

QDOSS Pre-Budget Submission 2011

Introduction

QDOSS, the Quality Development of Out-of-School Services network, was established to promote and progress quality development of out-of-school services for children and young people in Ireland through interagency collaboration to enable all children to reach their full potential, especially those experiencing social and educational disadvantage.

QDOSS is deeply concerned about the impact the current recession will have on investment in vital education, youth justice and childcare services that support children's and young people's development.

Quality Out-of-School Services (OSS) are crucial to supporting children and young people's development. Accessible services such as school-age childcare services, after school clubs, homework clubs, youth groups and programmes help children and young people develop confidence and self-esteem and a huge range of life skills¹. Out-of-school services also play a significant role in helping vulnerable children and young people stay in formal education by equipping them with the necessary skills to remain at school². A recent Dublin City Childcare Committee report also outlined the growing demand to develop standards and regulation for out-of-school services highlighting the increasing focus on the importance of such services.³

These services are under threat due to the cut backs they have suffered over the past two years. We are concerned that further cuts in expenditure in this area in Budget 2011 will have very serious consequences for the futures of many Irish children. We are particularly concerned that the cessation of funding for such services in disadvantaged communities throughout Ireland will lead to the loss of the facilities, expertise and trust built up over the years resulting in both loss of significant support for children in these communities and a waste of the critical and substantial investment that has been made in this sector over the past ten years. In addition, reductions in investment at this critical stage will result in a need for heightened levels of financial expenditure in later years e.g. in the areas of education, justice and law, and social welfare⁴.

We are concerned that some of Ireland's most marginalised children will be unduly affected if out-of-school supports which have made a real difference in many of their lives are removed. Investment in the welfare of Ireland's children and young people is our long-term strategy for building a sustainable and just society and how we respond to their needs now will reflect the Ireland we are building for tomorrow. Investment in Ireland's children and youth must be a priority, for their sake and ours.

Good Practice Models

QDOSS believes that promising practice currently being developed in Ireland in out-of-school services should be learned from and expanded on to increase access to these crucial services across the country. Programmes such as the Dormant Accounts

Funded, 'Maximising Community Use of School Premises and Facilities' administered through the Department of Education and Science (DES), Limerick, seeks to make school facilities more accessible to the extended community and is an example of how a school can become a vibrant resource. International research suggests that more academically orientated out of school programmes are promising because students spend twice as much of their waking hours outside of the classroom as in it, and out of school periods, like summer breaks, are the time when the achievement gap widens⁵. However, close attention must be paid to the quality and content of the academic curriculum in out-of-school provision as research shows (2004) that time received by students in a typical out of school programme may be too low to generate meaningful academic improvements.⁶ Furthermore, the Extended Schools model allows communities to access school buildings before and after school hours, which is a key priority for QDOSS.

Community based afterschool projects

The NESF report on Child Literacy and Social Inclusion (2009) recognises the importance of afterschool projects and community based approaches to language learning and literacy.

The positive impact in educational outcomes has been a focus of much international research. Benefits include increased participation rates, as well as more favourable educational outcomes such as lower failure rates for core subjects and higher graduation rates⁷. Within the Irish context children who attended one of four after school clubs in disadvantaged areas scored higher in the areas of socio-emotional development as well as having a higher standard of homework (rated by teachers) compared to peers who did not attend⁸. Research carried out in the Fatima area of Dublin involving children, young people and their mothers also indicated the benefits of OOS, finding that there was a need for existing OSS to continue, as they provided important social outlets for children and young people to interact with their peers, as well as providing academic support through a local homework club⁹.

Similarly, the recent evaluation of a community afterschool service in North inner city Dublin (Ivers, McLoughlin & Downes 2010) highlighted the distinctive role of community afterschool projects to modify the impact of poverty, prevent early school leaving through reaching target groups others projects may not engage with, promote social skills for those most marginalised, provide social support for positive mental health in contexts of psychological stress, help overcome fear of failure, contribute to a positive climate in school, promote self-directed learning, improve language development, provide the benefit of safety for children, and employ the Arts to reach groups who would not be reached by others. Community afterschool projects also offer clear potential for reaching withdrawn children and not simply those exhibiting externalising problematic behaviours in school (Downes 2004; Ivers, McLoughlin & Downes 2010).

Budget cuts on this key sector have a serious impact on social inclusion in education. As well as the closure of CDPs (Community Development Projects) through their integration with Area Partnerships which impacts upon community based

afterschool projects, the funding cuts to Local Drugs Taskforces is also seriously impacting upon community afterschool projects.

