*some children took part in more than one method

**3.6 Analysis**

The final stage of the research involved the analysis of the various forms of empirical data. The questionnaire survey was analysed using SPSS to provide a profile of the families taking part in the research. The qualitative data (interviews, drawings and photographs) were analysed thematically, according to the objectives of the research and the impact themes as suggested by Munton et al (2001a). Each of the six members of the research team independently analysed the qualitative data to ensure reliability amongst the different members of the project.

**4 The impact of out of school care on children**

**4.1 Friendships with Children**

**Summary**
The opportunity to establish new friendships and to strengthen existing ones is seen by children and parents as a key positive impact of OOSC. Children are able to spend time with their friends, and also make new friends from a wide variety of backgrounds, ages and sometimes schools. Whilst all groups of children benefit from this impact, it is seen to be particularly significant for only children and children living in rural areas.

Across the six clubs, children, parents and playworkers clearly identified friendships as a positive impact of OOSC. There were a variety of ways in which respondents discussed how OOSC can impact upon children's friendships. Firstly, children of all ages and all backgrounds and parents clearly stated that one of the most significant impacts of OOSC was that it enabled them to spend more time with their existing friends:

*" yeah, (its) better… I get to play with my friends longer" (Beckham, 8, Inner London)*

*"He comes to play with his friends... its just an opportunity for them to play with their friends, that's all" (parent, East of England II)*

Secondly, children can make new friends. Eighty five percent (n=62) of parents responding to the survey stated that the club enabled children to make new friends:

*"I'd been friends with her... but when I got to (the club) like I was friends with her even more... cos we've grown closer together and we're real close now. She tells me quite a few funny things and this one, god she's just a load of trouble.." (Jane, South West, 10)*

Thirdly, children were able to play with children of different ages and make new friendships. Parents and playworkers observed that children often have few opportunities to socialise with children of different ages outside of their own class in school, and OOSC enabled them to make friends with older and/ or younger children:

*"yes, they've definitely made friends with people in different years, different classes, that they're not that aware of at school, that they've met here" (parent, East of England)*

*"they're not segregated like at school and you've got your different age groups, haven't you? Obviously but here they're all joined together. They're all...together. It's not like we've got an activity for a young child, an activity...for the older ones. I try to get them all to interact together" (South West, playworker)*

One of the clubs in the sample collected children from five schools, and thus these children had the chance to make friends with children from other schools. In another club, users came from both the local first school (aged 4-9) and middle school (aged 10-13):

*"some of my old friends like when I used to come to (the first school), some of my old friends come here when I was in (the first school) so I feel happy to see them um.. my old friends again" (Samantha, South East, 10)*

*"Gets to mix with other children socially... mix with everyone, not just those who they know in their school" (South West, parent)*

Fourthly, children described making friends at OOSC who they also play with at home or in school:

*"some of them (new friends) are in our class, and yes, I have made new friends and now I play with them in school" (Jodie, Inner London, 8)*

*"all mixing together and then often they get invited to people's houses cos they've made friends here as well.. " (Outer London, playworker)*

*"well.. (I made) quite a lot...lots of new friends… I met one of my best friends here" (Darren, South West, former user, 11)*

However, not all children reported that these friendships extend beyond the club. For some, the practical opportunities to play with new friends outside of the club were limited, and some children appeared to have different sets of friends in different places.

Whilst all children and parents discussed the positive impact of OOSC in providing opportunities for children to make new friendships, this was seen as a particularly important impact for two specific groups, children with no siblings, and children in rural areas:

*"(My son) is an only child who gets very bored at home. He doesn't have other children to play with at home so I take him out to play so the club gives him to play with other children (Outer London, parent).*

*"we live out in the country and there are not enough children for him to play with" (parent, South East)*

### 4.2. Relationships with playworkers

**Summary**
Playworkers are seen as a valuable and integral part of OOSC, who provide added value to the service. Coming from a variety of backgrounds, they possess a wide variety of skills which impact upon children. As well as helping to facilitate play and resolving conflict, they are seen as friendly adults who listen to and support children and families in a diverse number of ways.

Another positive impact of OOSC were the benefits that children receive from their relationships with playworkers. There were a number of different ways in which parents and children discussed this impact. Firstly, one of the most significant impacts of playworkers was their ability to facilitate children's play:

*" Julie's really good, she always tells us what we can do" (Sydney, Inner London, 8)*

*"The people here, they are great with the kids" (parent, East of England II)*

*"staff that we've got now are.. have their own skills and expertise that they actually bring to the session..." (Outer London, headteacher)*

Staff in the six clubs visited during the research come from a variety of backgrounds, as table 8 illustrates:

**Table 8: Playworkers experience and background**

| Location | Background in | Employed by school | Employed in play/ youth community projects |
|---|---|---|---|
| *East of England (I+11), Inner London* | Youth | No | Yes |
| *Outer London, South East* | Care | Yes* | No |
| *East of England II, South West* | Play | Yes* | Yes |

*usually as learning support assistants or meal time assistants

Some had a background in, and were still working with pre school children in a variety of play and care contexts. Some staff were employed by schools as Learning Support Assistants or Lunch Time Supervisors during the school day. Others had a background in Youth Work and were still working on youth projects at other times of the day. Staff from these different backgrounds have their own unique sets of skills which they brought to the out of school club.

A second impact was playworkers' skills in resolving various forms of conflict. Conflicts were mentioned by children in all clubs, though there are a variety of ways in which children experienced these, from indifference to other children, to more problematic behaviours that often led to more acute and visible forms of conflict:

*"If people wouldn't shout, and be mean and say 'oi you get out of my way'.. I'm gonna push you, I'm gonna kick you outside. I think that's what would make it (the club) more better" (Sinita, Outer London, 6)*

Whilst playworkers and parents seemed to accept mild forms of conflict between children as part of the day to day existence of the club, other forms of conflict required attention. Most children clearly articulated that playworkers successfully resolve conflict:

*" if you like have a fight, they sort it out, and solve your problems" (Louise, Inner London, 9)*

However there were also a minority of children that this was not always the case:

*" fights, too many people arguing... I'm not trying to be horrible..., but some of the members of staff of play centre don't sort it out properly" (Romeo, Inner London, 9)*

Mostly, there was general agreement amongst both children and parents that children were well supervised in a relaxed atmosphere:

*" No, they don't tell us what to do., they advise us. They set some rules, about what to do and what not to do, safety rules basically, so we don't hurt ourselves. They are basically here to watch us to make sure we are alright" (Tim, East of England II, 12)*

*"The 'staff doesn't allow them to run wild, discipline is good" (South West, parent)*

Thirdly, many children also identified a wide range of skills that playworkers possessed which impacted positively upon children's experiences of OOSC. Children described playworkers as welcoming, able to listen and as adults who they could confide in:

*"they make you laugh, and they play fun games, and they listen to you, when you have a problem, they just don't go off and take other people's sides, they listen to you and try to, um like, sort things out" (Kat, Inner London, 10)*

*"and you can just talk to them about anything" (Meera, Outer London, 11)*

Parents also valued the positive relationships between children and playworkers:

*"(they are) wonderful staff who are very caring" (Outer London, parent)*

*"if anything is wrong with the child, then they will chat and see what they can do to help.. (they are) very approachable and you can always talk to them" (parent, Inner London)*

Some parents and children explained that they saw playworkers, especially younger ones, as positive role models:

*"Staff are very good. The children relate to the younger staff more....its good for my daughter to look up to the playworkers, looking up to them as teenage girls" (South West, parent)*

Four of the six clubs visited in the research employed male playworkers, and this was seen as important by many:

*"Most of our families are lone parents, (most) are Mums. It gives a very positive message about men... its good to have the experience that there is a man who is doing positive things, he's not a dragon, he is not shouting or being violent, he'll do craft as well as football. We do encourage male staff to get involved with cooking. It gives a very positive image about men, and that men are approachable" (playworker, Inner London)*

*"Also good that he likes the staff, and gets on very well with two of the men" (parent, Inner London)*

Male playworkers in the four clubs had a background either in the youth service, or worked as Learning Support Assistants. They undertook a variety of roles in OOSC and contributed to the scheme in many different ways. Some organised football and other physical activities, seen as important in facilitating older boy's enjoyment of OOSC. Other male playworkers undertook varied tasks including cooking and modelling.

In one club, staff turnover was seen as problematic by a minority of children and parents. Whilst there were a number of core staff who had been working at the club for a long time, there was also a rapid turnover of other members of staff. This was in part caused by the club's involvement in the local Surestart programme, in that they offered short term placements to students. One other club had a shortage of staff. The others described themselves as 'fortunate' since those clubs were based in schools or run by the local authority, and had a wider pool of potential employees.

### 4.3. Opportunities to play

**Summary**
One of the most positive impacts of OOSC is in providing a dedicated and uninterrupted play space for children. For many children, this offers more play opportunities than home or school for a variety of reasons. Whilst some families are time deprived, other children lack resources at home, whether those resources be other children, adults, equipment or space to play. Most clubs engage in free play and enable children to choose how they would like to spend their time in the out of school club. Some clubs have mechanisms to include children more formally in decision making processes, although their success is variable.

One of the most significant impacts identified by parents and children was the opportunity OOSC offers children to play. Children enjoyed the wide range of activities on offer:

*" like basketball and that.. and lie we do now we do papermache, and we've got playstation 2, an computers…we have the DJ room, we have the computer room… when I was in year seven, we went on stuff like camping, and tomorrow we are going pottery, Last week we went golfing" (Jane, East of England II, 12)*

Children also enjoyed the flexibility to experience a combination of activities, especially those they had never encountered before. Eighty five per cent (85%, n=63) of parents responding to the survey reported that children experienced new activities at the club. Furthermore, many children stated that there were a wider variety of play opportunities at the club than at home or at school, which were often seen as 'less fun':

*"because at home, it's really boring, all you do is just stay home, sit there and watch TV all day, then you get all lazy, and then you forget what you learnt" (Kat, Inner London, 10)*

*"(otherwise) they would come home at half three, watch tv, videos, or play on the pc and do not much else, (so the club is) just getting them to do more than that" (lone parent, Inner London)*

Thus, for most children a very significant positive impact of OOSC was its ability to offer a wide range of play opportunities to children that are often unavailable either at home or at school. There were a number of reasons why these play opportunities were unavailable elsewhere, including time and resources. One positive impact of the service was in giving children a dedicated and uninterrupted time of the day dedicated for play:

*"Um I like it because I get extra time…we've got more time to play" (Christina, Outer London, 6)*

This time to play was valued very highly. Both parents and children talked about their busy lives, and how children had many competing demands on their time. Homework, other informal educational activities or religious instruction classes meant that there was often little time to play outside of the club:

*"I don't have no time to play cos I've got to do my homework, wash the dishes" (Kat, Inner London, 10)*

*"so we're quite happy that she gets this chance to do this, because its not as if she'd do these things at home, because when we get home, you're busy cooking... you find yourself with not enough time to spare her, even though much as you try to" (East of England, parent)*

*"What a lot of our parents don't value highly is play and the social interaction you can get through play. They don't play with their children.. some of our parents... culturally in this area play isn't high on the agenda and academic achievement is on the agenda"* (Outer London, headteacher)

Thus for time deprived families, OOSC has a significant role to play in providing valuable time for children to play. This view was particularly expressed by parents in full time paid employment:

*"you know as working parents having the time to sit down and do that, I am not saying it's a replacement for us as the time we spend with our children, but it's nice that she gets the opportunity to do those things that necessarily we don't always have (time to), so I think that's very positive…"* (parent, East of England)

*"I think a lot of parents don't have the time to do things.. some of the things now that we do"* (Outer London, playworker)

OOSC also has a significant impact through providing a unique variety of resources for play that were often unavailable elsewhere. Some activities require large numbers of children. Thus OOSC has a key impact through enabling large groups of children to come together. One boy explained how playing football at home by himself wasn't the same as playing with a large group:

*"Football um.. I even do it at school but at home I don't like.. at home I can't play.. I just do catch but I don't really play football..."* (Suni, Outer London, 11)

And one parent commented:

*"obviously we do go out and we do all sorts of things, but when it's done here or tied in with play schemes as well, they get to do things that because they're doing it in a group, they wouldn't do on their own"* (parent, East of England)

Thus OOSC provides an opportunity for children to take part in group activities. Many children commented that outside of school, there were few other opportunities for children to come together and play in groups. Some children did not have friends or neighbours of a similar age to play with at home, or were unable to meet up with them. Significantly, these views were expressed by children within both urban and rural areas across the six clubs taking part in the research:

*"Mmm and we've only got our next door neighbours and one's quite old so they say 'oh no I don't wanna play today' cos they're too old and they don't do things like that and our other next door neighbour's always out"* (Kylie, South East, 7)

*"I think it's encouraged them to mix with other children,...we don't let them out on their own, so for them to mix with other children after school, which I think is quite important, especially at this time of year"* (parent, East of England)

OOSC also has an impact through other types of resources, including playworkers and other adults who, in two of the clubs visited, came in to work with children on particular activities, including arts and crafts, technology and media:

*"Er.. (in the carnival) we had.. we had these costumes as birds. The costumes were really good.. um.. this teacher came in and told us about it and we had to like cut it out. It was all on here and we had to cut loads out. About over 20 I think"* (Tanya, South West, 10)

Well equipped OOSC clubs also gave children access to a variety of play equipment and resources that was often unavailable at home or elsewhere:

*"probably not even the resources that we've got, you know, really… I mean we've got an awful lot of things for them to use and we've got, I mean school catalogues and things that perhaps you don't even find in the shops. So they get that sort of chance"* (Outer London, playworker)

*"Er.. things like games that I haven't got at home and snooker.. that snooker thing… Computer cos I haven't got a computer at home"* (Angie, South East, 8)

Similarly, OOSC provides more space for children to play than at home:

*"They can 'express their own interests' whilst they are here. They won't be shouted at at the club for enjoying themselves, not like at home where they get under my feet"* (parent, Inner London)

*"like (it) gets quite boring at home when we can't watch like cartoons and all that cos my Nan's up there but yeah it's all right"* (Jack, South East, 8)

Thus OOSC clearly gives children access to more activities, space and resources than children would have at home or elsewhere.

