

EIS Response to the Scottish Government's Draft Framework on Out of School Care

The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), as Scotland's largest teaching union with more than 60,000 members from across all sectors of the education system, welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Scottish Government's draft framework on out of school care.

It is important to note that within this response, out of school care and childcare are addressed as two separate services. The EIS notes that childcare is often delivered within out of school settings and largely organised to suit the needs of parents; whereas out of school care when discussed in this paper refers to clubs and activities, usually taking place in school settings outwith the school day. This can include sports clubs, breakfast clubs or holiday programmes.

The key areas of interest to the EIS on out of school care provision are breakfast clubs and the early learning provision within certain childcare sectors. Besides this, the EIS advocates for fair work practices to be applied to all staff within the out of school workforce.

Breakfast Club provision

One area of out of school provision that the EIS has been a campaigning priority for is the free universal provision of breakfast clubs. Breakfast clubs have been run alongside the school day in Scotland for many years now. Many clubs offer children the chance to socialise and learn valuable life skills alongside getting a healthy breakfast to start the school day. With the introduction of austerity policies just over 10 years ago, the number of children living in poverty in Scotland has increased¹, the number of breakfast clubs in operation decreased during the time in which there has been growing demand for breakfast clubs to be introduced in more schools.

Whilst many breakfast clubs offer additional support, the need to ensure that children and their families have access to nutritious meals is a growing concern for many local authorities with a rise in foodbanks use across the country.²

Figures from 2016/17 show that just over 20% of schools in Scotland offer a breakfast service, although there is huge variation across local authorities.³ There is also considerable variation in the cost of accessing breakfast clubs, with local authorities such as Glasgow City Council offering it free to primary school

¹ Child Poverty Action Group, "Child poverty in working families on the rise" <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/child-poverty-working-families-rise> 28th March 2019

² The Scotsman, "The use of foodbanks in Scotland hits record high" <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/use-of-food-banks-in-scotland-hits-record-high-1-4729188> (April 2018)

³ Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit, "Are pupils being served? A secondary review of the sector's evidence based on school meal provision at lunchtime in Scotland" John H. McKendrick et. al. Page 35

children who are entitled to a free school meal⁴ whereas some children in Dundee City Council are being charged £2 a day to attend a breakfast club.⁵

Benefits of Breakfast Clubs

In a recent EIS survey, over half of respondents said they had seen an increase in the number of children coming to school hungry with little or no food or snacks, or money for the tuck shop. Just over a fifth said they had seen an increase in the number of children demanding or stealing food from other children.⁶

There is an expanding body of evidence to suggest that hunger is a growing problem amongst school aged children in Scotland. However, there is also significant research to suggest that the use of breakfast clubs can mitigate against some of the effects of poverty in the classroom and can improve learning experiences overall.

In November 2016 Magic Breakfast and the Education Endowment Foundation published the findings of their The Magic Breakfast project which provided 106 schools with support and resources to offer a universally free, before-school breakfast club, including to all Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. The aim of the project was to improve attainment outcomes by increasing the number of children who ate a healthy breakfast.

The schools in the project were English schools with a relatively high proportion of disadvantaged pupils. The project ran between September 2014 and July 2015. Schools were provided with free food, support from a Magic Breakfast school change leader, and a £300 grant towards up-front costs. The intervention itself was delivered by school staff and volunteers.

Key findings from the Magic Breakfast study found that:

- “Year 2 children in breakfast club schools experienced around two months’ additional progress compared to Year 2 children in the other schools in the trial. These positive results would be unlikely to occur by chance.
- “For Year 6 children in breakfast club schools, results for the main outcomes, reading and maths, were positive but could have occurred by chance. However, on other measures of writing and English they experienced around two months’ progress compared to the other Year 6 children. These positive results would be unlikely to occur by chance.
- “The findings suggest that it is not just eating breakfast that delivers improvements, but attending a breakfast club. This could be due to the

⁴ Glasgow City Council, “Glasgow City Council Breakfast Clubs in Primary Schools”

http://merryleeprimarypc.org/downloads/Breakfast_Service_Consultation_Briefing.pdf

⁵ Evening Telegraph, “Dip in Dundee breakfast club numbers blamed on increase in charges for hard-up parents” <https://www.eveningtelegraph.co.uk/fp/dip-in-dundee-breakfast-club-numbers-blamed-on-increase-in-charges-for-hard-up-parents/> 1st October 2019

⁶ The Educational Institute of Scotland, “How is poverty continuing to affect children and young people's education in Scotland? Interim Findings - EIS Survey 2019” page 6

content of the breakfast itself, or to other social or educational benefits of the club.

