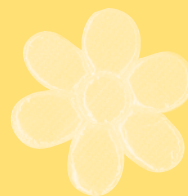




RESEARCH REPORT NO 1/07
FEBRUARY 2007

families commission
kōmihana ā **whānau**



when school's out

CONVERSATIONS WITH PARENTS, CARERS AND CHILDREN
ABOUT OUT OF SCHOOL SERVICES

A FAMILIES COMMISSION REPORT



The Families Commission was established under the Families Commission Act 2003 and commenced operations on 1 July 2004. Under the Crown Entities Act 2004, the Commission is designated as an autonomous Crown entity.

Our main role is to act as an advocate for the interests of families generally (rather than individual families).

Our specific functions under the Families Commission Act 2003 are to:

- > encourage and facilitate informed debate about families
- > increase public awareness and promote better understanding of matters affecting families
- > encourage and facilitate the development and provision of government policies that promote and serve the interests of families
- > consider any matter relating to the interests of families referred to us by any Minister of the Crown
- > stimulate and promote research into families, for example by funding and undertaking research
- > consult with, or refer matters to, other official bodies or statutory agencies.

The Commission can be contacted at:

Public Trust Building
Level 5, 117-125 Lambton Quay
PO Box 2839
Wellington

Telephone: 04 917 7040

Email: enquiries@nzfamilies.org.nz
www.nzfamilies.org.nz

Giving New Zealand families a voice –
Te reo o te whānau

ISBN: 0-478-29274-0

when school's out

CONVERSATIONS WITH PARENTS, CARERS AND CHILDREN
ABOUT OUT OF SCHOOL SERVICES

DONELLA BELLETT AND MARNY DICKSON

PROJECT TEAM: STEPHEN BLYTH (CONSULTATION MANAGER),
EILEEN CLARKE, IRENE DE HAAN, KUMAR MURALI,
TUILOMA SKOTI, ADEL SALAMANZDEH

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS AND HOST ORGANISATIONS

The Families Commission thanks all the parents, carers and children who participated in the consultation. Thank you to everyone who gave up an evening or afternoon to help the Families Commission learn what you think about out of school services.

The consultation meetings were possible only because of the generous support of the many local host organisations involved throughout the country. We thank the following organisations for joining the Commission to reach out to New Zealand families:

- > Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, Auckland
- > Wanganui Community House, Wanganui
- > Homebuilders, Warkworth
- > Petone Central School, Wellington
- > Methodist Connect, Dunedin
- > Southland Multi-Nations, Invercargill
- > Waihopai Rūnaka, Invercargill
- > Parent to Parent, Invercargill
- > He Puna Marama Trust, Whangārei
- > Te Atatū Intermediate School, Auckland
- > Family Support Centre, Pukekohe
- > Māngere Bridge School, South Auckland
- > Addington School, Christchurch
- > Tagata Atumotu Trust, Christchurch
- > Family Works, Hastings
- > Changemakers Refugee Forum, Wellington
- > Māori Women's Welfare League, Whakatū Branch, Nelson
- > Family Works, Nelson
- > Fairhaven School, Te Puke

We also thank St Pauls Convent, Ngāruawāhia, for their assistance in planning a consultation meeting. This meeting had to be cancelled when we learnt with much sadness of the death of the Māori Queen, Te Arikini Dame Te Ātairangikaahu.

PROJECT INPUT AND ADVICE

We acknowledge the advice and assistance of Chief Commissioner Rajen Prasad, Commissioners Sharron Cole, Sandra Alofivae, Carolyn Bull, Lyn Campbell and Mason Durie, as well as Michael Fletcher and Amanda Heath from the Families Commission.

Sarah Metwell and Josephine Tiro, from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, provided valuable assistance to the project with advice as well as assistance at a number of consultation meetings. The Families Commission is also grateful for the input of policy analysts across government, Trudie McNaughton and the OSCAR Foundation, who provided feedback on an earlier draft of the consultation report.

For their expert facilitation at consultation meetings and many kilometres travelled, we thank Annette Karepa and Bobby Newson. Facilitation by Quentin Dukes and Jill Worrall at one meeting each was also appreciated. Kathryn Hazlewood attended and helped record the findings of a number of consultation meetings. The organisational efforts of Helen Trim helped to ensure that the consultation meetings ran smoothly.

CONTENTS

PREFACE 5

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 7

CHAPTER ONE Introduction 11

- Purpose of the report 12
- Why are out of school services important? Policy objectives and impact 13
 - The Families Commission's interest in out of school services 14
 - New Zealand Government agenda for out of school services 15
 - The Families Commission consultation – what we did 16
 - Structure of this report 18

CHAPTER TWO New Zealand OSS Policy in the International Context 19

- New Zealand OSS policy 20
 - Regulation of services – OSCAR programmes 20
 - Assistance grants to OSCAR providers 20
 - OSCAR subsidy for parents and carers 20
 - Advice and information to providers and families about OSCAR 21
 - The OSCAR sector – 2004 evaluation 21
- Issues with current OSS provision in New Zealand 22
 - Demand 22
 - Supply 22
 - Cost 23
 - Quality 23
- Overview of OSS provision internationally – selected countries 24
 - Australia 25
 - United Kingdom 26
 - United States 27
 - Sweden 28
- Chapter summary: New Zealand OSS policy in an international context 28

CHAPTER THREE Families' Childcare Needs and Preferences 29

- Issues for working parents: Flexible work conditions 31
- Alternatives to formal OSS 31
 - Parents looking after their children themselves 31
 - Using informal care solutions 32
 - Home-based care 35
 - Subsidy flexibility for home-based, informal care 36
- Summary 36

CHAPTER FOUR Formal OSS – Evidence of Demand for Formal Services 37

CHAPTER FIVE Formal OSS – Accessing Services 39

- Cost of formal services 40
 - Affordability of current programmes 40
 - How much is 'affordable'? 41
 - Funding options and subsidy issues 42
- Availability of formal services 43

Access issues for children with special needs/disabilities	45
Times for formal services	47
School-holiday care	47
After-school care	48
Before-school care	48
Non-standard-hour care	48
Location issues	49
Before/after-school care	49
School-holiday care	50
Workplaces as a possible location	50
Information needs	51
Summary	52

CHAPTER SIX Formal OSS – Programme Content and Purpose 53

Enrichment activities and life skills	54
Cultural activities	55
Educational activities	56
Recreational activities	57
Children’s choice of activities	58
The need for age-appropriate activities and provision	59
Summary	60

CHAPTER SEVEN Formal OSS – Quality of Services 61

Staff training and qualifications	63
Children with special needs/disabilities – staff training and qualifications	65
Characteristics of OSS staff	66
Quality standards and monitoring	67
Summary	68

CHAPTER EIGHT Conclusions 69

Policy implications for the future of OSS	71
Major government investment is required to reduce the cost of OSS and a new universal funding model should be developed	71
The supply of centre-based OSS needs to significantly increase	72
Services should receive funding incentives to increase access for children with special needs	73
Funding for OSS needs to be more flexible	73
The quality of OSS needs to improve and minimum standards should be introduced	73
Summary	74

REFERENCES 75

APPENDIX ONE Information About Individual Consultation Meetings 77

APPENDIX TWO Consultation Questions 82

APPENDIX THREE Couch Questionnaire Results 83

GLOSSARY 87

PREFACE

This report aims to promote public debate and contribute to the development of government policy on out of school services (OSS).

Since the 1960s and 1970s, changing family structures, preferences and patterns of labour-market participation have led to a growing diversity of care arrangements for children and other family members. Demand for and use of childcare and out of school services has increased significantly. Responding to these needs and preferences is a significant policy challenge.

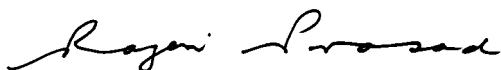
It is also recognised that school-aged children need access to safe, supervised, enriching activities outside school hours. The OECD has recently advised a number of countries, including New Zealand, that they should improve the provision of out of school services to promote positive child-development outcomes, address barriers to labour-market participation, reduce child poverty and foster economic growth.

In August 2006, the Prime Minister launched *Choices for Living, Caring and Working*, a 10-year plan for improving the caring and employment choices available to parents and carers. A key focus for *Choices* is the development of an OSS Five-Year Plan. This formed the immediate impetus for the Families Commission's OSS consultation.

The Families Commission has a legislative mandate to consult families and to provide policy advice on issues that affect the interests of families. In July and August 2006, we consulted a broad range of parents, carers and children about how they would like to see OSS develop. For those who did not want to use formal OSS, we asked what, if anything, could be done to better support their current care arrangements.

The policy advice contained in this report draws on our understanding of the New Zealand policy context, research, international policy developments and, most importantly, what parents, carers and children told us they want and need from OSS.

There are significant challenges ahead. Government investment in OSS is relatively low by international standards, there is a lack of available services at the times and locations that parents and carers require, and quality standards are minimal. Placing parents, carers and children at the centre of future policy developments is critical to ensure that OSS meets the needs of all families.



Rajen Prasad
Chief Commissioner





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The term 'out of school services' (OSS) refers to before-school, after-school and school-holiday programmes for school-aged children (aged five to 13 years), where the care of a child has been formally handed over from a parent or caregiver to an OSS provider.

OSS can benefit families in a number of ways. By offering children a range of enrichment activities and experiences, quality OSS can enhance children's health, social, behavioural and educational development. For parents, the provision of affordable, accessible and appropriate OSS can remove barriers to participation in paid work and ensure that families are able to obtain quality care for their children without placing living standards at risk. OSS is also able to provide useful support to families with challenging care responsibilities, study or voluntary work commitments. It is the Families Commission's view that all of these aims are important and that a well-developed OSS sector needs to pursue a range of goals in the interests of children, parents and families as a whole.

New Zealand research and consultation evidence indicate that achieving a reasonable balance between work, family time and income is one of the most significant challenges to family wellbeing. In order to invest in the future of their families, parents and carers need to have real choices about care arrangements for their school-aged children. This includes being able to care for children themselves outside school hours, through informal arrangements and/or through the use of formal services.

This report is intended to provide information from which to develop an OSS Five-Year Action Plan, led by the Ministry of Social Development. It draws on information from a large consultation exercise that asked a wide range of parents, carers and children how they would like to see OSS develop. The Commission

held 19 consultation meetings and ran an online questionnaire in mid-2006 to ask families about their OSS needs. Almost 350 adults and 190 children attended meetings, and more than 600 people responded to the online questionnaire.

The consultation found that a significant number of families do not have access to the OSS they want and need. Although only a minority of families consulted used OSS, the majority said they would use a suitable programme if it was available, appropriate and affordable. This report presents the findings of our OSS consultation and highlights policy implications for the OSS sector and government.

Major government investment is required to reduce the cost of OSS and a new universal funding model should be developed

Families told us that improving the affordability of OSS was their top priority. To address this, the Commission recommends that government investment in OSS increases substantially. Services should receive adequate funding to enable OSS to be offered to all families for a minimal cost. The cost of school-holiday programmes was especially difficult for all types of families, severely impacting on holiday programme accessibility.

