

Quality Assessment of Out of School Provision across the City of York

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Purpose

This report provides a current baseline of Out of School Clubs across the City of York to assess their quality, particularly in terms of how well the statutory welfare requirements are being met. It also proposes recommendations to be included in a new Quality Improvement Strategy for this sector.

Definition of Registered Out of School Provision

Out of School Clubs are defined as childcare which is registered with Ofsted to offer care before and after school and during the holidays. Out of School Clubs cater generally for children aged 4-11 although some offer childcare for children up to 14.

The management structure for Out of School Clubs can differ as follows, depending on the type of provision:

- Managed by a voluntary committee (which may also be a registered charity)
- Be the direct responsibility of school governors under Extended Schools legislation
- Managed by a director(s) as a private company

Where Out of School Clubs are run by Voluntary Management Committees and private companies, the authority can only seek to influence and make recommendations on improving practice to meet Ofsted requirements. Where it is run by school governors under Extended Schools legislation the authority has a greater influence on practice.

Welfare Standards are the legal responsibilities that Ofsted places on registered childcare providers. These cover:

- Safeguarding
- Suitable people
- Suitable premises, environment and equipment
- Organisation
- Documentation

Out of School Clubs are a key provider of childcare under the local authority's statutory duty of having sufficient childcare to meet parental demand.

Background

The Extended Services Unit was established in June 2009 and responsibility for Out of School Clubs was transferred from Early Years to the Unit for children aged 4-11. Of the 50 Out of School Clubs currently in operation, six of these are run by school governors under ES legislation. Approximately 1,325 children attend Out of School Clubs.

As part of the new structure there is an Out of School Development Adviser who provides advice, support and challenge to staff employed within Out of School Clubs and their employers, i.e. School Governors, Headteachers, Voluntary Management Committees or directors.

As an Extended Services Unit we are committed to ensuring that Out of School Clubs in York are of the highest quality, and that where challenge is needed to improve quality for children and families then we will do so. We have high expectations of all Out of School Clubs across the city and are certain that minimum standards should not be accepted as good enough for children and families in York. There is also an expectation that inclusive practice for all vulnerable groups is of a high quality.

To facilitate our vision on high quality, the Out of School Development Adviser works with other advisers supporting schools and Early Years settings to share a common aspiration towards quality improvement, supporting each others' strengths and areas of expertise. Central to improving Out of School Clubs, the service works to form trusting relationships, build capacity, empower, ask difficult questions, and place the leaders of Clubs in a position to consider whether all options for improvement have been explored.

We also acknowledge the value that Steps to Quality has placed in beginning to engage some Clubs and we are committed to continuing to work with the Steps Team to contribute to the improvement of quality.

We embrace the Taking Play Forward policy and the guidance offered to clubs through the Better Play Objectives. These objectives give us an additional quality measure to contribute to the improvement of quality.

Where the Out of School Club is the direct responsibility of school governors, it is vital that the Extended Services Unit can work with them to ensure they understand the implications for their Section 5 inspection, should their Club not meet the legal requirements. It is important the Headteachers and School Governors understand these implications so as not to impact negatively on inspection judgements for their school.

Through monitoring visits the Extended Services Unit works to ensure the providers take the necessary steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. Where the Extended Services Unit becomes aware of potential safeguarding and welfare breaches that may place children at risk, this information is reviewed as a priority and on a case by case basis between the Head of Extended Services and the Out of School Development Adviser.

Further advice would be sought if necessary, from Ofsted and the City of York Safeguarding Children's Board.

To meet our vision of improved quality for Out of School Clubs and target our support more effectively we needed, as a new service, to have a greater understanding about how well Out of School Clubs were delivering statutory welfare requirements. We therefore commissioned a consultant to carry out a review by visiting a prioritised number of Clubs to rate them as Red, Amber or Green to help establish a baseline of current provision. The review was also intended to identify trends and highlight areas for improvement. A letter was sent to Out of School Clubs to give prior notice of the visit and the reasons for it. The work was carried out from May to September 2010. For those Out of School Clubs who did not receive a visit, the Out of School Development Adviser already had knowledge and understanding of current practice.

Findings

The Annex attached to this report sets out details on the Red, Amber, Green rating given to Clubs by the consultant, their last Ofsted judgement and examples of good practice. (An additional annex is also included to show those schools not receiving a visit as part of the consultant's work but does show our own Red, Amber, Green rating from recent visits.)

The majority of providers welcomed the visit and the support that followed. In a few cases it was difficult to gain access to the provision which demonstrates that some Out of School Clubs work in isolation and do not take full advantage of the support on offer. However, the visit has since highlighted to those Clubs the benefits of working in partnership with the authority.

Some of the visits flagged up immediate areas of concern and these were addressed by the Out of School Development Adviser supporting staff and their employers.

There were many examples of exemplary practice to show the strengths of particular Out of School Clubs in meeting statutory Welfare Standards.

Safeguarding

There were very few issues highlighted with safeguarding which reflects the priority that the Extended Services Unit places on this aspect of the Welfare Standard, in terms of encouraging take-up of training and CRB checks by the Out of School Development Adviser.

Suitable People – Leadership and Management

Leadership and Management is a key area of development, and this has also been recognised nationally by the Children's Workforce Development Council. Where Out of School Clubs have a strong management structure this tended to be reflected in the high quality delivery of provision and the effectiveness of

their staff team. Where the management structure is weaker there is a need for more focussed training on leadership and management.

