

QDOSS Pre-Budget Submission 2010

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 members are 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

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 in 2009 and we are concerned that further cuts in expenditure in this area in Budget 2010 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 low socioeconomic status communities throughout Ireland would 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

¹ Davidson, G. and Barry, A.M. (2003). *Assessment of Benefits and Costs of Out of School Care*. UK: Scottish Executive Education Department; 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; and, Luehmann, A.L. and Markowitz, D. (2007). Science Teachers' Perceived Benefits of an Out-of-school Enrichment Programme: Identity Needs and University Affordances. In, *International Journal of Science Education*, Vol. 29, Issue 9, July 2007 (Pp. 1133 – 1161).

² Bissell, J.S. (2002). *Evaluation of California's After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnership Program: 1999-2001*. California: Department of Education, University of California, Irvine; 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; Lee, B. (2001). *California's After-School Choice: Juvenile Crime or Safe Learning Time*. California: Invest in Kids California; and, Schweinhart, L., Barnes, H. and Weikart, D. (1993). *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27*. Ypsilanti, Michigan: High Scope Press.

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

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 socially⁴.

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.

Benefits of Out-of-School Services

A recent report commissioned by the OECD (2009) highlights a number of policy changes that are required to improve child well-being. Among those recommendations that are particularly relevant to policy-makers include the need to invest more heavily in the early 'Dora the Explorer' years of children relative to the 'Facebook' years of later childhood. Furthermore, investment needs to concentrate on improving the lot of vulnerable children. According to the report 'success generated by early policies for such children should not be allowed to wither on the vine. Investment in the vulnerable early years needs to be reinforced through later parts of childhood'.⁵

QDOSS believes that engagement in high quality OSS brings both short and long term benefits to children and young people. These benefits extend across health and nutrition, safety and wellbeing, and academic support⁶. The provision of effective OSS holds the potential to not only benefit the child, but through the child their families and communities, therefore building capacity and social capital within communities⁷.

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 rates⁸. Within the Irish context children who attended one of four after school clubs in low socioeconomic status areas scored higher in the areas of socio-emotional development as well as having a higher standard of homework (rated by

⁴ Davidson, G. and Barry, A.M. (2003). *Assessment of Benefits and Costs of Out of School Care*. UK: Scottish Executive Education Department; Schweinhart, L., Barnes, H. and Weikart, D. (1993). *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27*. Ypsilanti, Michigan: High Scope Press; and, Schweinhart, L.J. (2004). *The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40: Summary, Conclusions, and Frequently Asked Questions*. Michigan: High/Scope.

⁵ OECD (2009) *Doing Better for Children*. OECD Publishing, Paris.

⁶ Harvard Family Research Project, 2008

⁷ Higgins, A. (2008), 'My School, Your School, Our School, Celebrating the Transformation of a Primary School into a Community Learning Centre, 1985-2005', PhD thesis

⁸ 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; Mahoney, J.L. & Carins, R.B. (1997) 'Do curricular activities protect against early school drop out?' *Developmental Psychology* 33: 241-53

teachers) compared to peers who did not attend⁹. 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 club¹⁰.

Recent research in Limerick also proved that after school provision offered children the opportunity to build a skill set which enabled them to engage more effectively with the school system and to foster positive adult /child and child/child relationships and ultimately to build resilience¹¹.

The out-of-school environment complements traditional education and provides a safe space where children can build on educational skills learned in school while also developing necessary social and emotional skills which support their development as they grow up. It is crucial that children and young people are given every opportunity to develop fully as they grow into adults, both for individual children and for society at large. Quality out-of-school supports can provide the early intervention necessary to help children and young people develop the skills they need to cope with and manage the difficulties they face in life. It is particularly beneficial for children living in low socioeconomic status communities where the skills they need may not be developed anywhere else. It is crucial that out-of-school services are maintained in the current climate so that we can continue to build these services in the future for the benefit of all children.

Key Recommendations

QDOSS calls on the Government to:

- **Ensure that out-of-school services, including youth and youth justice services, currently being run are not cut back in 2010, particularly those serving low socioeconomic status communities throughout the country; (Responsible Departments: Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs; Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; Dept. of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs)**
- **Ensure that the 5,000 after-school places committed to in the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010 are provided; (Responsible Departments: Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs)**
- **Ensure that the integration of the School Completion Programme, Home Community Liaison Scheme and the Visiting Teachers for Travellers Service into the National Education Welfare Board does not result in a dilution of these services for children and families on the ground; (Responsible Departments: Dept. of Education and Science)**
- **Ensure that the DEIS strategy continues beyond 2010 with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy outcomes and the provision of quality out-**

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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

¹¹ Higgins, A. (2008), 'My School, Your School, Our School, Celebrating the Transformation of a Primary School into a Community Learning Centre, 1985-2005', PhD thesis

of-school services; (Responsible Departments: Dept. of Education and Science)

- **Ensure that the National Children's Strategy 2011 – 2020 includes a strong emphasis on the value of out-of-school services and how their development will be promoted. (Responsible Departments: Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs)**

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