Children's freedom to choose how to spend their time at OOSC was identified as an important aspect of the service. Most playworkers promoted the philosophy of choice and free play, and children recognised this:

*" we're allowed to do whatever we like"* (Leo, East of England II, 13)

*"cos you get to do a different type of stuff here really…you get to do fun bits. They come up with ideas to do.. and sometimes they tell you to do something. They'll say 'right this is the activities for today' and stuff and they'll tell you what they are. You don't have to do them. You get 'free play' as well"* (Jane, South West, 10)

In many cases, choice and free play consisted in practice of playworkers organising a variety of activities to choose from, with children dipping in and out of specific activities as they wanted. However one club required children to spend the entire session undertaking activities they had chosen:

*"we do encourage them to stay there.. if you know you've made a choice, therefore, you made that choice,... and you have the consequences"* (playworker, *South East*)

Another notable aspect of four of the clubs was the extent to which children were able to participate in discussions and decisions about the types of activities on offer. Some of the playworkers talked about the different mechanisms they used to enable children to offer ideas and suggestions:

*"we talk to the children every night, we have assemblies, we talk about problems the night before. Or we get them to share good things, we talk about the rules on the wall, that they have instigated. Then we judge what comes through them, and then we will try and put things forward... We have a suggestion box which we open once a week, 'why can't we go abseiling or something'. 'Wouldn't it be a good idea if one night only the juniors could use the home corner?' Just all different ideas"* (playworker, Inner London)

However, two clubs did not have such formal mechanisms. Furthermore, some of the ways to consult children were often not seen as empowering children or influencing the running of the club. Some children were not aware of these attempts to consult with them, and in some cases, children commented that efforts to consult with them were not effective:

*"It's all right but (a playworker) she gets us to choose and we all have these meetings and no offence but she says we'll do them and then we won't and we'll never actually get to do it type*

*thing.. so there isn't really any point and she thinks about it all and stuff but she doesn't actually do it...it's like we wish we had more things and sometimes they get us to like write wish tree and stuff so we write it and it never gets sorted out" (Jane, South West, 10)*

*"he (an ex playworker) listened to whatever everyone else wanted to do, he didn't just do what he wants to do, he listens to everyone else. (The current playworker) just says, 'we're going outside' and we do what he wants, even if you don't wanna" (Kyle, East of England II, 11)*

Thus whilst children value the ability to engage in free play and choose how they spend their time in OOSC, it is not clear to what extent there are effective ways of enabling children to participate and choose on anything more than a superficial level.

A final impact on children that was noted by a very small number of respondents was a positive impact on children's health, due to clubs offering them the chance to run around and take part in aerobic exercise, rather than simply going home after school and watching television:

*"I've lost half a k.g... my (weight) is something like 35 and a half k.g now and I'm supposed to be...26 k.g so I've put 10 k.g extra on, so I need to lose weight" (James, Outer London, 7)*

*"every time I turn up..., he's in a hot sweat because he's playing football. Which I'm really impressed with 'cos he does need to lose a bit of weight. I am quite impressed he's actually doing things like that" (parent, East of England)*

*"I think this environment is so much healthier for a child than just going home with somebody, get stuck in front of the television" (parent, East of England)*

### 4.4. Social skills and self confidence

**Summary**
Parents, playworkers and children were aware of the contribution that OOSC can make to children's self confidence, in terms of making friends and trying out new activities. Some parents however stated that their children did not increase their self confidence at the club since they were very confident already from using pre-school childcare. Parents were also aware of the difficulties of identifying OOSC as the only contributing factor to increasing their child's self confidence.

### 4.4.1 Social skills
Many of the playworkers, parents and children taking part in the research stated that OOSC had a positive impact on the development of children's social skills in a number of ways. Firstly, parents and children identified that children developed social skills through learning to share:

*"One child was very destructive before she came here, but has calmed right down. She won't share things at home but knows that she has to share here" (lone parent, Inner London)*

*"(my) daughters have socialised and grown up a lot. The older one has learnt skills how to get out of difficult situations, its made her more diplomatic" (South West, parent)*

*"It's changed my attitude generally….. it's hard to describe but.... I don't know.. just politer.. no not politer but kinder" (Darren, South West, former user, 11)*

The second way in which parents believed that children learned a variety of social skills was through socialising and playing with, and learning from older children at the club:

*"...he has matured and often plays with older children... attending the club has brought him out socially and he has learnt to share in a very different environment from the classroom" (South East, grandparent)*

*"when she first started school she was as silent as a mouse, didn't want to talk to classmates, or didn't want to talk (to me) about the issue. Now she spends time with friends her own age and older, and has developed her conversation, and has learnt bigger words from mixing with older children, like "Mum I do have my own opinion". The club gives her skills!" (South West, parent)*

Playworkers discussed how developing social skills was one aim of their service:

*"I certainly think it helps them with their social skills, with interacting with other children, they obviously have to learn to negotiate, they have to learn that the world doesn't just revolve around them, really, you know, in a social setting" (playworker, East of England)*

*"learning new skills, sharing space, sharing space with other people, sharing people. Really just learning to start becoming caring, competent little adults really" (playworker, Inner London)*

Thus both playworkers and parents clearly articulated that OOSC has a role to play in developing children's social skills, particularly through learning to share with other children and playing with and learning from older children at the club.

### 4.4.2. Self confidence
Many parents and playworkers discussed how OOSC helped to raise children's self confidence. Indeed, this was often a key aim of the service:

*"we see a difference, especially some of the little ones from when they start over the time, how much they come out of themselves.. and the parents have told us its really helped them" (Outer London, playworker)*

Fifty nine per cent (59%, n=44) of parents responding to the survey thought that their child had become more confident since using the club. Parents described three key ways in which OOSC helped to raise children's self confidence. Firstly, it gave children more confidence in terms of developing new friendships:

*"he used to be very introverted and wouldn't talk to other children. But now he will go up to other children in the park and start a conversation" (Outer London, parent)*

*"it's made them more independent, coming here, they don't worry if they're going into a situation with kids they don't know, cos they're used to walking into that sort of environment" (parent, East of England)*

Secondly, parents also stated that going to the club gave children the confidence to try out new activities and events:

*"(He) used to avoid the creative side of himself and would avoid the arts and crafts table. But now he has become more confident, both here and at school and at home. Through the club he has discovered and enjoyed making things. Has seen how others do it, and enjoys making things in groups" (Outer London, parent)*

Thirdly, parents also reported that doing activities at the club had given children more confidence to undertake these same activities outside of the club:

*"coming to the club has helped with her confidence. She will come home and want to do the things she has been doing at the club, e.g. painting, reading and cutting up. The club has inspired her to do these activities" (South West, parent)*

*"she was beginning to be interested in cooking at home because she wanted to try out things she had learnt at the club" (parent, Inner London)*

Whilst parents of all groups of children commented on the contribution that OOSC can make to children's self confidence, the impact was seen as particularly significant for two groups of children, notably shy children and younger children. Many parents discussed how shy children had become more sociable through attending the club:

*"my daughter wasn't so confident, didn't know so many of the children. But now has made lots of friends in year 1 class, and wants to come to the club more. She used to be shy but coming to the club has helped her gain more confidence" (parent, Inner London)*

*"He was quite insecure when he was on his own so attending the club has made him more secure and increased his confidence. The impact the club had had on his confidence, however, was important which had had a knock on effect in class. He has become more outgoing" (South East, lone parent)*

Parents also described how OOSC helped to increase younger children's self confidence. This was particularly expressed in terms of younger children gaining confidence through playing with and learning from older children at the club:

*"Yeah, particularly some of the very young children, if they've not got older brothers and sisters, with it being a separate infant and junior school, in those cases they are quite separate, I think they do gain a lot of confidence" (playworker, East of England)*

*"I think they can see that they can do other things and play with older children. They can do activities they wouldn't have thought they could do before because we don't have an age.. you know if we're doing something we might have to sit on a one-to-one with say a five year old and not a ten year old, but we will still do it with them..." (Outer London, playworker)*

However, a significant minority of parents stated that their children were already confident, for example through having attended group childcare settings since a very early age:

*"Um - she's a very sociable person anyway, so whether that's because she's had child minders and that, I dunno, I've been working ever since she was 2 months old. So she's always had that contact with various adults and people" (parent, East of England)*

Others noted that their children were already confident but that the club had helped them to become even more confident. As one grandparent stated:

*"the boys have always been confident and being at the club hasn't detracted from this, but has built upon it" (South East, grandparent)*

A number of parents acknowledged that children may be gaining confidence from a range of experiences and sources, including school, family life and other activities as well. Thus parents were aware of the difficulties of identifying OOSC as the only factor or influence which contributes to children's self confidence or social skills. As parents stated:

*"has been very much helped by the club, has become more cocky, but this as good considering how quiet he was before. But that could be just from starting school" (Outer London, parent)*

*"The older son has more confidence with older people now, although this was not necessarily because of the club" (South East, parent)*

## 5. The educational impact of out of school care

**Summary**

Homework is a contentious activity in the out of school club. Many clubs do provide space and opportunity to complete homework, and individual playworkers in some clubs provide support depending upon their own particular skills and confidence. However, whilst many parents often see the club as an ideal time for homework, many children disagree and few actually report completing homework at the club. Generally, both children and playworkers and some parents see homework as a task to be completed at home not at the club, under the guidance of parents not playworkers.

Over half of parents state that their children learn through play, and that OOSC helped to foster a more positive attitude to school. However, many children stated that their attitude to one was very distinct from their attitude to the other. A significant minority of parents also thought that it had no effect on their children's attitude to school. No respondents identified that OOSC helped to directly raise educational achievement.

### 5.1 Homework

Homework was a contentious issue and there was a clear difference of opinion as to the place of homework in OOSC. At the very least, there was an agreement amongst most respondents that there is potential for homework to be completed in an out of school club. Many children identified that there was a specific place in the club designed for homework:

*"we have a place to do homework in this area... you do have time, it's quiet here, so you can do you home work" (Beckham, 8, Inner London)*

This did result in at least some children doing their homework in the club. Sixteen per cent (16%, n=12) of parents responding to the survey stated that their children did homework in the club:

*"Yeah sometimes I do (my homework): Well I sometimes use the computers and sometimes I just .. just do it like by hand.. if I do my homework here that means I like get to spend more time with my family at home" (Samantha, South East, 10)*

*"(They) can do their homework. (They) have children together so they can do their homework together" (Outer London, parent)*

Playworkers often were seen to play an important role in facilitating homework. Many of the children who did complete homework and their parents stated that playworkers were available and willing to assist children if necessary:

*"I don't get time to sit and do homework with him so he gets to do that at the club, there are teachers who can help out… teachers know more about homework so can sit and help him. There are lots of books around in the club so he can read them, and ask questions from the teachers" (Outer London, lone parent)*

*"when kids get home they don't want to do homework, and its quite tough on the parents to make them as well. For my daughter, she has so much avoidance, its much easier for me for someone else to be dealing with it, and to be honest she is quite happy to have someone else to help her who isn't me" (parent, East of England II)*

However, there was a marked difference between parents' and playworkers' perception on this issue. Whilst parents saw playworkers as a valuable support for homework, many playworkers

questioned whether it should be them promoting, encouraging and supervising homework. As one playworker commented:

*"but its not my job to ensure that the homework is done. I'm not professionally trained to teach"*
*(playworker, Inner London)*

In response to these differing views, in most clubs there was a compromise. Most clubs offered a particular space for children to complete homework as one option amongst the wider variety of activities on offer. In individual clubs, playworkers might offer support depending upon the confidence and expertise of specific members of staff:

*"we have the homework table which the children go and do their homework if they want to. We are learning but we're.. we're not making them do things. They have the choice" (Outer London, playworker)*

*"we do have times when we help them with their homework.. but our role is not to make them do their homework, we suggest it and we will facilitate it, you know but our role is not to be a homework club" (playworker, East of England)*

Thus in most cases, homework was one option among many. Whilst children were aware that they could do homework, they themselves stated that they rarely if ever did it at the club. Children stated that homework was not a popular activity in the club. Children would almost always choose one of the play activities rather than homework, a choice supported by many parents and most playworkers:

*"I normally do it at home cos. .I like playing with my friends here... Yeah if I do it like at here um.. I'll spend more time doing my homework.... than playing.. playing with my friends" (Dee, South West, 6)*

*"give them a break!...Let them have a rest! Well basically they run a homework club so the junior children can do their homework if they like" (Outer London, headteacher)*

Many stated that the home, not the club, was both the most common place and the most appropriate place for homework to be completed. Most children stated that homework was done at home, with the assistance of parents. This reinforced the idea that it as parents rather than playworkers responsibility to facilitate homework and ensure it was completed:

*"No, we do it (homework) at home because then our parents can help us" (Leo, East of England II, 13)*

*"maybe they do their homework with their parents, and they can talk about what they have done, that is a good time to sit down and talk, whilst you're cooking tea or something. Let them do their homework then" (playworker, Inner London)*

## 5.2 Learning through play
Although many parents interviewed queried the impact of OOSC in terms of supporting homework, fifty six percent (56%, n=41) of parents stated that the club helped their children to learn through play. Two clubs visited in the research provided a framework for learning by introducing a specific theme around which activities were focused:

*"we have a theme… it could be one week it may be 'water', one week it may be 'autumn', it's like this week it's been 'autumn' so what we do is um.. it could vary from making something absolutely spectacular from junk and gunk or just simple leaf rubbing. They go out and get some leaves... they make a collage" (South West, playworker)*

*"We have a theme, sometimes it's one term or two terms. This term it is healthy living and eating, We're trying to get them to think about what they eat in terms of the tuck we provide. Its been gradual change from the crisps to fruit and cereal bars"* (playworker, Inner London)

Respondents identified a number of ways in which the club provided a learning experience for children. Many discussed how children learned through undertaking new experiences, and from the social skills they gained through this:

*"How to do art, how to make things, how to make things that you can't make at home"* (Holly, East of England, 8)

*"They definitely learn about respecting other people... they have to learn how to get on with other people and learn how to play. They can let off steam but they have rules and responsibilities as well. They learn how to have a good attitude outside of school"* (parent, Inner London)

### 5.3 Nurturing a more positive attitude to school

The existing literature appears to suggest that OOSC can help to give children a more positive outlook on attending school (King, 2000). Fifty five per cent (55%, n=41) of parents stated that the club helped their child feel more comfortable about being in school:

*"When he started at school he used to come home and moan about his day. But now he comes to club, has made more friends and feels better about the school day... It has made him feel better about being in the school building"* (parent, Inner London)

*"some of the children…it allows them a positive experience within the school context that they may not have during the day. A bit of school that they particularly enjoy"* (headteacher, East of England II)

However, for some children the club was seen as something *different* and distinct to look forward to at the end of the day. Indeed many children discussed how their attitude to each was not related, and their attitude to school was very distinct to that of the club:

*"well I like going to after care but the thing that ruins it is that you've got to have school first"* (Meera, Outer London, 11)

*"cos when I'm in school, right through the morning, I can't **wait** till play centre"* (Kelly, Inner London, 9)

A substantial proportion of children and parents categorically stated that the club had no impact upon their children's attitude to school:

*"he has always had a good attitude to learning and so the club had little impact on this"* (South East, lone parent)

*"I don't feel it had altered either my children's attitude to school or their behaviour"* (South East, parent)

In discussions with playworkers, parents and children, none explicitly stated that OOSC had any impact upon children's education achievement. Thus, whilst the service can be seen to indirectly support education, there was no perception that it increased achievement.

**6 Other impacts on children**

**Summary**

There are a variety of other impacts of OOSC. One positive impact of OOSC is in providing a safe environment for children to play. Whilst the perceived threats varied according to location, respondents identified a number of issues which made it important to have a secure place like an out of school club, including fears of traffic, stranger danger and other children and young people.

Many parents and playworkers are aware of how OOSC may contribute to children's tiredness. A minority of parents report that their own children are tired from using the service. There are also different perceptions of the impact of the service in terms of spending more time away from family or other friends. Whilst some children enjoy the break, and are aware of the impacts this may have upon themselves and their families, other children are concerned that they have little time to spend with family or friends.

