

CWDC Practitioner-Led Research Project

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Children Assessing Quality

How and when can children participate in the evaluation of services in an out of school club, and to what extent do they want to?

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Children assessing quality: how and when can children participate in the evaluation of services in an out of school club, and to what extent do they want to?

Abstract

Introduction:

Children have a right to be involved in decisions which affect them, and to influence services of which they are the primary recipient, both because it will increase their sense of ownership and responsibility, but also because it is the ethical thing to do in any service which claims to be 'child-centred'. Self-evaluation is of increasing importance in terms of Ofsted assessments of quality, but also for a learning organisation.

An outcomes-based approach to evaluation may not adequately capture the nature and quality of children's experiences in out of school provision. Where play is prioritised over formal learning and development, 'enjoy' may be deemed a more relevant outcome than 'achieve' by both children and parents. However it is harder to produce evidence of enjoyment, particularly with no nationally agreed indicators. It seems important to try to capture at least some elements of this outcome, to complement targets which are easier to measure.

Methodology:

Our project aimed to develop a creative and participatory approach to on-going evaluation appropriate to this age group, in this type of setting. It also aimed to find out more about *how* children judge quality, for example the fun of an activity, the suitability of resources, the nature of the play environment, and the staff. We used a range of creative and participatory methods and activities including photography and video, model-making, and peer interviewing. 20 children aged 5-11 participated to some degree; 16 in peer interviewing.

Findings:

We found that children enjoyed being involved in evaluation, and that they can participate in a variety of ways: developing evaluation tools and recording outcomes; collecting and interpreting data; and reporting back to children, parents and partners.

We found that it is appropriate, feasible and desirable for us to involve children in on-going evaluation, as long as their contribution is entirely voluntary and acknowledged, and when evaluation activities are not perceived as being children's 'work'. Play and having 'fun' remain paramount.

1. Introduction

This project builds on findings from previous participatory research with children at our out of school club, in which we learned about what they value at the club, how they viewed the role of staff, and how the service could be improved. Our findings fed into decision-making: resource purchase, activity planning, promotion and funding bids. It led to the development of our 'Research and Evidence-based Children's Action Plan' (RECAP), within which we have identified a need to incorporate on-going, child-centred evaluation, in accordance with our policy on Involving and Consulting Children.

2. Aims of the project

This project aimed to develop a creative and participatory approach to on-going evaluation appropriate to this age group, in this type of setting. It also aimed to find out more about *how* children judge quality, for example the fun of an activity, the suitability of resources, the nature of the play environment, and the staff.

We wanted to know whether, and how much children want to be involved in this type of evaluation, and other periodic activities such as consultation and staff recruitment. We hoped to learn where it is appropriate, feasible and desirable for us to involve children in evaluation.

3. Context

3.1 Out of school provision – policy, delivery and outcomes

In policy terms, out of school clubs (OOSCs) fall under the remit of Early Years Childcare, Play and Extended Schools and operate in the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors, with a variety of funding models (DCSF, 2009a)¹. They may construct themselves as providers of childcare, play, or education (or a combination); staff qualifications and experience may range across these areas.

OOSCs may use the Every Child Matters outcomes (DfES, 2005) to guide policy-making, practice and evaluation, but generally as aims rather than targets to be measured systematically. Some studies have looked at children's and parents' views of childcare in terms of impact and quality (Barker et al, 2003, Moonie & Blackburn, 2003), but found that 'it is difficult to isolate the impact out of school care makes compared with other factors, such as school and family' (Barker et al p.6).

Policies may focus more on long-term outcomes than on the immediate benefit to children (Montgomery and Kellet, 2009). Ofsted has been described as ill-suited to the inspection of play provision, where most children are over 5, and EYFS goals less relevant (Children and Young People Now, 2009a). OOSCs may adopt the Playwork Principles and Charter (Skills Active, 2004; Play England, 2009), but playwork can struggle to be seen as a core service: while benefits are widely described (Cole-Hamilton et al, 2002), play is a process, with a lack of 'evidenced outcomes' (CYPN, 2009b). Rogers et al (2009) note this lack of empirical data and

¹ For a summary of some of the issues arising from this 'mixed market' see Silver, 2009.

argue that a focus on outcomes can be narrow and instrumental: 'children and young people's self-reporting of their play behaviour are important for understanding how play is associated with particular outcomes' (p 2).

The Joint Area Reviews of Children's Services (Ofsted/DfES, 2005 in Powell, 2009) located play under the 'enjoy and achieve' outcome. There are no national indicators for 'enjoy', but in OOSCs enjoyment is likely to be more important for parents than formal learning and achievement (DCSF, 2009 b). Our own surveys show that parents value opportunities for children to have fun, with freedom to choose activities; a happy atmosphere; and positive relationships with staff, and these are equally important to children (Silver, 2009). 'Flourishing means above all social engagement and the enjoyment of life' (Layard and Dunn, 2009, p. 9). While the value of play is difficult to capture (Else, 2009) it may be possible to capture some elements which lead to the outcome 'enjoy'.

3.2 Children's rights and participation

In addition to a right to be involved in decisions which affect them (UNCRC, Article 12), children have a right to enjoyment of their free time (Article 31). Children of working parents may not have an active choice in attending an OOSC, and parents may feel conflicted². Layard and Dunn (2009) note the importance of freedom, in connection with friendship (of key importance to children: Barker et al, 2003; Silver, 2009). Freedom is restricted in an OOSC, although not necessarily wholly so, or more than for children not attending.