Parents and carers stated that the current OSCAR (Out of School Care and Recreation) subsidy system is too complex, difficult to navigate and unfair. We recommend changing the way services are funded from one of subsidies linked to employment status and individual family circumstances, to a universal funding solution related to hours of provision. This would simplify the system by removing the need for families to apply to Work and Income for financial assistance. It would also allow children of parents and carers, who are not in paid employment, to more easily access the enrichment activities that quality OSS has to offer.

During a move to universal funding, increasing government assistance to OSS providers in a series of stages would allow parents' fees to be reduced over time. Until increases in direct funding result in a significant reduction in these fees, providers should continue to receive higher levels of funding for children from low- to middle-income families who use their services. However, responsibility for accessing this funding should rest with OSS providers rather than individual families. This would make a significant difference to the accessibility and affordability of OSS for many families.

The supply of centre-based OSS needs to significantly increase

After cost, access and availability issues were identified as families' most significant barriers to OSS. Inability to access school-holiday services caused many families particular difficulties. Significantly increasing funding to the OSS sector as a whole would result in the increased supply and availability of quality services. Parents also told us that OSS times need to reflect their actual working hours.

The development of services at convenient sites is a priority. For many families, this means increasing access to school-based services. Schools were not necessarily preferred by families who preferred services to be culturally specific. These families tended to suggest alternative venues, such as existing cultural centres, churches or marae.

Parents and carers also told us that they would like more information about available services. There is a need for better co-ordination and dissemination of information about the availability of local services, costs, hours and activities.

Services should receive funding incentives to increase access for children with special needs

Families with children with special needs or disabilities told us that they have great difficulty accessing OSS. The Commission believes that all families should be able to access local services of their choice. To achieve this, adequate funding needs to be made available to cover the cost to services of any extra staff, necessary building modifications and special equipment to cater for children with special needs.

Funding for OSS needs to be more flexible

For some families, centre-based care is either inappropriate or inaccessible. This includes families in rural areas, some families with children with special needs, and families in which the parents or carers work non-standard hours. In these situations, home-based or small-scale services should be funded and regulated to ensure that quality services are available. Consideration should also be given to ways of registering friends and relatives as home-based carers to make them eligible for some form of financial assistance, support and training.

The quality of OSS needs to improve and minimum standards should be introduced

Parents and carers expressed strong concern at the quality of many services and the lack of sector standards. The Commission recommends that mandatory minimum standards be introduced for all services. Quality standards for centre-based services should encompass staff qualifications and training, supervision ratios of adults to children, policies covering staff and child behaviour, programme content and equipment, and premises.

Parents and carers also told us that OSS needs to be more than a babysitting service. Programmes need to provide a range of options offering children real choices between relaxing, fun, educational and recreational activities. Many Māori, Pacific, migrant and refugee parents expressed a preference for culturally appropriate services to be available, run by staff of the same ethnic background as the children attending.

Conclusion

Placing the users of services – parents, carers and children – at the centre of future policy developments is critical to ensure that OSS meets the needs and preferences of all families. This report aims to ensure that the OSS Five-Year Action Plan is designed with families in mind. This should ensure that OSS contributes to positive child development outcomes, addresses barriers to paid work or training and provides better support for parents and carers with challenging caring responsibilities.



Maia, age not given

CHAPTER ONE

introduction

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The main purpose of this report is to provide information to develop government policy on out of school services (OSS). The report is based on the Families Commission's understanding of current New Zealand policy and practice, international models of OSS, research literature and, most importantly, what parents, carers and children told us they want for the future development of OSS.

The findings outlined in this report reflect a series of consultation meetings with parents, carers and children throughout New Zealand.¹ In the final chapter of this report, the Commission has drawn on these findings to provide policy advice on the future design and delivery of OSS in New Zealand.

The immediate impetus for this report is *Choices for Living, Caring and Working* (New Zealand Government 2006), a 10-year Government plan to improve the caring and employment choices available to parents and carers. A key focus of this work is the development of an OSS Five-Year Action Plan, for consideration in mid-2007. This report is intended to stimulate public debate and influence the nature and content of this Action Plan.

WHAT ARE OUT OF SCHOOL SERVICES?

The term 'out of school services' (OSS) refers to before-school, after-school and school-holiday programmes for school-aged children (aged five to 13 years), where the care of a child has been formally handed over from a parent or caregiver to an OSS provider.

Formal OSS is provided by public, community and private organisations. These include community centres, marae, private providers, parent co-operatives and school boards of trustees. Local councils sometimes run holiday programmes in association with recreation centres, swimming pools or libraries. Some churches and a few employers also provide services. Formal programmes are often known as OSCAR (Out of School Care and Recreation) programmes.

Informal OSS includes care where the child is looked after by someone other than a parent or primary caregiver outside school hours, but not in an organised programme. This includes care that is provided by adult relatives or siblings, friends, neighbours, child minders and nannies.

The following sections of this chapter provide an overview of the impact of OSS on family-related outcomes and explain the Families Commission's interest in the development of OSS. The chapter also provides an overview of the Government agenda regarding OSS and the approach the Families Commission used to discover the views of parents, carers and children for this consultation.

¹ The report does not reflect the views of OSS providers. Providers' views were collected in a separate consultation conducted by the Ministry of Social Development.

WHY ARE OUT OF SCHOOL SERVICES IMPORTANT? POLICY OBJECTIVES AND IMPACT

In recent years, a number of OECD countries have taken steps to improve the provision of childcare and OSS as a mechanism to promote positive child-development, address barriers to labour-market participation, reduce poverty among families with dependent children and foster economic growth (OECD 2004a).

Improving access to OSS should help parents and carers who want to engage in paid work to do so and so reduce the number of children living in poverty. Depending on the design of the system, a well-developed OSS sector could also provide respite for parents with challenging care responsibilities and assist parents and other carers to study or do voluntary work.

In terms of more direct outcomes for children, child safety is one of the most significant. OSS provides a safe, supervised environment for children when parents or other carers are unable to look after them. Improving access to OSS reduces the likelihood of children being left unsupervised outside school hours (for example, see Sanderson and Percy-Smith 1995).

OSS that offers a variety of stimulating activities is most likely to be attractive to children as well as their families. Research from the United Kingdom has found that parents and carers value the safe, well-equipped, play environment provided by quality OSS (Barker et al 2003).

Several studies have found that OSS gives children opportunities they would not otherwise have due to a lack of resources, equipment or space at home. However, Barker et al (2003) point out that those who might benefit most from OSS, such as children growing up in jobless households, come from families that are least likely to be able afford market rates. Children with special needs also face particular barriers, including wheelchair access, lack of specialist equipment or trained staff.

The amount of time children spend in OSS is relatively short compared with time spent with family or in schools. Conclusive long-term impacts are difficult to identify. Only a few robust studies into the effects of OSS exist, with most of these based in the United States (for example, Huang, Gribbons, Kyung Sung Kim, Lee and Baker 2000; Little and Harris 2003; TASC 2004).

The focus of OSS programmes in the United States tends to be less care-oriented and more overtly academic than those of many other countries, including New Zealand. At primary school level, a number of United States programmes have focused on remedial learning, while those for secondary school students have tended to have wider objectives including skills acquisition, youth development and crime prevention. Findings from these studies indicate that quality OSS programmes can promote a range of positive social, academic and behavioural gains for participants including:

- > better attitudes towards learning
- > better academic performance
- > higher school attendance
- > decreased behavioural problems (Ministry of Women's Affairs 2006).

These findings remain subject to debate, but indicate that promoting positive identification with school through extra-curricular activities can have a positive influence on school performance and other activities (Cooper, Valentine, Nye and Lindsay 1999). The Ministry of Women's Affairs' report (2006) cautions, however, that most robust US evaluations have focused on OSS programmes

directed at low-income disadvantaged children and the positive academic and behavioural changes identified would not necessarily be experienced by more advantaged children.

The relationship between OSS and its benefits for children will depend on the nature and quality of any specific programme. In order to benefit from OSS, children need to feel safe and cared for, and to be able to exercise a degree of ownership and choice. A meta-analysis of 25 OSS evaluations in the United States found the following factors to be associated with positive outcomes for children:

- > provision of a variety of activities that are age-appropriate and interesting
- > ensuring flexibility of programming to allow children to choose from an array of interesting activities
- > fostering a positive emotional climate – including a warm relationship between staff and students and staff and parents (Beckett, Hawken and Jackowitz 2002).

The research literature indicates that regular, sustained participation in quality OSS is most likely to generate positive benefits for children (Ministry of Women's Affairs 2006). Perhaps most importantly, children report being happy attending out of school care, with three-quarters of children in one United Kingdom study reporting social benefits, especially in the areas of social interaction and development (Malcolm, Wilson and Davidson 2002).

The Families Commission's interest in out of school services

The Families Commission's interest in OSS relates to our wider concerns about the economic circumstances of families. The Families Commission's *Focus on Families* research and *What Makes Your Family Tick?* consultation indicate that, for families with dependent children, being able to achieve a reasonable balance between work, family time and income is one of the most significant challenges to family wellbeing (Stevens, Dickson and Poland, with Prasad 2005); (Seth-Purdie, Cameron and Luketina 2006). These findings are consistent with a large body of New Zealand research and consultation evidence (CTU 2002; Department of Labour 2003, 2004, 2006; EEO Trust 2005; Ministry of Social Development 2005).

International research also indicates work-life conflicts can place stress on individuals and families, influence child development and affect workplace productivity and employment equity (CAAL Ad Hoc Committee on Work-Life Balance 2002). Certain families, including single parents, those working non-standard hours and those on low incomes, are most likely to experience difficulties.

One of the Families Commission's key strategic goals is that parents and other carers are well supported to balance paid work and family responsibilities. Achieving this goal requires that:

- > employers are supportive and implement workplace initiatives that assist families to balance paid work and family responsibilities
- > families are able to make choices that suit their needs based on an understanding of the options available to them
- > government legislation and regulation, social service provision and financial assistance to families better recognise the demands of family care-giving.

The goal recognises that work-life balance needs and preferences differ across families and often change according to life-stage and circumstances. There is no single ideal. Given this diversity, the Families Commission's aim is that parents and other carers have real choices about how to arrange their paid work and caring responsibilities.

Ensuring that families who want to use OSS have access to affordable, responsive and high-quality care for their school-aged children is one of three subsidiary goals for our work in this area.

FIGURE ONE: FAMILIES COMMISSION'S STRATEGIC GOALS: WORK-LIFE BALANCE



The Families Commission wants to ensure that OSS is developed in a way that supports families and reduces conflicts they may face between their working and their family lives.

In the Families Commission’s previous consultation, *What Makes Your Family Tick?*, a significant number of those who responded wrote of their difficulties in accessing childcare for their school-aged children. Such problems were particularly acute for parents who lacked access to childcare support from extended family, those on low incomes and those with two or more children. Families reported that childcare costs made a significant dent in their household incomes and, in some cases, meant they received little financial benefit from paid work.

Appropriate, affordable childcare – particularly for the school holidays. Currently if I place my school children in programmes during holidays it takes all of my income to pay for it for that period. (submission to What Makes Your Family Tick?)