Illustrative examples of cuts impacting on community based out of school services (communicated to the Educational Disadvantage Centre, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, September 2010) include the following in Dublin:

* The impact of cuts on current service in Clondalkin Youth Service is as follows:

"We are currently in the process of letting go all but three part-time staff as contracts come up for renewal they are not being renewed we are about to let our administrator go [in] Christmas week - hence no one for meet and greet reception duties etc. In addition all programme budgets are now gone... The net result is closure of evening programmes which attract some very serious high risk groups we are fast approaching the bottom of the barrel hence we feel we have little or no control of our destiny".

* Ballyfermot LDTF have lost €20,000 discretionary funding they used to give local school/community groups due to a 17% cut in their budget.

* The BiteÓg Afterschool Clubs in Ballymun have closed due to the budget cut (€104,000)

* Tallaght Youth Services have had staff cut in their community based youth intervention project

*In Finglas/Cabra, the Drugs Task Force funds 15 small initiatives in the school community for various projects including community afterschool programmes. There has been a 50% administrative funding cut and a development worker lost with an overall 20% cut in funding since 2009.

Key Recommendation:

- QDOSS calls for the prevention of further cuts to the community out of school service sector to protect a sector already seriously damaged by previous budget cuts – a sector vital to working with some of the most marginalized children in communities.

Developing Equality of Outcomes in Schools (DEIS)

The first phase of the DEIS Strategy will come to an end in 2010. The phase is currently under evaluation by the Education Research Centre, focusing in the main on the literacy and numeracy elements of the strategy. Schools identified under the first phase of DEIS continue to be funded in the 2010/ 2011 academic year - currently 678 primary schools and 200 post-primary schools receive additional supports under the DEIS system. The Department of Education and Skills has noted that the DEIS identification process will be reviewed in 2012. Phase two of the DEIS must ensure that all schools enrolling students from marginalised backgrounds receive additional supports to engage more fully in school life. As noted in this submission, out of

school services, which formed part of the first phase of DEIS, play a significant role in helping vulnerable children and young people stay in formal education by equipping them with the necessary skills to remain at school . Phase two of DEIS must incorporate the best practice learning from phase one, while maintaining a strong focus on out of school supports to young people.

Key recommendation:

- Ensure that the DEIS strategy continues beyond 2012 with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy outcomes and the provision of quality out of school services (Responsible Department: Department of Education and Skills).

QDOSS is a coalition of partners working to develop strategic national out-of-school services for children and young people in Ireland. Members include: Barnardos, Border Counties Childcare Committee (BCCN), Children’s Research Centre (Trinity College Dublin), Crann Support Group, Educational Disadvantage Centre (St. Patrick’s College, Drumcondra), Foróige, National Voluntary Childcare Collaborative, PLANET, The Partnerships Network, Representatives from the City & County Childcare Committees BMW and S&E, School Completion Programme Support Service, TED: Targeting Educational Disadvantage (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick), Youth Work Ireland

Endnotes

¹ Hennessy, E. and Donnelly, M. (2003). *After School Care in Disadvantaged Rural and Urban Areas: Making Choices, Having a Good Time and Learning?* Dublin: Department of Psychology, University College Dublin;

² Brown, W.O., Frates, S.B., Rudge, I.S. and Tradewell, R.L. (2002). *The Costs and Benefits of After School Programs: The Estimated Effects of the After School Education and Safety Program Act of 2002.* California: Afterschool Alliance;

³ Dublin City Childcare Committee (2009). *School Age Childcare in Dublin City.*

⁴ Davidson, G. and Barry, A.M. (2003). *Assessment of Benefits and Costs of Out of School Care.* UK: Scottish Executive Education Department;

⁵ Beckett, M., Borman, G., Capizzano, J., Parsley, D., Ross, S., Schirm, A., & Taylor, J. (2009). *Structuring out-of-school time to improve academic achievement: A practice guides.* Washington DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Wikeley, F., Bullock, K., Muschamp, Y., & Ridge, T. (2007). *Educational relationships outside school: why access is so important.* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

⁶ Dynarski, M., Moore, M., James-Burdumy, S., Rosenberg, L., Deke, J., & Mansfield, W. (2004). *When schools stay open late: The national evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. New Findings.* Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. Kane, T. (2004). *The impact of after-school programs: Interpreting the results of four recent evaluations.* New York: William T. Grant Foundation.

⁷ Goerge, R., Cusick, G.R., Wasserman, M. & Gladden, R.M. (2007) After school programs and academic impact: A study of Chicago's After School Matters Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Centre for Children;

⁸ Hennessy, E. & Donnelly, M. (2003) After school care in disadvantaged rural and urban areas: Making choices, having a good time and learning? Department of Psychology, University College Dublin;

⁹ Byrne, T. & Greene, S. (2007) A needs assessment conducted with 51 children and 16 adults in the context of the development of out of school services in the Fatima and Rialto areas Children's Research Centre, Trinity College, Dublin.