There are limitations to a purely rights-based approach when listening to children; relationships of care, and notions of dependence and interdependence need to be taken into account (Kjorholt et al, 2005). Listening to children should be part of a process of continual learning (Kinney, 2005), with an ethical imperative. However much children contribute their 'voice' it is up to adults to 'hear', to make the rhetoric fit the reality, adjust their practice, and ensure that participation leads to real change (Cairns, 2006; Kellet, 2009a).

Clubs like ours³ may involve children in day-to-day decision-making (resources, activities, food, rules of behaviour) which helps to increase children's sense of 'ownership' and responsibility (Miller, 2003). Fewer are likely to complement 'low level' consultation and negotiation with 'high-level' consultation and evaluation influencing service planning and delivery (Davies and Artaraz, 2009), although on-going participation with evaluation in play initiatives is increasingly seen as central (Rogers et al, 2009).

3.3 Participatory evaluation – hearing children's voices

When involving and consulting children there are risks of tokenism (leading to disillusionment and feelings of disempowerment), but also of participation becoming 'work' (Kirby and Gibbs, 2006). 'Too often children are expected to fit into adult ways of participating when what is needed is institutional and organisational change that encourages and facilitates children's voice' (Prout, 2003, p 20-21). Building a 'culture of participation' (Kirby, 2003) also requires an understanding of power and how this is shared between adults and children.

² One parent in our club commented : 'he shouldn't be here – he should be with me'.

³ A small community-based charity, offering after school and holiday provision.

'Many children's workforce professionals struggle with giving expression to children's right to participate' (Navidi, 2009)⁴. Participation Works (2008) produces a handbook for 8-12 year olds which aims to 'improve the ability of the children and young people they work with to participate in decision-making'. However, a 'training' approach is time consuming and less appropriate to play settings, particularly for younger children. Exhortations to 'be creative' and 'try to make it fun' (CYPN, 2009c) may not help staff who without the knowledge, experience or confidence to do it at all, or to make it meaningful.

Our project merges participatory evaluation with elements of an action research approach (common in community settings: Hall and Hall, 2004), and has a 'utilization focus' (Patton, 1997) aiming to empower both children and staff. The lead researcher⁵, staff researchers, and children were all considered 'stakeholders' collaborating in research and evaluation. It is important to note that children in this age group of course can, and frequently do, express their views whether formally consulted or not.

4. Methodology

Like other participatory projects (Kirby and Gibbs, 2006; Flekkoy and Kaufman, 1997) ours shifts between levels and categories (Hart, 1992; Treseder, 1997; Shier, 2001) being adult-initiated, but involving children in decision-making. We worked from a presumption that children are 'beings' not 'becomings' (Quortrup, 1994; James and Prout, 1997) and can share in the definition of problems and identification of solutions (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). We used a 'mosaic' of methods (Clark and Moss, 2001; Clark, 2005) to enable children to participate in ways they feel are appropriate, comfortable, interesting (Davis, 2009; Eide & Winger, 2005).

We noted the usefulness of focus group and individual interviews when researching with children aged 5-12, but also that creative methods have the potential for great impact if we can 'manage the pitfalls and plan carefully' (Greig et al, 2007p. 62).⁶ We involved children as 'co-researchers' (Warren, 2000; Christensen and James, 2008; Kellet, 2009b ; Davis, 2009) in helping to design the interview schedule (appendix A); as trained peer interviewers; reviewing data and helping to guide analysis; in the creation, and evaluation of evaluation tools; with recording; and in reviewing the project. We used participant observation to take account of the 'embodied subject' and 'unspoken words' (Kjorholt et al, 2005).

4.1 Ethics and consent

We followed the Practice Standards in Children's Participation (Save the Children, 2005) and the Statement of Ethical Practice of the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2002). Informed consent was obtained from parents/carers (an opt-out for the project, and written permission to use photos of children in this report), and as far as possible from children, using a child-friendly information leaflet. Children could opt in or out at any time. The club's Trustees provided oversight and all club policies were

⁴ In a review of Brown and Taylor's *Foundations of Playwork*

⁵ Also a committee member

⁶ Our previous project gave some understanding of these pitfalls: photography, art and model-making were successful, group collage less so; group discussions were fruitful but difficult to record; individual discussions limited by time and availability.

adhered to. The project included staff training, through joint planning meetings and workshops.

4.2. Peer interviewing

A group of, mainly older⁷, children were supported in evaluating Ofsted's '20 questions for children'⁸, choosing and re-writing questions, resulting in a list of those which they thought were the most useful and important (See Appendix A). 12 volunteer interviewers were trained in interview 'do's and don'ts' (using an interactive activity), conducted practice interviews, and were supported by adult researchers throughout. Interviews were conducted one-to-one in a quiet room, audio-recorded with an adult present with under 8s. 16 children aged 5 to 11 were interviewed (5 boys and 11 girls⁹). After the interviews some questions were modified for future use (see Findings).

4.3 Creative activities and evaluation tools

We used a range of creative and participatory activities to collect information on the things children like and enjoy, and resources and activities they would like to have, to feed into our development strategy. These included a post-it chart for favourite activities; photography for favourite resources (Kid's Inventory); model-making; mask-making; voting with foam balls, for 'bought-in' workshops; video for reflection on the project and free comment; and competitions to design a suggestions box and a new logo. (Pictures below. See Appendix B for further details).

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We also created tools for participatory evaluation which aimed to be simple, repeatable, and fun. We established a 'conceptual understanding of the notion of a scale such as 1-5, or 0-10, represented in a visual way' (Grieg et al, 2007, p.227) by

⁷ The interviewers ranged from age 6 to 10, but most were over 8

⁸ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Leading-to-excellence/Twenty-questions-for-children>

⁹ Currently more girls than boys attend the club.

using a simple 'traffic light' system, repeated in different ways, with which the children became familiar and comfortable.