A lack of affordable childcare options left some parents juggling paid work and care responsibilities in ways that left little time to be spent together as a family. The cost of school-holiday programmes, and the gap between parents’ annual leave entitlements and the length of school holidays was identified as a particular problem.

Three weeks annual leave does not allow enough time to be with the children during holidays. Finding care for school-age children in the holidays is a nightmare! (submission to What Makes Your Family Tick?)

Conducting a consultation specifically on issues surrounding out of school care has given the Families Commission the opportunity to explore childcare barriers and potential solutions in greater detail.

New Zealand Government agenda for out of school services

Until the mid-1980s, OSS was primarily a private or community responsibility in New Zealand. In 1989, a Government report identified a high level of unmet need and recommended that the Government support the development of an OSS sector. The sector developed throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, primarily

through the initiation of development and assistance grants to providers and subsidies for parents that were paid directly to providers (Meagher-Lundberg and Podmore 1998).

In August 2006, the Government released *Choices for Living, Caring and Working*, a 10-year plan to improve the caring and employment choices available to parents and carers. According to the plan, some school-aged children still aren't receiving adequate supervision outside school hours. This could impact on their development, health and future wellbeing as well as their families, their schools and their communities. A lack of OSS also limits some families' work choices (New Zealand Government 2006).

A key component of the plan is the development of an OSS Five-Year Action Plan. The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) has responsibility for leading the development of the Action Plan.² Cabinet agreed [Cab Min (06) 11/5 refers] that the Action Plan should enable parents of school-aged children to access age-appropriate services which are:

- > good quality – contribute to the quality of life of school-aged children through national, consistent standards of quality set by Government that reflect community expectations available
- > available – reliable, at convenient locations, with places to meet demand
- > accessible – providing options for all children, including those with disabilities and special educational needs
- > affordable – available at a cost that strikes a balance, consistent with Government policy objectives, between cost to families and cost to the Government.

The MSD conducted an information-gathering exercise primarily focusing on providers of OSS and other key stakeholders.³ In order to complement and build on this, the Commission consulted parents, carers and children.

The Families Commission consultation – what we did

The Families Commission OSS consultation was designed to find out how a wide range of parents, carers and children would like to see OSS develop.

The Families Commission held 19 consultation meetings and ran an online questionnaire between July and August 2006 to consult families about their OSS needs. The key consultation questions we asked parents and carers were:

- > Are you happy with your children's care arrangements out of school hours?
- > What is not so good about your current out of school care arrangements?
- > If you were able to design services or care to fully meet your needs, what would they look like?

² Cabinet directed that this was to be done in conjunction with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), Department of Labour (DoL), Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (MPIA), Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA) and Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK) and other relevant agencies.

³ The MSD's first phase of engagement/consultation on OSS involved meetings with key stakeholders to learn more about existing services, the issues from their point of view and the opportunities for change. The process ran from June to October 2006. The MSD held meetings with national organisations representing parents, providers, employers, Māori, Pacific peoples, disabled children, the rural sector and the education sector. The MSD also held focus groups and one-on-one meetings with a broad range of providers as well as some parents.



Rhys, age not given

The online questionnaire was placed on the Families Commission's website, 'The Couch', and was open to anyone who was able to access the internet.⁴ The questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes to answer and consisted of mainly closed-ended questions as well as three open-ended questions. The questions all related to the three key questions above. A total of 603 Couch members responded to the questionnaire. The full questionnaire and the responses are contained in Appendix Three.

The majority of consultation meetings were open to the public. When designing its approach, the Commission recognised the difficulty of attracting members of the public to consultation events. For this reason, it decided to work with local organisations to host meetings. The local hosts knew their communities and were able to promote the meetings or advise the Commission on how best to do this. The effort to contact potential participants was at times very intensive, with hosts using direct methods to invite individual family members. Their insider information and experience ensured relevant knowledge was tapped into and also meant that families enjoyed participating and felt valued. Commission staff helped to organise and publicise the meetings to promote good attendance. Details of each individual meeting and information about local hosts are contained in Appendix One.

Consultation meetings were organised across the North and South Islands to ensure wide geographical coverage and appropriate representation. Effort was made to include all sectors of the community, including rural families, families with children with special needs, shift and seasonal workers, Māori, Pacific and ethnic communities. An average of 23 adults attended each public meeting, with almost 350 adults and 190 children participating in the meetings in total. It is likely that those who attended had a particular interest in the future development of OSS. In addition to the 13 public meetings, a small number of additional meetings were held with children, refugees, Māori, second-chance learners and grandparent carers.

Most of the consultation meetings were held in the evenings and began with a light meal. Childcare was available. The meetings were conducted by a combination of Families Commissioners and professional facilitators and involved adult participants working in groups to answer a series of questions (based on the three key questions above). The majority of time in each of the consultation meetings was spent on the third question, which asked participants to design services or care that fully meet their needs. Specific prompts asked parents and carers:

⁴ The Couch website (www.thecouch.org.nz) was launched in April 2006 as a means of directly hearing the voices of families on a range of topical issues. Every six to eight weeks Couch members are invited to complete short polls or questionnaires. Membership is open to anyone and requires no ongoing commitments. As at 14 August 2006 there were 2,150 members.

- > What activities would you like your children to do?
- > Where would it be?
- > Who should staff it?
- > What times should services be available?
- > How much should it cost?
- > Are there any quality issues which need to be taken account of?

Those who didn't want to use formal services were asked how their situation could be improved or better supported.

Children were also encouraged to participate at the public meetings and additional meetings by answering simple questions about what they liked to do after school and in the school holidays. Some children preferred to illustrate their responses and examples of these have been used in this report.

The full list of the questions we asked participants who attended consultation meetings is outlined in Appendix Two. Group responses were all recorded on a flip chart by a group member and comprehensive notes were recorded separately by up to three Families Commission staff members.⁵ All the flip charts and staff notes were typed to provide a full record of each individual meeting. These meeting notes were then analysed according to the key themes of:

- > preferences for parental care, informal arrangements and demand for formal OSS
- > current barriers to the use of formal OSS
- > ideas for the future development of OSS: cost, times, locations, activities, staff and quality.

Open-ended responses to the online questionnaire were analysed using the same approach.

Structure of this report

This introductory chapter provides the rationale for the Families Commission's OSS consultation and explains how this consultation was conducted. The next chapter of this report explains the current system of funding and delivering OSS in New Zealand and provides a brief comparison of OSS provision in four countries – Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Sweden.

The report then moves on to present the findings of the Families Commission consultation, beginning with a discussion of the diversity of families' needs and preferences for out of school care, including formal and informal preferences, and issues surrounding home-based care.

The three chapters (on accessing out of school services, activities and content of programmes, and quality issues affecting uptake of services) discuss families' responses to questions about what their ideal OSS might look like, in light of the barriers they said they faced.

The final chapter of this report discusses the policy implications arising from the consultation findings and provides our advice regarding the future development of OSS in New Zealand.

⁵ Ministry of Women's Affairs officials attended six of these meetings and fed their notes back to the Commission for incorporation in our analysis. The Families Commission is grateful to the Ministry for its contribution and support of this consultation.

CHAPTER TWO

new zealand oss policy in the international context

NEW ZEALAND OSS POLICY

This chapter provides an overview of OSS provision in New Zealand and compares the New Zealand system for funding and regulating OSS with models of provision in Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Sweden. The conclusions and policy advice contained in the final chapter of this report are drawn from our understanding of the New Zealand policy context and the pros and cons of different international models of OSS.

Regulation of services – OSCAR programmes

In New Zealand, there is no compulsory regulation of OSS and no mandatory minimum standards. However, if a provider wants access to government funding, it must meet Standards of Approval as set by Child, Youth and Family (CYF). These standards cover basic requirements for safety, staff and volunteer management, and financial accountability (other quality issues are covered to a minimal degree). Once CYF approval is granted, OSS programmes (known as Out of School Care and Recreation, or OSCAR) become eligible for government funding. CYF Standards of Approval apply to formal, centre-based care only. This means that home-based providers, childminders and nannies are unregulated and ineligible for government funding. OSCAR services are visited every two years to ensure they are maintaining the required minimum standards.

There are two government funding streams for OSS in New Zealand: grants to CYF-approved providers and the OSCAR subsidy for parents. Both the grants and the subsidy are administered by Work and Income with assistance from the OSCAR Foundation.

Assistance grants to OSCAR providers

OSCAR grants to providers were introduced in 2002. OSS providers setting up a new service can apply for a one-off OSCAR Development Grant of up to \$3,000. Existing OSCAR providers can apply for an OSCAR Assistance Grant of up to \$16,000 a year to support programme running costs.

OSCAR subsidy for parents and carers

Eligible parents or caregivers can apply to Work and Income for the OSCAR Subsidy if their children are attending an approved OSCAR service.⁶ This subsidy is for children aged five to 13 years (or up to 18 years if they receive a Child Disability Allowance). Providers receive the subsidy directly on behalf of eligible parents or caregivers. This reduces the fees paid by the parents or caregivers using the service. An OSCAR subsidy can be used to reduce the costs of approved before- and after-school care of up to 20 hours a week, and school-holiday programmes of up to 50 hours a week.

Access to the OSCAR subsidy is means-tested on household income and dependent on the work or educational status of the parents, the number of children and any health or disability issues in the family. According to the following table, a family with one child using an OSCAR-approved school-holiday programme for 40 hours could receive a maximum subsidy of \$132.40 for the week. Families eligible for the lowest rate of subsidy would receive \$51.20 for the week.

⁶ Full details on Work and Income OSCAR grants and subsidies can be found at: www.workandincome.govt.nz

TABLE ONE: OSCAR SUBSIDY AVAILABLE TO PARENTS AND CARERS

OSCAR SUBSIDY: RATES OF PAYMENT		
NO. OF CHILDREN IN FAMILY	THE FAMILY'S WEEKLY INCOME BEFORE TAX (GROSS)⁷	THE SUBSIDY (AN HOUR) FOR EACH CHILD IS UP TO:
1	less than \$870	\$3.31
	\$870 to \$959.99	\$2.30
	\$960 to \$1,049.99	\$1.28
	\$1,050 or more	no subsidy
2	less than \$1,050	\$3.31
	\$1,050 to \$1,149.99	\$2.30
	\$1,150 to \$1,249.99	\$1.28
	\$1,250 or more	no subsidy
3 or more	less than \$1,210	\$3.31
	\$1,210 to \$1,329.99	\$2.30
	\$1,330 to \$1,449.99	\$1.28
	\$1,450 or more	no subsidy

Advice and information to providers and families about OSCAR

The OSCAR Foundation⁸ is contracted by the MSD to provide training, support and advice to OSS providers through a network of OSCAR Foundation advisors. The OSCAR Foundation also administers provider grant applications on behalf of Work and Income.

Childcare co-ordinators, based in Work and Income centres through the country, were introduced as part of the Working for Families package in Budget 2004. Their role is to act as a link between families and providers. Childcare co-ordinators work to promote awareness of the OSCAR subsidy and provider grants and how to access them.

