

**DUBLIN CITY CHILDCARE COMMITTEE
SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE IN DUBLIN CITY
RESEARCH REPORT**

October 2009

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KEYS

DCCC	Dublin City Childcare Committee
SAC	School-Age Childcare
LCRC	Local Childcare Resource Centre
SCP	School Completion Program
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
NCIP	National Childcare Investment Program
SACTWG	School Aged Childcare Thematic Working Group
CDVEC	City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee
DHC	Department of Health and Children
DJELR	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
EOCP	Equality of Opportunities Programme
FÁS	Fóras Aiseanna Saothair – National Training and Employment Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Federation
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IPPA	Irish Preschool Playgroups' Association
KWCDT	Kimmage, Walkinstown, Crumlin, Drimnagh, Terenure Partnership
NCNA	National Children's Nurseries Association
NOSHA	Australian National Out-of-School Hours Services Association
OFSTED	Office of Standards in Education
QDOSS	Quality Development of Out of School Services
DCCC	Dublin City Childcare Committee
HSLO	Home School Liaison Officer
SCP	School Completion Program
EOCP	Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme
SACTWG	School Age Childcare Thematic Working Group
DEIS	Delivering Quality of Opportunity in Schools

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the Dublin City Childcare Committee

Dublin City Childcare Committee (DCCC) is the body set up with the specific objective of coordinating the delivery of quality childcare to the citizens of Dublin City. Thirty three City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) were established in 2001 under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) 2000-2006. The main focus of the CCCs is to encourage the development of childcare locally. A wide variety of services are offered to the public including, advice on setting up a childcare business; childcare information sessions; training courses and advice and support on applying for funding under the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP).

DCCC operates within the policy context of the National Childcare Strategy 2006-2010. It receives direction and is mandated at policy level by the Childcare Directorate of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and by Pobal. The National Childcare Investment Programme provides the framework to support the Strategic Plan of DCCC over the period of 2007-2013. The NCIP aims to develop 50,000 new childcare places at national level to respond to the local need, as articulated via the City and County Childcare Committees' strategic plans. DCCC plays an essential role in identifying local childcare needs and supporting applicants to maximise funding opportunities afforded by the NCIP.

Dublin City Childcare Committee (DCCC) is made up of representatives from agencies with interest in the childcare sector. DCCC is responsible for implementing part of the Dublin City Development Board Strategy. There are close links between DCCC and the Dublin City Development board via board representation and consultation with the Dublin City Childcare Focus Group. Since its inception in 2001, DCCC have created a very efficient and action orientated committee.

VISION

'A Dublin with a system of early childhood care education that values all children equally in the context of families and communities, where children's rights and needs are upheld in all aspects of service provision'.

MISSION

'To create an environment that values all children, by guiding the ongoing development of an infrastructure of high quality edu-care that supports the holistic development of children in a family and community context throughout Dublin City.'

Report Terms

'**Guiding**' is based on the recognition that DCCC is just one of a large number of Stakeholders involved in childcare in Dublin city and that its role involves harnessing the efforts of other stakeholders to achieve a common goal. 'Infrastructure' describes the physical environment, geographic location and human resource dimension of its work. It has been developed, in collaboration with our five Local Childcare Resource Centres (LCRCs), where local supports and services can be accessed. This support is also intended to contribute positively to the physical location and development of childcare services in local communities. DCCC recognises the importance of building and strengthening capacity among service providers, be they Home-based or centre-based, community or private providers.

'Edu-care' describes our vision for childcare, as it treats education and care of young children from a developmental perspective, which is holistic, yet tailored to suit individual needs.

'Family' is in its widest sense, inclusive of immediate family members such as parents, but also includes other family members who may be involved in childcare, such as grandparents and siblings. DCCC recognises that families can have different structures and that the presence of adequate childcare supports can make an important positive contribution to the child's environment. Finally, DCCC's understanding of community reflects the diverse nature of the population of the city.

DCCC agreed the following as its core principles for the period 2007 to 2010:

- The holistic development of the child
- Parental choice
- Equality, inclusion and diversity
- Innovation
- Co-ordination

Dublin City Childcare Committee Strategy 2007-2010

Dublin City Childcare Committee's Strategic Plan 2007-2010 was developed in line with the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs/National Childcare Strategy 2006-2010 / National Childcare Investment Programme.

Strategic Objectives of Dublin City Childcare Committee

- To co-ordinate and facilitate the development of the childcare sector within Dublin City
- Promoting the provision of quality and affordable childcare in Dublin City
- Enhancing the capacity of childcare providers engaged in all forms of childcare provision, be it home-based or centre-based
- Supporting the development and integration of citywide childcare infrastructure
- Researching, developing and disseminating best practice about innovative models of childcare delivery and childcare supports

1.2 Background

In its strategy 2007-2010 Dublin City Childcare Committee (DCCC) initiated the establishment of a School-Age Childcare Thematic Working Group (SACTWG). This arose out of an acknowledgement that School-Age Childcare (SAC) was a growing area of concern. Demand for such care was on the increase while it did not appear to be matched by provision in the childcare sector. There was a desire to focus on SAC provision in order to gain a common understanding of the nature of the need, the current range of services being provided and how this area of activity could or should be supported.

The development of a School-Age Childcare thematic working group was one of DCCC's objectives in its Strategic Plan 2007-2010. School-Age Childcare was one of the most cited forms of 'ideal' childcare among the parents surveyed in Dublin City in 2006. This group has responsibility for gathering data on the current level of school age childcare available in Dublin City, exploring barriers which are preventing provision, and recommending proactive strategic responses.

A cross-section of stakeholders were invited to participate in the School-Age Childcare Thematic Working Group (see Appendix A). The group met on a number of occasions in late 2007 and early 2008, exchanging information, knowledge and ideas. A brief was drawn up by the group for the completion of a School-Age Childcare Audit and Needs Analysis.

The analysis included the input of more than 168 school-age childcare providers operating in Dublin City using a postal and telephone questionnaire (Appendix B). In addition three SAC services participated in three separate two-hour structured interviews to describe their models of good practice. Finally, five focus groups were held in the five separate administrative areas of Dublin City. These focus groups captured the input of 60 interested parties.

This report outlines the findings of the School-Age Childcare Audit and Needs Analysis and uses the input of all participants to summarise findings and make recommendations. The research undertaken for this report focuses on services with children up to 14 years of age. However in a small number of cases, some children in the services surveyed were aged up to 17 years.

1.3 Brief

The overall aim was to undertake research into the provision of school age childcare in the Dublin City Area with a particular focus on establishing needs and the framing of initial response to the needs identified.

Aims & Objectives of Research

The stated aims and objectives for the research were identified as follows:

- To complete a base line study of existing School Age Childcare services in Dublin City
- To develop a database for current and future mapping of School Age Childcare services
- To map these services on a Dublin City map divided into the 5 boundary areas of the Local Childcare Resource Centres (LCRC)
- To review a national and international models of good practice of SAC providers
- To inform DCCC policy /position on what SAC could be in the future.

Methodology

The following were the key tasks identified and agreed for the completion of the report:

1. **Literature Review** - to include a maximum of three National and three International reports on School-Age Childcare services/models, as nominated by the Research Sub-committee of the school age childcare thematic working group
2. **Audit of Dublin City Provision** – to include a circulation of questionnaires to all identified current providers for creation of a database of current provision. Some comment on analysis of those questionnaires is provided in this report.

3. **Examples of Current Models** – to include a review and interview with three current models of good practice as identified by Dublin City Childcare Committee to provide comparative examples of service provision.
4. **Stakeholder Consultation** – to include completion of five focus group sessions, one in each of the five administrative areas in Dublin City, with key people who develop, manage or use school-age childcare, to obtain feedback on their experiences of demand and key issues arising in provision.
5. **Recommendations** – The future role DCCC can play in relation to supporting school-age childcare in Dublin City in association with the School Age Childcare thematic working group.