The 3 main evaluation tools we developed were:

- *'Smiley' face magnets and board*

Children made re-usable magnetic faces, which they placed according to how much they enjoyed the activity.



- *Hula hoops*

Children stood in hoops, according to how much they enjoyed the activity or session.



- *Traffic light*

Children write their names and any comments on post-its and put on the appropriate circle (below).

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All evaluations were recorded on a pro-forma, with photos and further notes for use in planning and self-evaluation¹⁰ (see Appendix C). The evaluation tools were themselves evaluated by the children, using a simple wall chart (below, see Findings).

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¹⁰ OFSTED

4.4 Data analysis

We were conscious that our analysis needed to be robust but appropriate to the context, aims and practical constraints of this project (Gallagher, 2009). We used a mixture of basic quantitative analysis of the 'countable' data, and a simple framework approach for qualitative data.

All data collected in activities was summarised in a data table (with columns for method used; aim; findings/outcome; observations; and evaluation)¹¹. The peer interviews recordings were transcribed in full by the lead, with summarised responses and quotations added to a spreadsheet matrix. Yes/no answers were totalled, with additional explanations, observations or qualifications noted.

The main findings from the interview matrix were summarised and included in the main data table, which was discussed with the research team¹². A simplified version of the interview matrix was created (summaries, no quotations) and a small group of children who were asked to comment on the results (what they thought was important, interesting, or surprising). This discussion was recorded and helped the lead to identify three themes under which to synthesise and organise the data: 'Activities, relationships and behaviour'; 'The role of adults'; and 'Space to play'. The theme of 'Measuring fun' was added to include findings on the evaluation tools; and 'Children and decision-making' to include findings on children's engagement in this project and in the future. The data was interpreted in the light of the literature and findings from our previous project.

5. Findings

These findings are based on research conducted with 19 children attending the after school club over two three-week periods (November 2009; January-February 2010). Different children participated in activities¹³ and two children opted not to take part. The findings reflect the interests and concerns of these children, or at least those they chose to share, and although not wholly generalisable, may represent those of other children in similar circumstances.

The findings below are extracted and summarised from the full data table¹¹ with additional illustrative quotations from the peer interviews. They are organised under the following five themes which emerged during the analysis of the data.

5.1. Activities, relationships and behaviour

Popular activities identified by the children were art and 'making' (mostly girls); sports (including football, mostly boys); and ICT (both sexes). A wide range of other resources and activities were mentioned by one or two children including toys (lego, marble run); outdoor equipment (scooters, apparatus); group activities (drama, murder in the dark); and free play (making up songs and stories, pillow fights, snowballs). Children highlighted outdoor activities they would like (tennis, running races, skipping) and other activities they would like more of (den building, hula hooping, and street soccer).

¹¹ Appendix B

¹² Only one staff researcher remained at this stage.

¹³ Children attend between one and four days a week, some irregularly

Several children (boys and girls) said that they enjoyed just playing with friends and 'hanging out', indicating the importance of allowing time and space for this. Several mentioned that they just like the variety of activities on offer:

'...I like how we've now got a new list of activities to do that I know we are all going to enjoy' (girl, 9).

When asked what they least enjoyed, or what made them sad, some children (mostly girls) mentioned other children 'being mean' or 'unkind', 'making fun of' them or their drawings, and 'bullies' (which seemed to relate to bossiness, and interfering in games). In contrast one child responded 'when I have to go' (boy, 6). Another response indicated that some negative behaviour presented may be hypothetical, although children did not probe this in the interviews.:

'Only if someone is being mean ...that hasn't happened yet (girl, 10)

It is worth noting a difference in responses to similar questions: 6 children said that nothing makes them sad; but when asked what they 'enjoyed the least' all children named something. The suggested modifications to the interview schedule¹⁴ might help to clarify the extent of negative experiences, and whether they are actual or potential.

Two children still said that they enjoyed everything:

'I don't think there is anything...I think this place is absolutely brilliant' (girl, 8).

5.2. The role of adults

All bar one of the children interviewed said that they felt safe at the club¹⁵, with three mentioning adults and the terms 'trust' or 'responsible', or 'because they are more wise' (boy, 7). Most (11) children said that they can or would talk to an adult at the club if they were sad, although 4 said they would talk to their friends:

'...because I can trust them not to tell too many people' (girl, 9)

6 children said they were not sure of all the adults' names:

'Sometimes if I'm in on another day when it's different people I get confused' (girl, 8)

However there did not seem to be a relationship between children knowing adults names, trust and feeling safe, although this could be explored further in the future¹⁵.

Some statements also indicate the importance of staff for ensuring the general well-being of children. Things some children didn't like included:

'when people don't play with me' (girl, 5)

'when adults are cross with me' (boy,9).

¹⁴ See Appendix A.

¹⁵ And the other gave a rather enigmatic answer which was followed with the child concerned and senior staff: there were no serious concerns arising.