The OSCAR sector – 2004 evaluation

A 2004 evaluation of the OSS assistance package (2002) found the introduction of grants and the support provided by government-funded OSCAR advisors resulted in an improvement in the sustainability of programmes (Murrow, Dowden, Kalafetalis and Fryer 2005). However, other findings of the evaluation included:

- > Participation rates of children in approved OSCAR programmes were low.
- > There was more demand for services than providers were able to meet.
- > The quality of many OSCAR programmes was perceived as being relatively low.
- > A significant number of OSCAR programmes were not (or were barely) financially viable (this led to the Assistance Grant being raised to its current level, stated above).

The following section further investigates the issues raised by the evaluation, discussing demand, supply, cost and quality.

⁷ Note that the income thresholds listed in this table were raised to this level in October 2006, after the completion of the consultation.

⁸ The OSCAR Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation whose membership consists of individuals, groups and organisations throughout New Zealand with involvement or interest in out of school care and recreation.

ISSUES WITH CURRENT OSS PROVISION IN NEW ZEALAND

Demand

The 1998 Childcare Survey found that 20 percent of school-aged children had some form of non-parental care arrangement during the school term, including an estimated 21,000 children who attended a formal before- or after-school programme (4 percent of school-aged children). Almost half of all school-aged children had some form of non-parental care arrangement in the school holidays (with approximately 15 percent participating in a formal school-holiday programme) (Department of Labour 1999).

Although it is difficult to get accurate data, the OSS sector appears to be growing quickly. Source data for the 2004 Living Standards Survey indicate that total participation in formal OSS has increased markedly since 1998, with an estimated 7.4 percent of families using before- or after-school care (MSD 2004). With each of these families having an average of 1.5 children, this would mean that nearly 50,000 children used before- or after-school care in 2004 – more than double the 1998 figure.⁹ Despite this leap in usage, only a very small number of families receive an OSCAR subsidy to attend approved OSS.

The 2004 evaluation of approved OSCAR programmes found that 16 percent of services had waiting lists (Murrow et al 2005). This is likely to be a substantial underestimate of unmet demand. Parents who lack confidence in the quality of available services, or who are unable to find appropriate local services with hours that suit their needs, are unlikely to place their children on a waiting list. Similarly, placing children on a waiting list may not seem worthwhile to parents who face immediate childcare needs.

Although many parents rely on informal services, there is substantial evidence that informal arrangements do not always reflect parental preferences and that many families would like to use formal services. The 1998 Childcare Survey found that different types of early childhood education and out of school care were wanted for 29 percent of children whose main arrangement was care by ‘someone else’ on an unpaid basis. The survey also found that parents of an estimated 31,000 children (six percent of school-aged children), who were not currently in before- or after-school programmes, wanted to use them (Department of Labour 1999). More recent data from the 2004 Living Standards Survey show that a large number of families reported being affected by a lack of suitable childcare. A total of 27 percent of two-parent families and 47 percent of single-parent families said that a lack of childcare affected their work or study options (MSD 2004).

Supply

Approximately 590 approved OSCAR providers receive government funding.¹⁰ Nearly half (47 percent) of these programmes are delivered on school sites. There are no data available on the number of unapproved and unfunded programmes in New Zealand, though the number is likely to be substantial.

⁹ When surveyed for the 2004 Living Standards Survey, 32,967 families said they had used before- or after-school services.

¹⁰ This figure was obtained from the National Association of OSCAR providers (NAOSCAR, which changed its name to The OSCAR Foundation in October 2005), cited in Murrow et al 2005. More recent figures from the MSD indicate that the number sits somewhere between 441 and 570, offering between 979 and 1,170 unique programmes.

Past evaluations of OSCAR and wider feedback from providers indicate that OSS is a difficult sector in which to cover costs or make a profit (Murrow et al 2005). Service providers report difficulties in attracting and retaining staff to the sector given the limited and disjointed working hours and the low pay levels. In relation to school-based OSS, while some boards of trustees encourage the presence of good quality OSS in their schools, others are less keen to allow school premises to be used for this purpose (due to the potential liability of schools should accidents occur and the view that OSS provision is not 'core business').

Because CYF approval and government funding are only available for centre-based services, not all families are able to make use of these funded services. This is an issue in rural areas and situations in which home-based care is most appropriate (for example, some families with children with special needs). There is also a lack of suitable services for families who work non-standard hours.

Cost

According to both the 1998 Childcare Survey (Department of Labour 1999) and source data for the 2004 Living Standards Survey (MSD 2004), cost is the single biggest factor affecting access to formal OSS, particularly for single-parent families. Fees for OSS programmes vary widely by location, the hours the service is provided and the type of service and provider, meaning that there are no definitive data on the costs faced by parents and carers. Recent data provided by MSD's childcare co-ordinators suggest that costs to parents for before- and after-school services vary from \$30 to \$90 a week for each child and costs for school-holiday programmes vary from \$60 to \$170 a week for each child.

As outlined above, parents who are eligible for an OSCAR subsidy (see Table One) can offset these costs. Under the 2005 Budget package, 70 percent of all New Zealand families with dependent children will be eligible for the early childhood education (ECE) and/or OSCAR subsidy by October 2006. However, low take-up of the subsidy is a significant issue; in 2004/05 only 0.7 percent of all children aged five to 14 years – approximately 4,500 – accessed the OSCAR subsidy (Adema 2006).

While this figure is low, it needs to be remembered that not all children in this age bracket would incur childcare costs or be eligible for the OSCAR subsidy. It is likely that many of these children are cared for by family or friends, a home-based carer or a non-approved programme. Nonetheless 4,500 children is a very small proportion of the estimated 50,000 children who attended before- and after-school programmes in 2004 (MSD 2004).

Quality

As outlined earlier in this chapter, a reliance on low-quality or unreliable childcare is undesirable for parents and children. The nature and quality of OSS, including approved OSCAR programmes, unapproved programmes and informal care, vary significantly.

Currently, there are no mandatory minimum standards for OSS. CYF approval standards for centre-based OSCAR programmes require programmes to meet basic requirements covering health and safety, staff/volunteer management and financial accountability. Issues such as staff training or qualifications, and

programme content are covered to a minimal degree.¹¹ There is some evidence that parents may be incorrectly under the impression that programmes are regulated and monitored at a level similar to that of the ECE sector (Murrow et al 2005). It follows that a number of parents may be making childcare decisions based on unfounded assumptions of service quality.

At present, there is no requirement for supervisors, staff or volunteers in the OSS sector to have any training. The only specific training available for OSS workers is a Certificate in Out of School Care and Recreation provided by the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. OSCAR Foundation advisors also run in-house training sessions for OSS workers in their area.

OVERVIEW OF OSS PROVISION INTERNATIONALLY – SELECTED COUNTRIES¹²

So how does New Zealand compare? The remainder of this chapter outlines service provision in four key countries: Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Sweden. These countries provide different potential models or ideas for the future provision of OSS in New Zealand. Despite variation in OSS in the four countries, they each share some common approaches that are absent from services in New Zealand.

In addition to government assistance to support formal, centre-based services, all four countries provide funding to allow families to access some form of small-scale OSS in a carer's home or home-based OSS in the family home. In all cases, there is a system to either approve or register carers and funding is contingent on the carer being approved/registered. New Zealand provides no financial assistance to, or regulation of, home-based OSS provision.

Each of the four countries has mandatory minimum quality standards for OSS for all types of childcare, with the exception of care provided in a family's own home. These standards are quite different to New Zealand's CYF approval standards, which only apply to centre-based care. In addition to this, more stringent, higher-level standards can also be met (with subsequent funding incentives) in Australia and the United States.

Formal educational qualifications are required of centre-based OSS staff in each of the four countries. Each has a requirement that somebody in a management or supervisory role hold an appropriate qualification (at degree or diploma level). Requirements for other staff are not as high and range from requiring at least one staff member to hold a first-aid certificate through to a good-quality high-school qualification. Staffing requirements for non-centre-based OSS are much less stringent than for centre-based care, but usually involve some form of training and/or minimum age/experience requirements. In contrast to all four countries, New Zealand has no formal training requirements for any OSS staff.

The following sections provide a brief overview of the way OSS is provided in each of the four countries, and their approaches to ensure the quality and affordability of services.

¹¹ The standard referring to staff training states that the programme should provide adequate training and support for all staff, without specifying what this might involve. The programme content standard states that the programme should be stimulating and varied, age-appropriate and that it should meet children's recreational needs and allow for choice. Again, no further specification or description is given (Child, Youth and Family 2005).

¹² This section is primarily drawn from Talbot and Graczer 2006 and the OECD's *Babies and Bosses* series of publications (2002, 2004b, 2005a, b).

Australia

A range of OSS programmes exists in Australia, primarily aimed at meeting the needs of working parents, although services are also used by non-working parents and to provide respite for families. Programmes include Outside-School-Hours Care (OSHC, which provides activities for children aged five to 12 years before and after school and during school holidays); Long Day Care centres (LDC, primarily catering for under five-year-olds, but open to school-aged children); Family Day Care (FDC, registered caregivers within the carer's or the family's home); and services specifically for rural children. Families may be eligible for in-home care if other services are not available or suitable.

Four out of seven state and territory governments require that all OSS programmes hold licences stating that they meet minimum standards, except for in-home care (which is for families who cannot access alternatives). Standards also apply to staff training and qualifications. For example, for centre-based care in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), at least one staff member must be qualified and hold a relevant degree or diploma. Other staff do not require qualifications, although there must always be one person on site with a first-aid certificate. Services can gain accreditation from the National Childcare Accreditation Council if they meet higher-level quality standards, in addition to the minimum standards. These higher standards aim to provide children with high-quality care that promotes learning and development, with particular emphasis on play, social interactions and recreation.

State and territory governments fund the development and administration of minimum standards for OSS programmes. Provider funding comes under the responsibility of the Federal Government, with different levels of funding available depending on the type of service. Provider funding is also linked to accreditation.

The majority of public funding for OSS comes by way of a user subsidy, which takes into account family circumstances and is paid directly from Federal Government to providers chosen by parents. The Child Care Benefit (CCB) is targeted to provide greater assistance to low- and middle-income families using approved (formal) childcare services. The highest income threshold for a family with one child to access targeted funding through the CCB (\$NZ116,400 a year) is about double that of the New Zealand OSCAR subsidy (\$NZ54,600). The highest payment level of the CCB for one child a week (\$NZ486) is almost three times the level of the highest weekly payment for one child available through the OSCAR subsidy (\$NZ165).

Australian families can receive a lower level of CCB for informal care (by friends, relatives or nannies) as long as the carers are registered. The CCB also includes a universal component of approximately \$NZ30 paid to all families using childcare, regardless of their income. Since the introduction of the CCB, low-income Australian families spend less than 10 percent of their incomes on childcare. Unlike the New Zealand system, where eligible families must pass a work/training/study test to receive the OSCAR subsidy for up to 50 hours a week, Australian families receive a by-the-hour contribution towards the cost of up to 24 hours a week of approved childcare regardless of their employment or training status. In order to receive more than 24 hours of CCB a week for each child, parents need to undertake work or a work-related commitment for at least 15 hours a week.