**6.1 Safety**

Respondents identified that OOSC impacted upon children by providing a safe place for children to play. Eighty two per cent (82%, n=61) of parents responding to the survey identified safety as a key feature of the club:

*"Yeah its just a really, really, really good place to come after school and that cos you know you're safe and everything.. and you know you're safe and you know no-one's going to hurt you because there's teachers around" (Meera, Outer London, 11)*

*"it has to be a safe environment, I think that's paramount, that we know when they're not in our care, that they are in a completely safe environment" (parent, East of England)*

*"and the parents… it stops them worrying. It stops the children worrying and we know that they're safe as well and they're not having to wait for their parents to come. You've got that facility" (playworker, South East)*

There were variations in perceived threats to children's safety in different areas. Some respondents identified that there was a need for a safe place for children to play to keep them protected from other children and young people. This was particularly expressed in the Inner London club:

*"But in my area, normally I hang out with 16 and 17 year olds.. but there are none in the after school club to hang round with. Round my area, you're likely to get mugged or something, or get beat up" (Max, 10, Inner London)*

*"Living on an estate you choose who you friends are, I don't like him playing with some people when he's on the estate, but here its safe for him to play and mingle with everyone" (parent, Inner London)*

Some parents across many clubs described the importance of having a safe place to play like an out of school club because of the danger posed to children from traffic:

*"You can't play in my street, because people speed.... its quite a cut off street but people generally speed down to the bottom" (Leo, East of England II, 13)*

*"The club keeps her off the streets. If she went home after school, she'd be out on the street, and her friends play out" (South West, parent)*

Respondents in all areas commented on how it was important to have a safe place like an out of school club due to fears of stranger danger. This view was articulated by both parents and children:

*"Yeah and there are some paedophiles around" (Jane, East of England II, 12)*

*"Plus you hear about all these abductions and stuff, and it's getting dark now, so in a way to me it's more better, feels safer" (parent, Inner London)*

## 6.2 Tiredness

Some respondents discussed how children may become tired as the result of using OOSC. A minority (4%, n=3) of parents responding to the survey stated that their children had become more tired through using the out of school club. Tiredness was also mentioned in the group discussions by a minority of parents:

*"the child does feel a bit odd because he's still at school. It's a long day, eight hours at school'. He does get very tired when he's home" (Outer London, lone parent)*

*"he does get tired…, yeah after a school day and then an hour or two here, I'd say he's tired, yes" (parent, East of England)*

One headteacher also expressed her concerns about children who were using both before school and after school care:

*"we have had incidences where the children have not coped with (the breakfast club), day time in school and then the (after school club)" (Outer London, headteacher)*

Younger children were seen as particularly vulnerable to tiredness from attending the club:

*"I mean I think for some children, particularly some of the very young children, it does make it a very long day for them" (playworker, East of England)*

*"they're not even fully coping with being in school all day because they're not used to a full day or some of then have done the whole nursery thing, but again, it's different when you're in school. Umm and they're.. they're shattered, they're tearful, they're upset and it can take quite a long time for some of the younger ones to settle in and that bothers me because that has an impact on them wanting to walk through those gates" (Outer London, headteacher)*

## 6.3 Spending less time with families or friends

One consequence of attending an out of school club for many children is that they spend less time with their family. Children's perceptions of spending less time with their families varied. For some children, the club was a welcome break from family life:

*"I get away from my brother too, he's annoying, little boys are so annoying... yeah, it makes my life good because I get away from my brother, because he's mowing over things, I'm glad he's not coming to play centre" (Beckham, 8, Inner London)*

*"yeah, I think it is good in a way, cos you sort of like forget what's going around you, you can sort of lay around, do stuff" (Nicola, East of England, 10)*

Some children were aware that it was not only them, but their parents or siblings who benefited from this period of respite:

*"because so my mum can relax, and my sisters can play without me bossing them around, stop letting them go into my bedroom, …so if I come to (the club) for quite a while then they can my sisters can play on the play station" (Harry, Inner London, 9)*

*"when we're at (the club), it's my mums time to have a rest, cos we've had our play time here"* (Louise, Inner London, 9)

However, not all children enjoyed spending this extra time apart from their family. Some respondents described that their children would rather be at home:

*"I think it's just that she'd prefer to be at home with us"* (East of England, parent)

*"Sometimes really excited and sometimes a bit sad cos I'm not really around my parents much"* (John, South East, 9)

Many children had contradictory feelings on the matter. Sometimes children would like to be home, and other times they would like to be at the club. As one girl explained about her friend:

*"She likes coming here I know that, but the things is… because she's small…she like misses her Mum.. so when she goes home she's happy to see her Mum but she'd also rather be here as well at the same time"* (Meera, Outer London, 11)

For some children this presented a problem. Many were unsure about how to communicate their often contradictory feelings about spending time in the club:

*"in a way you don't really get a lot of time to spend with your parents.. It's hard to explain to them cos I like coming to (the club). There's nothing wrong with it but on Tuesdays and Thursdays.. it's hard. You don't really want to tell your parents cos I don't know whether they'd get hurt or not"* (Jane, South West, 10)

*"I mean I'm.. I'm used to it cos I'm fine with it. I like to spend some times with my parents. I don't like to spend so long apart"* (Sophie, South East, 8)

Some parents were acutely aware of this issue and discussed how they tried to accommodate their child's wishes:

*"it's very new to her at the moment, we were thinking that we'd like to get her in 5 days, she said she's not so keen on that, we'd feel guilty if we made her"* (East of England, parent)

As well as having less time to spend with their family, some children also commented that attending an out of school club made it more difficult for them to take part in other after school activities which children, for example going to other children's houses to play:

*" Like when I didn't want to come, when my Mum wanted to work, I like say had a friend in my old school when I was younger and they wanted to come round and all the Mum's were working all the other days and like I was at the club"* (Darren, South West, former user, 11)

*"because we're both working he 'doesn't have much time to have friends round"* (parent, Inner London)

## 7. The impact of out of school care on parents

**Summary**

Most parents were using the service whilst they undertook paid employment. Over one third (36%) of respondents commented that their use of OOSC has resulted in a positive labour market impact, including re-entering training, education or employment, or to increase their hours of employment. Many stated that they would not have been able to make these changes without the club.

Parents identified a diverse number of ways in which the service supports these economic impacts, by giving them a greater peace of mind during the working day, enabling them to concentrate more at work, and reduces the need to rush home from work. Some clubs are able to respond to short term demand for childcare, although others are over subscribed and unable to meet these needs. Some respondents also comment that the service enables them to make future plans.

In addition to these economic impacts, many parents also identify a wide range of ways in which the service provides practical support to parents by providing respite care. For some families, this is regular time out for families and their children, whilst for others it is a short term response to support families during a variety of crises.

### 7.1 Economic impacts

The vast majority of parents taking part in the research identified that OOSC had a positive economic impact on families. Most parents were using the club whilst they were in employment. Two thirds of parents responding to the survey (67%, n=48) were in full time employment, whilst another 14% (n=10) were in part time employment. Fourteen per cent (14%, n=10) of the sample were unemployed. In each of the six clubs there were examples of economic gains, although they were more commonplace in four of the schemes. The other two clubs reported more non-economic rather than economic impacts (see section 7.2).

In general, playworkers discussed that the rationale for providing a service was to support parents in a variety of employment or training related ways:

*"The market research we did in the first place was not with the students but the parents. When we did our bid for the lottery, we got 60 parents who came back and said they would use it regularly, and said it would increase their hours, to let them work longer and a handful said it would enable them to train. And that was probably our original motivation. We were aiming to make a contribution to the economy of the area, nothing else" (East of England II, headteacher).*

Thirty six per cent (36%, n=26) of questionnaire respondents identified that they or their partner had experienced a positive labour market impact through using the club. The provision of childcare enabled parents to undertake a variety of economic tasks, including entering training or employment, extending hours of employment, and remaining in employment.

### 7.1.1 Entering training

Twelve per cent (12%, n=9) of parents responding to the survey reported entering training as a result of using OOSC. There were also a few examples of parents entering training in the group discussions. One grandmother reported that the child's mother is currently at college and the child uses the club on the day that his grandmother works. Another mother reported that she is in training and the club has been really good at giving her *'more time to study'* and will be a great help when she gets back to work.

### 7.1.2 Entering employment

Twelve per cent (12%, n=9) of parents responding to the survey had entered employment as a result of using OOSC, and this was reflected in comments from playworkers and parents:

*"everyone's doing something… If it wasn't for us I don't think they would be able to go back to work, or at least one parent would be able to go back but then the other wouldn't or they'd have to work alternate shifts or something…" (playworker, South West)*

*"cos I was on income support 6 years… but there just comes a time when you gotta work'…actually, no I don't think I would (have gone back to work). If I hadn't have heard of this, from a friend, she said you can trust them, it's brilliant, if I hadn't have know about this club, I think I would probably be doing a part-time job, you know, school hours" (single parent, East of England)*

### 7.1.3 Extending hours of employment

One in ten (10%, n=7) of survey respondents reported that using the club had enabled them to increase their hours of employment. There were examples in all of our study sites of parents talking about extending their hours of employment. One single mother who worked in a school, commented that her son's attendance at the club for an hour means that she has the opportunity to stay at work longer. Other parents mentioned that the club enabled them to undergo changes in their working hours, or to work later:

*"that in itself is beneficial as it means we are more able to afford holidays" (parent, South East)*

*"its brilliant…Before using the club, it was a struggle. Now using the club I have been able to extend my work, and work longer hours" (parent, Inner London)*

### 7.1.4 Supporting those already in employment

Eighty one per cent (81%, n=58) of respondents to the survey were in some form of paid employment. Respondents also discussed the ways in which OOSC had an indirect economic impact through supporting families in employment. Almost one half of the respondents to the survey (47%, n=34) stated that the club supported them at work by providing greater peace of mind. Almost one third 30% (n=22) of parents stated that the club enabled them to concentrate more at work. Twenty nine per cent (n=21) of parents stated that use of the club reduced the need for them to rush from work:

*"(the club) has enabled us to control our lives without having to arrange for babysitters or child minders or anything else. And we know it's secure and safe. And I work in (local town) and if there was a problem, I'm always available… it's taken the pressure off us immensely, because we know, we've used it since it first opened, and we've recommended it to loads of people. Even sometimes, my wife, she works from home as well, and she'll book them in when she's got to do a days work at home, because she knows she hasn't got to rush to pick [son] up from the school, then she can pick them up at 5 or 6 o'clock, it's tremendous" (parent, East of England)*

Many respondents stated that flexibility was particularly important since employers were not always accommodating concerning childcare issues:

*"If there was no club, I would have great difficulties, as I can't get home early, and I don't have the kind of employer that would understand my problems" (parent, South West)*

*"even if they want to do a bit of overtime they know that they can just phone, their child will be collected" (playworker, South West")*

Some of the clubs were also able to take children at very short notice. However, clubs could only provide this flexibility if they were not full. Two of the clubs in the study in particular were full, with waiting lists, and were unable to respond to short term childcare needs:

*"The majority of the parents are working parents…Basically we're full all the while so it's got to be a fairly regular booking to get their children in, so it's generally so they can work" (playworker, East of England)*

Some playworkers were also aware of some of the other problems of returning to work and helped to support their parents in the process:

*"in the case of some parents if we can be a little bit sympathetic, when they're first going back, then we are, and we don't make parents pay in advance, which some clubs do, and it does enable them to go back, and quite often we see children come through pre-school here, go off to nursery, start school and then they come to the after school club, because the parents have that security" (parent, East of England)*

In addition to currently supporting parents, 27% (n=20) of parents stated that using the club enabled them to make future plans.

### 7.1.5 Labour market additionality
Many respondents stated that these diverse labour market impacts would not have occurred without the club:

*"I work full time, am a single mother, and she's an only child…(without the club)… I would be in dire straits" (parent, Outer London)*

*"I've always said to [club leader] this is essential for us, without it, my parents are elderly and I wouldn't ask them to look after the children, we would not be able both to do the work that we do if the after school club wasn't here. It is absolutely fundamental and essential to the way our life is at the present time" (parent, East of England)*

Clubs may be very important to lone parents in this regard as two lone parents commented:

*"I would not have gone back to work without childcare, as a single parent the club are very good at accommodating my children's needs. They have been coming for 3 years and we have grown to know the staff very well and completely trust them" (parent, East of England)*

*"Being a lone parent this club has helped me tremendously in being able to work and have peace of mind in doing so. Without it I would be well and truly stuck. Many thanks to all that have made this club possible, you are very much appreciated" (parent, South East)*

### 7.2 Providing practical support for parents
OOSC provides practical support for parents, through providing respite care and time out for families, and enabling parents to visit or care for other family members and undertake other activities such as attending hospital appointments. Respondents in each of the six locations reported these practical impacts, although they were more widespread in some clubs than others. Clubs provided practical support, both in the short term in response to crisis, and in the longer term, through respite and time out for families.

### 7.2.1 Regular time out for children and families
Almost one third (30%, n=22) of respondents to the questionnaire survey stated that the service provided regular respite care and time out for children and families. Parents identified a diverse number of activities they were able to undertake whilst their children were using the club:

*"shopping is 'much less stressful without the children. And it means that I can get everything set up for dinner by the time the children come home from school" (parent, Inner London)*

*"I can come in, sit down, tidy up or go to sleep. There is no rush to get them from school. I'm not as stressed as much" (parent, Inner London)*

*"I can go and visit my Mum who lives a little way away and I've time to catch the bus back and come to collect (the children) before 5.30. It means I can see my Mum once or twice a week" (parent, Inner London)*

Thus for many families, 'time out' was beneficial for both parents and children. Playworkers were also aware of these impacts of the service:

*"we take the children.. it gives them that bit of a break.. and they know that their children are being collected from school.. it gives them that respite care. Some of our parents have little children so they rely on us to collect their children" (playworker, South West)*

### 7.2.2 Supporting families in crisis

There were a number of different circumstances in which the club provided childcare for families facing a variety of crises. The service was valued because whilst it provided childcare parents were able to undertake a variety of activities. Some parents discussed how they had other, competing care responsibilities:

*"it was brilliant, my grandmother was very very ill and so I phoned up to say, have you got any spaces, can they come, because I didn't have to rush to be at the school at 3:30… she was for 2 weeks in [hospital 15 miles away], it was just taking up a lot of time going backwards and forwards, and that just reduced my stress levels, the fact that I didn't have to be back here for a certain time, I knew they would be safe, and for them it's a treat for them to come here' , I was in the car on the way back from [hospital] and I was sitting in [town], and I was like '[club leader] please go and pick up my children' cos I didn't have anybody else to turn to. So yeah, for me, it's like a real back up thing, and I know that if I can't get there, and my husband can't get there, then [club leader] will, and it won't phase the girls" (parent of former user, East of England)*

Other parents had been supported by using the service when they had health or other problems:

*"(I use the club) because I'm not well and I have a lot of hospital appointments" (parent, Inner London)*

*"being recently widowed, the club has provided support to me and my child, allowing me to deal with my loss" (parent, Inner London)*

In some cases, social service sponsored places to provide respite care for children and their families:

*"we get social services referrals… now you know much more about them. We are much more accountable for the children we take and the service we provide" (playworker, Inner London)*

Playworkers discussed another way in which they had attempted to help and support one family:

*"You know, we also had, a year or two ago now, a family with two children here, and the mother left, and dad found it very difficult at times, and the after school club leader had to speak to him about the hygiene of the children, and one thing and another, but we supported him through what was a very difficult time, and he was always late picking the children up, and he was very tired, but he was trying to work, it was very difficult because while you wanted to be supportive obviously the staff wanted to go home, so we negotiated different things, so we support them in that way" (parent, East of England)*

## 8. Children aged over 8 and their families

**Summary**

It is debatable to what extent clubs for 4-11 year olds are responding to the needs of children aged over 8. These children are often a minority, and hence have less children of their own age to mix with and make new friends. Children aged over 8, especially boys, are generally less positive about their experiences of the service. Children aged over 8 are also less positive about their relationships with playworkers, who are sometimes seen to lack the training and confidence to facilitate their needs. Playworkers with a youth work background are seen to be more effective in the ways they work with children aged over 8.