Snack time is clearly of importance to the children. Staff had recently involved the children in helping to improve the snack menu. 14 children said they liked the food (three 'sometimes') although two noted the disappearance of 'nice biscuits with cream inside'. The generally positive responses seem to reflect recognition of improvement, although clearly not all children will like all the snacks all the time:

'The food's ok – it's not poisonous' (girl, 10)

5.3. Space to play

Several children referred to being 'stuck inside', and wanting to be able to do a wider range of activities outside, although this is not surprising as the research took place in the winter:

'Sometimes people just get a bit bored and frustrated – then it turns to anger' (girl,9)

When asked what they would like to do outside but currently can't football was mentioned, although acknowledging that they do this already. Football is a high priority for many of the boys (and one girl) who would play inside (with foam balls) if they could not go outside:

Several said they enjoyed playing group games:

'...because its bigger [than] making up your own games which people might not want to join in with – you get to do one big thing with everyone – and enjoy it' (girl,9).

Some did not like shouting and noise:

'When people like crowd round us and we're shoved in a really small space and then there's shouting and screaming and stuff ... 'cos it's really annoying – you get headaches'(girl, 8).

However other children clearly enjoyed opportunities to be active and make noise, and it is a challenge for staff to manage indoor space to allow for both noisy and quiet activities.

5.4. Measuring fun

During this project we introduced some new activities (including clay modelling, parachute games, street soccer, and a visit from some owls). We also developed, trialled and evaluated three tools for evaluating activities with the aim of measuring the amount of fun had, in a fun way (See Table 1 below).

Table 1: Summary of activity evaluations (all represented here by faces)

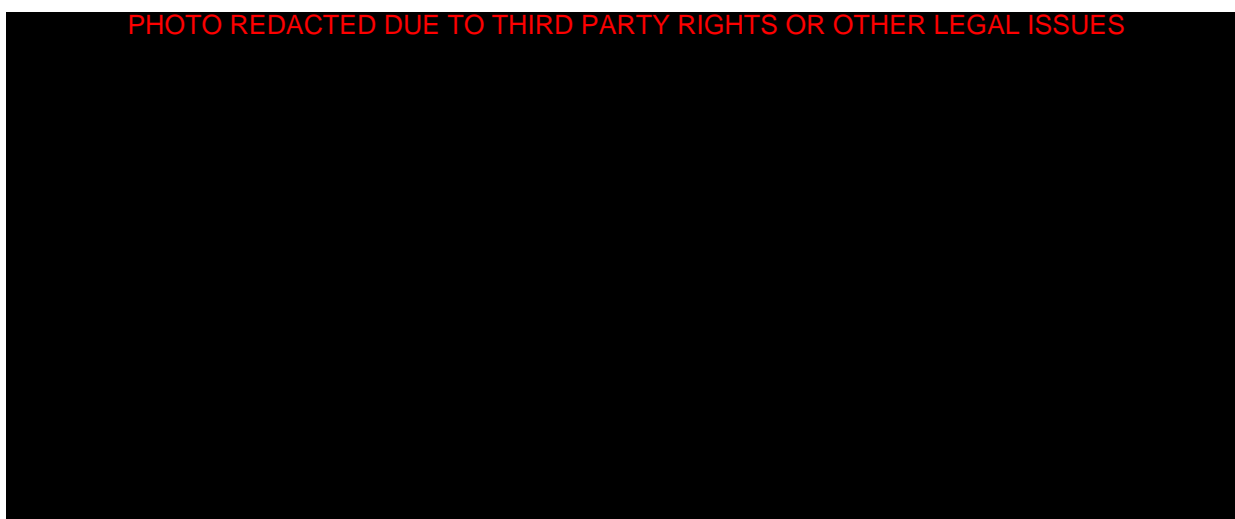
| 'Smiley' faces | | Hula hoops | | Traffic light |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Clay modelling (/9) | Owl visit* (/9) | Street soccer* (/17) | Parachute (/10) | Puppets (/9) |
| 😊 = 6 😐 = 1 😞 = 0 | 😊 = 6 😐 = 0 😞 = 0 | 😊 = 7 (6 boys) 😐 = 4 (girls) 😞 = 0 | 😊 = 6 😐 = 1 😞 = 1 | 😊 = 7 😐 = 0 😞 = 0 |

NB Some children left the session before the evaluation, affecting totals

The coloured, magnetic faces worked well (all ages could understand the concept and take part), were simple to use, and the activity was easily repeatable. It was voted the best evaluation method by the children (12 stars). We noted that as some children left before the evaluation the board needs to be in place at the start of the session. This activity also led to the children making fridge magnets (below).



The 'traffic light' hula hoops also proved a simple and effective method which the children said was fun (10 stars), could be used indoors or outside, and was easy to record with photographs. It also led to free play with hoops, foam balls and bean bags. We noted that it is important that the red hoop is presented as a positive choice (by asking for and acknowledging reasons) and is not an isolating experience (below right).



Equally popular for the children (10 stars) was the cardboard traffic light (below, left). Post-its can be counted and written comments added, although only some children

wanted to write, and so this would work well for evaluating whole sessions as well as individual activities.

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The post-it chart for favourite activities (above, right) was an easy and quick way to gather information, but was less popular with the children (7 stars), with two commenting that this was because it involved writing (like school work).

Children were also asked if they enjoyed the peer interviews. 15 said yes, although 5 qualified this with 'sort of' or similar, and one with 'a bit scary actually' (girl,9). Some children enjoyed role-playing interviews afterwards. One was particularly enthusiastic:

'Yes ...because it gave me a chance to tell what I think about the club – I hope it will help future generations' (girl, 9).

Children were also given an opportunity to comment on the research project (or the club) in a 'video diary room'. Several children were keen to do this, although in practice this simply involved mini 'performances' for the camera.¹⁶ One child commented:

'I think the research project is good ...because it helps the adults find out what everyone wants.... Its really good fun as well... I think it's really gonna help the out of school club – its gonna make more people want to do it'
(girl, 9)

5.5. Children and decision-making

When asked if they help adults plan the majority said they do, at least sometimes, and that this was a good thing:

'Yeah – we always can ... because if the adults know that we aren't allowed we might get a bit bored or annoyed, or start going into a hissy fit' (girl, 9) .