Australia provides additional financial assistance to support the inclusion of children with disabilities or other special needs in childcare services. This can be used to pay for additional staff and to purchase specialist equipment. There is no equivalent financial support available to address barriers to OSS participation for children with disabilities or other special needs in the New Zealand context.



United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is implementing major changes to OSS to improve the availability and affordability of services to families. By 2010, the Government aims to guarantee high-quality childcare for all school-aged children on the school site or through other local providers, available 8am–6pm year round, through the expansion of Extended Schools. The intention is to provide a varied menu of activities, such as homework clubs, study support, music tuition, sport and special-interest clubs. In addition to this school-based provision, registered childminders may provide care, usually in their own homes, for children under the age of eight. The Childcare Approval Scheme can also approve carers to provide care for children over the age of eight, or within the family home (carers for other types of care, such as that provided through Extended Schools or for children under eight years, need to be registered).

The Childcare Act (2006) requires that families' views are heard in the planning and delivery of services, and it enshrines in law a parent's expectation that high-quality childcare will be available for all those who want to work. It also confirms the role of local authorities in strategic planning and service provision.

OSS is subject to minimum quality standards. These standards cover child safety, premises, adult-child ratios and the age-appropriateness of activities offered. Standards are administered centrally (by the Office for Standards in Education) and cover all types of out of school care except for non-school-based care for children over eight years and care in a child's home. These exceptions are covered by a separate authority (the Childcare Approval Scheme) and are not mandatory, but funding incentives are provided. Standards also apply to staff qualifications and training. School-based OSS is required to have a qualified manager and at least one other staff member with a (lower-level) qualification. In-home carers are required to have first-aid training and to have been subject to a police check.

In recent years, the British Government has invested heavily in capital funding and infrastructure to further develop the OSS sector and expand school-based services. A Childcare Working Tax Credit is also available to low-income families to offset the costs of using approved or registered childcare. For a family with one child, this provides help with 80 percent of a family's total childcare costs up to a limit of \$NZ513 a week. To make a claim for the childcare element of the Working Tax

Credit, parents must be working at least 16 hours a week. Families are not eligible for the Childcare Working Tax Credit if their children are cared for by a relative, even if the relative is registered or approved.

The United Kingdom provides additional financial assistance to support the inclusion of children with a disability. Families who receive a Disability Living Allowance for a child are able to receive additional financial assistance under a disability element of the Childcare Working Tax Credit.

United States

OSS provision in the United States varies according to regulatory and funding patterns within individual states. At the federal level, funding for childcare is highly targeted towards low-income families and students from poor or low-performing schools. Many federally funded services are provided through 21st Century Community Learning Centres (21st CCLC). Schools are the lead agency, but they can also collaborate with community-based organisations. Objectives of school-based programmes are varied and include recreation, academic achievement and the provision of a 'safe haven' to reduce crime and drug use. Recent changes to federal funding arrangements require centres to be underpinned by science-based research (SBR) (Ministry of Women's Affairs 2006). This policy has resulted in many programmes focusing on the more easily measured academic improvement at the expense of other, broader developmental gains. Other forms of OSS include Family Child Care (care that is provided in the homes of licensed individuals, both relatives and non-relatives).

Mandatory minimum standards apply for school-aged care, however, many states exempt certain providers (for example, small-scale or church providers and informal care) from licensing rules. There is a funding incentive for providers to participate in additional accreditation, with further funding being made available according to the accreditation level achieved (through the National After-School Association's accreditation for quality care). Requirements for staff qualifications vary from state to state, but typically involve the need for the programme director to have a degree (or high level of training) in early childhood, and for all other staff to hold a high-school diploma.

OSS programmes are administered by state education agencies with funding for services coming from a variety of public and private sources (including foundations, charities and parental fees to supplement federal funds). The largest single source of funding for OSS in the United States is parental fees. Parental fees account for 70 to 80 percent of revenue in affluent areas; parental fees in programmes catering to children from low-income families account for 15 to 25 percent of revenue.

Low-income families may be eligible for additional targeted funding to offset childcare costs. The Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) provides eligible low-income families with childcare subsidies in the form of vouchers or certificates. These can be used in a range of settings from centres to home-based services. Services that accept subsidised children must comply with state health and safety regulations. Under federal law, CCDF subsidies are targeted to families who are participating in education and training programmes and have incomes less than 85 percent of the state's median income or lower. Families who receive subsidies are required to contribute to the cost of care, in the form of a co-payment. Tax credits are also available to eligible families. This credit can cover up to 35 percent of family childcare expenses, dependent on income.

Sweden

Sweden is widely recognised as having high-quality OSS (Meagher-Lundberg and Podmore 1998). OSS is provided in a context where public services are seen as a fundamental right and receive good public support. Publicly available childcare is characterised by its low fees and high quality and accessibility. OSS is seen as part of the education system, with the emphasis being on the social development of the child and the provision of meaningful recreation.

Services cater to the age of children. Leisure Time Centres (LTCs) are primarily attended by six to nine-year-olds (older children can attend if they have no alternatives) and are open year-round at hours that suit parents' working hours. Other services include Open Leisure Time Activities for children aged 10 and above (participation tends to be casual and services are not widely available) and Family Day Care Homes, for children up to nine years of age if there are no good alternatives (this is most commonly used in rural areas and is rapidly being replaced by school-based provision, such as LTCs).

Standards for OSS are set by each municipality and all facilities are required by law to hold operating permits. Municipalities tailor programmes to local needs, while the goals, guidelines and financial framework are set by central government. Quality assurance is largely based on self-evaluation, and a mixture of formal and informal elements. The National Agency for Education has set guidelines for OSS and reviews a small sample of programmes. Staff must include qualified educators (with typically three or more years of university-level training) in combination with secondary school-qualified assistants. In 2003, 70 percent of Swedish LTC staff held relevant university-level training, while only 20 percent had no specific formal training.

Consistent with a universal approach, the Swedish Government provides a high level of funding from general taxation to municipalities, which supplement this with funding from local taxation and parental fees. Parental fees charged by OSS providers are subject to a maximum fee to ensure that the costs faced by families remain very low. Fees charged by providers can be no more than three percent of a family's income for the first child. No fees are charged for the fourth or subsequent child from any one family.

CHAPTER SUMMARY: NEW ZEALAND OSS POLICY IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Countries have taken different approaches towards balancing OSS availability, quality and affordability. Accurate information about the OSS costs faced by families in different countries is difficult to obtain, as most international comparisons do not distinguish between pre-school education and care and OSS. We do know, however, that New Zealand investment in OSS is low compared with a number of other OECD countries. Approaches to increase the affordability of OSS vary – from the universal approach taken in Sweden to the tightly targeted assistance to low-income families in the United States. In recent years, the United Kingdom has made major strides to increase the supply of OSS by way of increased direct grants to providers, while also increasing payment levels and income thresholds for childcare subsidies to families. The final chapter of this report will draw on our understanding of the lessons from these international models of OSS to provide policy advice on the development of OSS in New Zealand.

CHAPTER THREE

families' childcare needs and preferences

This chapter begins by discussing the role of workplace flexibility in allowing working parents to manage their childcare obligations, before moving on to discuss alternatives to formal OSS and, finally, evidence of demand for formal programmes. We asked parents, carers and children who used OSS – and those who would like to – how they wanted these services to develop. For those who did not use OSS – and did not want to – we asked what, if anything, could be done to better support their present care arrangements. This chapter investigates the diversity of families' care needs and outlines what families told us about their preferences regarding parental care, informal arrangements, home-based care and formal OSS.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, we found that different care arrangements suit different families. Use of centre-based OSS to care for children aged five to 13 is just one option. Many families use a combination of family, friends and formal services to care for their children. This is consistent with research by Robertson (2006) which found that at least half the parents preferring care by extended family and friends/ neighbours also wanted or needed OSS. According to our consultation, some parents or carers undertake all the out of school hours' care for their school-aged children themselves. Others rely on informal arrangements with extended family or friends. Still others use private, home-based carers, such as nannies. Workplace flexibility was critical for many working parents to cope with 'everyday emergencies' such as sick children.

Common to many families, regardless of how they organised childcare, was the view that the role of parents in raising children should be more highly valued, reinforcing findings from the Families Commission's *Focus on Families* research and *What Makes Your Family Tick?* consultation (Stevens et al 2005; Seth-Purdie et al 2006).

If the parents of the children were properly supported to care for their own children rather than being made to feel that they 'must' get back out in the workforce, then it would probably cost the Government less – and they [would] do well to remember that being in a parent's care is not a poor choice – it is the best! (Couch)

Children are our most precious resource. [They] need protection and education, and need to be supported in making their choices. If not on a payroll, people become 'invisible'. (Warkworth)

[I] strongly believe that (generally) it is best for children to be looked after by their own parents, and so I think parents should be encouraged, empowered and equipped to do so. (Couch)

A number of parents involved in the consultation stressed the importance of families being able to make real choices about their care arrangements. Parents wanted families to be financially able to choose to care for their children themselves or to make alternative arrangements. For many families, financial considerations played a huge role in determining their care arrangements. Clearly, OSS is not the sole answer to families' childcare needs. Adequate income and flexible working arrangements also play a pivotal role in allowing parents and carers to realise their childcare preferences.

ISSUES FOR WORKING PARENTS: FLEXIBLE WORK CONDITIONS

Lack of flexibility in their working arrangements was a major issue for many parents in this consultation. A number of parents talked of a basic incompatibility between the demands of a full-time job and the requirements of caring for school-aged children. Trying to juggle these two competing priorities was a source of some frustration and stress. Parents and carers talked of a desire to be more flexible with start and finish times, the possibility of working only during school terms, and the ability to occasionally bring their children into the workplace when care cannot be found. Employers who provided their staff with this kind of flexibility were highly valued.

I have the wonderful good fortune to have a job that allows me to be at home before and after school and during the holidays. My employer's flexible attitude makes work possible for me. (Couch)

Parents experienced extreme difficulties when their children were sick. For parents with limited sick leave – the minimum statutory requirement is five days paid leave – leave was very quickly used up, especially if they had more than one child. For most parents, their only option was to take unpaid leave when their leave allocations were exhausted.

Especially if you have more than one child, sick leave is very easy to use up... Half the time I go to work sick, so I can save my sick leave for when my child is sick. (Dunedin)

Parents spoke of the need to be flexible with their working hours when their children were ill. OSS was not seen as a practical solution to the care of sick children. It follows that while more accessible, affordable OSS could potentially reduce parental perceptions of incompatibilities between paid work and parenting, it is clear that continuing efforts to promote family-friendly workplaces are required.

ALTERNATIVES TO FORMAL OSS

Parents looking after their children themselves

The reasons why some parents and carers don't use formal OSS vary greatly. A minority of parents professed a strong desire to care for their children themselves at all times outside school hours and wouldn't ever want to use OSS. Usually this preference was accompanied by the belief that one parent (typically the mother) should either withdraw entirely from paid work, or work part-time within school hours.

