

Context

Over the course of the National Childcare Strategy 2001 – 04 a number of new out of school holiday childcare schemes in Swindon were funded through the New Opportunities Fund (now Big Lottery). The success of these schemes was very limited with the majority of them closing either at the end of the funding period or shortly after due to lack of take up.

Three key risks were identified:

- Financial risk to the provider
- Risk in investing public funds with no sustainable outcome
- Risk to parents being offered unsustainable childcare

With this in mind schools subsequently expressing an interest in offering holiday care were offered the opportunity to pilot a provision with a view to longer term funding subject to successful evaluation. However, there were few developments none of which progressed, in part due to low take up and in part due to organisational pressures.

Sufficiency Assessment

Swindon Borough Council published its first statutory childcare sufficiency assessment in March 2008. The report outlines supply and demand in Swindon's childcare market. This identified a mismatch between the over supply of holiday childcare places for school aged children (many settings experienced low numbers) and unmet demand from parents who were unable to find suitable holiday care particularly for older children (over 10). Some parents are currently going to great lengths to avoid using existing holiday childcare by parents taking leave in shifts or taking term time only work.

Many parents identified their reluctance to pay what is for them a great deal of money for a service where their children are either unhappy or not engaged in stimulating activity. Consultation with children identified their strong preference for outdoor play and structured activities such as sport, cooking and art (as well as television).

What we are looking for in a proposal 2010 - 11

Proposals for holiday childcare need to meet the existing out of school criteria and under direction of a Sure Start Partnership Development Worker provide documentation to support the application in the same way as any other out of school application. **In addition** the following must be given serious consideration and factored into the project plan:

Sustainability

Most applicants use a parental questionnaire identifying interest in using a provision as a measure of potential sustainability and historically parents have always expressed a strong interest in holiday care. However, not all parents needing after school care will require or need holiday care as well, and those that do may only need care for part of the school holidays once they have taken their annual leave. Previous projects have failed to be sustainable due to low numbers and in all cases providers were disappointed with the level of actual take up compared with the level of initial interest. Developing a sustainable holiday club market needs some additional thought in particular:

- Consider running good quality activities for a limited number of weeks
- Consider working in collaboration with other schools to extend the market
- Consider any other innovative solution

Consultation with children

The most important thing to parents is that the holiday club offers the kinds of activities that make it a place where their children really want to be. Any proposal needs to provide evidence of extensive consultation with children and how their views will be incorporated into the scheme's activity plan.