1.4 Format of Report

Section 1: Provides an Introduction and sets the context for the completion of the research

Section 2: Provides a comment on the review of recommended literature

Section 3: Presents a picture and comment on the current service provision in the Dublin City area

Section 4: Presents three comparative Case Studies of current practice

Section 5: Presents comment form stakeholders identifying key issues, needs and concerns

Section 5: Where to from here? What are the key issues to take account of in moving forward and how can DCCC use the outcomes of this research to inform its future strategy and plans of action.

2. COMMENT ON SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE

This section seeks to provide some general comment on selected literature pertaining to school-age childcare. It is not intended as a comprehensive or in-depth literature review or analysis, which would be beyond the scope of this piece of work, but rather as a reflection on the school-age childcare debate to provoke thought and inform future direction in implementing actions arising from this report.

Defining School Age Childcare

In recent years there have been quite a number of papers, reports and comment in relation to the provision of care for children of school going age. A common feature and thread running throughout is the lack of a common internationally held understanding or definition for school age childcare. This is primarily due to the fact that there are varying school age ranges across countries and the development of care for this sector has evolved in varying ways in different countries.

The 2005 Report of the Working Group from the Childcare Directorate in the DJELR, '*Developing School Age Childcare*', defined school age childcare as being:

“Childcare for school going children provided outside of normal school hours where the same children attend the childcare facility on a regular basis and

access to the service is clearly defined by agreement with parents and guardians.”

An earlier definition from the 1996 report of the European Commission Network on Childcare described school age childcare services as being:

“Services which take over the responsibility for children when school is over but parents are not available – whether because they are working or for other reasons.”

This definition raises the issue of responsibility of care. Both are clearly referring to care outside of the standard school hours applicable.

While both of these definitions refer to school age childcare, the more recent 2006 report from QDOSS, ‘*Quality Development of Out of School Services – An Agenda for Development*’, presents a more all encompassing definition for the alternative term of ‘Out of School Services’ as follows:

“Out-of-school services refer to a range of structured programmes, clubs and activities for school age children and young people (4-18) which take place within supervised environments during the times that they are not in school. As such, out-of-school activities can take place before school, after school, at weekends, during lunch hours, and during school holidays.”

It provides a clear indication of age range. It also opens out the parameters for the type and range of services which could be included within an understanding of care for children of school age as. QDOSS further indicate the variety of services which can be offered and by whom. The SAC TWG adopted the QDOSS definition, with some slight amendments, in the context of their work to date. However given the breadth of coverage the definition provides there may be value in reviewing this in the context of the work of the group and what it aims to achieve.

The SACTWG defines school age childcare as follows;

“Out of school services refer to a range of organised age appropriate structured programmes, clubs and activities for school age children and young people (4-18) which take place within supervised environments during the times that they are not in school. As such, out of school services can take place before school, after school, at weekends, during lunch hours and during school holidays. Out of school services therefore can be offered in a variety of schools, attached to schools and non school environments, including home based childminders, community centre, child-care centres, places of worship, libraries, parks etc. Out-of-school services are sponsored by inter alia, statutory and non-governmental agencies, schools, community based groups, faith-based organisations and other voluntary sector groups”

School Age Childcare Policy

In recent years there has been much attention and debate in Ireland in relation to the care and education of pre-school children. While there is an increase in the level of debate on SAC, it is still in the early stages and only gathering momentum. As a result there is a distinct lack of focus and resultant policy in relation to provision in Ireland.

This situation is in contrast to many of our counterparts in the EU and beyond. In the UK, the 2003 Government Green Paper, *'Every Child Matters'*, places school age childcare firmly on the agenda, with a stated target of.

"...promoting full service extended schools which are open beyond school hours to provide breakfast clubs and after-school clubs and childcare, and have health and social care support services on site."

The government matched this with the creation of a Young People's Fund to stimulate the development of such services. This was further followed by the publication in 2005 by the Department for Education and Skills of *'Extended Schools: Access to Opportunities and Services for All.'* In this the department has set a target of 2010 by which all children will have access to a variety of activities beyond the school day, within their communities and based on their particular needs as identified through consultation with parents and service providers.

Finland, Sweden and Denmark are the only EU countries in which childcare is framed as a social right: when the child reaches a certain age, parents have a guarantee of a childcare place. In Norway, unlike the other Scandinavian countries, childcare services are not a social right. Yet, since the late 1980s "full coverage" has been the common political goal for care services. (PES Discussion Paper 2006: *'Childcare Provision: Contributing to the Achievement of Social Democratic Goals'*)

Further afield, Australia and New Zealand have, for a number of years, been proactive in the development of policy for the provision of quality SAC. Indeed they are a number of years ahead of us in their thinking on the subject and their implementation of actions to support their aims and objectives for this sector of childcare. In Australia for example, the Department of Family and Community Affairs published a Handbook in 2000, entitled *'Australia: Community-based Outside School Hours Care Handbook'*. This outlines their requirements for what are described as "outside school hours care". Incentives are available to providers for the establishment of services, some of which go directly for the set up costs and other elements which are provided through a Childcare Benefit for fees, either directly to the service or in a lump sum to the parent. In return, services must comply with policies, rules and regulations in respect of the timetabling and standard of the service.

A similar system is in operation in New Zealand through their "Out of School Care and Recreation Programme (OSCAR)". Again grant aid and incentives are available for the provision of services and the granting of such aid is dependent on the service satisfying a number of criteria and policies in relation to opening hours (during both school term time and holiday time), the charging of fees and the satisfying of a number of quality criteria. A proactive role is also taken in supporting the networking of OSACR supported projects.

Ireland remains some distance behind in the development and implementation of policy. As the recent 'Children's Rights Alliance Report Card 2009' highlighted:

"Investment in childcare continues to focus on the provision of places, with little evidence of sustained policy commitment, or investment, in securing the long-term viability and quality of services."

Quality of Services

SAC service provision has different forms and conditions. These include centres separate from the school; school-based activity; varying hours; varying funding structures; varying objectives in relation to the primary focus of provision. With such a divergence in the form and conditions of services provided, addressing the question of what constitutes quality becomes more challenging. Despite all these variances however, there is a broad level of consensus in relation to key factors that need to be addressed to ensure the delivery of a quality service. These include:

- variety in the programme of activity, based on themes and projects, and flexibility with a range of options and differences each day;
 - provision of free play time and child's own time out;
- appropriate physical environment, suitable to age ;
- standards of training for employees in the sector;
- close relationships and communication between providers and the client child, with the child being actively consulted and participating in the programme design and development;
- close relationships and communication between providers and the client parent ensuring the parent is aware of what to expect from the service and mutual support roles;
- Regulation within the sector.

Examples of International Guidance Standards in School Aged Childcare

Quality assurance guidelines based on best practice have been developed by the Australian National Out of School Hours Services Association (NOSHA). They address six key areas as quality indicators for Out of School Hours Services as follows:

Areas for Consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Development○ Emotional Environment○ Physical Environment○ Interactive Environment○ Framework○ Community

The underlying principle for these guidelines is the desire to ensure that best practice is *“child focused and results from interactions between those whose primary concern is the well –being of the whole child”*

In Britain the Office of Standards in Education, (OFSTED) regulate facilities which provide for childcare up to the age of eight years. They have identified 12 standards for childcare as follows:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Suitable Person ○ Organization ○ Care, learning, play ○ Physical Environment ○ Equipment ○ Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health ○ Food and Drink ○ Equal Opportunities ○ Special Needs ○ Behavior ○ Working in partnership with Parents & Carers
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In addition the *‘Kids Club Network’* in England, an initiative which is targeted solely at out of school provision, offers detailed recommendations with regard to school age childcare and an accreditation facility to Clubs which meet its criteria in order to promote high quality childcare.

QDOSS identified six of key themes, questions and priorities which they believe need to be addressed in the context of an ongoing discussion on quality standards in the provision of out of school services. These include:

1. Key Structures underpinning Out-of-School Services
2. Out-of-School Services: Bridging Health and Education Needs
3. Out-of-School Services: Contribution to Development of School Climate
4. Out-of-School Services: A Key Resource in Culturally Relevant Curriculum Implementation
5. Community development Principles and Out-of-School Services
6. Evaluation: Structural, Process and Outcome Indicators.