When they're young they need their parents. Sometimes I wonder if people want too much – four-wheel drives and so on. We lived in a crappy bach for years so I could stay at home and look after the kids. (Warkworth)

I believe you should look after young kids rather than farming them out. Kids come first, I changed my lifestyle. Doesn't work for all, but there is too much sway one way. Take a lower income instead of expecting subsidies elsewhere. (Whangārei)

Even if there was an ideal centre established, I still wouldn't use it because I choose to raise my children personally and take on employment around my children's needs. (Te Puke)

Parents and carers were asked what they wanted for their own family. As such, comments about what other parents should or should not do were rare and tended to provoke some debate. The majority of parents who had made the choice to stay at home with their children talked about being lucky to have had such an opportunity and acknowledged that their financial circumstances allowed them to make what many saw as a privileged choice. This point was also often made by single parents working long hours, or those receiving the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB), who spoke about the financial pressures they faced to undertake paid work. In some cases this was augmented by perceptions of direct pressure from case managers at Work and Income.¹³

Work and Income started 'pushing' me out to work when my child was one year old. I'd love to stay home... they start threatening to reduce your benefit, they can be really nasty. (Hastings)

Quite distinct from parents who had chosen to be at home, were a number of parents/carers of children with special needs who talked of *having* to be at home.

I would like to have care for my son [with special needs] but to date this has not been possible. This means, therefore, that I am unable to work and contribute to the family budget, which... puts our family at a disadvantage. (Couch)

I don't use services because I have adjusted work hours to care for [my] child morning and night, I have given up work to care for [my] child with a disability. (Grandparents)

The demands of caring for children with special needs meant that these parents and carers felt unable to engage in paid work. Many of these parents and carers had given up or not taken on jobs, sometimes reluctantly, because of their care commitments.

Using informal care solutions

According to the 1998 Childcare Survey, parents did not pay for 60 percent of their families' non-parental care arrangements during term time. This reflects the high proportion of children who are cared for by relatives or someone else unpaid. This was particularly the case for Māori (75 percent of Māori children compared with 56 percent of European children¹⁴) and low-income families (77 percent of children compared with 51 percent of children in higher-income families) (Department of Labour 1999). We found a similar situation in this consultation. The majority of parents and carers either cared for their children themselves or relied on informal arrangements – the majority did not use formal OSS.¹⁵

The ability to call on friends and extended family members for help with childcare was highly valued by parents. For some families, having a trusted member of their extended family provide out of school care for their children was ideal. Usually this was because they felt able to trust the carer, and the belief that children were always best looked after by their own family or whānau.

A stranger is not going to look after your kid like family... I'd prefer family, but they all work. (Māngere)

¹³ Note that Government policy does not require DPB recipients to engage in paid work. To be eligible for the DPB you must be a single parent with a dependent child under the age of 18. DPB recipients are not obliged to take up paid work but they must prepare a Personal Development and Employment Plan and show that they are committed to reaching their goals.

¹⁴ While the Childcare Survey found that Māori parents were more likely than Pākehā to cite cost as a barrier to the use of formal services, it is not possible to tell whether different patterns of childcare use reflect differing needs or preferences without further research.

¹⁵ Just over half of Couch respondents did not use services, while an even greater proportion of those attending public meetings did not use services.

I previously lived in Auckland where I had my parents to help me; here I have church members to help me. (Whangārei)

I want family or friends or something community-based – like, I don't know, a church group – the fact that most things are institutional is a real barrier to me. (Petone)

The preference for care by extended family members was sometimes related to the role of family in transmitting culture and values to the next generation. This was spoken of primarily by Pacific parents and carers. One Pacific parent commented:

Cultural background is very important; they need to get taught respect. This is very important and they don't get it at all in New Zealand. (Invercargill)

One young Pacific woman talked about the practice of bringing family members over to New Zealand from the islands to look after children while their parents worked. A group of Samoan grandparents also talked about the advantages of family being able to provide culturally appropriate care.

[Grandparents caring for children] provides opportunities for language and culture maintenance and also listening to Samoan legends and myths. [Also] prevents children from going on the streets and joining other kids that might be up to no good. (Christchurch)

A number of refugee parents also talked of preferring their children to be at home rather than at OSS. The more time that children spent away from home, the less opportunity there was for them to be in their own cultural environment, as well as reducing the opportunity to speak or hear their own language.

Despite the fact that a number of families expressed a preference for family or friends to look after their children, many were not able to achieve this. Geographical mobility and the growth in labour-market participation (especially among women) has meant that extended family is now less available to provide childcare support than has often been the case in previous generations.

Our parents are still working, things are different for our generation. We can't rely on them like other generations did. (Invercargill)

For many parents and carers, the absence of available family or friends meant that informal care arrangements were not a realistic option, especially for regular or substantial care requirements. This lack of access to family support was often particularly acute for new migrants who did not have extended family or friends living close to them. For such families, OSS fills a necessary gap.

I have no family here, so I have nobody to help. (Invercargill)

We don't have any family here, so the after-school programme is critical. (Dunedin)

For other families, reliance on informal care was less a positive choice and more a practical or financial necessity. These parents and carers did not necessarily want to use informal arrangements as their preferred day-in, day-out source of out of school care.

For families who had significant childcare needs and who weren't able to use formal services, informal arrangements were often a source of stress. Parents talked about having to juggle a range of options, meaning arrangements were often makeshift, unreliable and difficult to plan well. A number of parents and carers spoke of feeling guilty about the burden that such demands placed on informal carers, such as friends and neighbours.



It is very hard for me to always be asking friends to look after my kids. I have no whānau in Nelson. I always feel I owe [others]. (Nelson)

I am not always comfortable taking up offers of help from friends/neighbours. I always feel like I owe them, always feel guilty that I am burdening other people. (Wanganui)

Those who relied on family members reported similar problems.

I have family who can help me – my sister. There's also my mum, but she's elderly. I have other siblings too, but they're all either working or have their own kids, so it's not ideal. (Whangārei)

[Mother who works shifts:] During the term time my sister usually looks after my kids after school... You don't want to take advantage of them [family] but I've got nothing else. I'm also acutely aware that my children don't like going to my sister's. (Māngere)

Some parents and carers talked of the burden being placed on older children to look after younger children, while others expressed concern about relying too heavily on older family members – a sentiment echoed by a number of grandparents.

Grandparents get tired; families expect too much. Grandparents go the extra mile, but do their health a disservice. They are being used. (Grandparents)

I have friends [who are grandparents] you are just about at screaming point. They are getting completely worn out, getting really tired because [of] doing all the after-school care... caring grandparents are not going to say no. (Te Atatū)

[Using grandparents] caused stress to the older parents as they could not rest and lead their own life, as they now have become babysitters here in New Zealand. (Refugee)

In other cases, parents and carers voiced worries that informal arrangements could be unreliable, and that they had less control than they would like about the quality of care their children received.

I was totally shocked when I came back to my friend's place to pick up my kids and there was a teenage family member, who I did not know, left to look after a whole lot of kids. (Māngere)

Families who had children with special needs, and who were not able to access formal services, were seldom able to find anybody who could look after their children.

As it stands, [the] caregivers are usually 100 percent parent care, 24/7 with no support or breaks. (Warkworth)

[It's] huge to ask friends to look after your children with a disability, [it's] not fair and mostly not possible. (Nelson)

As a result, these parents were unable to get any respite from intensive caring responsibilities and were often desperate for a break.

Home-based care

A significant minority of parents said that one of their priorities was that care be based in a home – either theirs, or that of another carer. Parents who said they'd prefer home-based care were a diverse group.

Some parents and carers talked about the desirability of having a childminder come to their home to help ease complicated childcare requirements. Many of this group worked non-standard hours (starting or finishing very early and/or having hours that varied from week to week) and found arranging childcare a constant source of stress. Rural families, who faced transport difficulties in accessing services, commonly expressed a preference for home-based care.

A large number of single parents and/or families with three or more children of various ages also preferred home-based care. Many of these parents and carers found informal arrangements difficult to maintain. For this group, a subsidised nanny or childminder was often seen as the best, most cost-effective solution to meet their needs.

A nanny should be an available option for families with a number of children – they would be better [able] to be cared for in their own home and it would be more cost-effective. (Couch)

In our family we have four children... it is more cost-effective for me to have a nanny in our own home than it is to cover day-care/after-school care. (Couch)

Others, who preferred home-based care based on their family's circumstances, included families who had children with special needs. Due to the nature of their children's needs, these families did not feel that centre-based care would be appropriate. (Some families with special needs did want centre-based care – see the separate section, Access issues for children with special needs/disabilities, on page 45.)

These kids need a caregiver in the home because of what they've been through. They need stability and routine. (Grandparents)

A home-based carer for a family with a child with special needs can also provide care for other children in the family.

I think home-based care is the ideal OSS system – surely this makes sense. I work 32 hours, have three children, [one with special needs]. It is cost-effective instead of paying formal care for each. (Pukekohe)

I used my carers' support funding to hire a carer to look after my [special needs] child and the rest of my children. This is working really well for all the family, though it took a long time to find the right person. I'm too scared to let just anyone look after her. (Warkworth)

We have a child with special needs, but also three other children. I would like services provided that they can do together and don't always have to be separated. (Couch)

Yet another motivation for parents and carers wanting home-based care was that it was seen by some to provide a higher-quality, non-institutional setting.

The safest place is in the home. We want children to leave school and come home, or if they can't go home to go to the nearest thing. (Wanganui)

These parents and carers also talked about home-based care offering more personalised care and a safe environment for their children.

Subsidy flexibility for home-based, informal care

Most parents preferring home-based care wanted to be able to use childcare subsidies for that care. To these parents, the stipulation that subsidies were only for centre-based care was seen as unfair, especially when they felt they had good reasons for wanting their children to be cared for at home.

Cost is an issue... my friend won't take money for it, which is a real issue for me. If I was receiving a subsidy that I could pass on to her that would make things different. Then she'd take it and I'd feel a lot better about it. (Petone)

In such cases, parents wanted to be able to use subsidies to pay family or friends who were providing care on an unpaid basis in order to ease feelings of guilt or obligation.

SUMMARY

This chapter outlined families' needs and preferences for the care of their children outside school hours. For many parents, a combination of parental care, informal care from friends or family, and use of OSS is ideal. For those who did not want to use OSS, improved access to home-based services, including the flexibility to use OSCAR subsidies to pay friends and family was requested. Clearly, improving access to OSS shouldn't mean families who prefer informal care, or to care for their children themselves, have to use services they do not want to use. Home-based, out of school provision was identified as the most appropriate form of care for a small number of families – primarily those who worked non-standard hours, rural families and for some children with special needs.

Unfortunately, many families are not able to realise their preferences, and end up having to make compromises and/or use inadequate or inappropriate solutions. A range of reasons why preferences for care could not be achieved were identified, including: lack of employer flexibility; lack of family and friends available to care for children; grandparents unable to provide regular care; and a lack of options for children with special needs.