Thus, whilst the research identifies a wide number of potential impacts of OOSC, it is debatable to what extent children aged over 8 benefit from these impacts. Whilst many parents still need care for children aged over 8, many also consider these children to have 'grown out' of the service and question whether OOSC is an appropriate service for children aged over 8.

The research also observed an example of good practice for services for older children aged 11-14. However, this club operated a slightly different model in that motivations to attend were often different. Rather than parental employment motivating parents to send their children to the club, the young people themselves opted to attend because of the opportunities it afforded them.

There were a number of specific issues relating to older children's use and experience of OOSC and the impact it may have upon their lives. For the purposes of this section, older children refers to those aged over 8.

### 8.1 Friendships

In all of the clubs visited which drew from the age ranges 4-11, the majority of users were aged 4-8. Therefore, those older children who were attending the club were often in a minority, and had fewer friends of their own age to play with compared with younger users. For some older children, this impacted upon their enjoyment of the service:

*"He had complained that it was for younger children.. And actually I thought about it, and you know, I've been taking a bit of note, and you know, there are a lot of kids here that are a bit younger than him" (parent, East of England)*

*"There's only er.. at least one. There's only two people in year six" (James, Outer London, 7)*

In many cases, this meant that older children had fewer opportunities to make friends and to play with children of their own age than younger children. Thus most older children in clubs were spending time in a predominantly younger environment. Many parents saw that this had a positive impact on the younger children. Parents commented that older children made a positive contribution to the club in providing valuable role models for younger children, as these parents explained:

*"Even though my son is 5 he likes to play with year 5 and year 6 children. The bigger boys look after him and teach him things like football" (parent, Outer London)*

*"it gives her help to mix with children from different age groups. She used to learn from older children and now she is now helping out the younger children" (parent, Outer London)*

And as one playworker commented:

*"I was even surprised at that actually. How much the bigger ones.. especially if they've got younger brothers or sisters....they look after them and they do have a general thing of looking after them" (Outer London, playworker)*

One boy explained how he enjoyed looking after the younger children in club:

*"infants, they're so cute. Especially I like a friend, my friend's sister called Beverley. She's cute. She's nice to play with... infants, it's like you're like a parent to them. You set them straight" (Romeo, Inner London, 9)*

However, not all older children perceived spending time with younger children as an opportunity. Indeed, for many, it led to conflict with younger children over resources and space in the club:

*"the little ones and the bigger ones argue" (Megan, South West, 9)*

For some of these older children at least, spending time in a mixed age environment was not popular. As these children explain:

*"But the little ones come in and spoil it" (Tanya, South West, 10)*

*"Younger (children)... some of them are quite annoying" (Max, 10, Inner London)*

*"Sometimes the little infants are very rude. They don't have no manners. They swear at you, yeah, sometimes I don't like him" (Kat, Inner London, 10)*

### 8.2 Playworkers
Additionally, older children also discussed how their relationships with playworkers were often less positive than those reported by other children (see section 4.2). Older children often commented that playworkers were less likely to facilitate older children's play. In some cases, this resulted in confrontation and conflict between older children and playworkers:

*"they (staff) can be a bit annoying, like they tell us to split up when we're having fun, we keep laughing and they tell us to split up. So when we were sitting down then and having our snack, I sat there, Matthew sat there and Michelle had to sit there (i.e. pointing to three different tables)" (Mark, East of England, 9)*

Whilst many older children expressed this view, it was particularly significant amongst boys. Similarly, the research observed that some playworkers did not appear confident in communicating with and facilitating older children's play needs, and there were particularly few examples of playworkers working effectively with older boys. Significantly, playworkers with a background in youth work appeared to be much more effective at addressing the play needs of older children.

Furthermore, some older boys expressed a desire for more male playworkers. However, the researchers observed that in other clubs, whilst some male playworkers routinely played football and other games with older boys, other male playworkers sometimes felt more confident facilitating younger children's play. Thus, whilst many playworkers, parents and children would like to see more men in the playwork profession, they should not be seen as a simple solution to facilitating older children's play. More emphasis needs to be placed on training which draws upon the youth work profession for working with and facilitating the needs of older children, regardless of the gender of the playworkers.

### 8.3 Play opportunities
On the whole, older children seemed less satisfied with their play experiences of OOSC than younger children. In part, this was due to a perception by older children that most activities and equipment were targeted towards younger children:

*"they mainly get it for the little ones thinking the little ones' only want to do it but the reason why we can't do it.. they think we don't do it" (Jane, South West, 10)*

*"older boys want other things… if we had all like tennis rackets and cricket bats and stuff like that yeah" (Suni, Outer London, 11)*

Therefore, it is debatable to what extent clubs are successful in equipping and facilitating the play needs of older children, particularly boys.

### 8.4 Relevance of the service to children aged over 8

Thus much of the evidence suggests that mixed age out of school clubs are not particularly effective at meeting older children's needs. Many older children discussed how both themselves and their friends were beginning to gain independence in their lives:

*"I left once, then I came back.. I came back September. /…/I had my own keys and then I could go home on my own. But now because my baby brother is here and I can't take him home by myself, my mum needs me here and so she's come and picks me up about 5" (Kat, Inner London, 10)*

*"my mum gives me my set of keys, cos I've got my own as well, and if (the club) is shut and my mum is working, I can go home by myself and play at anything I want, cos I've got a play station" (Romeo, Inner London, 9)*

*"well, I've got my own house keys, so I wouldn't like really need to come here, but at the moment the house key is under a pile of junk in my room, I only use it if it's like really necessary, cos I can come here" (Louise, East of England, 10)*

Many parents of older children questioned whether a formal, care based service was suitable for older, increasingly independent and autonomous users. Indeed many of these users were already using other services for older children and young people. As these parents comment:

*"(the club) helped them make new friends. They meet up with others who use the club, and they go to youth club together" (South West, parent)*

*"Meets some of (her friends) outside the club.... when they go to youth club or other activities" (South West, parent)*

A parent of one former user discussed how her son had enjoyed his time at the club but had 'grown out of it':

*"he started secondary school, just a few months from leaving the junior school to being at college, he's growing up very very quickly, and basically he's really enjoying college and out of school care was something that was really important to him while he was a junior, but now he's moved on to college. He doesn't miss it, now he's ready for different things" (parent of former user, East of England)*

This is not to say that all older children had negative experiences of OOSC. Some older children did enjoy the service, and discussed how they were not looking forward to stopping attending:

*"and I am really not looking forward to going to the college next year so we don't come here" (Louise, East of England, 10)*

### 8.5 A specialist service for children aged 11-14

One of the clubs visited in the research provided OOSC for 11-14 year olds in a secondary school environment. Whilst the club was originally set up to provide integrated learning and care, over

time the service had adapted to become a more youth service oriented club to reflect the needs of its users.

The club was very highly regarded by the young people attending, and followed a distinctive model from many of the clubs providing services for primary school children:

- Unlike many clubs catering for primary school children whose parents were in paid employment, most of the users were self selecting. This in effect means that a lower proportion of school pupils were using the club compared to the other clubs visited in the research (70 per week out of 1000 roll). The young people who did attend the club had made their own choice to attend because of the opportunities to play and spend time with friends. This is also backed up the fact that none of the parents noted a positive labour market impact since their child has begun using the club.

- Furthermore, the playleader was a youth worker with experience of working with the secondary school age group. The club was much more informal than the others visited during the research, with young people given more autonomy to choose their own activities, prepare food and play music, as well as not having to wear their school uniform at the club.

- Additionally, the club was managed by the headteacher of the school, who allowed the club to use much of the school. Thus, the club was able to benefit from using a wide range of the equipment and space of the school, as well as drawing upon the technical expertise of some of the teaching staff to provide longer term projects such as car building and TV broadcasting. The club regularly also organised off site after school trips to a variety of places in the locality.

## 9. Minority ethnic children and their families

**Summary**
Minority ethnic families report similar impacts from OOSC as other families, in terms of friendships, relationships with playworkers, opportunities to play, social skills and self confidence and learning through play. Minority ethnic families report additional impacts, in that at least some clubs attempt to respond to diverse cultural needs, and also promote wider cultural diversity.

The research observed some examples of very good practice. Some clubs make a concerted effort to employ playworkers reflecting the ethnic diversity of their users. Many playworkers employ a variety of measures to implement cultural diversity and multi-culturalism, through for example, promoting diets and festivals from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds. Other clubs achieve this through day to day activities, and possess equipment reflecting the ethnic diversity of its users.

However, in some clubs, equal opportunities are not being implemented in practice. In clubs with predominantly and sometimes exclusively white users, multi-culturalism is absent and is not seen as appropriate for the area.

Although this was a small scale, qualitative study, it identified at least two minority ethnic groups that are not using their local out of school club. There may well be a number of cultural and financial barriers which prevent these families from accessing the service.

Minority ethnic children attended five of the six clubs visited by the researchers. A total of 43% (n=32) of parents responding to the survey were from an minority ethnic background, and were predominantly families using the clubs in London and the West of England. Minority ethnic users recorded no significant differences in terms of general perception of the service and the impact it can have upon children and families (see sections 4 and 5). However, minority ethnic families did indicate that the service can offer *additional* impacts to minority ethnic children.

### 9.1 Promoting inclusion through multi-cultural playworkers
Two of the three clubs with a significant proportion of minority ethnic users had staff which reflected the ethnic background of the families using the service. The other was staffed predominantly by white playworkers although up to 50% of the children were African-Caribbean. Employing playworkers from variety of ethnic backgrounds was seen as a positive initiative to promote the use of the service amongst minority ethnic families, and to promote positive images of different ethnic groups:

*"the staff reflect the community, the school community…. they'll actually be able to talk to (children) about the sorts of things, like today is Diwali" (Outer London, headteacher)*

*"Well we're quite lucky that most of our staff know the different religions because they're part of it.. and so we always do a project on religions…we've found out as much as we can about the different religions and follow them all and do something for all of them.. so they're learning, and one child actually said to me yesterday, I don't celebrate Diwali but I'm going to a Diwali party" (Outer London, playworker)*

### 9.2 Activities and equipment
The three clubs with a multi-cultural profile of users responded to and reflected the diverse groups in a variety of ways, including diet, celebration of festivals and activities. These responses had two related impacts. Firstly they reflected the needs of different minority ethnic users, focusing the service to a diverse range of needs. Secondly, this helped to promote and encourage multi-culturalism and diversity amongst all users. The playworkers achieved the two

related impacts through a number of day to day practices. One club was able to draw upon the specialist skills of its playworkers who prepared a variety of foods that both reflected religious diets, as well as promoting diversity. This diverse diet was popular amongst children and parents:

*"the ethnic mix of food is also educational" (Outer London, parent, Indian)*

*"they get to taste different foods from different parts of the world" (Outer London, parent, Indian)*

In another club, children and playworkers had designed a non-denominational blessing for food that was seen as suitable for all. Children enjoyed being part of promoting cultural diversity:

*"with the blessings and that, it isn't them (the playworkers) who said we have to do it we chose it and it's not for a certain thing.. it's not for English people only, that's why you say 'oh um.. breathe in, breathe out, breathe in' to calm us down and we go 'blessings on our snacks, peace on our heart and peace in the world' so it's not really anyone's like" (Jane, South West, 10, white)*

Another practice adopted by one of the clubs was to promote and celebrate different religious festivals. Once more, this was illustrated by parents as a positive feature of the club:

*"she learns a lot about multi-cultural festivals, then she comes home and tells the rest of the family what its all about" (Outer London, parent, Indian)*

In all three clubs, multi-culturalism was also promoted through various activities and equipment. One club had books and toys which reflected the multi-cultural setting of the club. Another club drew upon the specialist skills of its multi-cultural playworkers and organised mehndi painting and Bangra dancing lessons:

*"They have lots of activities and have other people and cultures represented like when they learned Bangra so others can enjoy it as well" (Outer London, parent, Indian)*

### 9.3 Valuing multi-culturalism
Most respondents recognised these efforts as valuable and successful:

*"I reckon.. I.. the thing I reckon that make's this club good is that we have loads of different religions and well all just join together. We all have a laugh" (Jane, South West, 10, white)*

*"I think its good. You learn more about other religions" (Sangitta, Outer London, 8, Indian)*

*"(the club) has something to offer to different cultures" (Outer London, parent, Indian)*

*"they love it, love the culture and the attitude, it's brilliant. (It's) multi-cultural, very good for the children to be aware of that. Children get to mix with different people, that's very important, get an awareness of multi-cultural issues and get to taste every lifestyle" (South West, parent, white)*

*"You know, they do like the fact that their children are mixing. Some of them are learning ..some of them that don't speak a lot of English. We had one little girl that didn't speak hardly any English when she came and within weeks she was chatting away and I think that happens quicker here than in the classroom, you know, just with them doing it" (Outer London, playworker)*

These are some examples of good practice which illustrate both an ability to respond to and reflect the needs of users from diverse ethnic backgrounds as well as promoting a wider sense of multi-culturalism.

### 9.4 Limitations to multi-culturalism
Each club embraced multi-culturalism in different ways, partly in response to its users, the socio-demographics of the location, the ethnic profile of playworkers and their relevant skills and

confidence to promote ethnic diversity. One club in particular, whilst having an equal opportunities policy on the wall, and posters proclaiming diversity and difference, did not appear to implement this within its day to day practices during the researchers' visit. The two other clubs were much more visible in the extent to which they actively promoted multi-culturalism.