- "Pupil behaviour, as measured by a teacher survey, improved in breakfast club schools. This is interesting because it shows that breakfast clubs may improve outcomes for children who do not even attend breakfast club, by improving classroom environments.
- "Activities thought to increase take-up of the breakfast provision included promoting it to parents and encouraging all children to attend while sensitively targeting pupils most likely to benefit. The project required additional staff time which some schools found difficult to provide without charging for breakfast."⁷

A similar study run by the Department for Education found that breakfast clubs had a positive impact in schools with high levels of deprivation.⁸ With more children being pushed into poverty, breakfast clubs offer a vital service to many communities and should be free at the point of use.

Out of School Care in School Settings

Many children in Scotland take part in out of school activities such as sports, breakfast and study clubs in school settings. Whilst many of these programmes offer children and young people additional benefits outside of the school day or week there are a few issues of concern to EIS members – such as:

- The use of classrooms by any outside group can have possible disruptive effects on learning and teaching.
- At times scheduled for parent consultation meetings, there can be some conflict over use of accommodation.
- Some headteachers are concerned about the use of school premises by any outside group.
- Some headteachers enquire about the qualifications of the carers.
- Some local OSC groups ask schools to disseminate information, leaflets, etc.
- Many schools have tightened their security arrangements, post Dunblane. It is important that OSC groups should be consulted/informed about security arrangements.⁹

Poverty Proofing Out of School Care

Consideration should be given to assigning additional resources to models of provision being trialled in areas of high and multiple deprivation, or generally in instances where it is known that children have additional needs.

⁷ Ibid. Page 4

⁸Department for Education, "Evaluation of Breakfast Clubs in Schools with High Levels of Deprivation Research Report" Noreen Graham et. al.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/603946/Evaluation_of_Breakfast_Clubs_-_Final_Report.pdf (March 2017)

⁹ The Educational Institute of Scotland, "Guidance to members on out of school care" June 1997

The EIS believes that childcare should be free and accessible to all, with consideration also given to how children and families in rural areas will be able to access out of school care and childcare. Recent survey data from the EIS shows that many teachers are highlighting that the cost of the school day can be prohibitive for many children and families, and therefore free provision must be provided to all children, as any cost barrier, regardless of how small the contribution may be, will exclude some children from participating in out of school clubs.

Workforce Considerations

Whilst the EIS does not represent workers in the out of school and childcare sectors we advocate strongly for fair work practices to be applied to all staff. This includes paying fair wages which reflect the skills needed to work with children and deliver high quality care across all settings.

To this end, all members of the ELC workforce should have access to appropriate training, and be fairly paid, as appropriate to their role within the team. It is worth noting that many of Scotland's poorest children currently are likely to be the daughters and sons of childcare workers.

Research consistently demonstrates that such an approach- proper investment in the workforce- is the means by which to deliver the highest quality of provision overall, in addition to that which has the greatest positive impact on improving outcomes for children who face socio-economic disadvantage.

Recommendations

Out of school provision can be a valuable asset to children and their families when designed and implemented in a way that is complimentary to the school day. The use of breakfast clubs for example can be a valuable tool to help combat child hunger and improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

Out of school care must always be designed and provided with the benefits to children and young people in mind. Whilst out of school care can be a valuable tool for families to access the workplace, consideration must be made of the quality of care on offer, and the length of time children are spending in wraparound care settings.

When using school premises, steps should be taken to ensure activities do not disrupt the school day, or put additional workload commitments on teaching staff and other practitioners.