Suitable People – Workforce

In some cases Out of School Clubs were unable to recruit and retain staff which reflects the national picture. Clubs struggle to recruit new staff, particularly those with adequate qualifications, so whilst most Clubs have a relatively low staff turnover, when staff move out of the sector, sustainability of the Club can be at risk. Most groups contact the service when they have staff vacancies and work with the Family Information Service. However, recruitment of the right staff with appropriate qualifications is becoming increasingly difficult, and again this is also the national picture.

Early Years Foundation Stage

The majority of groups are still struggling to fully meet the requirements imposed by the Early Years Foundation Stage. The areas causing particular difficulty are the requirements to formally record purposeful observations and then use this information to inform planning. The Out of School Development Adviser has arranged for Out of School Clubs to be able to access Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) training that is tailored to meet their needs.

It was also found that some groups do not have policies that reflect the changes introduced through the introduction of EYFS. The Out of School Development Adviser has worked with Out of School Clubs to bring policies up to date in line with legislation.

Organisation – Ratios

Some settings do not count their over eight children in the adult:child ratio and in some cases this means that the care given to under eights is diluted. The Extended Services Unit always advocates that adult:child ratios should include over eights and challenges providers who do not follow our advice.

Partnerships

We know that effective and supportive partnership arrangements between schools, clubs and communities, can make a real difference to the quality of childcare provision. If Out of School Clubs feel valued for the service they offer to a school, our findings show this is reflected in the quality of provision. This was evidenced as part of the consultant's findings.

Suitable Premises

The majority of Out of School Clubs are located in premises that are not purpose built. However, findings highlighted that Clubs maximise their use of space in a creative way to meet the needs of children.

Forum

The clubs who regularly attend the Out of School Club network meetings are proactive in identifying and embracing new ways of working. These meetings are held on a half termly basis and are facilitated by the Out of School Development Adviser. Further work needs to be done to engage those Clubs who do not prioritise attendance at the Forum so that they can benefit from opportunities to network and share good practice. Clubs run by schools are also showing an interest in attendance.

Conclusion

There is a lot to be celebrated within the Out of School Clubs across the city where there are many examples of exemplary practice. However, there is the potential to raise their profile further and improve the quality of the Out of School Clubs to ensure there is consistency of approach across the city and have better outcomes for children. Clubs are willing and able to see the benefits of our monitoring visits and take on board any advice, guidance and challenge we pose. However, this does depend on maintaining good relationships between the authority and the providers, and the need to continue building on the historical partnerships that always existed, for example, through the Shared Foundation Partnerships.

Given the context of the current economic climate, capacity to support Clubs will continue to be an issue. However, a more targeted and tiered approach to support will mean the most effective and efficient use of resources is deployed where Clubs are confident to take ownership for improving their own quality, rather than the authority imposing change upon them. Through their continued engagement that improvement will become embedded and sustained.

It is clear that those groups who regularly attend the Network Meetings are fully engaged with the service and also better achieve outcomes at inspection. The opportunity should be taken to strengthen Network meetings to share good and innovative practice and keep updated on legislative changes and guidance. There is also a role for the authority in networking regionally, to influence national thinking and raise the profile of the sector.

Recommendations

- Develop a Quality Improvement Strategy for Out of School Clubs which also builds on existing work with Steps to Quality.
- Develop inclusion standards in line with the Regional Quality Standards award.
- Good Practice – encourage leaders in Clubs to share knowledge on their specialist area and to deliver at future meetings of the Network Forum.

- Deeper questioning, requesting evidence and offering constructive challenge during monitoring visits.
- ‘Team around the setting’ approach – set up six monthly meetings with all partners who advise Out of School Clubs to ensure work is targeted to resolve identified issues and work is not duplicated.
- Use a three stage categorisation approach to prioritising Clubs (based on the Team around the Setting’s knowledge and the Club’s Ofsted grading):
 - *universal*
 - *improvement notice*
 - *targeted approach* – areas of high deprivation

This categorisation approach will determine how often we visit Clubs.

- Development of the Network Forum so that opportunities for bitesize training can be offered along with opportunities to highlight and celebrate good practice.
- Work with the Play Team to ensure the allocation of the Better Play Grants ensuring that these grants used to offer support to resolve issues that are highlighted in this report and through the categorisation process. These grants supported by the Taking Play Forward policy give us a clear strategic drive to improve the quality of play provision.
- Work with York CVS to strengthen support offered to Voluntary Management Committees. Develop a committee guidance pack and ensure committee members have access to business health checks and a full induction in partnership with York CVS.
- Ensure training offered to Clubs is tailored to meet their needs and seek to continually improve on this by monitoring the impact any training programmes have had on practice through visits and monitoring forms.
- Ensure all practitioners at all Clubs complete Disability Equality Duty (DED) Levels 1 & 2.
- Ensure that all Clubs have a commitment to inclusive practice and attend specific training programmes such as Disabled Children’s Access To Childcare (DCATCH) or other schemes which become available through National Initiatives and funding.
- Support Clubs to actively encourage a member of the Club to attend Inclusion Coordinator (INCO) training.

- Out of School Development Adviser to identify national and regional opportunities to network with similar type posts to share good practice and act as voice to influence national policy direction.
- In 2008 the government made a commitment to train 4,000 Playworkers nationally. We had begun to see the impact of this in York. This programme has now ceased so the numbers of new staff entering the workforce without qualifications is likely to increase, unless additional funding can be accessed. The Out of School Development Adviser to keep representation on the Early Years and Extended Schools Training Group to continue to prioritise training for Playworkers wherever possible.

The limited resources around staffing capacity must be acknowledged in taking this agenda forward and to carry out the recommendations contained within this report.