Furthermore, in the other three clubs the overwhelming proportion of users and playworkers were white, reflecting the demography of the area. In these clubs, multi-culturalism was largely noticeably absent, both on the walls and in day to day practices. Table 9 below illustrates the different responses to multi- culturalism across the six clubs visited:

**Table 9: Ethnicity and Multi-Culturalism in Clubs**

| Location | Staff | Families | Equal opportunities (statements, posters etc) | Implementation (through activities etc) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Outer London, Inner London* | Multi-ethnic | Mainly minority ethnic | Yes | Yes |
| *South West* | White | Some minority ethnic | Yes | No |
| *East of England (I+II), South East* | White | Mostly white | Limited | No |

### 9.5 Impact on minority ethnic parents
There was no difference in labour market participation rates amongst different ethnic groups (81%, n=58). Similarly, amongst those responding to the questionnaire survey, there was no difference in the rate of uptake of the WTFC amongst families from different ethnic groups. However, 32% (n=8) of minority ethnic families report a positive labour market impact, compared with 44% (n=17) of white families.

### 9.6 Barriers to use
Furthermore, there is also evidence that even clubs with users from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds fail to attract the full ethnic diversity of the local population. One club was located in a school with a significant minority of Somali pupils, although no Somali families were currently accessing the service. Two possible reasons were given for their non-uptake of the service. The first was financial, in that the club was primarily for working parents, and many of the Somali families were refugees. No funding was available to enable these families to access the service. This relates to the wider issue that minority ethnic families are more likely to be in poverty so are more likely to suffer from financial barriers to accessing the service as identified in section 10.

The second explanation was cultural, in that these Somali families may not see the club as an appropriate resource. This was the reason given in another club where a significant proportion of the local population were Bangladeshi, although none used the out of school club. This playworker explains:

*"There are Asian families in the school, but...at the moment we have no Asian children in the after school club...I can only reflect on what is happening in other parts of the borough with large Asian communities. Those after school clubs find it very difficult as well. Even putting Asian staff in those centres, that doesn't work to bring Asian families in. From what I know, the parents prefer them to go home. We have a few Muslim children here, Turkish and Cypriot, rather than Bangladeshi. And its great we have that mix. But, in terms of representation we are really badly represented here in Asian families, and its something we should do outreach almost, trying to tap into local Asian groups, so we can have some use, That's not to say that we never have had any Asian families, I think last year we had one or two" (playworker, Inner London).*

However, it should be noted that barriers to use were not a focus of this research and so more research is need to ascertain why these groups are not using clubs to the same extent as others.

## 10. Children and families in areas of deprivation

**Summary**
OOSC potentially has a very significant role to play in helping families in areas of deprivation. The service impacts on children in a wide variety of ways, but particularly in terms of gaining access to equipment and space to play which are often not available elsewhere.

Families report positive economic and non-economic impacts. Almost one quarter of the sample (22%) were benefiting from the WFTC, although this rises to 33% in some clubs in areas of deprivation. However, in some of the clubs in areas of deprivation, users are less likely to report positive labour market impacts than in more affluent areas.

Families also reported a wide variety of non-economic impacts, including using the service to help cope with immediate crisis or over a longer term to provide respite, and by providing emotional support and information regarding other services.

However, the research has also revealed that in some cases, services provided in areas of deprivation are used predominantly by more affluent families. Playworkers comment that the financial realities of running a club without core funding means that access to the service often rests on ability to pay. Therefore, there are a number of financial barriers which prevent both working and non-working families in areas of deprivation from accessing the service. Therefore, whilst the service has its greatest potential positive impact in supporting low income families, such families are clearly sometimes excluded from accessing the service.

Four of the clubs taking part in the research were located in areas of deprivation. Although each location was distinct, all had high unemployment rates, low incomes and poor housing stock. Two of the clubs were in Surestart areas. For the purposes of this research, the term 'area of deprivation' refers to clubs situated in the top 25% deprived wards in England.

### 10.1 The impact on children
Many of the impacts of the service upon children identified by respondents were similar to those in more affluent areas. However there were two particular impacts which clearly had a more significant and positive impact in areas of deprivation. Whilst children from all the clubs enjoyed the opportunity to access resources such as equipment (see section 4.3) this appeared to be particularly valued in areas of deprivation. As these children commented:

*"Yeah drawing, painting cos I haven't got any drawing and painting at home, have I? Yeah there's quite a lot stuff. Pictures cos I haven't got no paper at home" (Claire, Goucester, 6)*

*"They don't have many things to do at home, and they have so much more stuff here for them, to play, make and try things, great activities, days out etc" (parent, Inner London)*

Similarly, the role of OOSC in providing space for children to play was seen as particularly important in areas of deprivation. In one of the areas visited by the research, the housing stock consisted primarily of high rise flats. Some families described how they valued the out of school club since there was little space at home, either indoors or outdoors for children to play:

*"(There's) not much space for them to play at home.. a two bedroom flat doesn't have much space, so coming to the club gets them out and gives them a place to play" (parent, Inner London)*

*"the flat is so small that they couldn't get out to play. We live upstairs so no place for her to play" (lone parent, Inner London)*

*"At home (they) have little space to play and no outside space, whereas here they have both"* (Outer London, parent)

Therefore, due to a lack of suitable space either at home or in the local neighbourhood, OOSC has a very positive impact in areas of deprivation in creating a dedicated, safe place for children to play.

There was no evidence to suggest that the impact of the service in areas of deprivation in terms of children's social skills, self confidence, or attitude to being in school was different to the impact of the service in more affluent areas.

**10.2 The impact on families**
The research identified a number of ways in which OOSC can support families living in areas of deprivation. Indeed, in many clubs in these areas, the impact on families was more significant than in more affluent areas. The impacts were both economic and non-economic:

**10.2.1 Economic impact on families**
Whilst 36% of the overall sample reported a positive labour market impact, this varied between individual clubs. In the club for 11-14 year olds, none of the parents reported a positive labour market impact, reflecting the fact that the model of the club focused upon the needs of the young person rather than the economic needs of the parent. In other clubs, the proportion reporting a positive labour market impact varied between 17% and 60%, although low response rates mean these figures should be treated with caution. Most significantly, two clubs in areas of deprivation reported lower rates of positive labour market impacts (between 17% and 35%) than clubs in more affluent areas. However, this does not simply mean that low income families are less likely to report positive labour market impacts. As section 10.3 discusses, in one club in an area of deprivation, the low rates of positive labour market impact were due to the fact that many of the users were more affluent, dual income earner families who were already working.

**10.2.2 Uptake of Working Family Tax Credit**
22% (n=16) of the questionnaire respondents were receiving WFTC to help pay for OOSC. This rate of take up is higher than those found by other contemporary research (SQW and OSCRU, 2002) suggesting that either the rates of take up are increasing, or rather that take up is higher in the sample which is drawn predominantly from areas of deprivation. In addition, 8% (n=6) of respondents had subsidised places, mostly from the local authority. The majority (67%, n=49) were receiving no financial assistance. However, once more this varied from location to location. In two clubs in areas of deprivation, a lower proportion of users paid the full fee (between 50% and 60% of users). In two clubs, one third (33%) of families accessed WFTC. In one other club in an area of deprivation, all users paid 100% of the fee, reflecting in this case the more affluent, dual- income families who used the service.

The average fee for the six clubs visited in the research was £1 per hour. The most expensive was £5 per session. Despite forms of assistance such as the WFTC, several respondents stated that they had difficulties affording OOSC. One parent commented *'it has been difficult to pay the club fees as we received no financial help'*.

**10.2.3 Non-economic impacts on families**
The non-economic impacts of OOSC (for example, providing practical and emotional support for families) was particularly significant in areas of deprivation. One club in particular was accessed by a high proportion of non-working parents. In this club, one quarter (25%, n=8) of the users were in non-working families. In this club, families often accessed the service to help support them through acute crises, or to have regular time out for children or parents (see section 7.2).

In addition to the practical support of providing childcare to enable parents to deal with acute crises, playworkers were, in some clubs, a source of informal emotional support for parents.

Respondents discussed how playworkers fulfilled this role in a number of ways, including discussing problems with parents, and helping to refer parents to a wide variety of other support services.

### 10.2.4 Listening to parents
In two clubs visited during the research, it was noted that as parents or carers came to collect their children they often sat chatting to each other or to staff in a very relaxed atmosphere. This time for parents to sit and chat was seen to provide an informal *'support network',* as the club manager commented:

*'"We get to know our parents really well.. Sometimes I have to go away into a corner and talk to Mum for half an hour, if she's up to here in problems. And that's fine. That's the way in which we support our children" (playworker, Inner London)*

Parents also spoke very positively about this role of providing a listening ear:

*"the staff are very helpful, they ask her if I'm ok, and are very approachable and you can always talk to them" (parent, Inner London)*

*"if I have a problem then I can go to the helpers'. Helpers are very good and will give parents time if needed" (single parent, Inner London)*

Another mother mentioned that *"staff are good to talk and very supportive when you've got a problem as well as when the child has got a problem" (parent, Inner London)*

Another club also attempted to support parents in a number of ways:

*"It tends to be [the after school club leader] who does that most of the time, and then she will refer things to me if there are any difficulties, if there are any child protection issues, if there's difficulties or issues and then I will come in and support her, discuss it with her and say are you happy with how you are dealing with that? /…/We've had parents, you know, one mum who broke her arm who was laid off work as a result of it, and we continued to take the child one night a week so that she could get a bit of respite and everything. And [the after school club leader] at the moment has started doing a counselling course this year, …, I mean she's brilliant at it now, but has more tools at her disposal to do that" (headteacher, South East)*

### 10.2.5 Helping to refer parents to other services
In two clubs, the playworkers discussed how they themselves referred families (either informally or formally) to other services available to support them. One club located in the local community centre had a range of services available to families:

*"And we also offer parenting courses [i.e. at the community centre] for people with children under the age of 5 which doesn't so much affect the after school club but may do if they've got younger ones. And they're free. We offer computer training one morning a week, the computer bus comes, and that can help people get back into Jobsearch. And then after Christmas we're offering a 'Breaking through the barriers' course, again free, with a creche, the after school club leader is helping me run than, that's a confidence building course, maybe to put people back into the first steps where they've had difficulties, or they're just looking to go back to work, so then we'll see the children" (playworker, East of England)*

Similarly, playworkers in another club saw providing information and referring parents to other services as a key part of the service they offered. The manager said:

*"… it is also there to support, for someone to come to ask for information. For example, we've been asked about where to get bereavement counselling. If they have a problem where can they*

*go. And I see that as part of my job, to support a child you support a parent, to help them through a crisis" (playworker, Inner London)*

Thus, there are a number of ways in which OOSC has a particularly significant role to play in supporting families in areas of deprivation, not only by providing childcare whilst parents are in paid employment, but also by providing emotional support and information regarding other services. However, as the following section highlights, there are a number of issues which influence whether families are able to benefit from the positive impacts that OOSC can offer.

**10.3 Barriers to use**
Of the four clubs in areas of deprivation, two explicitly stated that they targeted low income families within these areas:

*"we try to cater for this area.. the more run down area and parents that are on a low income or maybe single parents" (playworker, South West)*

*"mainly the children come from the large (public) housing estates that surround the school. It's changed over the past ten years, with the ownership of housing, so we're getting more of a mix, but its still predominantly from the local housing estates" (playworker, Inner London).*

However, the majority of users of the two other clubs in areas of deprivation were relatively affluent parents, frequently dual earner families. These families often travelled from more affluent areas to make use of the club. One playworker commented:

*"they're working families who need childcare because they can't get here at half past three" (playworker, Outer London)*

There are a number of reasons which explain why more affluent families were using services targeted towards areas of deprivation. In one such club, the centre manager was concerned that the majority of parents were working full-time and were relatively affluent. She explained the necessity of having affluent users who can pay the full fee (£5 per session) to financially support the club:

*"Because of the area we're in, which is a traditional council estate area, we can't charge very much money, because we want everybody to be able to attend if they can, and it's very hard for us to fund raise, and again because a lot of people don't have that much money. In terms of the profile of the children that come to the club, it is not a huge percentage of children off of the estate, it is not the children from the low income families, in general. Because we are so stretched that we can't top up free places at the moment as much as we'd like to. The lower income families … maybe want to work a couple of nights a week, but then they can't claim the WFTC because they're not working enough hours, so they're actually falling through the net, so therefore, they can't claim it and therefore their children can't come, because they just can't afford it. We can't afford to give the subsidised rates, because we're not getting any sorts of subsidies from elsewhere, and secondly because since the minimum wage has come in, which [has meant that] our costs have gone up so much over the last 18 months/2 years, have gone up significantly, staff costs, and therefore the only thing we can pass it on to are parents, and all we aim to do is break even" (playworker, East of England)*

Five of the clubs had received start up funds from the Out of School Childcare Initiative or from the New Opportunities Fund. These clubs were now mostly reliant upon parental fees, with some support from their local EYDCP. Many playworkers commented on the particular difficulty of trying to operate a financially sustainable club in an area of deprivation:

*"And there are a lot of after school clubs who have had the start up funding and are now having major difficulties sustaining themselves. They really need some proper core funding, and all*

*people will give you is start up funding, or funding if you're providing a new service. But you can't keep expanding your service unless the core is secure" (playworker, East of England)*

Thus, the financial realities of running an out of school club often results in access to the service resting on ability to pay, rather than those who might benefit most from the service. This was particularly true for voluntary committee run clubs with no core funding. The only club in an area of deprivation not to face the problem of generating sufficient revenue was run by a local authority and hence had core funding.

However, this was not the only barrier to use. One club in an area of deprivation had a policy which required users to attend full time:

*"we had people that just wanted to use it just to give their children a social life, but we don't have the places. When we started we could take children for a couple of days and a lot of people thought 'the children can come and play for a couple of days' but now we can only take full-time, every single week, so it is generally now for working people" (playworker, Outer London)*

These kinds of policies, whilst providing valuable services for working parents and generating a reliable and sustainable income from fees for clubs, can exclude non-working families from the service. Requiring full time attendance also means the service cannot be flexible nor respond to the wide variety of economic and non-economic circumstances which may require short term, or part time care.

Thus, the existence of services in areas of deprivation does not necessarily mean they are accessible to low income families. For example, non-working families, who might benefit from the service in providing practical and emotional support are not eligible for WFTC. Table 10 below illustrates across the six clubs the different profile of users and the impact of the service:

**Table 10: User groups and Impact of the Service in Areas of Deprivation**

| Location | Indexes of deprivation (out of 8474)* | Service focused for economic impact | Users reporting economic benefits | Respond to short term demand for care | Accessed by non-working families |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Inner London* | 376 | No | Low income | Yes | Yes |
| *Outer London* | 2264 | Yes | Affluent | No | No |
| *South West* | 1407 | Yes | Low income | Yes | No |
| *East of England* | 5125 | Yes | Affluent | No | No |
| *East of England II* | 5341 | No | None | Yes | Yes |
| *South East* | 1890 | yes | Mixed | Yes | Yes |

*where 1 is most deprived, 8474 is least deprived

## 11. Children with special educational needs

**Summary**

OOSC has a wide range of potential positive impacts for children with SEN. It can help to widen children's social circles and offer them more time to play in a well resourced environment. Respondents also gave evidence to demonstrate how it can improve self confidence and social skills. Whilst these impacts are also true for non SEN users, the impact was seen to be particularly significant for children with SEN. The service also provides respite care which benefits parents and siblings. However there are a number of financial and non-financial barriers which can prevent children with SEN from accessing the service and benefiting from it in these ways.