Each of these themes is further developed in their 2006 publication *‘Quality development of Out of School Services: An Agenda for Development.’*

The 2005 Report of the Working Group from the Childcare Directorate in the DJELR, *‘Developing School Age Childcare’*, under its terms of reference developed guidelines for the school age childcare sector and these were set out in an annexe to the report. These include detailed guidelines on:

- Physical Environment
- Programme of Activities
- Health and Safety
- Adult Child Ratios
- Fostering Partnerships
- Training

These have yet to be formally adopted and developed as official guidelines and standards for the provision of quality school age childcare in the Irish context. Since

the publication of this report childcare remit has since moved to the Office of the Minister for Children within the department of Health and Children. It is unclear whether they intend to formally adopt these recommendations and/or implement them as standards for the sector. To date the sector remains self-regulated resulting in varied standards of provision across services.

Benefits of School Age Childcare

Research indicates that quality school age childcare programmes can provide many benefits and opportunities for children. In her article in *Child Links*, The Journal of Barnardo's National Children's Resource Centre, '*School Age Programmes*', Issue 3 2006, Mary Maloney identifies a range of positive outcomes for children attending school age childcare services, indicating that:

"Quality programmes facilitate and support children to develop skills required to live and function in society such as confidence, autonomy and self-esteem"

Maloney also refers to research indicating that the development of the child is shaped and influenced by a number of experiences including home, pre-school, school, friends, their community and school age childcare settings. It is the mix of experiences that lead to a healthy development of the child and their competencies both social and personal.

In the same journal Eilis Hennessy refers to a piece of research conducted by herself and Mary Donnelly in relation to the benefits of school age childcare in disadvantaged areas. The conclusion of the research was that parents and children place a high value on participation in after-school clubs. Benefits could be clearly identified. She asserts that these findings are reflective of American research studies where the benefits of the school age childcare, in terms of the child's emotional adjustment, peer relationships and ability to complete tasks were highlighted against a similar cohort of children who did not participate in school age childcare programmes.

Conclusion

School-age childcare is a growing childcare sector in Ireland. While there is no internationally agreed definition, there are commonalities among definitions currently in use. In Ireland, much can be learned from the more advanced development of the sector in some European countries and Australia. A key area for development is the implementation of agreed and recognised standards and practices in the sector. However, without agreed national policy and procedure, commitment is lacking in directing resources and focus on the needs for quality school-age childcare provision. There is consensus among childcare professionals on the value and the need for such provision, the challenge now is to use this as a basis for developing the sector.

3. DUBLIN CITY SAC PROVISION

Much comment and debate takes place in relation to the number of services available and the geographical spread therein. The objective in undertaking an audit of service provision in the Dublin City area was to establish a more accurate picture of the actual number, range and location of services. A questionnaire was designed by DCCC (see Appendix B) and circulated to over 170 known providers in Dublin. These were followed up with telephone calls resulting in a substantive base of information from over 168 providers. DCCC then categorised the responses by LCRC area and by service provider category of Community, School, and Private. This section provides a selected analysis of those responses.

Five particular categories of information were selected as follows:

1. **Number of Services** – including the number of response, the capacity of services and the number of waiting lists for services as an indication of outstanding demand for services.
2. **Age Range** – to provide an indication of the age categories catered provided for by services
3. **Nature of Service** – identifying the number of services which offer part-time, sessional and full-time care.
4. **Opening Days and Weeks** – including the number of days per week the service operates and the number of weeks in the year.
5. **Special Features** – included in this category are a number of key features identified by practitioners including availability of an open area, collection service, and receipt of Government Funding and whether the service is specifically for a particular target group of children.

Using each of these categories the information is presented in two formats:

- As an overall Dublin City analysis
- Analysis as per each LCRC area

It should be noted that not all of the information from the questionnaires is reflected in this analysis but rather areas of particular relevance in the context of this report. There remain further areas of information which could be extrapolated and used in the overall context of the work of DCCC.

3.1 Dublin City Analysis

1. Number of Services

Of the total number of response received, 168 can be used for the purpose of the analysis on the basis of the comprehensiveness of the questions completed and thereby creating a sufficiently comparative basis for analysis. The picture for the city in terms of numbers is as follows:

Provider Category	Total	% of total	Capacity	Capacity as a % of total	Number with Waiting List	Wait List as a %
Community	51	30%	1,897	36%	24	27%
School	67	40%	2,483	48%	35	39%
Private	50	30%	835	16%	30	34%
TOTAL	168		5,215		89	

Table 3.1 shows that while there is no major difference in the number of providers in each category, there is a substantial difference in the capacity of provision. School providers have the highest capacity, three times that of private providers. Another feature of note is the relatively similar split between all providers in terms of the number with waiting lists. Over half of the total numbers of providers indicate they have current waiting lists. This is an indication that current supply of places is clearly not meeting demand.

2. Age Range

Of the 168 total number of response, 2 services did not indicate the age range they catered for. Percentage figures given in the following table are calculated on the number of responses, in this case 166. The age categories were identified as reflective of the categories given by respondents.

Provider Category	Age Up to 10	Age 10 - 12	Age 12-14	Age 14+
Community	18	22	5	5
School	17	37	8	4
Private	34	15	1	0
TOTAL	69	74	14	9
TOTAL as %	42	45	8	5

Table 3.2 shows that 87% of SAC providers cater for children up to ten years of age, 45% cater for children up to twelve years of age and that nearly 13% cater for children over twelve years of age. This suggests that service provision in Dublin for the twelve plus age group is very poor. Service provision for children aged twelve or less is much better but this must be seen in the context of significant if unknown numbers of children on waiting lists for SAC.

3. Nature of Service

In this category the intention is to identify the basis on which providers operate under three particular category headings. It should be noted that there are likely gaps in the figures as presented as there were no common definitions given as to

an understanding for each of the categories. For example, what constitutes full-time care? It is reasonable to assume therefore that similar services may have used either the part-time or the sessional category. Nonetheless, it does give some broad picture of the nature of services being provided. It should also be noted that a number of respondents indicated more than one type of service.

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Sessional</i>	<i>Full-time</i>
Community	32	12	6
School	21	44	2
Private	45	9	9
TOTAL	98	65	17
TOTAL as %	58%	39%	10%

It would appear that while there is a good supply of sessional and part-time services, full-time services are very limited. It is difficult to draw any conclusion from this, as it is probably reasonable to assume that in the absence of definitions, many providers may not see their service as full-time given that the child will always have school time.

4. Opening Days and Weeks Per Year

The table below gives an indication of the number of days and weeks services make available in their provision.

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>5 days per wk</i>	<i>4 days per week</i>	<i>Less than 4 days p.w.</i>	<i>46-52wks per annum</i>	<i>41-45wks per annum</i>	<i>40 wks or less p.a.</i>
Community	38	6	7	37	7	7
School	33	15	16	8	6	51
Private	48	1	0	46	2	1
TOTAL	119	22	23	91	15	59
Total as a %	73%	13%	14%	55%	9%	36%

Private and Community Providers are more likely to provide a year round service with the majority of schools operating to the school calendar year. Only half of the school services operate for a full week.

5. Special Features

As indicated above, the areas of interest identified are reflective of key areas which are considered of importance in the effective provision. Target groups included those open to school pupils only, children at risk and service for homeless children

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Access to outdoor Play Area/Park</i>	<i>Collection Service</i>	<i>Received Government Funding</i>	<i>Limited to Specific Target Group</i>
Community	36	22	36	20
School	56	9	46	39
Private	45	39	14	2
TOTAL	137	70	96	61
TOTAL as %	82%	42%	57%	36%

Although the figure of 82% of providers with access to an outdoor area is very positive and encouraging, from anecdotal evidence it is likely that a substantial number of these are not dedicated spaces but rather public park areas. When the school providers are excluded from the analysis of the collection service figure (schools are less likely to have the need for the service as they are located on site), the percentage of private and community providers rises to 75%. This is reflective of the demand for such a service. The majority of private providers indicated that the government funding they received was in the form of once off capital grants.

3.2 Analysis by LCRC Area

Using the categories and notes from the Dublin City analysis the figures for each LCRC area are presented below in a similar format. Comment is reserved as many of the figures are self evident and a number of the comments as outlined above continue to apply.