¹⁶ It is hoped that further comments on the project will be forthcoming when the video diary room reappears at the Kids Workshop.

4 children said that they didn't, although this may be through choice; this was not probed by peer interviewers¹⁷:

'...they do ask for ideas and stuff but if there's an animal guy coming in – they arrange that not us – I think that's a good idea' (girl, 10).

All said they could choose what they played with, but 6 qualified this with 'not all time' or similar. Again some noted that adults shared responsibility for choosing:

'Sometimes we have an activity to do instead of choosing...but that is good' (girl, 11).

Most children seemed to enjoy using the evaluation tools (confirmed by the star chart), are likely to be happy to use them again, and may be willing to help develop other similar tools in the future.

In terms of future participation in decision-making children were invited to 'sign up' for a range of possible activities. 8 children (6 girls, 2 boys) wanted to take help make decisions in the club, and 10 (6 girls, 4 boys) wanted to help interview new staff. 5 girls and 1 boy signed up for writing letters (for example to funders), and the same number expressed interest in being on a 'panel' of children and parents. Although not comprehensive this gives an indication of which things children would be most interested in being involved with.

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¹⁷ See Appendix A for suggested modified questions

6. Implications for practice

Our research findings have implications for the practice of staff in our own club (which have been reported in detail separately), and more generally for staff and organisations running this type of play provision, which are highlighted here.

6.1 Children's priorities

Based on the findings of this project, priorities for children are likely to form around the following:

- The provision of a variety and range of activities (including art and craft, sports and ICT)
- Being able to play outside, especially football
- The management of indoor space to allow for active and noisy play
- Having the choice to participate in activities or just to 'hang out' with friends
- Storage and accessibility of resources.
- The 'showcasing' of children's creations
- A rotating snack menu
- Knowing who adults are (staff photo board and badges; using each others' names)

Children clearly do recognise that adults are important in ensuring their safety and well-being, and this includes the management of behaviour. High expectations of children (and parents) will undoubtedly make this the most challenging part of the job for staff, and there is a careful balance to be struck between maximising children's choices, and restricting them for the benefit of others.

6.2 Child-centred evaluation

Adults ultimately hold the power to make changes, but children are often able and willing to share in collecting views, making recommendations and decision-making. In order for provision to be truly 'child-centred' it is crucial to give children opportunities to share in evaluation, in interesting and appropriate ways. To do this staff need access to evaluation tools that are simple and quick to use, and can be easily combined with their own evaluations, for example relating to the safety and welfare of the children. (See Appendix C for an example evaluation record sheet).

Organisations can and should:

- embed frequent, participatory child-centred evaluation activities in day-to-day practice: individual activities; whole play sessions; monthly planning.

- use creative participatory activities, such as model-making and photography to help guide service planning: choosing resources; changing menus; or selecting new activities.
- carry out additional activities, such as peer interviews on an annual basis to confirm whether children's individual interests are being catered for and concerns being addressed.
- maintain a 'sign-up' list for children interested in ongoing participation, and refer to this when planning decision-making, recruitment and consultation activities.

7. Conclusion

In this project we developed creative and participatory methods for evaluation appropriate to children aged 4-11 in an out of school setting. We found out more about the children's notions of what quality provision looks like, and their priorities for improvement.

We found that most children enjoyed being involved in evaluation, and that they can participate at all stages: developing and making evaluation tools (which can be an activity in themselves) and recording outcomes; (re)writing interview questions and collecting data; and helping to summarise, analyse and interpret that data (although this is likely to require more adult time). They can also be involved in reporting back to other children and parents; to partners such as schools, local authorities and partners; and to Ofsted.

We found that it is appropriate, feasible and desirable for us to involve children in ongoing evaluation, as long as their contribution is entirely voluntary and acknowledged, and when evaluation activities are not perceived as children's 'work'. Play and having 'fun' remain paramount.

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All web pages available at 25th February 2010

Kids' questionnaire

We are using these questions to find out more about things children like or dislike about the club.

1. Do you know the name of all the adults here?
(Please name them if you can)
2. Who can you talk to if you feel sad or unhappy when you are here?
3. Do you feel safe here?
(What makes you feel safe?)
4. What do you enjoy the most here, and why?
5. What do you enjoy the least here, and why?
(Is this something that bothers you?)
6. Do you help the adults plan what activities to do?
(If 'no', do you want to help plan?)
7. Can you choose what you want to play with here?
8. Are there things you would like to do outside that you don't already do here?*
9. Is there anything here that makes you sad?
(If 'yes', is this something recent?)
10. Do you like the food here?

Did you enjoy the interview? Thankyou!