Four of the six clubs visited in the research had children with SEN attending. There was a wide range of SEN, from behavioural issues to physical disabilities. Many children with SEN stated that they enjoyed spending time in their out of school club:

*"(I feel) all right. I feel that I've had a good day at after school club" (Jack, South East, 8)*

Respondents identified a wide range of ways in which the service impacts upon children with SEN and their families.

### 11.1 Friendships
The service gave children with SEN a valued opportunity to spend time with and meet new friends. Whilst this was also described by non SEN users (see section 4.1) it was seen to have a particularly important impact for children with SEN. One club located in a non SEN school also had children attending from the local SEN school. The children with SEN enjoyed spending time in the club:

*"Well when I was.. when I was first started.. yeah and I never met that many people.. that was my favourite bit" (Pete, South East, 6)*

*"The reason I like coming is cos James is around, cos I can play with James" (Shaun, South East, 9)*

Thus in providing integrated care, the club enabled children with SEN to make new friends and widen their social circles.

### 11.2 Playworkers
Playworkers were seen to have a crucial role in realising the potential impact of the service on children with SEN. Playworkers possessed particular skills which enabled them to work effectively to ensure children with SEN enjoyed themselves and gained maximum benefit from being in the club:

*"Staff are very understanding. (My) son can be difficult but staff engage with him. Staff always treat him well. Even if he's been bad at school they don't punish him for that in the after school club, he starts afresh here. Staff are very understanding, know him well and how to deal with him. Very patient with him. They will sit and chat honestly about him to (me). They are helping him move on and he's learnt a lot from being here" (Parent of SEN child, Inner London)*

*"I think definitely like our special needs children who've come from outside school, I know James when he first came, there is times when he does, you know, he's very agitated.. We have to calm him down in that respect" (playworker, South East)*

Thus playworkers had a very important role to play in enabling children with SEN to benefit from the service. In some instances, playworkers were supplemented by other support workers, or one to one workers, although these often required additional resources. Playworkers communicated with other staff working with children with SEN to ensure continuity of care and support.

## 11.3 Resources

In addition to playworkers being a valuable resource, respondents also discussed the other resources, such as specialist equipment, which enabled children with SEN to take part in play and enjoy themselves. As one boy described the equipment for his friend with SEN:

*"they've made lots of electronic toys for him…and we buy different materials for him" (John, South East, 9)*

Thus, specialist equipment has a very important role to play in facilitating SEN children's enjoyment of their club. Whilst some clubs were able to draw upon the specialist equipment located in schools or in play libraries, others had attempted to secure funding to purchase this equipment.

## 11.4 Confidence and social skills

Furthermore, the service was seen to promote self confidence and social skills amongst children with SEN. Whilst this echoes the experience of non SEN users (see section 4.4) it was particularly significant for children with SEN:

*"(my) younger daughter is special needs, and she gets lots of encouragement, and they've both become more independent for themselves since they've been coming" (parent, Inner London)*

*"One of the recommendations by the consultant was that he (autistic child) should integrate with children of his own age…Child did not have a lot of speech, it was quite difficult for him, he came a little bit later than the other children, after they had had a snack, and it was hard from him to begin with because of the rules of sitting, waiting his turn, but he soon learnt. He did play with the other children and didn't spend all his time with his carer. It was good for the other children too, and he learned very quickly how to deal with them" (parent, East of England)*

Playworkers gave testimonies to illustrate the positive impact of the service upon the self confidence and social skills of children with SEN:

*"And he had no speech when he first came, and he now has some speech, and you know, he'll play badminton with them, and you know, that really improved on everybody" (playworker, East of England)*

*"Other SEN children have learnt more about sharing and love the after school club, children mix with a diverse range of children and do not stand out as being different" (playworker, South East)*

*"I've seen an improvement with special needs children, also one of our own children that had a .. had a (behavioural problem) its helped his social side" (playworker, South East)*

*"James who has severe disabilities is now able to recognise more people… One boy with special needs felt special himself helping out and learning about James' needs. Integration of special needs children has helped greatly with learning and social skills" (playworker, South East)*

## 11.5 Impact on other children

The impacts of the service were not only experienced by children with SEN but were also felt by non SEN children who were able to spend time playing with children with SEN. Respondents discussed the positive impact of integrated care:

*"James mostly taught us how to.. watch his wheelchair and she (his helper) teaches him how to er.. count like um.. how to have like a musical mind so she lets him have a go on the piano and… and it's really interesting" (John, South East, 9)*

*"Other children, a small group of boys in particular have learnt how to push his wheelchair and other communication and care skills...it removes stigmas and allows children to look at different people in a different light" (Parent, South East)*

*"we had three different children who came in on different nights of the week, one had quite severe ADD and two were autistic, one quite severely autistic on the spectrum. That increased the confidence of the children quite a lot in dealing with people who've got SN" (playworker, East of England)*

*"I know our children have um.. benefited greatly from James who is severely mentally handicapped and physically handicapped as well. They've learnt a lot through like spending time with him and I know some of the previous year four children went to his birthday party. So I think, you know, in that respect that they've learnt a lot to be able to cope with other people as well" (playworker, South East)*

## 11.6 Impact on families
The service not only had a positive impact upon children with SEN but also their families. There is no difference in labour market participation rates for families of children with or without SEN. Many families stated that the club provided respite care, in enabling parents and carers to have time out from their caring responsibilities:

*"It provides respite care. Before her son attended the club she looked after him all the time, so she now has more time to herself. She feels this has helped their relationship" (notes from informal conversation with South East, parent)*

In some cases this also had a positive impact upon siblings of children with SEN:

*"these families all had other children, and it was to give them one night a week, after school, to spend some time with their other children, because that must be so difficult if you've got a special needs child" (playworker, East of England)*

*"The club meant that she (mother) could spend 'quality time' (her words) with her other two children" (notes from informal conversation with parent, East of England)*

## 11.7 Barriers to use
However, there were some barriers which prevented some families from experiencing these impacts. Four of the six clubs visited in the research were wheelchair accessible:

*"her daughter broke her leg in February, again she came here, it was fine, they picked her up from her classroom in her wheel chair, and they accommodated her here, fine. She could get in and out of the building, and the toilet, she came in in her wheelchair, and that was fine" (notes from interview with parent of former user, East of England).*

However the other two clubs visited in the research were not wheelchair accessible. One other was only accessible via a narrow pathway that could not accommodate a chair, whilst the other was on the first floor and had no lift. Thus accessibility is a significant barrier for some clubs.

A second significant barrier preventing the delivery of services for children with SEN concerns funding. Some funding initiatives have recognised that SEN provision requires additional resources than other provision for a variety of reasons. In some cases, children with SEN require additional care in the form of staff. Premises may need adapting. Specialist equipment may be needed. None of the parents of children with SEN reported financial assistance with their

childcare costs. Service providers found it increasingly problematic to sustain a viable integrated service which provided well resourced care for special needs children:

*"Unfortunately, we applied for it (special needs funding) for three years but only got one years funding because they said it wasn't sustainable, I would like to see any special needs projects that actually are sustainable…you know. It was fantastic for a year but unfortunately after the year we had to say to these parents, well, "I'm sorry but we can no longer take your children", and that was really terrible, and I believe in each club, you know, if we are talking about equal opportunities, then there should be funding to make these sustainable" (playworker, East of England)*

## 12. School based out of school care

**Summary**
Schools are becoming an increasingly significant site for the location of after school clubs. Some schools recognise the added value of OOSC. This research has mapped out the complex dimensions which indicate a variety of possible relationships between school and club. Whilst some clubs remain relatively autonomous with distinct philosophies, administration, staffing and day to day practices, others tend to reproduce those that operate within the school day. Whilst neither is inherently better or worse, there are implications in terms of the kinds of services that are experienced by children and parents on a daily basis.

Schools are increasingly important sites for the location of after school clubs. During the research, it became clear that there are a variety of viewpoints on the philosophy of OOSC and whether it links with the formal school day (see table 11 for summary). Some respondents clearly expressed how the service was distinct from the role of the school, even though it shared the same premises:

*"the National Curriculum these days is so rigid for the children, that there Isn't actually enough time for them to play and that side of development within the curriculum, and we actually try to offer things that they no longer get at school within the National Curriculum. That's right, and there's lots of things for imaginative play, there's a life skills corner, there's dressing up clothes, and we've got all the equal opps equipment, and everything as well"* (playworker, East of England)

Some clubs were staffed by playworkers from non school backgrounds, mainly by those who worked in other care or youth work settings. Some club organisers valued the distinctive qualities that playworkers offer, and the more informal playworker- children relationships, such as children calling playworkers by their first name. Another innovative way one club used to mark the distinction between school and club was by enabling children to change out of their uniform after school. This was very popular amongst children and most did change their clothes. Because of the lower adult-child ratio, children also discussed how they enjoyed the fact that playworkers had more time to communicate with children than formal teachers:

*"Staff at the moment have play skills but not real education skills. Lots of teaching staff are interested in taking part in the club but don't have non teaching skills like the current staff (youth worker and LSA) do. Many teachers find it difficult to cross the 3pm divide and work with young people in a different way to how they do in school. Some teachers are better at facilitating play than others"* (headteacher, East of England II)

*"Yeah. So they (playworkers) actually think about you. They have more time with you cos the teachers usually.. usually have two teachers in our class but they have to go round the whole school"* (Tanya, South West, 10)

However, some children also mentioned that they found it difficult to make the transition between the different sets of expectations between school and out of school. One particular example concerns how children had to address playworkers by they surname during the school day if they also worked in the school:

*"(at school) no, you have to call her Miss......you forget and you call her Julie, and she goes sshhh, I'm Miss now "* (Jane, East of England II, 12)

*"and even one child throughout the whole of the infants..(he) found it quite difficult to change his behaviour from different sessions. If you go to (the club).. it's not a school. Its .. its a social*

*event... but in school you have to do things in a different way and there are more restraints if you like, I suppose. We've had some children who've found that really, really difficult to cope with" (Outer London, headteacher)*

However the distinctiveness between club and school was not apparent in all clubs. In two of the clubs visited, the philosophy, rules, staff and expectations about behaviour and rules were similar to those of the school day. One playworker perceived the club to be an extension of the school day. In one club, the rules were the same as during the school day, and in two clubs, children were required to address playworkers formally as Miss, Mrs or Mr. Furthermore, two of the schools had a policy to recruit playworkers who were also employed by the school during the school day:

*"all except the play leader, they are all mid day supervisors for the students, so they're all very much a part of the school community" (Outer London, headteacher)*

*"(the name of the club) is part of the school's phrase. …that's the school's motto really... So its just carry on the ethos within the school as well, and the high expectations we have within the school is carried on within the after.. within the club as well" (playworker, South East)*

Out of the six clubs visited, two of the clubs were administered by the headteacher of the school. In another, a playworker commented that the administration of the club was now the responsibility of the education department:

*"They put us in the education department, which meant we then had obligations to do curriculum based activities which has made a huge difference to the after school service. I think it is now much more professional and the expectations are higher" (playworker, Inner London)*

Use of space is another dimension to explore in the complex relationship between school and OOSC. Amongst the four clubs in the research that were based within schools, two had access to a significant amount of school space. In both cases, each had its own dedicated OOSC space as a base, but was able to use a variety of other school spaces, including individual classrooms, IT suites, as well as halls and playgrounds. This gave the clubs access to a significant variety of resources both equipment and space. One playworker explained how a positive working relationship between school and out of school had enabled this to occur:

*"we are very lucky with our accommodation. I think its because of that good relationship and the school realising the worth of the after school club, and the work of the after school club, that it is like this., A lot of other clubs, teachers are very territorial. Some are here, its annoying if you want to go in your classroom and work till 5, or if something gets touched in your classroom,. But these are the children that they have in school all day, that's my argument. They do not suddenly change at quarter past 3. We are working with the same children, it's a community building, serving the community" (playworker, Inner London)*

Good working relationships between another OOSC club and the school in which it was located had enabled the club to benefit from using some of the school's office resources, a relationship the head-teacher was keen to foster:

*"there are things like facilities.. they don't have their own photocopier and you wouldn't expect them to so…they've got access to ours and we charge them. It not a hassle because they want it when most of our staff have .. not gone home but they're in their classrooms working, so that doesn't overrun or interrupt… if I was the sort of head that said 'I'm sorry you don't touch any of that' the whole system wouldn't work as well as it does" (Outer London, headteacher)*

Thus, the out of school club was able to benefit from the wider resources of the school. Headteachers and other school staff recognised the value of the out of school club and the contribution it makes to school life in general. Headteachers and playworkers in many of the clubs

visited discussed how the school was benefiting from having an attached out of school club. An out of school club helps to boost interest in and applications to the school, as these headteachers commented:

*"its got children into our school because we have an (after school club). No doubt about it. 'We've applied to your school because we want the after care' .. They come here because of after care some of them. So it boosts the numbers" (Outer London, headteacher)*

*"And I know parents have actually brought children to come to this school.. because of the facilities of the breakfast club and the after school club so it has been an attraction to actually increase numbers and also some of the like parents at pre-school um.. know that once their children are four they can come along and join as well" (headteacher, South East)*

Positive collaborative working relationships between school and club can be extremely beneficial for children, families and schools. Two playworkers described the different ways in which they had developed effective channels of communication which helped to support children and enabled them to get the most out of OOSC and the school more generally. Whilst this was seen to support all groups of children, it was seen as particularly beneficial for children with SEN and children from vulnerable families:

*"we look at the behaviour issues and we look at like children's learning. Everybody knows what's happening so if any of the issues have happened within a day with a child they're passed on after school so it's the smooth transition. So anything that comes up we're able to deal with because of the, you know, even though it is separate…it's very much a part of the school" (playworker, South East)*

*"We share the building, we talk a lot with the school, with teachers and the home support worker. There is a whole support network here for them... With their permission, we feed back stuff to the school, we can get them help, get them in touch with the home support worker" (playworker, Inner London)*

Table 11 summarises the different relationships between school and out of school club in the six clubs visited in the research.

**Table 11: Characteristics of school based out of school care**

| Location | Premises | Philosophy | Rules | Administration | Staffing | Children on first name terms with staff | Use of school space |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Inner London, East of England II* | School | Distinct to School | Distinct to School | Non School/ School | School/ Non School | Yes | Large amount |
| *South East, Outer London* | School | Same as School | Same as School | Non School/ School | School | No | Limited |
| *East of England, South West* | Not School | Distinct to School | Distinct to School | Non School | Non School | Yes | None |

## 13. Policy implications and suggestions for further research

This chapter outlines the key points of the research and discusses possible policy implications arising from each of the issues raised. Whilst this research highlights a number of issues relevant to the development of OOSC, it also raises a number of issues which require further exploration. Given that this is a small scale, qualitative study, we recommend further research to investigate the relevant issues in more depth.

### 13.1 Positive social, educational and economic impact on children and families

From the research, we have identified that:

- out of school care has a positive social and educational impact on children

- out of school care has a positive economic impact on families, with one third of parents reporting a positive impact on labour market participation

- out of school care also has a positive non economic impact on families, including providing respite care, and crisis support during stressful episodes such as illness and bereavement

These points suggest that out of school care has a wide range of positive impacts upon children and families.