Dublin North West

1. Number of Services

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Capacity</i>	<i>Capacity as a % of total</i>	<i>Number with Waiting List</i>	<i>Wait List as a %</i>
Community	7	28	133	23	3	23
School	11	44	309	54	7	54
Private	7	28	132	23	3	23
TOTAL	25		574		13	

2. Age Range

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Age Up to 10</i>	<i>Age 10 - 12</i>	<i>Age 12-14</i>	<i>Age 14+</i>
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<i>Community</i>	0	7	0	0
<i>School</i>	4	6	1	0
<i>Private</i>	5	2	0	0
TOTAL	9	15	1	0
TOTAL as %	36%	60%	4%	0

3. Nature of Service

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Sessional</i>	<i>Full-time</i>
<i>Community</i>	6	0	1
<i>School</i>	4	7	0
<i>Private</i>	6	0	1
TOTAL	16	7	2
TOTAL as %	64%	28%	8%

4. Opening Hours

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>5 days per wk</i>	<i>4 days per week</i>	<i>Less than 4 days p.w.</i>	<i>46-52wks per annum</i>	<i>41-45wks per annum</i>	<i>40 wks or less p.a.</i>
<i>Community</i>	5	2	0	2	3	2
<i>School</i>	3	1	6	0	1	10
<i>Private</i>	7	0	0	7	0	0
TOTAL	15	3	6	9	4	12
Total as a %	60%	12%	24%	36%	16%	48%

5. Special Features

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Access to outdoor Play Area/Park</i>	<i>Collection Service</i>	<i>Received Government Funding</i>	<i>Limited to Specific Target Group</i>
<i>Community</i>	6	2	4	2
<i>School</i>	9	1	7	4
<i>Private</i>	7	5	3	1
TOTAL	22	8	14	7
TOTAL as %	88%	32%	56%	28%

Dublin North Central

1. Number of Services

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Capacity</i>	<i>Capacity as a % of total</i>	<i>Number with Waiting List</i>	<i>Wait List as a %</i>
<i>Community</i>	3	9	195	19	2	15
<i>School</i>	11	34	456	45	1	7
<i>Private</i>	18	56	353	35	10	67
TOTAL	32		1,004		13	

2. Age Range

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Age Up to 10</i>	<i>Age 10 - 12</i>	<i>Age 12-14</i>	<i>Age 14+</i>
<i>Community</i>	0	1	1	1
<i>School</i>	0	9	1	1
<i>Private</i>	12	6	0	0
TOTAL	12	16	2	2
TOTAL as %	37%	50%	6%	6%

3. Nature of Service

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Sessional</i>	<i>Full-time</i>
<i>Community</i>	0	3	0
<i>School</i>	3	8	0
<i>Private</i>	17	2	1
TOTAL	20	13	1
TOTAL as %	62%	40%	3%

4. Opening Hours

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>5 days per wk</i>	<i>4 days per week</i>	<i>Less than 4 days p.w.</i>	<i>46-52wks per annum</i>	<i>41-45wks per annum</i>	<i>40 wks or less p.a.</i>
<i>Community</i>	3	0	0	2	1	0
<i>School</i>	5	2	4	0	0	11
<i>Private</i>	18	0	0	17	1	0
TOTAL	26	2	4	19	2	11
Total as a %	81%	6%	12%	59%	6%	34%

5. Special Features

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Access to outdoor Play Area/Park</i>	<i>Collection Service</i>	<i>Received Government Funding</i>	<i>Limited to Specific Target Group</i>
<i>Community</i>	3	1	3	0
<i>School</i>	11	4	8	6
<i>Private</i>	16	13	7	1
TOTAL	30	18	18	7
TOTAL as %	93%	56%	56%	21%

*Dublin South Central*1. Number of Services

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Capacity</i>	<i>Capacity as a % of total</i>	<i>No. with Waiting List</i>	<i>Wait List as a %</i>
<i>Community</i>	23	35	956	45	13	38
<i>School</i>	28	42	1,053	49	17	50
<i>Private</i>	15	23	123	6	4	12

TOTAL	66	2,132	34
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2. Age Range

Provider Category	Age Up to 10	Age 10 - 12	Age 12-14	Age 14+
Community	7	10	3	3
School	7	14	4	1
Private	12	2	1	0
TOTAL	26	26	8	4
TOTAL as %	39%	39%	12%	6%

3. Nature of Service

Provider Category	Part-time	Sessional	Full-time
Community	15	6	3
School	8	20	0
Private	13	4	2
TOTAL	36	30	5
TOTAL as %	54%	45%	7%

4. Opening Hours

Provider Category	5 days per wk	4 days per week	Less than 4 days p.w.	46-52wks per annum	41-45wks per annum	40 wks or less p.a.
Community	16	2	5	17	1	5
School	13	9	4	2	3	21
Private	14	0	0	13	0	1
TOTAL	43	11	9	32	4	27
Total as a %	65%	16%	13%	48%	6%	40%

5. Special Features

Provider Category	Access to outdoor Play Area/Park	Collection Service	Received Government Funding	Limited to Specific Target Group
Community	18	10	19	10
School	23	1	24	22
Private	14	13	3	0
TOTAL	55	24	46	32
TOTAL as %	83%	36%	69%	48%

Dublin South East

1. Number of Services

Provider Category	Total	% of total	Capacity	Capacity as a % of total	No. with Waiting List	Wait List as a %
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<i>Community</i>	4	21	92	15	2	18
<i>School</i>	11	58	440	73	6	55
<i>Private</i>	4	21	73	12	3	27
TOTAL	19		605		11	

2. Age Range

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Age Up to 10</i>	<i>Age 10 - 12</i>	<i>Age 12-14</i>	<i>Age 14+</i>
<i>Community</i>	3	1	0	0
<i>School</i>	5	6	0	0
<i>Private</i>	3	1	0	0
TOTAL	11	8		
TOTAL as %	57%	42%		

3. Nature of Service

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Sessional</i>	<i>Full-time</i>
<i>Community</i>	4	1	1
<i>School</i>	5	5	1
<i>Private</i>	4	2	2
TOTAL	13	8	4
TOTAL as %	68%	42%	21%

4. Opening Hours

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>5 days per wk</i>	<i>4 days per week</i>	<i>Less than 4 days p.w.</i>	<i>46-52wks per annum</i>	<i>41-45wks per annum</i>	<i>40 wks or less p.a.</i>
<i>Community</i>	3	1	0	4	0	0
<i>School</i>	8	2	1	4	1	6
<i>Private</i>	4	0	0	4	0	0
TOTAL	15	3	1	12	1	6
Total as a %	78%	15%	5%	63%	5%	31%

5. Special Features

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Access to outdoor Play Area/Park</i>	<i>Collection Service</i>	<i>Received Government Funding</i>	<i>Limited to Specific Target Group</i>
<i>Community</i>	2	2	4	2
<i>School</i>	7	2	4	5
<i>Private</i>	4	3	0	0
TOTAL	13	7	8	7
TOTAL as %	68%	36%	42%	36%

Dublin Central

1. Number of Services

<i>Provider Category</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Capacity</i>	<i>Capacity as</i>	<i>No. with</i>	<i>Wait List as</i>
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DCCC School Age Childcare Research Report

				a % of total	Waiting List	a %
Community	14	54	521	58	4	40
School	6	23	225	25	4	40
Private	6	23	154	17	2	20
TOTAL	26		900		10	

2. Age Range

Provider Category	Age Up to 10	Age 10 - 12	Age 12-14	Age 14+
Community	8	3	1	1
School	2	2	2	1
Private	1	4	0	0
TOTAL	11	9	3	2
TOTAL as %	42%	34%	11%	7%

3. Nature of Service

Provider Category	Part-time	Sessional	Full-time
Community	7	2	1
School	1	4	1
Private	5	1	3
TOTAL	13	7	5
TOTAL as %	50%	26%	19%

4. Opening Hours

Provider Category	5 days per wk	4 days per week	Less than 4 days p.w.	46-52wks per annum	41-45wks per annum	40 wks or less p.a.
Community	11	1	2	12	2	0
School	4	1	1	2	1	3
Private	5	1	0	5	1	0
TOTAL	20	3	3	19	4	3
Total as a %	76%	11%	11%	73%	15%	11%

5. Special Features

Provider Category	Access to outdoor Play Area/Park	Collection Service	Received Government Funding	Limited to Specific Target Group
Community	7	7	6	6
School	6	1	3	2
Private	4	5	1	0
TOTAL	17	13	10	8
TOTAL as %	65%	50%	38%	30%

4. MODELS OF CURRENT PRACTICE

It is acknowledged that there is a wide range of quality school-age childcare services in operation throughout the city of Dublin. Such variance and mix succeeds in providing a variety of choice for many seeking to access a range of services, meeting a range of needs. In this regard the models chosen for analysis should not be viewed as chosen examples of best practice but rather as comparative examples of good practice for information and learning in the delivery of SAC.

