Research

Children's Workforce Development Council

'What is our out of school club?' A child-centred approach to understanding the role of an OOSC and integrated working

Sharing our experience

Practitioner-led research 2008-2009

PLR0809/016

This report is part of CWDC's Practitioner-Led Research (PLR) programme. Now in its third year, the programme gives practitioners the opportunity to explore, describe and evaluate ways in which services are currently being delivered within the children's workforce.

Working alongside mentors from Making Research Count (MRC), practitioners design and conduct their own small-scale research and then produce a report which is centred around the delivery of Integrated Working.

The reports are used to improve ways of working, recognise success and provide examples of good practice.

This year, 41 teams of practitioners completed projects in a number of areas including:

- Adoption
- Bullying
- CAF
- Child trafficking
- Disability
- Early Years
- Education Support
- Parenting
- Participation
- Social care
- Social work
- Travellers
- Youth

The reports have provided valuable insights into the children and young people's workforce, and the issues and challenges practitioners and service users face when working in an integrated environment. This will help to further inform workforce development throughout England.

This practitioner-led research project builds on the views and experiences of the individual projects and should not be considered the opinions and policies of CWDC.

‘What is our out of school club?’ A child-centred approach to understanding the role of an OOSC and integrated working

Karin Silver

Abstract

The aim of our research project was to give children aged five to 11 years an opportunity to articulate their views and experiences of their out of school club (OOSC) and to learn more about their perceptions of the club, the staff and what happens there.

The research used creative, participatory methods to answer the research questions (including photography, drawing, collage, model-making and mapping) which were appropriate to the nature of the setting, and the age and interests of the 20 children involved in the research.

The research identified that the children enjoy much of what is currently on offer, and the freedom to choose what they do, but would like a wider range of activities and resources, and more opportunities to interact with the outside environment. The research also found that they want to feel comfortable and that they recognize the role of adults in 'running' and 'organizing' things, and keeping them safe. In addition, children were not aware of 'helpers' and organizations being formally connected, or that they had any sense of 'integrated working'. Relationships with children and adults, fun and a sense of belonging were found to be important to their experience of the club.

The findings are now feeding into action planning and improvement, and the participation of children central to the culture of our voluntary-managed organization, and to our decision-making processes.

Karin Silver

Photo by Abbie

Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to all the children who participated in this research project, for their time, their comments, their patience, their creations, and most of all their irrepressible sense of fun.

A thank you is also given to the staff of the club, who supported and joined in with activities and created a positive environment for the research. Also to Debbie Watson of the Centre for Health and Social Care, University of Bristol and mentor for Making Research Count, and Dr Tess Ridge of the Centre for the Analysis of Social Policy, University of Bath. Last but not least, thank you to the voluntary committee members, without whose public service ethos and energetic desire to provide a safe, fun place for children, the club would not exist at all.

Karin Silver

1. Introduction

Under Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children are entitled to express their views, and have them taken into account, on the policies, services and decisions which affect them. Prior to this research project children in our out of school club (OOSC) were involved in decisions about daily activities, snack choices and some planning, but their views were not systematically taken into account. We identified scope to embed the views of children in decision-making (for example, in the choice of equipment and resources; activity planning; recruitment and training) and to formalize this in our policy on 'Involving and Consulting Children'.

2. Aims

The main aim of the research project was to give children an opportunity to articulate their views and experiences of the club. Adults describe an OOSC variously as 'child care', 'play' and 'extended schools': we wanted to find out how it is perceived by the children who use it.

We had three broad research questions:

- What does the club mean to the children?
- What do the children value at the club and what would they like to be different?
- How do they perceive the club in relationship to other local people and organizations (and do they have any sense of integrated working)?

At the time the research was planned we were preparing to relocate to the primary school site, and with the advent of the EYFS these questions seemed increasingly pertinent.

3. Context

This section covers four areas: policy, implementation and regulation; children's rights and participation; creative research methods; and voluntary community sector OOSCs.

3.1 Policy, implementation and regulation

The policy area in which OOSCs operate is a contested one, and this has implications for implementation, regulation and funding. In terms of the 'philosophy' of child care, debates around whether providers should be concerned with 'education' or 'care' (or as a replacement for parenting) remain unresolved (see for example Pugh and Duffy 2006; Brannen and Moss 2003). This 'education–care divide' has been described as creating tension between a formal learning agenda (an 'investment' in children), and the rights of parents (usually women) to child care, enabling them to work (David 2006).

Framing OOSC child care as ‘education’ can lead to an emphasis on learning, development, and assessment. Up to 2008, OOSCs have been regulated by Ofsted according to National Standards for Daycare (DfES 2003) and are now expected to adhere to the Early Years Foundation Stage (DCSF 2008a). Both emphasize the need to actively work with parents, although OOSCs exist to provide ‘support for parents’, rather than to engage ‘parents as supporters’ for developmental or educational work (Pugh 2006:16–17). Providers are encouraged to work in ‘partnership’ with schools under the Extended Schools initiative (DfES 2005; 4Children 2006), bringing them further into the education arena. Staff are expected to work in an integrated way with teachers and other children’s professionals, in safeguarding children (DCSF 2008b).

An OOSC could be seen as a replacement for care offered by family members and friends, or provided by child-minders. Framing OOSCs as being primarily ‘care’, however, is not necessarily helpful when most children are over five years of age, and may attend other activity clubs, which are not ‘care’ services.

‘Play’ is the third, arguably most relevant, concept for OOSCs. The government has adopted a national Play Strategy (DCSF 2008c) focusing on the largely outdoor, open-access play sector (represented by Play England). In the Childcare Strategy ‘play’ (particularly Early Years) is linked to learning, and educational targets (Wood and Atfield 2005), perhaps overemphasized in the Play Strategy (Children and Young People Now (CYPN), January 2009). In addition to statutory registration as child care providers OOSCs may adopt the Play Principles (Play England/NCB 2007), but seem to be caught between the two strategies, leading to debate around whether Ofsted is ‘fit for purpose’ with regard to OOSCs (*Guardian Education* 2008) and the role, status and training of OOSC staff (CYPN 2008).

There is no space to expand on these topics here except to note that the world view described above is an adult one. Giving children an opportunity to articulate what an OOSC is may help to clarify how to deliver and regulate a service that is not only child-focused, but child-centred, and one that children and parents want to use.

3.2 Children’s rights and participation

This project is guided by Article 12 of the UNCRC which states that children have a right to give their views and explain how the club ‘fits into’ their world (Kirby et al. 2003). Different levels (Hart 1992) or degrees (Treseder 1997) of participation have been identified, from adult-directed consultation to activities initiated and carried out by children (Kirby et al. 2003). This project is located in between: adult-initiated, but involving children in decision-making.

Potential benefits of participation are said to include an increased sense of ‘ownership and responsibility for their environment, activities and rules’ enabling adults to work in a more informed and effective way. Ensuring that services meet children’s needs may make them more popular and therefore ‘more likely to survive’ (Miller 2003: 16–17), especially when children may have little active choice about whether/how often they attend.

All OOSCs are expected to comply with the principles of *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2004) and focus on continual improvement in the delivery of services. Some have argued that consulting with children should be a minimum standard for childcare (Campbell-Barr 2004) and that children's participation must be embedded in everyday practices for it to be meaningful and effective (Sinclair 2004).

3.3 Creative research methods

Researchers have used creative methods in different settings (for example, Butler 2005; Thompson 2008). Research and consultation with older children in OOSCs has tended to use surveys, interviews or focus groups (for example, Daycare Trust 2007b; Moonie and Blackburn 2003), although Miller (2003: 8) mentions a club that used creative, participatory work to support a funding bid. Elsley (2004) conducted creative, participatory research with children in an OOSC on their experiences of *public* space.

Creative methods seem to lend themselves to research in a setting where play is prioritized and creativity can be an end in itself. 'The desire to represent and share our experiences…seems to be a basic human characteristic' (Duffy 1998: 5). Gauntlett (2007: 2007) details ways that creative methods can be used to understand social experience and explore perceptions while making the process fun, giving participants the 'opportunity to communicate in their *visual* voice' . Anning and Ring (2004: 124) used drawing to listen to children and stated a need to 'recognize the multi-modality is core to their preferred ways of representing and communicating their growing understanding of the world and their roles as active members of communities'. Leitch (2008: 37) states that there have been few studies using drawings as 'an innovative alternative way to understand children's knowledge and experience', and fewer still where children have shared the interpretation of their images. This is key to the Mosaic approach of Clarke and Moss (2001), Clarke (2004, 2005), and Moonie and Blackburn (2003).

3.4 Voluntary community sector OOSCs

Around 40 per cent of OOSCs are in the voluntary community sector 9VCS) (DfES 2007). Small community-run OOSCs like ours have a 'flattened' structure (Scott et al. 2000), with committee members (often parents) involved closely in the running of the club. Recruitment and retention is a continual challenge (Daycare Trust 2007a). Unlike pre-schools there is no statutory funding for OOSCs: some may have contracts with local authorities or schools; others, like ours, may be supported by parental fees, ad hoc grants and fund-raising. Sustainability remains a key concern.

4. Methodology

4.1 Ethical research with children

We worked from a presumption that children are ‘beings’ not ‘becomings’ (James and Prout 1997) and experts on their own life experiences (Clarke, KJØrholt and Moss 2005); not only ‘dependents in need of services and provision’ but also ‘“participants who share in defining and solving problems’ (Alderson and Morrow 2004: 124). We respected children’s choices as to whether and how they participated, explained possible outcomes, and aimed to engage them as active ‘subjects’ and to some extent as ‘co-researchers’ (Christensen and James 2008).

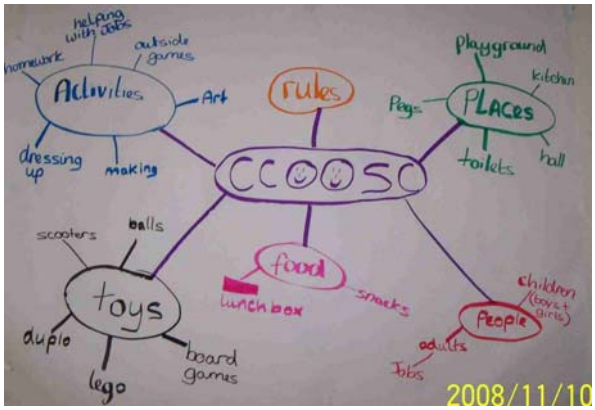
‘“All children have a right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of activities’ (Article 31, UNCRC). It was vital that the research was not ‘work’, a potential ‘harm’, and activities were fun, with a minimum loss of time and autonomy (Alderson and Morrow 2004). We hoped to connect with the children’s ‘culture of communication’ (Christensen and Haudrup 2004), and listen to children in ways which ‘resonate[d] with children’s own concerns and routines’ (Christensen and James, 2008) and enabled them to demonstrate their resources (Kay et al. 2006). We discussed the issues of sensitivity (for staff and children) and power (Christensen and Haudrup 2004) and adopted a reflective and reflexive approach (Davies and Hill 2006).

Alderson (2005) and others highlight the need for an ethical framework in research with children: we adhered to the Statement of Ethical Practice of the British Sociological Association (BSA 2002) and followed the Practice Standards in Children’s Participation (Save the Children 2005). Approval was obtained from the Management Committee and all policies were adhered to. Informed consent was obtained from parents/carers (an opt-out), and as far as possible from children, using a child-friendly information leaflet.

4.2 Research design

Our club is managed by a committee of ten working parents, and employs six part-time staff. Twenty-five children aged five to 11 attend regularly in term time, 20 of whom actively participated in the research activities. Until January the club operated from a cadet centre, and then moved to a new (shared) building on the primary school site. The lead researcher and two paid staff conducted the research, over two three-week periods ‘book-ended’ by workshops for planning, interpretation and analysis.

We began by explaining we would be making a 'Kids’ Handbook', and that we hoped to find out what they thought about the club and how it could improve. We used a mind-map to brainstorm possible topics:



We used a 'Mosaic' approach combining observation and creative activities, adapted to fit age and interests, and time available. Initial questions were open ended (What do you think is important at the club?), and later became more specific (What do you like about the club? What would you like more of/less of? What's missing? What would you like to change?).

The first activity involved the children taking digital photos, and/or drawing/painting pictures of 'important things' at the club. In the second the children created models of a 'club in a shoebox':

IMAGE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

These popular activities gave us a wealth of visual data and written (or dictated) interpretations. When eliciting interpretations we checked whether creations were 'to do with' the club, as we, like Duffy (1998: 101), found that: 'sometimes I just want to show you my drawings, not to tell you about them, sometimes they are just for looking at.

The third activity, a group collage, involved drawing around the supervisor and stimulated discussion about an 'ideal' playworker:

IMAGE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

This was less successful: it did not engage the younger children (collage probably works better with older children, individually); and we felt it required more abstract thinking (doing this when recruiting new staff would make it more meaningful).

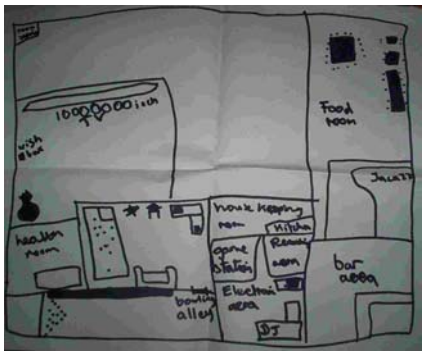
In order to analyse the initial data we grouped children's photographs, pictures and interpretations, and researcher's photographs and observations, onto large sheets of paper according to what the children said they showed, or what had been observed. We gave these tentative headings, which were refined through discussion (and in light of further data) until we felt we were able summarize it in a way which would be meaningful to both children and adults. These headings formed our five main themes, and we identified some sub-themes where they seemed helpful. Although the children were not involved in this analytical process, we tried not to impose out own interpretations on the children's, and treated our observations as complementary, not more significant.

We then fed back to the children by making posters together: a 'recycling bin' for the things which had changed (many by moving premises); and a 'treasure island' for the things they had told us were important:

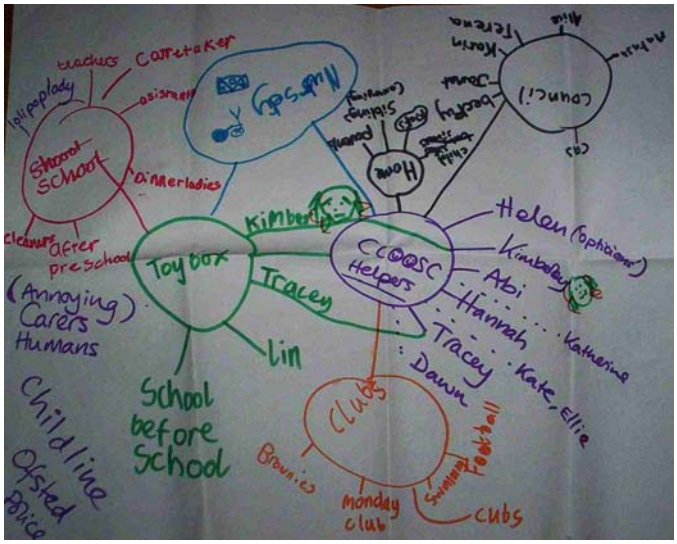
The recycling bin

The 'Treasure Island'

Next we created a 'wishing (palm) tree' with the things they would like to have/change, which the children were then able to add to (p. 9). Some children then decided, unprompted, to produce plans of their 'ideal' building:



Finally we used a mapping activity with a small group to elicit discussion (recorded) about the people and organizations they were familiar with; how the 'helpers' differed; and who they would talk to if they had a problem (using the example of being bullied).



At a final workshop we analysed and incorporated the additional data (including observations), and reflected on implications for practice.

Drawings, paintings and models were returned to the children with photographs they had selected. We gave them feedback on actions taken; asked them which research activities they enjoyed most (model-making and photography); and invited them to take part in the workshop for the Kids' Handbook.

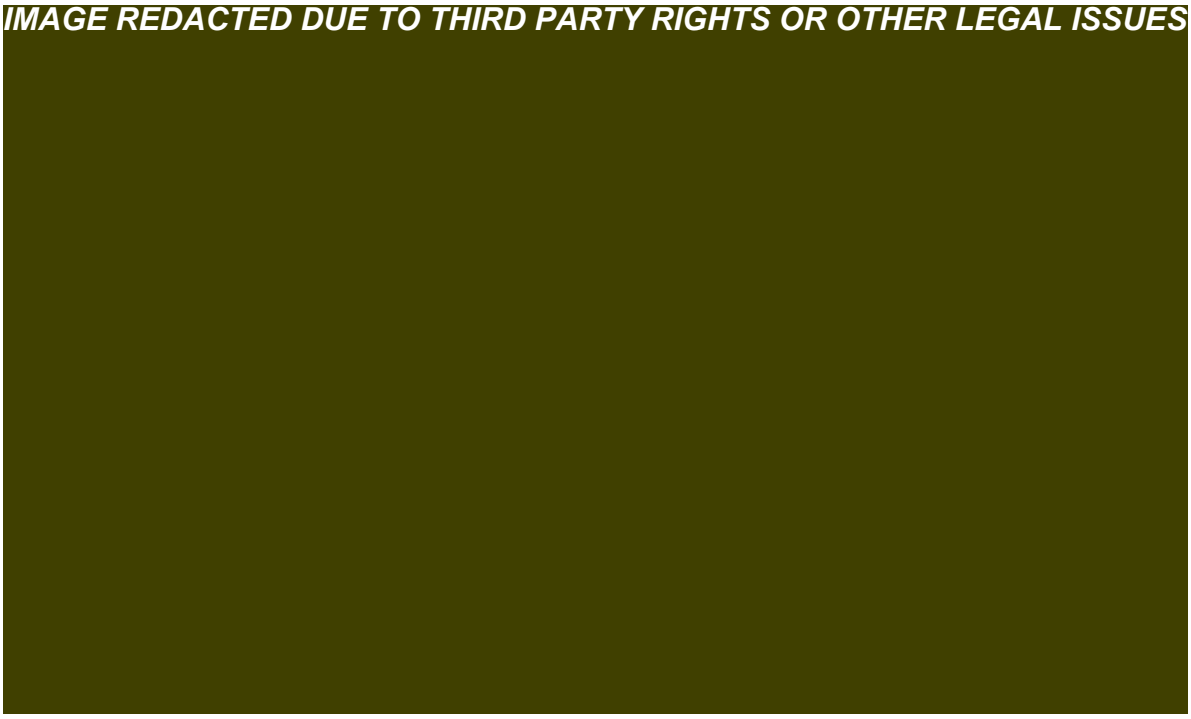
5. Findings

The findings are grouped into five main themes generated from the data: important activities and resources; the environment; people and relationships; fun; and belonging.

5.1 Important activities and resources

Current activities

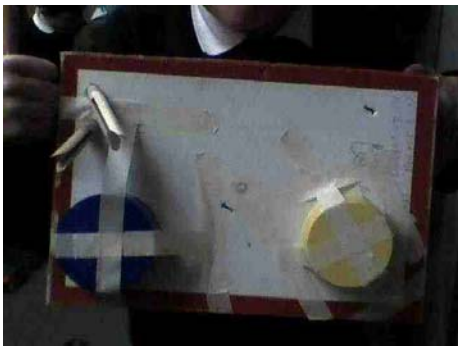
Children of a range of ages identified important outdoor activities, including using scooters, because they are 'fun' and 'we can play with them a lot' (boy, 7). Ball games featured for boys, particularly football. 'Making dens' was mentioned by several boys and girls, and some group games ('hot potato' and dodgeball). Important indoor activities for both boys and girls included making and eating food, and art and craft. Younger girls also mentioned face painting and dressing up, and younger boys specified construction toys (Lego and K-nex) and dinosaurs. Some liked 'all the different toys we have" (girl, 8). Water fights outside and (paper) snowball fights inside were also mentioned.



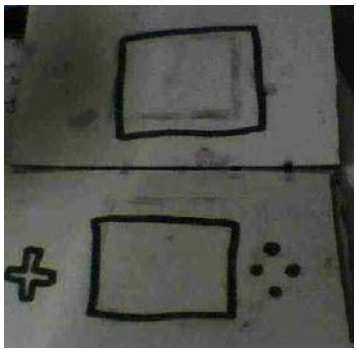
Some photographed art work on the wall, which seemed important for the sense of the club being 'their place': 'I like how our art work is shown to everyone' (girl, 8). Several children identified various 'jobs' and routines as being important (clearing plates, hanging coats on pegs) and one said that helping clear out the cupboards was an enjoyable activity (boy, 8).

Desirable activities

Currently missing from the club, but considered important, were animals and pets and trips out (feeding ducks, bug hunts). Some younger girls also wanted more dressing up opportunities and clothes. Music (drums, guitar and CDs) featured for both sexes, and for some boys this was associated with making noise. Technology was identified by both boys and girls (all ages): cameras; a Wii (since purchased); Nintendo DS 'because everyone likes it' (girl, 9); and films.



Drum kit



Nintendo DS

The children wanted greater variety of resources and activities and contributions to the 'wishing tree' ranged from 'better pens' and 'a wider range of food' to '"karate instruction', a 'DJ station', a 'swimming pool' and a 'midnight feast'. The children were told that we might not be able to deliver everything, but that we would seriously consider all suggestions.

The ‘Wishing (palm) Tree’

Child-initiated activities

During the research period we also collected evidence of activities which were wholly initiated by the children, for example ‘Out of School Club’s Got Talent’; a restaurant game (using the club logo as the menu); and the redrafting of the rules of behaviour.

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Research tools also acted as a stimulus, for example, free-drawing on the ‘big paper’ (flipchart). The shoeboxes and new modelling materials spurred activity and creativity.

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Doing nothing and talking to friends were defined as important activities by several boys and girls: ‘the older kids want to be alone, sitting down, chatting and things’ (girl, 10).

5.2 The environment

The environment changed in the course of the research project from rooms in a cadet centre, to a timber-frame, eco-friendly building on the school site.

Our original premises were not ideal (‘it’s not very nice’, boy, 8; ‘it smells’, girl, 8) although the outside areas were valued: the playground, the long grass, the gravel and the mud. There were some comments on safety outside: one child photographed the fence noting that ‘nobody can get out of the playground or in’ (girl, 6); others mentioned grazed knees from the gravel.

Original premises Outside (with fence) The ‘long grass’

The new building (‘our new place’, girl, 6) was described as warmer and cleaner, and children noted the new features and areas including the thermostat, burglar alarm, and fire alarm, as well as the big glass doors, the new office and storeroom, and improved chairs. The snow, although temporary, was ‘very important’.

Some children would like a garden to play in ‘with flowers to plant and grow butterflies’ (girl, 7) and others mentioned fields and trees. ‘Places to hide’ (inside and outside) were deemed important by boys and girls, with dens, tents and curtains specified: hiding from adults, or hiding from other children. This chimed with the desire of some for quiet: a ‘chill out space’ (girl, 10) to get away from noisier children and activities, and somewhere to do homework. This seemed particularly important for the girls whose models were mostly room interiors. We now have a second, smaller room to use in this way and this has been appreciated: ‘I like the quiet room’ (girl, 7).



We also identified the sub-theme of ‘comfort’ which we felt covered some less tangible things: clean, flushing toilets (‘nobody ever flushes the toilet – the young ones’, boy, 9); hand-washing; tidy, accessible resources; first aid; and cuddles. It also seemed to encompass décor and furnishings: several children wanting a more comfortable space, with cushions, bean bags and sofas, and more colour. Some were critical of the old metal cupboards (since abandoned) as they looked ‘weird’ and seemed ‘dangerous’ (girl, 7).

First ade’ (boy, 7)


Animal bean bags’ (boy, 8) ‘


Smelly toilets’ (Several children)

The kitchen appeared to be an important area ‘because the food is in there’ (boy, 9), and because ‘kids are not allowed in it’ (girl, 6). Some children thought they should be allowed in the kitchen, and we observed children trying to find ways of getting in.

5.3 People and relationships

We tried to bring into clearer focus the relationships between children, and between children and staff. Most took pictures of their friends because they were ‘important’. One child said they ‘like it when everyone plays together’ (girl, 8); another photographed a (younger) child because ‘they need looking after’ (boy, 8).

Most children also took photos of the staff. They almost unanimously referred to all staff, volunteers and the lead researcher as ‘helpers’. A few said that they ‘loved’ a staff member and we observed the use of nicknames, and hugs. Several children identified the staff as ‘running things’: ‘if you don’t have enough helpers you can’t run the club’ (boy, 8). The children seemed aware that staff planned and organized activities, were responsible for managing behaviour and keeping the children safe (using keys, the first-aid kit, and the fire-extinguisher).

Our final activity aimed to map (p. 7) other groups the children identified with; what happened there and how the people were different; and whether the children spontaneously identified any connections between them. The first organization identified was the ‘council’ who ‘kind of find out the points where we need to improve and then do something about it’ (boy, 11, child of committee member).

OOSC staff ‘work with children’ and ‘sort of like organize things…’ (boy, 9). They then added the pre-school (a ‘school before school’, girl, 8) which some had attended, and which had two staff in common with the club. There ‘they are kinder’ and ‘they just let you do stuff – they don’t force you…or boss you about’, although this was possibly ‘because we are more advanced than tiny children’ (girl, 7).

When identifying people in schools, they specified teachers (‘they let us have ’’golden time’”, girl, 7) and teaching assistants (‘they specialize on one person’, boy, 11). At this point one girl (9) said that at the club ‘it’s all golden time’. They also identified cubs and brownies, and activity clubs including swimming and ‘Monday Club’ (for juniors) but these were not explicitly linked to the OOSC.

When asked who, out of all the helpers identified, they would speak to if they had a specific problem (such as being bullied) there were a wide range or responses:

> I’d talk to all of them…to the one closest to me (boy, 11)
> I’d speak to (named Play Assistant) because she can deal with things (girl, 9)
> I’d go the bully and say stop bullying me…or my mum and dad (girl, 7).
> I’d call ChildLine (girl, 9)
> ...or ring Ofsted (girl, 7) [laughter]…they’d say ‘I’ll come and inspect your school’ (girl, 9)
> The police (boy, 9)
> I’d talk to my friends (boy, 5)

There was no consensus on who would be the best person to speak to (we recognize that if the question were asked individually responses might be different).

5.4 ‘Fun’

Fun could be seen as a sub-theme of the above, but we felt it was significant in its own right. The children have joking relationships with staff that seem different from those they have with teachers and other ‘helpers’. Some of the photos they took were because people were ‘silly’, ‘funny’ or ‘weird’. Staff had their faces painted by the children; ‘joking around’ was mentioned by boys and girls. There were many examples of humour in the children’s games, paintings, and photos.

'Fun' was mentioned repeatedly by children of both sexes and all ages, and seemed to be the primary way that children assessed the value of any activity. Fun is hard to measure, but seems vital to the children's perspective of what their club is about.

5.5 Belonging

Most referred to the OOSC as 'the club', some prefixing it with 'out of school'. Several children photographed the club sign, notices and rules of behaviour; the logo featured in the restaurant game; and one described the club itself as 'special' (girl, 6). Helping staff with jobs was important to some (boys and girls) and seemed to be connected to having a stake in the club. We intend to explore this theme further by asking the children to rename the club, design the logo and create a 'children's mission statement'.

6. Implications for practice

In the process of the research I noted what went well, and less so, and lessons were learned: some practical issues; some related to reflective practice and children's rights (summarized in Appendix I). We also identified possible future consultation activities (Appendix II) and specific outputs and anticipated impacts (for the organization, staff, children and parents: Appendix III). I focus here on implications for the organization as a whole.

6.1 The OOS workforce

Staff training in participatory methods, which also creates time for reflective practice, may help with retention and an improved sense of status. Evidence of a commitment to consulting and involving children may also help in recruitment.

Neither is able to tackle the national issue of low pay, although evidence of quality from this research could increase attendance, improving the 'bottom line' and allowing additional pay increases. (However, at the time of writing, recession means our provision has an uncertain future).

6.2 Working with parents

Working in partnership with parents is an Ofsted requirement. However, in our setting there is limited time, and arguably need, to work closely with all parents. We intend to use our findings to feedback to parents *collectively* about children's experiences and the specific ways we intend to improve this. We hope that this will inspire confidence in parents that the club takes children's views into account, and focuses on their wellbeing and enjoyment. This also makes good 'business sense'.

6.3 Integrated working

Although preliminary, our findings suggest that the children in this setting have a limited understanding of integrated working, when and how local organizations might be connected, unless they have 'helpers' in common. This may have implications for integrated working if it is considered important that children be aware of the 'orbits' into which they fall (for example, 'Extended Schools', or 'Early Years'). An improved understanding of children's perspectives will inform day-to-day practice, and in specific safeguarding issues.

We hope our findings will feed into future discussions around integrated working in our community, and will be of interest to local schools, and the pre-school, playgroups, and child-minders who care for younger children, some of whom may later attend the club. We also hope that they can be communicated to other OOS settings, child care and play infrastructure organizations, and ultimately policy-makers, with the aim of gaining greater recognition of the specific nature of OOSCs and their part in children's worlds.

Conclusions

This project has given us an insight into the children's views of their club: their perceptions of their environment, the people who care for them, and what they do there, as well as what they would like to change and how they can be involved in future decision-making. We learned that the children enjoy much that is currently on offer, and their freedom to choose, but would like a wider range of activities and resources, and more opportunities to interact with the outside environment. We also learned that there is a desire to feel comfortable and that they recognize the role of adults in 'running' and 'organizing' things, and keeping them safe (although not how people and organizations might be formally connected). We have also learned that relationships (with children and adults), fun and a sense of belonging are important to their experience of the club.

Our findings have already begun to inform staff practice day to day, and are bringing a more child-centred approach to our training plan, funding strategy, activity development and choice of resources. In the future they will also influence the development of the environment, and the recruitment and training of new staff. The research process has equipped staff members with some age-appropriate research and consultation skills, which we hope to build on. We are confident that the 'flattened' structure of the organization, with close working with front-line staff, will enable participation to become further embedded in our organization, for the long-term benefit of the children and their club. This is with the proviso that funds are made available to do so.

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Appendix I: Lessons learned

Practical issues:

- Keep research activities short, simple and sweet, i.e. fun.
- Prepare as much as possible in advance to 'hit the ground running', but allow children to help with tasks (writing, sticking things up, photographing the process).
- Keep good working notes throughout, e.g. photo author, content and image number.
- Use a range of materials for any activity, to allow different methods of response.
- Create repeat opportunities (for children attending on different days, at different times and with different levels of interest).
- Re-visit earlier contributions and build on them.

Reflective practice and children's rights:

- Be flexible and adaptive, and responsive to children's wishes, including the wish not to participate.
- Avoid being defensive when children make critical comments, or to deny them the right to make them – give them a hearing, probe sensitively and try to see criticisms as constructive (be clear on the difference between criticism and an insult).
- Children should get something out of the process (photos, models, the handbook) and be thanked for their contribution after each activity, and the whole process.
- Feed back to children at intervals about what has been discovered, and allow them to comment.
- The findings should be embedded into the club action plan (with prior agreement to implement as much as possible).

Appendix II: Planned consultation activities

Finding	Activity
'Wish list' of resources/activities More variety	Develop permanent 'wishing tree' and suggestions letter box 'Beans in a jar' approach to help prioritize
Enjoyment of playing in the natural environment (long grass, mud and gravel) Desire for 'trips out'	Modelling/drawing outside areas and what they would like to happen there
Like technology , inc. camera	Video 'diary room'; group 'reporters' to identify areas for improvement
Sense of belonging	Re-name the club, re-design the logo, produce hats/T-shirts

Appendix III: Outputs and anticipated impacts

'Paper' outputs:

- A selection of pictures (drawings, paintings, collage), photographs (including pictures of the children's models), pieces of writing (children's descriptions and interpretations), maps and plans. In addition to incorporating some in the report we are able to display these (with the children's permission) at open days and other events. We hope to include some in a new website which we plan to develop later in the year.
- A Kids' Handbook (in development at a separate Kid's Workshop), including a selection of the above, to be used for publicity purposes.
- A 'child-friendly' report summarizing the research findings.
- A display summarizing the research process and findings.
- Ideas and materials to be used for future research, evaluation and consultation work with the children.

Anticipated impacts:

On staff and the organization:

- An enhanced understanding of the research approach and methods used, and the basis of the skills needed to continue using them.
- Suggestions and criticisms for use in planning improvements to the service, the play environment, resources and activities, to feed into the club action plan.
- Improvements to the policy on 'Involving and Consulting Children' (including the drawing up of a child-friendly version and timetable for implementation).
- Evidence to support funding bids; publicity to raise the profile of the club; and an enhanced reputation as a caring, and learning organization.
- Evidence of activities contributing to the 'desirable outcomes for children' (Ofsted): *Personal and social development; Language and literacy; Physical and creative development; Knowledge and understanding of the world*.
- Evidence of service quality for the primary school, and other 'feeder' schools in the area.

On children:

- An input into our decision-making and a feeling of having their views taken into account.
- An increased sense of 'ownership' of the club and a degree of responsibility for the direction of change.
- Having the products of the research on display, and having them seen by others outside the club (parents, school, community and the public); pride in their contribution.
- Enjoyment of the research activities, i.e. fun.
- Child-centred information for new children, about the club and what happens there.

On parents:

- Feedback from the staff about how their children experience the club (how they spend their time; what they enjoy most; what they may need reassurance about).
- An enhanced understanding of the children's relationships with the staff caring for them.
- Confidence that the club takes children's views into account when planning services, while being sensitive to the needs of working parents.

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