*Policy Recommendations*
- Expenditure on developing out of school care may well lead to a variety of positive social, educational and economic outcomes for families.

- These positive impacts may particularly benefit groups already at greater risk of social exclusion, such as minority ethnic families, children with SEN and families in areas of deprivation.

*Further Research*
The clubs selected to take part in the research were purposefully chosen as examples of good practice. This enabled the research to explore the fullest potential impacts of the service. Thus, the results should be interpreted with this in mind. Further research on a wider scale would be beneficial in order to:

- Provide more large scale, longitudinal data to provide information about the actual impact of OOSC on children over a longer period. This would be able to provide reliable information on the possible impact of the service over the longer term, for example in reducing crime, anti-social behaviour, teenage pregnancy etc.

- Establish, drawing on from this research and the National Standards, a series of benchmarks of good practice which may indicate how to maximise the positive impacts on children.

- Identify barriers clubs face in offering the most positive impacts on children, and to identify possible practical solutions which can enhance the quality of clubs and thereby increase their potential impact on children and families.

- Examine the patterns of impact of other sessions of OOSC, for example, breakfast clubs, half term clubs and summer holiday clubs, and to examine whether each form of OOSC has distinct or additional potential impacts.

**13.2 Schools**

The research highlights that schools are becoming an increasingly significant site for the location of after school care. Some schools recognise the added value of OOSC. This research has mapped out the complex dimensions which indicate a variety of possible relationships between school and club. Whilst some clubs remain relatively autonomous with distinct philosophies, administration, staffing and day to day practices, others tend to reproduce those that operate within the school day.

*Policy implications*
- Expenditure on OOSC can bring 'added value' to schools

- More can be done to promote OOSC to schools. This can be done in a variety of ways, including: identifying the variety of positive impacts the service can have upon school life; exploring the different models of club-school relations, and promoting positive, productive and communicative relationship between school and club regarding use of equipment, space and support by both school and club staff to ensure the benefits are most widely felt.

*Further Research*
In examining the relationship between school and OOSC, further research could help the promotion of schools as sites for care by:

- Examining the full extent of the added value OOSC can bring to schools. Further research could map how schools can benefit from an attached OOSC club, including increased interest, increased roll and catchment area compared with other schools in the locality, changing levels of parental participation in the school (as the result of participation in the club), increased use of the school as community buildings, and how the service relates to wider policy developments such as extended schools.

- Identifying models of good practice. Schools have little information concerning good practice for establishing out of school care. Thus, research could examine the different approaches schools are adopting as they establish new clubs, with a view to producing good practice guidelines.

**13.3 Barriers to use**
Whilst the service has its greatest potential impact upon minority ethnic families, families in areas of deprivation and families of children with SEN, the research also identified a number of significant financial and non-financial barriers which prevent these families from accessing and benefiting from the service. Whilst these groups have the most pressing need, they are often the least able to pay the market rates for services.

*13.3.1 Areas of Deprivation*
There are a number of barriers to accessing the service. In some areas of deprivation, services are used predominantly by more affluent families. The financial realities of running a club without continued funding means that despite additional funding streams for clubs in deprived areas, access to the service often rests on ability to pay, rather than need. The need to charge a level of parent fee to ensure a sustainable service is particularly crucial for voluntary committee run clubs which have no core funding.

This problem is compounded by the fact that many potential users in areas of deprivation are non-working families who cannot access the same financial support (e.g. WFTC) as working families, and thereby can be excluded from using the service. Providers' policies can also exacerbate this by requiring full time attendance, which excludes no working families and those with a need for part time childcare.

*Policy Recommendations*
- Targeting resources to low income families in areas of deprivation can bring substantial economic and non economic benefits to children and families.

- Increasing accessibility and affordability of OOSC services to lower income families in areas of deprivation (through for example benefits such as the WFTC, and finding other ways for non working and working families to access the service) may well increase the number of families benefiting from these impacts.

*Further Research*
The research has revealed that in some cases provision in areas of deprivation is being utilised by more affluent families who do not live in the immediate locale of the club. Further research is needed to:

- investigate the extent of this phenomenon on a wider scale, and to establish whether this occurs in particular areas of deprivation with certain characteristics and not others (for example, those which are located adjacent to affluent areas), or if it is a feature of certain types of providers.

- To collect examples of good practice to highlight how providers can enable and encourage low income families to use the service.

*13.3.2 Minority Ethnic Families*
This small scale study identified at least two minority ethnic groups (notably Somali and Bangladeshi families) that are not accessing the service. The research identified financial barriers, in that many were non-working families and others were refugees with no financial support to access the service. Non-financial barriers were also identified, such as the club not being seen as an appropriate resource for specific minority ethnic groups. Furthermore, in addition, minority ethnic families in areas of deprivation may well be facing those barriers discussed above.

*Policy Recommendations*
- Expenditure on OOSC can bring numerous positive benefits to minority ethnic groups and to encourage multi-culturalism

- Further focus might be given to making services accessible to individual minority ethnic groups

*Further Research*
- Working with different minority ethnic groups to ascertain in more detail the complex reasons for non-use. Research could consider the relative importance of financial and non-financial barriers, as well as identifying how needs and requirements may differ amongst different minority ethnic groups, and whether integrated or specialist provision is preferred.

- Research could also identify examples of good practice to demonstrate how OOSC services can become accessible and attractive to individual minority ethnic groups.

*13.3.3 Children with SEN*
The research suggests that for children with SEN there are still many financial and non-financial barriers to use. Many clubs remain inaccessible to wheelchair users and children with other disabilities, and many clubs lack specialist equipment or appropriately trained staff. In many cases, these resources are absent due to financial limitations. Some respondents suggested that provision for SEN requires on going financial support.

*Policy Recommendations*

- Expenditure on OOSC services for children with SEN can have a wide variety of positive impacts on children with SEN, their families and also raise wider awareness of SEN.

- Respondents suggest that OOSC for children with SEN may require more ongoing funding than equivalent non SEN services

*Further Research*
Further research could identify the different financial and non financial barriers to use of OOSC services for families of children with SEN, as well as identifying examples of good practice that have overcome these barriers.

**13.4 Older children (aged over 8)**
The research has queried the extent to which clubs for 4-11 year olds are responding to the needs of children aged over 8. These children are often a minority in clubs, and have less children of their own age to mix with. Children aged over 8, especially boys, are generally less positive about their experiences of the service, and less positive about relationships with playworkers, who are sometimes seen to lack the training and confidence to facilitate their needs. Playworkers with a youth work background are more effective in the ways they work with children aged over 8.

However, the research also observed an example of good practice for services for older children aged 11-14. However, the club operated a slightly different model based more around the youth service, and reasons for attending this service were different to the other clubs in the research. Rather than parental employment motivating parents to send their children to the club, the young people themselves opted to attend because of the opportunities it afforded them.

*Policy Implications*
- Expanding specific services for older children may well increase the suitability of OOSC for older children and hence increase its positive impact upon this group.

- Further training for playworkers to enable them to facilitate the needs of children aged over 8 might also increase the suitability of the service for older children and hence increase its positive impact upon this group.

*Further Research*
Whilst this research has identified that many children aged over 8 are less satisfied with their OOSC service, there is potential for further research to identify:

- The different sorts of care services that children aged over 8 would prefer. This could be achieved by working with different groups of older children to identify the characteristics of a service which could meet their needs as well as the needs of their parents for childcare.

- the types of training that currently exist with regard to working with children aged over 8, and to identify which are more effective at addressing these issues.

## 14. Bibliography

Adamson, D, Jones, S (undated) *Evaluation of the Out of School Childcare Grant Initiative in Wales: A Report for the Welsh Office* University of Glamorgan

Aldgate, J, Statham, J, (eds) 2001, *The Children Act Now: Messages from Research* London: The Stationery Office

Alderson, P, 1995, *Listening to Children: Children, Ethics and Social Research* London: Barnardos

Bagley, C, 1988, 'Day Care, Maternal Mental Health and Child Development: Evidence from a longitudinal Study', *Early Child Development and Care*, **39,** p139-161

Callender, C, 2000, *The Barriers to Childcare Provision* Department for Education and Employment Research Report 231 London: Stationery Office

CEDA, 1999a, *Evaluation of the Out of School Childcare Initiative: Final Report for the Mid Wales TEC Transitional Committee* CEDA: Liverpool

CEDA, 1999b, *Evaluation of the ERDF- Funded Out of School Childcare Programme in Wales* Report for ERDF Childcare Network

CELTEC, 2000, *Out of School Childcare Evaluation* CELTEC

Davis, J, 2001, *After School Clubs Provision for Children with 'special needs'* Edinburgh: Midlothian Association of Play and Childcare and Early Years Partnership

Dench, S, O' Regan, S, 1998, *Helping Parents to Work: A Study for Kent TEC* Brighton: Institute for Employment Studies Report 348

DHSS, Training & Employment Agency, DENI, 1999, *Children First: Strengthening Childcare in Northern Ireland* DHSS, Training & Employment Agency, DENI

Ermisch, J, Francesconi, M, Pevalin, D, 2001, *Outcomes for Children of Poverty* Department for Work and Pensions, Research report No 158

Gadd, L, Cable, C, 2000, *Up to Children* Norfolk: Norfolk Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership

Gatenby, R, 1998, *Out of School Childcare Initiative: An Evaluation of Long- Term Sustainability* Department for Education and Employment Research Report 48 London: Stationery Office

Gladwin, M, 2001, *Assessing Quality in Out of School Play and Care- researching child centred evaluative tools* Leeds: The Children's Society

Howes, C, Matheson, C, Hamilton, C, 1994, 'Maternal, Teacher and Childcare History Correlates of Children's Relationships with Peers', *Child Development*, **64,** p264-273

Hutchinson, J, 1999, Playcare in Northern Ireland- An Evaluation *Labour Market Bulletin*, 13, p84-7

King, P, 2000, *The Wokingham Out of School Club Demonstration project: A Child Centred Approach to Running a School Based After School Club* Reading: Children's Information Centre

La Valle, I, Finch, S, Nove, A, Lewin, C, 2000, *Parents' Demand for Childcare* Department for Education and Employment Research Report 176 London: Stationery Office

Lamb, M, Hwang, C, Bookstein, F, Broberg, A, Hult, G, Frlodi, M, 1988, 'Determinants of Social Competence in Swedish Preschoolers', *Developmental Psychology* **24,** p59-70

MacBeath, J, Kirwan, T, Myers, K, McCall, J, Smith, I, McKay, E, Sharp, C, Bhabra, S, Weindling, D, Pocklington, K, 2001, *The Impact of Study Support: A Report of a longitudinal study into the impact of participation in out of school hours learning on the academic attainment, attitudes and school attendance of secondary school students* Department for Education and Skills, Research Report No 273

Mason, K, Bhabra, S, Mawson, C, Spear, M, Wray, M, Sharp, C, Rees, F, 1999, *Out of School Hours Learning Activities: An Evaluation of 50 pilot study support schemes* Department for Education and Employment, Research Brief 178

Mayall, B, Hood, S, 2001, 'Breaking Barriers- Provision and Participation in an Out of School Centre', *Children and Society*, 15, p70-81

McKay, S, 2002, *Low/ moderate income families in Britain: working Families Tax Credit and Childcare in 2000* Department for Work and Pensions, Research Report no 161

Millar, J, Ridge,T, 2001, *Families, Poverty, work and Care: A review of the literature on lone parents and low- income couple families with children* Department for Work and Pensions, Research Report No 153

Moss, P, Mooney, A, Munton, T, Statham, J, 1998, *Local Assessments of Childcare Need and Provision* Research Report No 72 London: Stationery Office

Munton, A, La Valle, I, Barreau, S, Pickering, K, Pitons, L, 2001a, *Feasibility Study for a Longitudinal Survey of the Impact of Out of School Childcare on Children* Department for Education and Skills, Research Report RR319

Munton, A, McCullum, B, Rivers, K, 2001b, *Childcare Quality Improvement and Assurance Practices* Department for Education and Employment, Research Report 266

NICHD Early Childcare Research network, 1998, 'Early childcare and self control, Compliance and Problem behaviour at 24 and 36 months', *Child Development*, **69,** p1145-1170

NICHD Early Childcare Research Network, 1999, 'Childcare and Mother- Child Interaction in the first 3 years of life', *Developmental Psychology*, **35**, p1399-1413

NFER, 2002, *Achievements and Challenges in developing Out of School Hours Learning* London: New Opportunities Fund

NOF, 1999, *Out of School Hours Childcare: Information for Applicants* London: New Opportunities Fund

O'Brien, M, Dench, S, 1996, *The Out of School Childcare Initiative: A Second Evaluation* Department for Education and Employment, Research Series no 72

Petrie, P, 1999a, *Satisfaction with Out-of-School Services: Children and Parents of African and African Caribbean Background* Research in Brief No. 8 London: Thomas Coram Research Unit

Petrie, P, 1999b, *Parents' Use of and Satisfaction with Out-of-School Services: A Telephone Survey* Research in Brief No. 9 London: Thomas Coram Research Unit

Petrie, P,2000, Out of School Lives, Out of School Services London: The Stationery Office

Pettit, G, Bates, J, Dodge, K, 1997, 'Patterns of After School Care in Middle Childhood: Risk factors and Developmental Outcomes', *Merrill Palmer Quarterly: Journal of Developmental Psychology*, **43,** p515-538

Pettit, G, Bates, J, Dodge, K, Meece, D, 1999, 'The Impact of After School Peer Contact on Early Adolescent Externalising Problems in Moderated by parental Monitoring, Perceived Neighbourhood Safety and Prior Adjustment', *Child Development*, **70**, p768-778

Posner, J, Vandell, FD, 1994, 'Low- income children's after school care: Are there beneficial effects of after school programs?' *Child Development*, **65,** p440-456

Rigby, A, Sanderson, C, Desforges, M, Lindsay, G, Hall, D, 1999, 'The Infant Index: A new Outcome measure for pre- school children's services', *Journal of Public Health Medicine', 21, p172-178*

Sanderson, I, Percy-Smith, J, 1995, *The Out of School Childcare Grant Initiative: An Interim Evaluation* Department for Education and Employment, Research Series no 44

Smith, F, Barker, J, 2001, 'Commodifying the Countryside: The Impact of out-of-school care on rural landscapes of children's play', *Area* 33 (2) p169-176

Smith, F, Barker, J, 2000a, *The Childcare Revolution: A Decade of Kids' Clubs* London: Kids' Clubs Network

Smith, F, Barker, J, 2000b, *Unmet Demand for Childcare Services in the City and County of Swansea* Report to Swansea Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership

Smith, F, Barker, J, 1999a, *Kids Clubs in the Community: Community Responses to Out of School Care* London: Kids' Clubs Network

Smith, F, Barker, J, 1999b *Child Centred After School and Holiday Childcare: Final Report to the Economic and Social Research Council* London: Brunel University

Smith, F, Barker, J, 1999c, *Children's Perspectives on Out of School Care* London: Brunel University/ Kids' Clubs Network

Smith, F, Barker, J, 1998, *The Unmet Demand for Childcare and Related Services in the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames* report to London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames

Statham, J, Holtermann, S, Stone, M, 1996, *Childcare in Wales: the 1996 Audit* Chwarae Teg

SQW, 1995*, An Evaluation of the Lothian Out of School Childcare Initiative.* Report for Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Limited

SQW, 1996, *An Evaluation of the Out of School Childcare Initiative in Scotland.* Report for Scottish Enterprise

SQW and OSCRU, 2002, Evaluation of the Out of School Hours Childcare Initiative: Second Interim Report London: NOF

SQW and NOP, 2002, *The 2001 Childcare Workforce Surveys* Department for Education and Skills

Training and Employment Agency 1999, *An Evaluation of Playcare* Report by Policy Research Institute for Training and Employment Agency, Belfast

UEA, 2002, *A National Evaluation of Breakfast Clubs* Department of Health

Vandell, D, Henderson, V, Wilson, K, 1988, 'A longitudinal study of children with day care experiences of varying quality', *Child Development,* **59,** p1286-1292

Vandell, D, Ramanen, J, 1991, 'Children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth: Choices in after School care and Child Development', *developmental Psychology*, **27,** p637-643

Wessels, H, Lamb, M, Hawng, C, 1996, 'Cause and Causality in day care research: An investigation of group differences in Swedish Childcare', *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, **11,** p231-245

White, D, Murphy, J, 2002, 'Researching Poverty and Outcomes for Children', in Fleiss, A, (Ed), *Research Yearbook 2000/ 2001* Department for Work and Pensions

Woodland, S, Miller, M, Tipping, S, 2002, *Repeat Study of Parents' Demand for Childcare* Department for Education and Skills, Research Report No 348

## 15.1 Leaflet for parents

Dear parent/ carer

every day, hundreds of thousands of children go to an after school club- just like the one your child attends. Whilst the government has collected a lot of information about how the service affects parents/ carers (for example, by enabling them to return to work), there is little information about how the service affects children.