The models were chosen by the research sub-committee based on a number of criteria including:

- type of service provision, i.e., school-based, private, community, etc;
- location;
- size;
- purpose designed and developed;
- operating structures and mechanisms, including funding.

The three services consulted were:

- Ranelagh Multi-Denominational School Age Childcare Service
- Tigers After School Care
- Edenmore Schools Project

The framework used for the analysis of the services is contained in Appendix C. The layout of the feedback is intended to provide a comparative view of the services under a number of key headings.

	Ranelagh Multi-denominational School Age Childcare Service	Tigers After School Care, St. Vincent's, Glasnevin	St. Malachi's B.N.S. Kilbarrack
<p>1. Nature of Service Provided:</p> <p>– Target group & Numbers catered for</p> <p>– Opening hours</p> <p>– How is the service accessed, including criteria</p> <p>– Nature of activities provided</p> <p>– Staffing & Physical resources</p>	<p>30 max – School Age Children 1 hour session for Junior & Senior Infants</p> <p>1p.m.-6p.m. on School days 8.30a.m. – 6p.m. on school holidays Closed in August</p> <p>1 hr session - children from school only Other – children from school & community</p> <p>Varied Developmental programme; Homework support; Outdoor Play; Snack/meal; Quiet time; Trips on full days;</p> <p>3 Full Time Staff including Manager 1 Part-time on an ad hoc arrangement</p>	<p>30 at any one time – School Age Children 1 hour session for Junior & Senior Infants</p> <p>1.30p.m. – 6.30p.m. on School days 9a.m. – 6p.m. on school holidays Closed 3 weeks in July</p> <p>1 hr session - children from school only Other – open access; collection service provided</p> <p>Homework support; Free play time; Physical activity; Snack/meal; developmental activity (arts, crafts, etc.); Outside Classes for children, e.g., swimming, will be supported from time to time</p> <p>3 Full Time 1Part Time</p>	<p>80 – Children with low educational attainment; social, trauma, bereavement needs; special needs; behaviour & emotional needs</p> <p>2.30p.m. – 3.45p.m. on school days 9.30a.m. – 2.30p.m. for 4 weeks in July</p> <p>Chosen in consultation with Principal; Class Teacher; HSLO Co-ordinator; SCP Co-ordinator</p> <p>Homework supervision; Activities – Robotics, Chess Club, Reading Club, Science Club, Music Club; Sports Activities. Parental Involvement – Maths for Fun, Science for Fun, Literacy; Courses & Classes for Parents; Transfer Programme for primary to 2nd Level</p> <p>School Staff; Outside Facilitators; SCP Coordinator; Link Person (based on nature of need)</p>

<p>2. Background to Establishment of Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How was the need for the service identified - Who initiated and led the development of the service - What research was undertaken (including Business Plans etc. if any) - Outline process by which service was established including timeline - What supports were received 	<p>Parents indicating need for 1 hour time. This was followed up with a questionnaire and meetings with parents to identify what they wanted from a service</p> <p>While initially it was the parents through indication of need, the Principal and Board of management in the school played a key role in leading the development of the service</p> <p>In addition to the questionnaires & consultations, research on other models and a detailed Business Plan and financial proposals were completed.</p> <p>From initial circulation of questionnaires to the first intake, the process took approx. five years. This included the establishment of a pre development group, followed by an overseeing committee and the development of formal agreed operating structures</p> <p>Significant support was received from the school Board Of Management and school Principal. Funding was received from the DEIS Scheme and Pobal through the</p>	<p>The owner was teaching as a Resource teacher & identified the need in collaboration with the School Principal. Questionnaires went to parents to establish the nature of service required.</p> <p>The development of the service was led and driven by the owner.</p> <p>Further research on need and models was undertaken followed by development of a Business Plan</p> <p>It took about a year to develop. The service was initially established on a trial run basis – Five children the first year and no rent charged to the school. It was then developed from there and began operating on a formal basis</p> <p>The school Principal was very supportive in facilitating the establishment of the project. Financially personal bank borrowings funded the establishment of the service.</p>	<p>SCP identified need for children in disadvantaged areas who needed supports to encourage them to stay in school on a daily basis. School attendance was the top priority</p> <p>A local Mngt. Committee made up of SCP Coordinator, reps of local statutory & non-statutory agencies, local school principals, HSLO & parents led the development</p> <p>Early school leavers programme initiated the research which was put into place by the SCP. The business plan & retention plan outline the aims & objectives of the project, the children's needs & the financial spend</p> <p>The DEIS Social Inclusion unit accumulated the information form the schools. The SCP is one of the reports received.</p> <p>The local schools co-operation in identifying the needs and facilitating the delivery of the project was a significant support. SCP funding enabled the delivery of the project.</p>
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<p>– Key learning from establishment process</p>	<p>ECCP There is need for leadership on the development of the project. This was available through the School Principal. Planning a quality service takes time.</p>	<p>Recruitment of good staff is critical. You need to be on hand for parents and listen to their needs, be flexible. Be friendly with the children and give them choices.</p>	<p>Committee and meeting are key to ongoing success of project. It brings together agencies dealing with the children on a daily basis, suggestions can be made, direction given, solutions found & changes made</p>
<p>2. Operation of Service: – Outline of Management Structure – What policies, procedures, regulations are in place – Funding structure – Comment on future sustainability – Key learning from operation of the service</p>	<p>Management Committee; Manager of service; Home School Liaison Officer Policy book developed specifically for SAC service outlines policies on Health and safety, standards, contracts, recruitment, fee structures employment, admissions, etc. Fees; NCIP CCSS May need to make some changes as current fee income is barely covering costs; may need to increase fees • Need to get the right staff which can be hard; need energy & acceptance of unusual hours • Good leadership from school principal is essential • Familiarity with the school is a benefit • Get Parents on board & build a good rapport</p>	<p>Overall Manager of Tigers After School Services; Manager of individual service. Policy Handbook available covering 24 specific policy headings relating to children staff & common areas of concern such as sickness, child protection, food hygiene etc Fees Sees a future market and the service being sustainable; schools are getting a good return • Recruitment of right staff – FETAC Level 5 in childcare as a minimum • Be on hand for the parents and listen to them • Be flexible, accommodate various arrangements for parents • Be open with the children and listen to</p>	<p>Local Committee and School Completion Program Coordinator SCP funding Dependent on funding • Importance of having a strong and representative committee • Committee must provide direction and initiate change • For children at risk, record and monitor needs and issues, both positive and negative.</p>

<p>3. Outline SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis of Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get policies and procedures in place, particularly one on behaviour • Hold weekly staff meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security in the school can be an issue • Can be issues between older age cohorts of boys and girls – be prepared to deal with that. 	
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff and teamwork • Respect with and for kids • Parents support and confidence • Flexibility in the hours, service, etc. – a listening ear <p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being in the school, particularly at the outset; need to set a divide and that is very hard to do. • Parents still thinking it is run by the school – getting the message across about the status of the service • Parents still going to the School Principal with an issue <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could increase involvement of local community by moving the service boundary beyond the school to include other children • Open to families in the area in need of the service <p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security in the school; there are so 	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility – choices are available in terms of hours, programmes, etc. • On the school premises • Staff – very important to get the right people and mix • The varied nature of the programme <p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space – flexibility on use of space once the schools reach capacity • Getting payment – cash flow can be a problem <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at other schools providing similar services • Provision of integrated facilities • The need for school cash flow creates an opportunity for the provision of school based services. This should be discussed and negotiated with the DEIS. <p>Threats;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an open market with no regulation • Funding – becoming more difficult to get from the banks to replicate and 	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative approach of HSLO and Community <p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty of finance • Low staffing levels <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project can make a difference in young peoples lives by supporting and encouraging them in their education <p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The economic climate • Loss of funding 	