Notes:

1. Suggested modifications to questions used appear in parentheses.
2. *Expect different answers in summer and winter.
3. Questions adapted by the children from Ofsted's '20 Questions for Children:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Leading-to-excellence/Twenty-questions-for-children>

Appendix B: Data table

NB Normal attendance during this project was between 9 and 18 children.

| Research activities (1) | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| Activity | Aim | Findings | Evaluation | Observations | Notes (repeat?) |
| <p>1. Poster with post-its</p> <p>[Photo of poster]</p> | <p>'To find out the things you like (doing) at the club'</p> <p>Children were given up to 3 post-its each. Later a small group of children reorganised these into themes, which they identified with adult help)</p> | <p>Popular things were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art & making = 8 • Sports (inc football) = 5 • ICT = 6 • Murder in the dark = 2 • Drama = 2 <p>Other (1 each): Pillow fights; dance; scooters; the apparatus; TV; eating jelly; playing at ccoosc.</p> | <p>Easy to do, can be left on the wall.</p> <p>Indicative, not wholly representative - some children did 3, some 1 and some none. Some saw their own choices already and so didn't add more. Some may have followed the choices of others. (NB Themes are useful to group similar items together, but adult-led so not very meaningful in themselves)</p> <p>[Final children's evaluation = 7 stars on the chart]</p> | <p>Confirms findings of first project, but more referring to IT now on the school site and school facilities available. Drama was chosen by two, but one child said 'we never do it' - this may depend on the day they attend..</p> <p>Older children were interested in the activity of grouping the post-its under suitable headings</p> <p>Worked well - the children all seemed to take time to think about what they liked and discussed this with each other.</p> | <p>Could repeat this to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - choose new activities & workshops - suggest changes to the snack menu (done recently, but to be repeated periodically) - make general suggestions (though a suggestions box is more anonymous) <p>Led to free drawing with big sheets of paper and coloured pens.</p> |
| <p>2. Voting with foam balls</p> <p>Children had a foam ball which they write their name on and put/threw in one of the 4 boxes labelled with different activities</p> <p>[Photo]</p> | <p>To choose 'bought-in' workshops</p> | <p>Most popular choices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A visit from animals x 9 • Street soccer x 7 <p>None chose 'art workshop' or 'drumming'. We did not explain in detail what these would involve - it is possible some would choose these if they had done them before and enjoyed them.</p> | <p>Worked well - all understood the concept, and enjoyed voting.</p> <p>Marbles in jars would be a more permanent record over the week (as you don't take them out) but not as much fun.</p> <p>Some children continued to play with the balls and boxes afterwards - so led to free play.</p> | <p>Few children seemed interested at first, but after the voting balls were introduced they were all keen to take part, and clearly enjoyed the activity.</p> <p>Some carried on 'voting' for some time afterwards, so it was important to record the name of the child next to the activity on a list. Some children wanted to take their balls home..</p> | <p>Visit from owls booked for Dec (cancelled) - took place in Jan., but on a different day so not all could attend (to be repeated in near future). Also Street soccer in Jan - see below for evaluation.</p> <p>Also hoping to book art workshop in Feb/March as so many children like art, even though it was not a choice selected here (possibly because they do it in the club anyway).</p> |

Research activities (2)

| Activity | Aim | Findings | Evaluation | Observations | Notes (repeat?) |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. Clay modelling [Photos of models] | 'Make a model of something(s) you like (doing) in - or out of - the club' Identified beforehand as KEY DATA | Some models were interpreted as having a personal connection or resonance; many were just things they wanted to make (food, dogs, candle holders, sculpture). No models were specifically 'about' the club. | Very successful as an activity, and a way to understand more about individual children's likes and dislikes, but not specifically about their views of the club. | <i>Most children were happy to talk about their models, and seemed pleased to be asked about them – all wanted to be photographed with them. Most wanted to paint them – the following week. Clay continues to be very popular.</i> | We are repeating this every couple of weeks as an activity. Won't repeat as an evaluation – plasticine might work better – easier to manipulate. |
| 4. Masks [Photos of masks] | 'Make a mask to show how you feel when you come to the club' Identified beforehand as KEY DATA | All produced masks of their own choosing, but none were about feelings – towards the club or anything else. | Not an effective way to collect this data – perhaps because it was a group activity, possibly because it is more a 'therapeutic' technique, or simply because children were more motivated to play than respond to our requests for input. | <i>All very engaged in making masks – most focussed their masks on the emerging theme at the time of the research (Christmas). Others wanted to paint their clay models from last week.</i> | Try repeating mask-making as research/evaluation tool when there is no obvious theme. Or just repeat as seasonal themed activity. Led to dressing up and making up short plays. |
| 5. 'Kids Inventory' and 'Wishing book' [Children's photos and drawings, and photos of the books] | a. 'Resources you like to play with' Children put in their photos with comment (written or dictated) b. 'Things we would like to have' Children's drawings | a. Choices so far: <i>Lego, K'nex, marble run, Wii, Art materials (x2), football (x3)</i> b. <i>More dinosaurs; a toy owl; new challenging Wii games; proper wooden hockey sticks and balls; a playstation; coloured chalks</i> | Quick, simple, easy and accessible. Good way to identify the resources that are of importance to the children to keep them accessible, in good condition and stocked up. Also to identify resources that could be (re-)introduced, or removed. | <i>a. Some (but not all) children enjoyed photographing what they liked to play with, and explaining why. Those children who participated liked using the camera and wanted to take a variety of angles on their choice.</i> <i>b. Some varied contributions to the 'wish list'. Children provided both drawings and images from the internet to show their interests.</i> | To add to over the year. Inventory could be helpful for new children attending the club - to know what resources we have. The 'wishing book' will help in planning fundraising and purchasing, particularly for identifying age appropriate resources. |