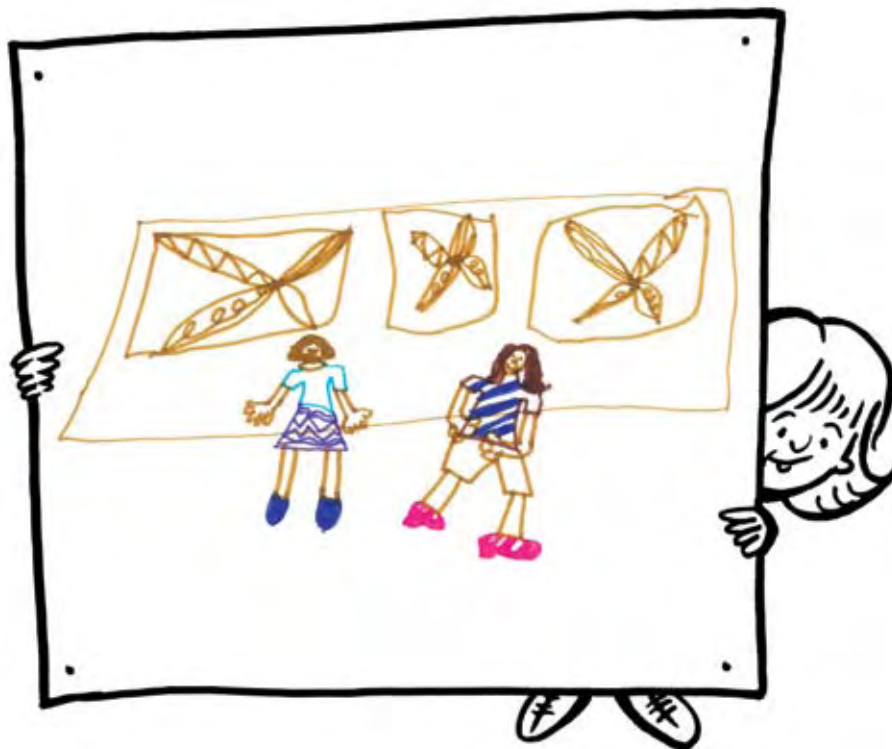
The following chapters will discuss some of the barriers families face in using formal OSS, and their views about the development of OSS in New Zealand.

CHAPTER FOUR

**formal oss – evidence of
demand for formal services**

The previous chapter focused on parents' and carers' needs and preferences regarding alternatives to formal, centre-based OSS. The following three chapters of the report focus on what parents, carers and children told us they wanted for formal OSS in the future.

The consultation found evidence of unmet demand for formal services. When asked about their ideal care arrangements, 73 percent of Couch members said they would use at least one type of OSS (compared with the 44 percent who do now). A similar trend was evident at the public meetings, with much unmet demand being talked about. This is in line with data from the 1998 Childcare Survey, which also found evidence of unmet demand – parents of an estimated 31,000 children (six percent of school-aged children), who were not in before- or after-school programmes, wanted to use them (Department of Labour 1999). Another, more recent, piece of research also found evidence of unmet demand – 44 percent of parents who said they preferred formal before- or after-school care were not able to achieve their preference (Robertson 2006). Together, this gives clear evidence that if quality care was accessible, appropriate and affordable, many more families would use it.



Briana, aged 7

CHAPTER FIVE

formal oss – accessing services

In order to give families real choices about how to arrange their paid work and caring responsibilities, OSS needs to be appropriate, affordable and available when and where families need it. The previous chapter discussed families' care preferences. Although the majority of families did not use OSS, most said they would use out of school care if it was suitable, available and affordable.

One of the key questions we asked parents and carers was, "What is not so good about your current out of school care arrangements?" From their responses to this question, we identified a range of barriers that families face when they try to access OSS. We also asked parents and carers about what their ideal services would look like, including what services should cost, where they should be and what times they should be offered.

This chapter begins by examining in detail the OSS costs for families – cost was a major issue for most families. The chapter then looks at the availability of formal services, highlighting particular issues for rural families, problems with school-holiday programmes and access for families with children with special needs. The chapter concludes by discussing appropriate times and locations for OSS, and the information parents need in order to gain better access to services.

COST OF FORMAL SERVICES

The cost of OSS is a significant barrier for many families. At most public meetings cost reduction was identified as the main priority for the future of the sector. Couch respondents also identified cost as the most significant barrier to using formal OSS (identified by 34 percent of respondents). This finding is strongly supported by other New Zealand research, which also identified cost as a major barrier when seeking suitable childcare (Department of Labour 1999, MSD 2004, Robertson 2006).

Childcare affordability has a significant impact on the ability of many parents, especially women and single parents, to participate in paid work (OECD 2004a). High costs also mean that some parents are likely to choose lower-quality programmes than they would otherwise select, or make alternative and possibly less safe or satisfactory care arrangements for their children.

Affordability of current programmes

Parents who identified cost as a problem included those who were eligible for an OSCAR subsidy and those who weren't.¹⁶ Single parents reported particular difficulties, as did families with more than two children.

Cost – the single biggest issue. After-school and holiday care is getting too expensive even with an OSCAR subsidy. (Christchurch)

Costs for school-holiday programmes were identified as being particularly prohibitive, and a number of families with more than two children said this meant that available options were simply unaffordable.

¹⁶ Income thresholds for receiving a subsidy increased in October 2006, after the completion of the consultation. Parents and carers are now able to earn more and still be eligible for an OSCAR subsidy. The subsidy rate remains unchanged. Income thresholds have increased by an average of 13 percent for families with one child, and by an average of nine percent for families with three or more children. As examples, families with one child can now earn up to \$1,049.99 per week before becoming ineligible for a subsidy, previously the cut-off was \$929.99; families with three children can now earn up to \$1,449.99 before becoming ineligible for a subsidy, previously the cut-off was \$1,329.99. See Table One 'OSCAR subsidy available to parents and carers', for full details of the current OSCAR subsidy rates and income thresholds.

Extra pressure on larger families – cost in particular is a huge issue. We are thinking of flying someone from the family down from Auckland, because it is cheaper than a holiday programme. (Christchurch)

The biggest obstacle is COST. All of my pay in holidays goes to care. (Wanganui)

Some parents who used after-school care talked about the cost of their particular programme as being ‘reasonable’, and most of these parents talked about feeling lucky to have access to them.

It was apparent that the range of prices charged for programmes varied widely from community to community and depended on a large number of factors, including the type of service, activities offered, the staffing level and quality and the hours it was available. Parents’ impression of the sector was that such huge variations in cost for such a wide range of services provided evidence that the system was unfair. A couple of parents also commented on the price differences between early childhood education (ECE) and OSS. Although ECE was usually more expensive, it was perceived as offering much greater value for money, due to the hours it was available and the quality of the care provided.

How much is ‘affordable’?

When asked how much they should pay for OSS, the vast majority of parents fell into either of two camps: saying that services should be completely free, or that they should be available for a minimal cost. For many, this was seen as something that should be part of the state’s commitment to supporting families with dependent children. Very few families suggested that employers should pay part of the cost of OSS. There was some concern that if employers had to pay then this may lead to discrimination against employees with young families.

Many of those supporting free services expressed little faith in the possibility that it might happen and saw it as an ideal rather than a likely outcome. Most agreed that requiring families to pay minimal costs was more realistic.

Services should be heavily, heavily, heavily subsidised and ideally free. (Dunedin)

It takes a village to raise a child – therefore we as a country should be providing for all. It should be free for all. (Petone)

There should be no fee for the children to participate in these types of programmes. The Government should fund the whole programme for the children. (Christchurch)

Because of the wide range of circumstances of families participating (numbers of children, family types, working arrangements) our consultation did not ask about particular dollar figures for different types of services. Parents, however, talked about a range of hourly and daily fees – from gold-coin donations and koha to ‘paying in kind’ (with food contributions or volunteering).

It should be available at a minimum cost to everybody. (Refugee)

I am happy to pay; not happy [to pay] silly money, just reasonable. (Te Puke)

There should be a small cost, not means-tested. Parents could contribute in kind. (Grandparents)

Parents who suggested hourly or daily fees wanted flexibility in OSS, stating that they would like the ability to use services on an ‘as needed’ basis, or, at the very least, to be able to commit to particular days and hours, rather than pay for full weeks that they may not necessarily need.

Although many suggested very low costs, a small number felt that they wouldn't trust a service that was 'too cheap', or worried that it might lead to services being oversubscribed.

Just a gold-coin entry would be too easy; I wouldn't believe it. Too cheap would mean not good quality. (Te Puke)

If it's free we wouldn't trust it. (Māngere)

Funding options and subsidy issues

While most parents and carers felt that substantial government investment in OSS was required, views differed about how best to distribute this funding. Among parents who were familiar with OSCAR subsidies, there was widespread agreement that requiring low- and middle-income parents to apply for a subsidy was overly onerous and that the system was not working well. Many worried that income testing was too 'blunt' to account for the range of different circumstances that families faced, for example, the number of children in a family, the number of parents earning, and the hours worked.

Part-time workers can't afford the same as two workers, or single parents. (Māngere)

This [subsidy] should not be means-tested, especially when more than one child in a family uses the service, but tested on the hours of work of parents. (Wanganui)

In particular, parents believed that subsidies were not high enough and the earning threshold at which subsidies stopped was too low. There was also a perception that the system was unfair, and that families 'in the middle' often missed out – not receiving the subsidies that lower-income families did, and not having the disposable income of higher-income families. As a result, some parents said they felt discouraged to engage in paid work.

Having to think twice about working is sad. (Invercargill)

Affordability – especially with a number of children, it's enough to put you out of work. (Dunedin)

As soon as you [earn] above the threshold all support disappears. (Refugee)

The way the Government works, the more you earn, the more they take. Sometimes I think, why bother working? (Invercargill)

A number of parents also gave very strong feedback that they didn't like dealing with Work and Income, or filling in forms and having to provide proof of income in order to get a subsidy. For some, the amount involved wasn't worth the hassle, especially for those who were eligible for only the minimum amount. Others who thought they had to make a special trip to a Work and Income office to fill in forms to have their subsidy processed thought this was unreasonable.¹⁷ This was particularly the case for those with children attending school-holiday programmes on a casual basis. A further group simply wanted to avoid interaction with the agency (either due to previous bad experiences or negative perceptions about Work and Income).

It's a huge issue. There's a lot more we'd be entitled to and don't [get] because it would involve engaging with Work and Income. (Hastings)

¹⁷ The perception that forms had to be personally taken into Work and Income was commonly held. In actual fact, forms can be posted or collected from an OSCAR programme by a Work and Income childcare co-ordinator.

OSCAR has too much paperwork – for some too much effort for little reward; why bother? One look at those forms and I thought, do I really want to be bothered with this hassle? (Te Atatū)

It [is] easier to hope the children don't burn the house down or have them at work rather than to persist with WINZ. [Work and Income]. (Hastings)

A very small minority believed that services should be entirely user-pays. This view was almost always expressed by parents and carers who did not use OSS and had no intention of doing so in the future.

I think parents should have to pay if you choose to work. (Hastings)

I don't know. I'm a bit of a believer in user-pays. (Petone)

For these parents, engaging in full-time paid work is a matter of individual choice and, in their view, the cost of OSS should be borne entirely by those who use these services.