	<p>many extra curricular activities in the school it can create an issue for staff and children in the service</p>	<p>create similar services elsewhere</p>	
<p>5. Future Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What if anything would you like to change and why - Where do you see the service in the future - What advice if any for other services seeking to establish. 	<p>More support and funding for services of this nature to maintain quality standard</p> <p>Looking at providing a breakfast slot in addition to current service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the ground work and research • Get the right people at the planning stage, voluntary people with vision and commitment • It takes time, will not happen overnight so be patient and persistent • Funding will be hard but stick with it • Rope in all the support you can get • Everyone must be on board 	<p>Greater commitment at government level to services of this nature</p> <p>May establish breakfast clubs and provide a pre-school hours service through use of pre-fabs on site in school grounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be done • Biggest cost getting started is staff and rent • Do some initial advertising but get the word out • Do not compromise on quality • Be flexible in rates for all occasions – hourly, full day, monthly – fill your spots. 	<p>Need more staff dedicated to the project. Also need a family support worker to support families and young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include all stakeholders • Monitor and Evaluate • Listen to children and their needs.

5. COMMENT FROM STAKEHOLDERS

This section seeks to provide an analysis of comment from the stakeholders who participated in the focus group sessions. Participants were drawn and representative of a number of childcare related backgrounds – childcare practitioners, private and community; parents; statutory workers; voluntary workers; youth workers; teachers and School Completion Coordinator. The brief used for the sessions is contained in Appendix D.

In all five Focus Group sessions took place, one in each of the Local Childcare Resource Centre areas, four which took place in the evening time and one in the morning. The overall aim of the sessions was to provide relevant stakeholders with the opportunity to input to the research by commenting on their experiences of need and delivery of school age childcare. In particular it sought to identify key issues and challenges for provision in the future. The commentary and feedback outlined in this section reflects an overall analysis of feedback and comment obtained.

5.1 Demands for SAC

A key note at all of the sessions was the ongoing change in our economic environment at present which will undoubtedly have an impact on the demand for SAC over the coming months and possibly years. While there was growing demand for services in recent times this was fuelled primarily by women returning to the workforce and/or education and training. With the changed economic climate, this demand may be affected

Demand appears to outstrip supply and this looks set to continue. As a result, informal arrangements and combined systems of care appear to be a common feature school-age childcare. Key issues in relation to demand were as follows:

- Session participants indicated a greater demand for community-based services across the city. While it is hard to come to a conclusion why, it is probably reasonable to assume that cost is an associated feature – fees in such services tend to be lower than private services. It should be noted, however, that the questionnaire analysis indicated almost equal demand between community, school and private provision
- Demand for private services showed no consistent trend across the focus groups. Some private services indicated increasing challenges in attracting children, while others indicated they had a waiting list for services.
- The facility to collect and transport children from school to the service was consistently identified as a critical feature impacting on the demand for services. Services which cannot provide this facility clearly lose out to other services, regardless of quality of service. In this regard, school based service have a distinct competitive edge over all other service providers. In addition

this can be a restriction for parents in their choice and the availability of services to meet their needs.

- There is an increasing demand for childminders. Several reasons for this were cited. Principal among them was the flexibility afforded by such an arrangement – the child can still participate for example in local after-school activities; transport to and from school will be provided; there is greater opportunity to dip in and out of such a service; it can be less costly particularly where two or more children are being minded. As one participant commented:

‘The childminder is a much more flexible option. For example if the child is sick, he/she can still go to the childminder. Or better again if the minder comes into the home – some of the chores can even be covered.’

- The greatest demand for services is from parents of children aged 4-10, with those starting school being the greater cohort within this age range. Thus demand far exceeds supply for the after school service which is school-based and bridges the gap of the hour between collection of a younger child and an older child. After the age of 10, it is felt that most children do not like the structured service with which they were traditionally familiar as a young child. As one stakeholder commented:

‘Children outgrow the services that are structured. They then need a different environment’

The challenge for providers is to meet the demand from the child for a different environment while meeting the demand from the parent for a structured safe environment for their child.

- Specialist referral services are reporting a huge increase in demand for their services. Almost all of such services indicated waiting lists for access.
- Space for the provision of services – private, community, school-based, voluntary, etc., was identified as a key feature in dictating the supply of places to meet the demand. The demand is there, but adequate affordable space is at a premium. This may change with the changed economic climate, ultimately to the benefit of providers.

5.2 Nature of Services

There are significant variations in the nature of childcare services being provided for school-aged children across Dublin city. While all are valuable in that they are

meeting a need, the difficulty is in tracking such services for the purpose of creating a basis for comparison. Such comparisons are possibly futile as the range reflects:

- the belief that there is no one size fits all;
- the fact that different services are needed at different stages of the child's development;
- parental needs can be quite diverse, reflecting the need for choice;
- The fact that combined approaches can often best suit the desired balance between parental and child needs. Again flexibility is the key.

The range of services identified in the course of the consultations included:

- Full afternoon and school-holiday care, i.e., care for all times out of normal school hours in the course of a what would be considered a 'normal' working day. Such services tend to be used by full-time working parents.
- Part-time service which caters for children on particular afternoons per week, typically 3 to 4 and for a shorter number of weeks in the year, typically maybe for the school calendar year. Such services play a key role in accommodating the part-time working parent. The majority of private providers are happy to take children on a part-time basis also. Included in this category are summer camp-type services.
- Club and/or sessional service, i.e., part-time care for a couple of hours on a couple of afternoons in the week. This could include homework clubs, reading club, activity themed club, etc. Such services tend to be community-based and are designed to target or create access for a greater number of children in an area.
- Services for target groups only, e.g., homeless children, children at risk, etc. They may run on a full-time or part-time basis and generally operate on a referral basis only. They are intended to make a particular intervention in the child's life for a specific period of time.

The type of activities provided by the services did show some common themes in terms of approach and mix of activity. Club-type service is the only exception with an obvious focus on the theme of the club only. Other services provide a mix of:

- developmental activity, e.g., arts, crafts, cookery, drama, etc.;
- physical activity, primarily outdoor where possible;
- recreational time, e.g., games, computer time, etc.;
- homework support for an agreed period ;
- free time for the child's own decision;
- food, physical nourishment.

There was agreement that whatever the schedule of activities provided by a service, they must be attractive to the child and the child must want to be there. It is more difficult the older a child becomes to retain them in a service where they are not finding it stimulating and reflecting their needs.

Children in full-time care in particular can find it a very long day where they are going from school directly to a service until possibly late in the evening. This provides a greater challenge for providers to accommodate their needs and to ensure they

retain their interest. They need the service to become more and more home-from-home the older they get. This includes a greater amount of space and free areas to just 'chill'.

In conclusion stakeholders feel that the school-age child needs routine but balanced by a greater amount of choice and input to the activity schedule. Children of school-age, particularly those at the upper end of the age scale, tend to need different activities everyday to stimulate and retain their interest. Most importantly they need time out to themselves, giving them the space and time required to relax and 'do nothing'.

5.3 Challenges in Service Provision

Some common themes emerged across all stakeholders in terms of the challenges faced in providing quality school age childcare. These included:

- **Premises** – the lack of availability of appropriate and adequate premises is a serious difficulty for providers. As children get older they physically need more space. The availability of a safe secure outdoor area was seen as of high importance in providing a quality service to meet the child's need. Premises meeting such standards are difficult to secure. A purpose built service is the ideal but not always possible.
- **Transport** – collection from school and transport to the after school service is a priority for service users. For service providers however this can be a difficulty. The physical transport as in the provision of a car/bus if necessary adds an additional cost. Even where this is not necessary as the service is within walking distance, there is a staff resource cost where staff must do the collection.