Research activities (3)

| Activity | Aim | Findings - summary | Evaluation | Observations | Notes (repeat?) |
|--|--|---|--|--|---|
| <p>6. Kids Questionnaire (Second phase, over 3 weeks)</p> <p>1. Group work: Ofsted's '20 questions for kids' - discussed question types and purpose, and reduced list to final 10 (some modified / added)</p> <p>2. Older children 'trained' with 'dos and don'ts' activity</p> <p>3. Child 'researchers' (8 girls and 4 boys) interviewed each other one to one (voice recorded)</p> <p>4. Recordings fully transcribed and summarised by Lead under each of the 10 questions</p> <p>5. Group work with children to review the responses (this to inform the analysis)</p> | <p>Aims:</p> <p>1. To find out what questions the children felt were the most important to ask (bearing in mind the ages of the children, previous research activities, and their own priorities for improvement)</p> <p>2. To find out children's responses to the 10 questions</p> <p>3. To see if children like to participate in this kind of activity, as researchers or interviewees</p> <p>16 children aged 5 to 11 were interviewed (6 boys and 10 girls)</p> <p>More girls attend the club than boys at the moment</p> | <p>See report narrative for quotations. 16 children were interviewed (11 girls and 5 boys)</p> <p>1. Most (10) were certain they knew the names of all the staff, but some didn't - especially on days do not normally attend.</p> <p>2. Most (11) feel they can/would talk to adults if they are sad (anyone/ an adult/ the teacher/ or named a member of staff) 4 said their friends, one don't know and one Childline (multiple answers possible).</p> <p>3. 15 said yes they feel safe at the club, three mentioned adults (trust/responsibility), and 1 the fire alarm, 1 responded 'a little' [following this up with the child/staff/parent]</p> <p>4. Things they like least/made them sad included when adults are cross, shouting, noise, teasing, 'bullies' - but also 'when I have to go'.</p> <p>5. 11 said they help adults plan what they do, 4 qualified with 'sometimes', and 5 said not (but this may be through choice - not probed).</p> <p>6. All said they can choose what they play with, but 4 qualified this with 'not all time' or similar, though this was only a problem for 1 (access to cupboard). 1 non-response.</p> <p>7. 14 said they liked the food (inc. 3 sometimes) 2 no or not really.</p> <p><i>Not summarised here:</i> Things they like the most, and new activities they want to do outside (see report narrative)</p> | <p>A 'core' group of older children were keen to be 'interviewers' and most children were happy to be interviewed (some did not want to take part at all and were not pushed). Some older and younger children wanted to do an interview after being interviewed, and so 'training' was done repeatedly with pairs and individual children after the initial group. Some younger children enjoyed being able to 'role play' the interview process but didn't want to be recorded.</p> <p>All interviewees seemed happy to be interviewed, but there were a few comments after the interview indicating that some did not enjoy the experience. However all were given the opportunity to stop the interview (with a 'traffic light' system of red, yellow and green cards provided) at any time, and none did so.</p> <p>All interviews began with an introduction, and explanation of the traffic light cards, and ended with a feedback question and thanks.</p> <p>15 out of the total 16 interviewees said they enjoyed it, including 3 who said 'sort of' and one said it was 'a bit scary'. 1 'no'</p> | <p>Where interviewers or interviewees were under 8 the an adult researcher in the room to provide support. This may have influenced what was said, although after comparing all the transcripts this did not appear to be a significant problem.</p> <p>Answers were in some cases very short (yes/no) but children did add comments even when not elicited in some cases. Where open questions were used, answers varied from very short (a few words) to quite lengthy explanations, some of which were clearly things the children concerned felt very strongly about.</p> <p>The interviews were generally well conducted - some giggling, a few missed questions, and some strange uses of a probing 'why?' which stumped interviewees.</p> <p>Interviewers all (mostly) followed the schedule, and all behaved appropriately and responsibly during the interviews. The older interviewers were better at probing, though not all did so and one 7 year old was very good at this.</p> | <p>This questionnaire could be administered annually, either by interview (with appropriate staff training, or possibly a volunteer), or by written questionnaire.</p> <p>Only older children are likely to be able to complete a written questionnaire, so consideration would have to be given to interviewing younger children anyway.</p> <p>Peer interviewing could be repeated, again with appropriate staff training.</p> <p>The questionnaire/ schedule itself should be reviewed and modified periodically - to reflect the interests and concerns of changing groups of children.</p> <p>A slightly modified version has been created after consultation with a small group of children at the end of this project.</p> <p>Prompts: <i>Please name them [the adults] if you can</i> <i>What makes you feel safe?</i> <i>If 'no', do you want to help plan?</i></p> <p>Plus a note to expect different answers to the 'outdoor' question in summer and winter!</p> |