As it is obviously important that children are attending after school clubs which have a positive impact upon their lives, the government has commissioned us to find out what children and parents/ carers think, and to explore the different kinds of impact the service may have upon children's lives.

### Who is doing the research?

There are a team of three researchers- one or two will visit your after school club.

- **John Barker** is research officer in the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences at Brunel University. John has carried out research with children in out of school care for 6 years.

- **Ginny Morrow** is Senior Research Lecturer in the Department of Health and Social Care at Brunel University. Ginny has carried out a number of research projects with children.

- **Susie Weller** is a postgraduate student in the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences at Brunel University. Susie has been conducting research with children for the past two years.

### What will happen if you decide to take part?

*We will be visiting your out of school club for two or three sessions. If you decide to take part, we will be working with children and parents/ carers.*

We have a number of fun and interesting activities which we hope will help your child tell us their views of out of school care. These include:

**Photographs-** using instant cameras to show what your child likes about attending the after school club, and what needs improving

**Drawings-** we may ask your child to draw a picture of what goes on at their club, and their favourite activities

**Group Discussions** we may chat to your child (with their friends) to discover their views

69

# The Impact of Out of School Care on Children

Department of Geography and Earth Sciences
Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 3PH
(Tel) 01895 203215
(Fax) 01895 203217
john.barker@brunel.ac.uk

An invitation to join a research project

and information for parents

We'd also like to find out what **you** think, as parents/ carers.

To do this, we will use

**Questionnaire Surveys**- we need to know about the kinds of families using the club, as well as finding out your experiences. *Please do fill one of these in for us!!*

**Interviews**- we would like to have a chat with you and other parents about your views on the impact of the club. We may have a quick word with you when you come to pick up your child (if you have the time!).

What will the information be used for?

All the information that you give us will be *confidential* and *anonymous*. Your child's name, photograph or club will **not** be used (your child can choose a pseudonym).

The information we collect will be kept safe and private.

The information will have a variety of uses. We will produce a report for the government which will help to shape the future development of out of school care.

Choosing whether to Take Part

Please talk over the project with your child to see if you are both happy to take part. Please ask us any questions you might have- telephone or email us on the numbers above

We hope you would like to take part but:

IF YOU DON'T WANT YOURSELF OR YOUR CHILD TO TAKE PART, PLEASE LET ONE OF THE PLAYWORK STAFF KNOW!

Thank you- and we look forward to meeting you

**15. 2 Leaflet for children (images removed)**

Hello!

*Did you know that everyday, hundreds of thousands of children and young people go to an after school club- just like the one you go to?*

The government wants to find out what children and young people think of going to after school clubs, and how it may affect their lives

We are John, Ginny and Susie- the government has asked us to come to your club to ask you what you think.

**We would like you to take part so that we can find out what you think about going to an after school club.**

If you do want to take part we may use one of the following activities;

*Photographs* we'd like you to use an instant camera to show what you like about going to your after school club, and what you might want to change

*Drawings-* we'd like you to draw a picture of what goes on at your club

*Discussions* we'd like to have a chat with you and your friends in groups- to talk about your views.

# What do you think?

## The Impact of Out of School Care on Children

An invitation to join a research project

---

You can take part in as many or as few activities as you wish

We will not tell your parents or playworkers what you tell us about your club.

We'll use your views to tell government how to improve clubs like this one.

We'll also be talking to some of your parents and carers to find out their views as well.

*Have a think to see if you would like to take part.*

If you have any questions, please do ask one of us- or you could get your parent to ask us. Our phone number and email address are at the top of the leaflet

Thank you and we look forward to meeting you

**15.3 Interview schedule for group discussions with children**

Introduction
- Who are you? How old are you?
- How long have you been coming to the club? How often do you come?
- Why do you come to the club?

Experiences
- What's it like coming to the club?
- What do you like to do? What's the best thing about the club?
- Tell me about a time you were really happy at the club...
- Tell me about a time when you weren't so happy at the club...

Quality
- Is your club good?
- What do you think makes a good club? What activities/ equipment/ staff/ premises would a good club have?
- How can your club be made better?

Impact
*General questions:*
- How do you feel when you come to the club?
- How do you feel when you leave the club?
- What effect does it have on your life?
- Has coming to the club made any difference to your life?

*Specific Questions:*
*Social skills/ friendships*
- Have you made any new friends by coming to the club?
(also a question about new relationships with playworkers- as adults)
- Does coming to the club make you feel happier? Have you felt happier since you started coming to the club

*Family life:*
- How do you feel having this time free from your family? Do you like having this separate time?
- What does your Mum/ carer do whilst your at the club?

*New opportunities*
- Do you do things at the club that you don't do at home? At school? Elsewhere?
- What would you be doing if you weren't here?
- What do your friends who don't come to the club do after school?

*Attitudes to learning:*
- Does coming to the club change the way you feel about going to school?
- Is the club different to being at school? In what ways?
Where do you do your homework? If you have homework, would you do it at the club? Why/ why not?

**15.4 Parent survey (reduced from original size)**

| | Area code | |
|---|---|---|
| | Club code | |

Dear Parent/ Carer

The Department for Education and Skills has asked researchers at Brunel University to carry out a research project on the impact of out of school care upon children and their parents/carers. The results of this study will be used to help improve the future development of childcare programmes.

We would be very grateful if you take a few minutes to complete the survey. To keep responses confidential, please return the completed form to your club in the envelope, so it can be passed to the researchers.

Your answers will be treated in <u>complete confidence</u> by the research team- we do not ask for your name. If you have any questions, please contact me on the above phone number/ email address. Thank you

John Barker

---

*Section One: Your use of out of school child care*

Please write the number in the box

1. How many children aged 4-14 do you have?

|  |
|---|

2. How many children do you have attending the out of school club?

*Please write the number in the box*

|  |
|---|

*Please write their **ages** in the box*

|  |
|---|

3. On average, how many hours a day does your child(ren) spend at the club each week?

| | *Enter the **number of hours** your child(ren) spends at the club on average* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | In term time: before school | In term time: after school | During holidays |
| Monday | | | |
| Tuesday | | | |
| Wednesday | | | |
| Thursday | | | |
| Friday | | | |

4. When did your child(ren) start going to the club?

| | *Tick one for each child* |
|---|---|
| Less than 3 months ago | |
| Between 3 and 6 months | |
| Between 6 and 12 months | |
| 1-2 years ago | |
| More than 2 years ago | |

5    Why did you choose this club?

| | *Tick all that apply* | | | *Tick all that apply* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Good location/ in school | | It has a good reputation | |
| Price was reasonable | | Convenient opening times | |
| It provides good quality care | | Child wanted to go | |
| It provides both term time and holiday care | | There is a pick up scheme from school | |
| No other club nearby | | | |
| Other (please specify) | | | |

6. Do you receive any financial help towards your childcare costs?

| | *Tick one* |
|---|---|
| No | |
| Yes, Working Families Tax Credit | |
| Yes, have a subsidised place (for example, from the local authority) | |
| Yes, have additional payments from an employer | |
| Yes, have accessed other assistance (please specify) | |

***Section Two: The impact of out of school care upon parents and children***

7. How would you describe your current employment status and (if appropriate) that of your partner?

| | *Tick as appropriate* | |
|---|---|---|
| | Yourself | Partner |
| Working full time (over 30 hours a week) | | |
| Working part time (16 - 30 hours a week) | | |
| Working part time (up to 16 hours a week) | | |
| On a government training scheme (e.g. New Deal) | | |
| In full time training / education (over 30 hours a week) | | |
| In part time training / education (under 30 hours a week) | | |
| Unemployed | | |
| Other (please specify) | | |

8. Has your or (if appropriate) your partner's employment activity (as described in question 7) changed since your child starting using the out of school club?

*Please circle yes or no*

Got a new job                          YES          NO

Increased hours of employment          YES          NO

Taken up training/ education           YES          NO

Other (please state)

_____

_____

9. What benefits have you and (if appropriate) your partner gained by using the club?

| | *Tick all that apply* | | | *Tick all that apply* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Childcare is now more reliable | | Provides respite care | |
| Children are better looked after | | Less need to rush away from work | |
| Greater peace of mind | | Better able to make future work / study plans | |
| Able to concentrate more at work / study | | | |
| Other (please state) | | | |

10   Has your weekly household income after tax increased as a result of using the out of school club?

| | Tick one |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

If so, by how much?   [    ]   per week

11      In what ways has the service affected your children?

*For each statement, please circle yes or no*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Club enabled child to make new friends | YES | NO |
| Enabled child to take part in new activities | YES | NO |
| Provides respite care for child/ parent/ carer | YES | NO |
| Child is happier since using the club | YES | NO |
| Child is less happy since using the club | YES | NO |
| Club helps child to learn | YES | NO |
| Child undertakes homework at the club | YES | NO |
| Makes child more comfortable about being in school | YES | NO |
| Child is more confident since using the club | YES | NO |
| Child is less confident since using the club | YES | NO |
| Child's behaviour has improved since using the club | YES | NO |
| Child's behaviour has worsened since using the club | YES | NO |
| Club keeps child in a safe place away from harm | YES | NO |
| After attending club, child is tired next day at school | YES | NO |

12   How does your child feel when you pick them up from the club?

| | Tick one |
|---|---|
| Child wants to stay longer at club | |
| Child keen to leave | |
| Other (please state) | |

13   Please use the space below to tell us any additional comments about the effect or impact of the club upon yourself, your child or your family

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

***Section Three: About you and your family***

14   Are you the child(ren)'s

|  | Tick one |
|---|---|
| Mother (or step mother) |  |
| Father (or step father) |  |
| Other legal guardian |  |

15. Are you a lone parent?

|  | Tick one |
|---|---|
| Yes |  |
| No |  |

16 i) Do any of your children attending the club have special needs or disabilities?

|  | Tick one |
|---|---|
| Yes (if so, please give brief details below) |  |
| No |  |

16 ii) Please give a description of your child's special need or disability, and how you think going to the club has affected/ supported your child

_____

_____

_____

_____

17. Which of the following ethnic groups do you consider yourself to belong to?

| | | *Tick one* |
|---|---|---|
| ***White*** | British | |
| | Irish | |
| | Other White | |
| ***Asian/*** ***Asian British*** | Indian | |
| | Pakistani | |
| | Bangladeshi | |
| | Other Asian | |

| | | *Tick one* |
|---|---|---|
| ***Black/*** ***Black British*** | Caribbean | |
| | African | |
| | Other Black | |
| ***Chinese*** | Chinese | |
| ***Mixed*** ***(please state)*** | | |
| ***Other*** ***(please state)*** | | |

***Thank you for your co-operation- Please return to your club sealed in the envelope provided.***

***As a follow up, the researchers would like to talk in more depth with families- at a date and time convenient to you- about their views of the impact of out of school care. If you are interested in taking part, please leave your name and a contact number***

***Name_____***

***Contact Number_____***

**15.5 Interview schedule for group discussions with parents**

**Interview Schedule with Parents**

*Experiences*
How long has your child been going to the club?
When does your child go? How often?
Why does your child go?

How do you think the child finds going to the club?
Do they enjoy it? In what ways?
Is there anything they don't like about it?

*Quality*
What qualities does a good quality club have?

Is this a good quality club? Explain....
How could it improve?

Impact
*On children*
What impact do you think the club has had upon your child?

Probe re:
*1. Social skills*- more friends? More friendly and sociable? Change in attitude to others?

*2. Confidence*
Do you think your child is more confident now they are attending the club?

*3. New opportunities:*
Has the club given your child opportunities and experiences they otherwise would not have had?
What new things/ opportunities have they done?

*4. Attitude to learning:*
Have you noticed any change in attitude to being in school?
Have you noticed any change in attitude to learning?
Is your child tired next day at school from attending the club?

*5. Behavioural issues:*
Have you noticed any change in child's behaviour?

*On Parents*
What has using the club enabled you to do? (.e.g. employment, training, education, respite)

In what other ways does the club benefit you? Or your family/ family life in general?

Would you have been able to achieve this without the club?

**15.6 Interview Schedule for Playworkers**

Could you give me some background to the history of the club...
-when did it start?
-how?
-who funds it?

What service does the club provide?
-opening hours
- activities
-also philosophy of the service (play, care)

who is the club for?
-    does it have target group(s)
-    if so, what is the rational behind that?
-    -if so, does its current clientele reflect those groups?

How have club tried to ensure good quality service?

What impact does the club have upon the children and parents who use it?

On children- their own observations, as well as those commented on by parents, teachers, social
workers etc
*1. Social skills*- more friends? More friendly and sociable?
*2. Confidence*
Do you think children are more confident now they are attending the club?
*3. New opportunities:*
Has the club given children opportunities and experiences they otherwise would not have had?
*4. Attitude to learning:*
Has club improved children's attitude to going to school/ attitude to studying?
*5. Behavioural issues:*
Have you noticed any change in children's behaviour?

*On Parents*
What has using the club enabled parents to do? (.e.g. employment, training, education, respite)

In what other ways does the club benefit parents/ families/ families life? (.e.g support)