Providers also saw transport as an issue in the context of increasing demand from parents to facilitate their child attending other after school activities, e.g., swimming classes, etc. Some services can facilitate this demand but it is difficult and logistically demanding for services to meet this need.

- **Staffing** – availability of skilled staff and relief staff can be a difficulty. SAC demands a different skill sets than that for pre-school childcare and for youth care. For example, the school age child can present different behavioural challenges; the mix in the age range brings differing demands which need to be balanced; etc. A commonly reflected comment was :

'School age childcare is a totally separate and specific area, to be approached in a very different way to 'childcare'.

Appropriate training for SAC provision is not widely available or accessible. There have been significant strides in the development of new modules of training but they need to be rolled out and made more widely accessible and available.

- **Cost of Service** – the costs for the provision of a SAC service can be significantly higher than pre-school childcare. The costs arise on two fronts in particular: the space/premises need and the cost of activities which tends to be higher for the older child.

A question which was frequently asked was whether there is a perception that SAC is worth it? Do parents value it in the way pre-school childcare is valued? Do policy makers value it and deem it worthy of allocation of resources? Who should ultimately pay – a key question in the context of the benefits identified with the delivery of SAC? There is not a culture of paying for school age childcare. This is an interesting feature in the context of a comment from one of the providers in a focus group session who stated:

‘It struck me the other day when I was parking my car in a city centre location and paying over €5 per hour for the privilege, that there really is very little value placed on school age childcare considering the cost for our service works out at approximately €4.50 per hour’

- **Standards** – while it was acknowledged that the majority of providers are striving to meet high standards, nonetheless there are no regulations or standards of practice to guide providers. There are no guidelines or frameworks in place for standards or policy in the delivery of SAC, as one stakeholder commented, *‘the universal stuff is still missing’*.

Providers in particular were strongly calling for some regulation in SAC. They see it as a support for their sector and they also feel it would highlight and underline the value of SAC.

Typical comments in relation to regulations and standards included:

‘There is no emphasis or drive in relation to children aged 5+ who are in school.’

‘Nothing will happen unless there are policy changes. Child protection is a huge issue in relation to SAC.’

It was acknowledged that there has been much comment and debate in relation to standards and regulations but no outcome or conclusion. While there has been a substantive amount of comment and review on services, this is not matched by any co-ordinated response. It is seen as being linked to value – if it is not deemed worthy of minimum standards, how can it be properly valued? What is the message being sent out?

- **Informal Childcare** - this refers to parental arrangements for care of school age children which are not clearly identified as childcare per se. It could include for example an arrangement for a child to go on ‘play dates’ on particular afternoons; a grandparent to collect and care for the child; an older sibling to collect and care for the child; the child being allowed to let him/herself in and remain in the house alone.

There was a sense that there is a growing trend for such informal type arrangements. This may be driven by a lack of availability but there is also a sense that it is being driven by a desire to cut household costs. There was a clear consensus on the need to reverse the trend for such informal arrangements if the interests of the child are to be best served.

For specific types of services other particular challenges identified were as follows:

School based services – there is an ongoing challenge of creating an environment which is separate and distinct from the school environment. Such services identified in the course of this piece of research do it very successfully, but they are acutely aware of the need and are proactive in addressing the issue. With the call for more services to be school based to facilitate the use of available premises, this issue needs to be supported and maintained to the forefront in the development of services.

Security was also identified as an issue for school based services in particular. This arose on two fronts: large empty school buildings in afternoons can be quite vulnerable places and secondly, where there are activities taking place in a school in the afternoon, there can be quite a through flow of people on the premises.

Specialised Services - those targeted at particular children identified access to linked services as a particular challenge. The service can be quite successful in their intervention of SAC but other required service supports needed for the child can be difficult to access. There is a need for greater co-operation and dialogue between services. It is also linked to the status of acknowledgement of SAC and the value of it.

In conclusion, the focus group feedback identified three key areas of support which would be welcomed in the provision of SAC:

- A. Facilitate dialogue on the school\ age childcare provision and provide leadership in the ongoing debate.
- B. The promotion of access to school premises, buildings and grounds, for use out of school time in a manner which is mutually beneficial
- C. Promote the development of guidelines and standards of practice in the provision of SAC.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the debate is open and developing in relation to the needs and supports for the school-age childcare sector, much remains to be done. Of primary importance is the need to keep the debate alive and focused.

While the SACTWG and DCCC can undoubtedly play a key role in advancing the debate, supporting providers and seeking to achieve key steps to ensure ongoing commitment to the development of a quality sector. They cannot do it alone. It must be achieved in partnership with other key players. In looking to the future, the recommendations below have been considered in the context of what can realistically be achieved by the working group and the childcare committee within a reasonable timeframe.

Recommendations:

1. Achieve Agreed Definition

There are a number of definitions of school age childcare, all of which are valid. However, in achieving a common voice and understanding of the sector, it would be useful if a common definition, functional for the Irish context, could be agreed and recognised. This may be a case of seeking agreement from key stakeholders on one of the current definitions in use, e.g., QDOSS; DJELR Working Group definition; etc. it may entail working on a merger of a number of definitions, or there may be an alternative. The key issue is to achieve a recognisable, acknowledged, working definition. DCCC through the TWG could lead the debate on this issue by building on what is there and agreeing a definition to reflect the work of their group.

2. Promote the agenda for Regulation

There is a clear and strong desire from practitioners, providers, parents, and all interested stakeholders for the establishment of policy in relation to SAC and supporting framework of guidelines and regulations for this sector of childcare. Much has been achieved already in this regard and much can be learned from international experience and research. The challenge is to build on this and move it forward to some stage of conclusion. DCCC could play a key role in bringing relevant parties together to advocate for the development of policy, procedure and regulation of the school age childcare sector.

3. Training Development

It is recognised that practice in SAC has particular specialities, some of which are similar to childcare and youth work, but many of which are also unique to the role. Much has been achieved in the development of new training and development materials for school age childcare workers. This training needs to be made more widely available and accessible to both current and future practitioners. DCCC could play a lead role in organising and co-ordinating the roll out of training and development for SAC workers in the Dublin city area.

4. Networking & Dissemination of Information

The exchange of information can act as a direct support to practitioners in the field. It also informs the ongoing debate in relation to the needs of the sector and the supports which can be provided. Such exchange can take place through the facilitation of networks of providers and/or stakeholders. Such networks can also act as a means of disseminating information on good practice in the sector, new developments, resources, etc. DCCC are well positioned to facilitate and support such networking and information dissemination.

5. Premises Support

The availability of adequate premises for the provision of school age childcare services was continually identified as a stumbling block and barrier to provision. In particular the issue of obtaining planning permission was identified as long drawn out and quite often unsuccessful. DCCC should examine what role they could play in supporting projects in the securing of premises whether it is through the planning process by linking with Dublin City Council or through other mechanisms.

APPENDIX A: Membership and background of DCC SACTWG

Membership

Stephen Barry, Business Support Officer, Dublin City Childcare Committee
Joe Rynn, Manager, Dublin City Childcare Committee
Ann Carroll, Childcare Co-ordinator, Community After-School Projects (CASPr)
Margaret Caul, Manager, North Central Local Childcare Resource Centre
Paul Downes, Quality Development of Out-of-School Services (QDOSS),
and Educational Disadvantage Centre, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra
Valerie Gaynor, Project-Coordinator, South Central Local Childcare Resource
Centre.
Maire Igoe, Children's Services Unit, Dublin City Council
Bernadette Kelly, Coordinator, Dublin North West Local Childcare Resource Centre
Valerie McLoughlin, Educational Disadvantage Centre, St. Patrick's College,
Drumcondra
Teresa Quigley, Coordinator, South East Local Childcare Resource Centre
Sr. Malene da Velle, Aisling Project, Ballymun
Joan Whelan, Principal, Ranelagh Multi-Denominational School
Trish McCann, Childcare Co-ordinator, KWCDT Partnership
Phil Lynch, Irish Preschool Playgroups Association
Breda Kenny, Central Local Childcare Resource Centre
Michelle McDermot, Barnardos

Background

In its strategy 2007-2010 Dublin City Childcare Committee (DCCC) initiated the establishment of a School-Age Childcare Thematic Working Group (SACTWG). This arose out of an acknowledgement that School-Age Childcare (SAC) was a growing area of concern. Demand for such care was on the increase while it did not appear to be matched by provision in the childcare sector. There was a desire to focus on SAC provision in order to gain a common understanding of the nature of the need, the current range of services being provided and how this area of activity could or should be supported.

The development of a School Age Childcare thematic working group was one of DCCC's objectives in its Strategic Plan 2007-2010. School age childcare was one of the most cited forms of 'ideal' childcare among the parents surveyed in Dublin City in 2006. This group has responsibility for gathering data on the current level of school age childcare available in Dublin City, exploring barriers which are preventing provision, and recommending proactive strategic responses.

APPENDIX B: Audit Questionnaire



It's that time of year again! Your service is probably taking in new children. Dublin City Childcare Committee Ltd is updating its childcare provider's database.

We would appreciate if you could complete this questionnaire and return it by 30th of September 2008 to the **Dublin City Childcare Committee, 108 James' Street, the Digital Hub, Dublin 8.**

Thank you for your assistance.

PART 1 – General Information

Name of childcare service/School	
Contact Name	
Address	
Phone number	
Fax number	
Email address	
Web address	

PART 2 – Services Offered

Q.1 The type of service that you provide (√)					
Community	<input type="checkbox"/>	Private	<input type="checkbox"/>	Childminder	<input type="checkbox"/>
HSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	School Based/Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		

	Yes (√)	No (√)
Q.2 Does your service have access to an outdoor play area/park?		
Q.3 Does your facility cater for children with special needs?		
	Physical disability	
	Sensory disability (deaf, blind)	
	Learning disability	

Q.4 Is the service that you provide? (√) (You can tick more than one)							
Full day		Sessional		Drop In		School Aged	
Combination				Part time/other			

Q.5 Which of the following best describes your service? (√) (You can tick more than one)					
Crèche		Crèche with Montessori		School Aged Care	
Naionra		Crèche with School aged childcare		Before School /Breakfast Club	
Montessori		Parent & Toddler		After school/Out of School	
Preschool/ Playgroup		Childminder		School Holidays/Project	
Full day & Preschool				Youth Project	

PLEASE TURN OVER

Q.6 Details of service provided									
Age Group	Yes	No	Hours of care		No. Days per week	No. Weeks per year	Capacity (No.)	Current (No.)	Waiting list (No)
			From	To					
Under 1									
Toddlers									
Pre school (3-4years)									
School Aged (4-7)									
School Aged (8-14)									

If you have ticked yes for School Aged Childcare can you please complete part 3 below.

PART 3 – School Aged Childcare

Q. 7 School Aged Childcare										
School Aged Childcare	Yes	No	Ages	Hours of care		No. Days per week	No. Weeks per year	Capacity (No.)	Current (No.)	Waiting list (No.)
				From	To					
Before School										
After school										
School Holidays										
What is your catchment area, .e.g. local school/neighbourhood?										
Does your service provide a collection/drop off service?									Yes (√)	No (√)
Has your school aged childcare service received any funding from government sources such as EOCP/NCIP?										
Is your service open to the general public?										
Is your service limited to a specific target group? (Please give details)										

Thank you for your assistance in completing this questionnaire.

APPENDIX C: Framework for Model Analysis

Service Analysis

Overall Aim:

To undertake analysis of 3 selected school age childcare services to identify and establish a comparative basis of information and learning from services currently in operation.

This will contribute to an overall analysis of school age childcare needs being undertaken on behalf of the DCCC. Other key elements of that research include:

- Analysis of documented research on best practice in school age childcare provision in Ireland and Europe
- Consultation sessions with key stakeholders including service providers, parents, workers, etc.

It is expected that the overall research will be complete by end February 2009.

Framework for Analysis of Service:

4. What is the Service You Provide:
 - Target group & Numbers catered for
 - Opening hours
 - How is the service accessed, including criteria
 - Nature of activities provided
 - Staffing & Physical resources
5. Background to Establishment of Service:
 - How was the need for the service identified
 - Who initiated and led the development of the service
 - What research was undertaken (including Business Plans etc. if any)
 - Outline process by which service was established including timeline
 - What supports were received
 - Key learning from establishment process
6. Operation of Service:
 - Outline of management Structure
 - What policies/procedures/regulations are in place
 - Funding structure
 - Comment on future sustainability
 - Key learning from operation of the service
7. Outline SWOT Analysis of service
8. Future Planning:
 - What if anything would you like to change and why
 - Where do you see the service in the future

- What advice if any for other services seeking to establish.

APPENDIX D: Brief for Focus Group Sessions

Focus Group Sessions

Background:

Dublin City Childcare Committee (DCCC) is currently undertaking a piece of research into the provision of school age childcare in Dublin City with a particular focus on establishing needs and framing of initial responses to those needs.

There are 4 key stages to the research:

1. Audit of existing services
2. Review and analysis of documented research on best practice in school age childcare provision in Ireland and Europe
3. Development of 3 comparative Case Studies of existing provision
4. Focus group consultation sessions x 5 with key stakeholders including service providers, parents, workers, etc.

It is in relation to Stage 4 that we are seeking your input and support

Overall Aim of Focus Groups:

The overall aim of the session is to provide relevant stakeholders with an opportunity to input to the research by commenting on their experience of need and delivery of school age childcare and the delivery.

It may also provide an opportunity to open the debate on school age childcare provision at local level along with an opportunity for key stakeholders to network on the issue.

How will it Work?

The session is being organized through the local childcare resource centres and information bureaus in the Dublin city area. They will be facilitated by the consultant contracted to undertake the research, Eilis Murray.

There will be a maximum of 12 people in each group. These will comprise of different stakeholders including providers, parents, workers etc.

They will be conducted on an informal discussion basis, with Ellis providing key questions to prompt thought and promote discussion. The session will last between an hour and two hours maximum.

It is expected that the overall research will be complete by end February 2009.

Many thanks for your help and cooperation.

APPENDIX E: Bibliography

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APPENDIX F: Acknowledgements

It is important to acknowledge the many inputs and co-operation received from a broad cohort of stakeholders which made the completion of this report possible. To all those who willingly made recommendations on pieces of research for review, thank you for your guidance through what could have potentially been a maze of documents.

To all of the providers for their completion of the questionnaire, thank you for providing us with a comprehensive database of information which is of great use and value now and going forward. To all the LCRC's who took on the task of organising the Consultation Sessions and all those who attended, thank you for providing an excellent insight to the reality on the ground. Finally, to the DCCC, the Research Working Group of the DCCC School Age Childcare Thematic Working Group, and the broader group membership, a sincere thanks for all your support and guidance.

APPENDIX G Dublin City Childcare Committee Board Members

Statutory Agencies

Rita Byrne, Health Service Executive

Vacant, FÁS

Rachel Devlin, Health Service Executive

Vacant, Dept. of Social, Community & Family Affairs

Kathryn Cleary, City of Dublin VEC

Máire Igoe, Dublin City Council

Martin Kavanagh, Dublin City Council

National Voluntary Childcare Collaborative

Martin Heffernan, National Children's Nurseries Association (NCNA)

Carmel Brennan, Irish Preschool Playgroups Association (IPPA)

Anne Conroy, Barnardos

Dublin City Childcare Focus Group

Sharon Byrne, Parent Representative

Bernadette O'Donoghue, Parent Representative.

Geraldine Brereton, One Family

Social Partners

Ethel Buckley, Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Brigid Ruane, Community Forum

Area Based Partnerships

Mary McGuane, Area Based Partnership Representatives

Declan Dunne, CEO, Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership

Equality and Diversity

Currently Vacant

Employer bodies/IBEC

Currently Vacant

The NATIONAL VOLUNTARY CHILDCARE COLLABORATIVE is made up of:

Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta, Childminding Ireland, Children in Hospital, Irish Preschool Playgroups Association (IPPA), Irish Steiner Kindergarten Association, National Children's Nurseries Association (NCNA), St. Nicholas Montessori Society of Ireland and Barnardos.