Evaluation tools

| Tool | Aim | Outcome | Evaluation | Observations | Notes (repeat?) |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Smiley faces Made 3 types of face on red, yellow & green card, laminated with magnet - on magnetic whiteboard [Photos]</p> | <p>To evaluate activities (or whole session)</p> | <p>Clay : 😊 = 6 ☹ = 1 😐 = 0 (/9 children) (/9)</p> <p>Owl workshop: 😊 = 6 ☹ = 0 😐 = 0</p> | <p>Worked well - all ages could understand the concept and take part. Some children left before the evaluation (hence low numbers) so the board needs to be in place at the start of the activity. [Final children's evaluation = 12 stars on the chart]</p> | <p>Original face stickers were too small, so children made bigger ones in traffic light colours - easier to use, and more fun to do. (This activity led to some children making fridge magnets). Children seemed to really think about where they wanted their faces and took time to place them on the board.</p> | <p>Easily repeated by writing name of activity on board and using re-usable magnetic faces.</p> |
| <p>'Traffic light' hula hoops Red, yellow and green hoops which children stand in according to how much they enjoyed the activity (or not) [Photos of children in hoops; video of both activities]</p> | <p>To evaluate activities</p> | <p>Parachute games (/10 children): Green hoop = 6 Yellow hoop = (1)* Red hoop = 1** * Would have chosen yellow but got there late & did not take part. ** Prefers football as 'you can score goals' (happy playing alongside)</p> <p>Street soccer workshop (/17): Green hoop = 7* Yellow hoop = 4** Red hoop = 0 *Some wanted the option for 'extra green' **No boys stood in the yellow hoop, but one girl who particularly like football stood in the green.</p> | <p>Worked well – quick, easy concept, fun and easy to record with photo Works best when all children are there at the same time (not always possible so best for evaluation of an activity rather than the whole session) Could also ask for explanations where children choose yellow or red. [Final children's evaluation = 10 stars on the chart]</p> | <p>Need to ensure children see the red hoop as a positive choice – not an isolating experience! (encourage them to explain why, acknowledge their views). Younger children seemed to think carefully about their choice, and few appeared to follow their friends' choices. This workshop was popular and some children had swapped days, or booked an extra session in order to take part. 17 participated, one or two took time out. 6 left before the evaluation, and not all were in the hoops at the same time (3 photos).</p> | <p>Easy to repeat - probably most appropriate for active activities such as sport. Led to lots of free play with hula hoops, bean bags, foam balls etc, so can also work well indoors.</p> |
| <p>Traffic light Large cardboard light with red, yellow and green circles and post-its. [Photo]</p> | <p>To evaluate activity or whole session.</p> | <p>Making puppets (/9): Green circle = 7 + a few comments (all positive) (presume they did not just pick green because it was at the bottom and easier to reach!)</p> | <p>Worked well, children very familiar now with the 3 colour principle – using corresponding colour post-its not workable (no red or green!) but any colour ok. [Final children's evaluation = 10 stars on the chart]</p> | <p>It was anticipated that children would help to help make the traffic light, but there was a puppet making activity at the same time and they chose to do this, or play football. The traffic light was made by the researchers, but some boys used the red and yellow card to make football cards for their game.</p> | <p>Easy to repeat for specific activities or for the whole session – can be left by the door with post-its so children can make comments as they leave.</p> |

Project evaluation activities

| Activity | Aim | Outcome |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Review of data from Kids' Questionnaire</p> <p>Small group activity in quiet room [audio recording]</p> | <p>To give children an opportunity to review the summarised responses, and to contribute their comments to the analysis of the data.</p> <p>Only 3 children (all girls, aged 8 -10) were interested in doing this on the chosen day, and one left part way through, so the discussion was limited. Further responses will be gathered at the follow-up Kids Workshop in March, when we review the findings and the process, and producing a Kids' Newsletter.</p> | <p>Some useful comments on areas which the children thought were interesting, surprising or important:</p> <p>Mentions of trust and the importance of knowing adults names; issues around people 'being mean'; how staff manage play outside and inside; the importance of getting the snacks right.</p> <p>It also helped to improve the questionnaire for future use (see additional prompts above).</p> |
| <p>Poster with photos of evaluation tools</p> <p>Children asked to put gold stars on the methods they thought were good ones for finding out what activities children liked doing, and how much they enjoyed them.</p> <p>[photo]</p> | <p>To evaluate the 4 evaluation tools and methods used</p> <p>Each child could put one star on 1, 2, 3 or all</p> <p>(Over 2 days with a total of 15 different children attending)</p> | <p>Poster with post-its* = 7 votes</p> <p>'Smiley' face board = 12 votes</p> <p>Hula hoops = 10 votes</p> <p>Traffic light = 10 votes</p> <p>* two children said that this was not as good as it involved writing</p> |
| <p>Poster with images of 'participation'</p> <p>Children were asked to 'sign up' for activities they thought they might like to participate in, in the future (these were explained)</p> <p>[photo]</p> | <p>To find out how many children would be interested in participating in other ways in the future.</p> <p>(Over 2 days with a total of 15 different children attending)</p> | <p>Making decisions in the club = 8 children (6 girls, 2 boys)</p> <p>Interviewing new staff = 10 children (6, 4)</p> <p>Writing letters* = 6 children (5, 1)</p> <p>Be on a 'panel' of children and parents = 6 children (5, 1)</p> <p>We have created a permanent 'sign-up' list to be kept on file, added to periodically, and referred to when planning decision-making, and related activities.</p> <p>(* eg for funders, local supporters, newsletters)</p> |
| <p>Video diary</p> <p>Video camera set up on tripod in quiet room, to self-record.</p> | <p>To give children an opportunity to make comments in private on the research project (and anything else they wanted to say)</p> <p>(4 children participated on one day – there was much less interest in the video camera than anticipated, and less opportunity to set up a more elaborate 'diary room' – see note in next box)</p> | <p>A few comments were made about the research project, but on this day and others most children seemed to prefer just 'messaging about' for the camera.</p> <p>We intend to repeat at Kids' workshop in March, and regularly in the future, for children who would like to make comments to camera, in a more comfortable 'diary room' set up.</p> |

Appendix C: Activity evaluation record sheet

Activity: *Sharandy's Birds of Prey* **Contact no:** XXXXXX

Date: *Thursday 21st Jan 2010*

Location: *After school club – main room, 4-5.30pm*

Photo(s) of activity:



Children's evaluation:



Comments:

Originally booked for Tuesday in Dec – cancelled by Sharandy's, so not as many children could attend as were interested in this (also bad weather affected attendance – total 8).

*Went very well – children really engaged and enjoyed holding the birds.
(Some drew pictures, brought in cuddly toys and talked about them afterwards)*

No H& S concerns - well worth repeating when funds allow, with advance publicity and on a day when more children can attend.

Staff names:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX