

CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 13 OCTOBER, 2004

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS LEARNING – SCOPING REPORT

Report Author:

Marianne Stevenson Acting Head of the LINC Unit Tel: 01992 555915

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide an over view of Out of School Hours Learning (OSHL) in Hertfordshire, with specific reference to Homework Clubs.
- 1.2 To propose options Scrutiny Committee could consider to scrutinise this area of activity.

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The Green Paper 'Extending Opportunity: a national framework for study support' (DfEE, 1998) emphasised the importance of Study Support. Study Support was seen as synonymous with Homework Clubs and after school clubs/activities. Currently the term OSHL (Out of School Hours Learning) is used to encompass the wide range of activities offering children and young people learning outside the classroom.
- 2.2 Schools have always provided after school clubs/activities. However they were not always explicitly connected to a school's general aims & included in School Development Plans, or recognised as making a contribution to raising pupil achievement. In 1999 the Lottery Commission established the New Opportunities Fund (NOF). Applications for funding were invited for the development of exciting & innovative programmes of activities that would support young people's achievement through raising their self esteem & confidence.
- 2.3 Hertfordshire successfully bid for £1.6million of NOF money to develop Study Support provision within the county. A substantial number of OSHL programmes have been developed in Hertfordshire over the three years, September 2000 - November 2003, with support from NOF.
- 2.4 Lead officers for this development were a core funded team of 4 Community Education Development Officers (CEDOs) who recruited schools and a range of partners. A County OSHL Co-ordinator, funded from the centrally retained element of the DfES Standards Fund was appointed to lead CEDOs in their development work with these schools.

- 2.5 A total of 97 schools, comprising 45 clusters of schools (for bidding purposes), developed a wide range of OSHL programmes. Please see Appendix A. Now that NOF funding has ceased there is no requirement for these schools to continue to operate as clusters, however the majority of schools are planning to continue to offer the OSHL programmes they have developed during the NOF funding period.
- 2.6 Homework Clubs are part of the wider OSHL programme that has been successfully developed in Hertfordshire over the last five years. A total of 236 Hertfordshire schools currently provide Homework Clubs: 179 in primary schools, 4 Middle schools, 44 secondary schools and 9 special schools. In addition there are 2 Homework Clubs located within local libraries that cater for school pupils. Please see Appendix B.
- 2.7 A County OSHL Conference, which focused on NOF funded activities, was held in July 2001 to disseminate practice and celebrate children's achievements. Good practice has also been shared with schools through CSF OSHL Co-ordinator networks, CEDOs' activity and CSF Inform Extra publications.
- 2.8 OSHL is now an integral part of the School Development Plans of 234 schools in Hertfordshire. CSF is continuing to support the growth of OSHL programmes and further development will be an integral part of extended schools' initiatives.

3. Homework Clubs

- 3.1 In the evaluation of NOF OSHL programmes, schools report that OSHL activities, including homework clubs, have made a significant contribution to raising pupil achievement. Details of individual pupil achievement is held at school level. Many of the OSHL activities developed are in response to young people's needs and by its nature OSHL provision is therefore a constantly changing picture. Parents and carers are advised to contact their local school to ascertain what programme of OSHL activities there is in their area.
- 3.2 Data on provision of homework clubs is collected through the OSHL annual mapping survey. The return is made according to provision at key stages and indicates that homework clubs are provided for pupils ranging from 6 to 16 years old.
- 3.3 The regularity and length of opening of these clubs varies from school to school. The annual mapping feedback indicates regular sessions of approximately 1 to 1.5 hours in length.
- 3.4 The clubs are supervised by paid and volunteer teaching staff, school librarians and classroom teaching assistants.

- 3.5 It was a requirement of NOF that all activities developed with its funding should be provided free of charge to the participants. Homework clubs were no exception. NOF funding has now ceased and some schools are indicating that they may need to impose a small charge to maintain some of the activities in their OSHL programmes. The next annual mapping survey will include the monitoring of charges for OSHL activities.
- 3.6 Three homework clubs were established within town libraries to cater for pupils in Borehamwood, South Oxhey and Stevenage. The Stevenage homework club has closed as a result of a fall-off in attendance.
- 3.7 The Borehamwood homework club was originally established with NOF money to support pupils making the transition from middle schools to a single secondary school within the town. It is very successful and continues to grow, staffed by the library and youth service.
- 3.8 South Oxhey homework club was established with money from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). There is no secondary school in South Oxhey and secondary aged pupils travel by bus to other neighbouring schools. The school buses stop opposite the public library and pupils tend call into the library to use the homework club on their way home from school.
- 3.9 Homework clubs established in special schools are amongst a variety of OSHL activities offered. Quite a large proportion of these activities are provided during the lunch-break, but others are offered at the end of the day – especially where the school has boarding facilities.

4. Service Implications

- 4.1 NOF funding has now ceased and the majority of the consortium of schools who benefited are planning to sustain most of the 340 OSHL activities they developed. Some have attracted alternative funding, others are using their own resources and / or their School Development Grant to continue with these activities.
- 4.2 A first draft of an OSHL Sustainability Strategy for Hertfordshire has been written, in consultation with key players. There will be wider consultation in preparation for the launch of the extended schools initiative in September 2005. The DfES funding for extended and full service schools may enable some additional funding for OSHL activities.
- 4.3 The DfES have recently funded CSF to embed 'Quality in Study Support' (QiSS) into OSHL practice. The following quality improvements have been agreed: to incorporate OSHL into Hertfordshire's Schools 'Self – Evaluation Framework'; to publish 'best practice' case studies and to identify other strategies to which the OSHL strategy relates: e.g. the 14 –19 and Key Stage 3 strategies.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The £1.6 million awarded by NOF to develop OSHL programmes over a three year period has now ceased.
- 5.2 The OSHL portion of the centrally retained element of the School Development Grant (SDG), formerly the Standards Fund, for 2004/2005 is £173,000. This is being used to establish activities in schools not as yet offering OSHL programmes; to establish OSHL activities with vulnerable and at risk groups and underachieving minority ethnic pupils; and the provision of advice & training. It is likely that a similar level of SDG funding will be allocated for 2005/2006. However this source of funding is scheduled to cease in March 2006.
- 5.3 The £20,000 awarded for QiSS is a one off payment to fund outcomes in the OSHL quality plan approved by the DfES.
- 5.4 Schools are currently funding their OSHL programmes from a variety of sources including their SDG allocation.

6. Access to Service Implications

Transport is sometimes cited as a barrier to young people participating in OSHL programmes. There is no evidence from schools that this is a major problem. It is more likely to be an issue in rural areas, in special schools and specialist projects such as 'Playing for Success', whose catchment areas are wider than their geographical neighbourhoods. It would appear that where schools have their own transport this is not a significant barrier. The main expense is staff time and fuel. Where schools need to hire transport it is more of an issue. To date there has been no specific review of the impact of lack of transport in relation to young people accessing OSHL programmes.

7. Conclusion

There are three possible options for further scrutiny:

- 7.1 To recommend that the CSF Panel take into account the 'value added' benefit of raising pupil attainment that homework clubs, as part of the wider OSHL programme, provide and ensure its development within Extended Schools' developments.
- 7.2 To request a detailed report on OSHL provision within Hertfordshire in a year's time, with witness statements.
- 7.3 To establish a topic group for OSHL. This option would be more resource intensive.

Background Papers

DfEE publication 'Extending Opportunity' 1998
Annual Mapping Data as at November 2003
Final report to NOF July 2004

Appendices

Appendix A: NOF bid awarded to 97 Schools grouped into 45 clusters

Appendix B: Range of schools providing homework clubs