AVAILABILITY OF FORMAL SERVICES

Parents at the consultation meetings told us that the availability of OSS varied hugely across the country, with some areas being relatively well served, while other areas had no services at all, or very few services with long waiting lists. Respondents to The Couch questionnaire also identified problems of access, with one-quarter saying there was a lack of services in their area. Similarly, access to OSS was found to be a problem in the 1998 Childcare Survey (lack of local services was identified by 12 percent of mothers, Department of Labour 1999) and Robertson (2006).

Parents and carers who were unable to access OSS, reported that at times they felt they had no choice but to leave their children unsupervised (for example, at home alone) or in potentially unsafe situations (for example, with a group of friends which may or may not include children over the age of 14).

Parents living in rural areas commonly talked of a complete lack of services and, therefore, having no options available to them.



Christian, aged 6

Rural isolation – lack of availability of programmes – none. (Grandparents)

There needs to be more programmes available, especially in the rural areas. Some areas of Nelson do not have a programme at all, so parents have to drive for at least two hours to get their children to a programme, and then do the same in the afternoon. (Nelson)

[Services] not available in the area, cost of travel not practical. (Te Atatū)

For many rural families, using formal OSS meant travelling long distances to drop children off before having to return to start work, resulting in large time and financial costs.

Difficulty transporting children to and from services was mentioned by a large number of families at public meetings as being a significant barrier to their use of OSS. Transport issues were also identified as problematic by 14 percent of Couch respondents (saying that services were inconvenient or difficult to get to). This was also reported in the 1998 Childcare Survey (10 percent of mothers, Department of Labour 1999) and in the 2004 Living Standards Survey (17 percent of families, MSD 2004).

Specific transport issues were most commonly raised by single and low-income parents/carers without their own cars, rural families and those who didn't drive. All of these families reported huge difficulties trying to get children between school and care.

Many grandparents don't have transport, or if they do, they can't afford petrol. (Grandparents)

Location of centres, which means that parents have to travel long distances to get there. This impacts on the running cost of cars, ie petrol. It also becomes a huge barrier for those families or parents who do not have transport. (Invercargill)

Parents talked of school holidays as being the most difficult times to find enough care for their children – either formal or informal. This was primarily due to the length of children's holidays – the number of weeks that children were on holiday often exceeded parents' annual leave entitlement by as much as 400 percent.

There are too many school holidays – [I] can't cope with all of the days off. (Grandparents)

[I've settled for a low-paid job because I get holidays off] it's not ideal but it fits the family situation. (Te Atatū)

In almost all areas, waiting lists for school-holiday programmes and/or a lack of places were a particular problem – with parents having to book for every holiday separately and available places filling up quickly.

[There are] not enough programmes in town. [I] struggle through school holidays juggling timetables and four children. (Whangārei)

Do not have a good range of choices for [our] kids. Community needs a range of alternatives. (Wanganui)

There are no guaranteed spots in school-holiday programmes, so we can't plan holidays. Need to book six weeks in advance to get a place. (Māngere)

Parents also talked of having to book and pay for school-holiday programmes in advance, leading to cash-flow problems while they waited for OSCAR subsidies to

be approved.¹⁸ This resulted in a number of families simply being unable to use subsidised school-holiday programmes.

If able to get subsidy, have to pay first then get reimbursed, which takes from two to six weeks then [there's] a convoluted process of 'to and fro' form-filling. (Whangārei)

Another consequence of having to book so far ahead was that families had to plan their holidays a long time in advance, meaning they lost the ability to be flexible or spontaneous during holiday periods. This was seen as a major drawback by many families. A number of families wanted to be able to be flexible over holiday periods, including being able to take leave from employment and using formal and informal care options, such as extended family.

ACCESS ISSUES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS/DISABILITIES

Families with children with special needs talked of a wide range of other factors that affected their ability to use existing services, over and above the accessibility issues facing the wider community. One reason that access may be especially difficult for this group is that every child with special needs has different needs, meaning that 'one-size-fits-all' solutions are inadequate.

Special needs kids – you often hear common stories, but they are very different and we tend to be lumped together. (Whangārei)

The almost complete lack of appropriate care for children with special needs dominated feedback from parents of these children at both the public meetings and on The Couch. Without access to services or informal care, parents and carers were left without any respite from the responsibility of caring for their children.

Standard hours of OSS care were a particular barrier for children who did not attend a 'normal' school day. In addition to this, parents noted a gap in care for children over the age of 13, with many children with special needs needing supervision until they are much older.

There is just nothing out there available [for special needs children]. (Couch)

[For my child] 9-12 is school hours... OSCAR only starts at 3pm. (Christchurch)

Big gap in care for 13-17-year-olds. Children with special needs don't stop needing care at age 13. (Whangārei)

One of the most common complaints of parents was that many services would not accept children unless they brought their own one-on-one carer with them. This had a huge impact on parents' ability to access services. Parents complained that this was not reasonable and if they were to comply, the cost would be prohibitive as they would essentially be paying twice.

[Additional costs for special needs child] I'm not saying it should be free, but it is a human rights issue. It's not fair. (Christchurch)

I was refused after-school care because I couldn't supply a support person. (Whangārei)

¹⁸ Subsidies can be approved fairly quickly provided that an application form is correctly completed and the programme provider can confirm the child's place in the programme. Work and Income aims to process OSCAR applications in five working days. In exceptional circumstances, a subsidy can be approved in 24 hours. Many applications are delayed due to incomplete information being supplied. Assisting parents and providers to complete applications correctly is a key role of childcare co-ordinators.

A child with a disability can't attend a holiday programme or before/after-school programme without their own caregiver (which normally comes as an expense to the parents on top of the programme fees). Parents of special needs children are always being penalised. (Couch)

Some parents also talked about not being able to use programmes if services did not have on-site specialist assistance or adequate staff training. The implications of staff not reacting appropriately could be fatal in some instances (this applied to children with potentially serious medical conditions, including severe asthma, allergies, heart problems or diabetes). Many of these parents had children who would otherwise be able to fully participate in OSS, if it were not for this perception of unmitigated risk.

I have an insulin-dependent nine-year-old, who is capable of looking after himself to a certain degree, but I would want someone such as a nurse or carer who is trained. (Couch)

In contrast to this, other parents talked of needing services with particular activities or a particular environment for their child with special needs. If these aren't provided by services, then parents felt their children couldn't use them. Some children needed a lot of additional stimulation and attention, while others needed quiet time and familiar surroundings to prevent sensory overload. Lack of physical modifications (for example, wheelchair access), specialist equipment and physical assistance was also mentioned by a small number of parents.

[I] need people who are trained in caring for children with disabilities, both physical and emotional needs. Also carers who are willing to do the changing of diapers, and feeding. (Couch)

Despite the modifications (both environmental and process), which may be needed for special needs children to have access to OSS, most parents wanted their children to be included by mainstream OSS providers.

They deserve an ordinary life. They deserve it, even if they need an extra support. (Whangārei)

There was a very small number of parents who would rather their children went to specialised care facilities. This group believed that attempts at inclusion were more likely to result in exclusion, as providers were not realistically able to cope with their children's needs. A final group of parents preferred home-based care for their children with special needs (this was discussed in the previous chapter, under the heading Home-based care).

Stress was a major issue for many families with children with special needs.

Lack of knowledge of the impact of that for whānau. There are pockets of tautoko, but no consistency in support. Whānau end up being reactive rather than proactive. (Whangārei)

Most parents [are] unable to go to work, as [they] have full responsibility and need to be on call at all times. (Warkworth)

Many of these parents and carers talked of having few breaks, due to lack of OSS and support in general.

TIMES FOR FORMAL SERVICES

The times that services are available, or not available, also affect parents' ability to use them. This is particularly an issue for families where all adults are engaged in paid work. Unsuitable times were identified by a significant number of parents in the consultation meetings and by 14 percent of Couch respondents (saying that the hours services were currently available did not suit the needs of their families). Source data for the 2004 Living Standards Survey also highlighted unsuitable hours of services as being a barrier to the use of OSS (reported by 25 percent of families, MSD 2004).

Parents reported unsuitable start and finish times (for after-school and school-holiday programmes), lack of options for people working non-standard hours and frustration with school-holiday programmes with hours that did not match working hours.

Pre-school was so easy with its hours and small holidays. Now I am constantly juggling, relying on family. (Te Puke)

Timing is a big problem in the Flaxmere area. Many seasonal workers start work at 6am and work until 6pm. There's no OSCAR programme to cater to these hours. (Hastings)

Invercargill has lots of shift workers, a 24-hour service is needed. (Invercargill)

Single parents faced some of the most difficult challenges arranging out of school care for their children, especially if they were working and had to start or finish before 9am or after 3pm. When single parents couldn't find services to cover working hours, a number said they felt they had no choice but to not work at all, or to work only part-time during school hours. Quality part-time employment is not always available. Single parents often also faced particular problems finding appropriate care arrangements during school-holiday periods.

There were different issues reported by two-parent, two-income families (living in one household). Where both parents worked full-time, some were able to juggle their start and finish times between them to allow them to cover before-school hours (and sometimes after-school), which still left school holidays as a time when non-parental care was needed. Two-parent families (living in one household) with one parent working full-time and the other working part-time, often did not need to use term-time services at all, but usually still required school-holiday care.

Parents were asked what types of OSS they'd like to use¹⁹ – before-school, after-school or school-holiday programmes. We got very similar responses to both the Couch questionnaire and from consultation meetings. The highest demand was evident for care during school holidays (63 percent of Couch respondents), followed by after-school care (53 percent of Couch respondents). Smaller numbers wanted to use before-school care (19 percent of Couch respondents) and non-standard-hour care (11 percent of Couch respondents). This section goes on to discuss the times that parents required care from these different types of programmes.

School-holiday care

The majority of parents talked of wanting formal holiday care that mirrored the working day – at least 9am to 5.30pm, though many pointed out that with transport issues, or earlier work start or finish times, 8am to 6pm or 6.30pm may be

¹⁹ At the public meetings, this was done by asking them to design their ideal service (including cost, activities, location etc). On The Couch, they were asked to assume that a suitable service was available and affordable.

necessary. For those who started work particularly early, a programme starting time of 7am or 7.30am would be more appropriate.

A number of parents complained that school-holiday programmes often operate from 9am to 3pm (reflecting the school day) and expressed frustration at having to find additional care for their children after 3pm.

Timing issues with school-holiday programmes – some finish as early as four, some only last for three hours. (Petone)

Parents also spoke of wanting the flexibility to use holiday programmes for the whole day or just part of a day, and of being able to use them for all or just part of school-holiday periods. This appeared to be driven by the need for children to have a break from the routine of term time, and for parents' desire to have at least some time at home with their children during holidays.

After-school care

Most parents wanted after-school care to be available as soon as school was over, to avoid any waiting. The ideal finish time for after-school care was, to an extent, dependent on location. It was most commonly suggested that care be available until around 6pm to give parents leeway with traffic and other unforeseen circumstances. However, small numbers suggested finish times of around 6.30pm or 7pm, while parents in smaller areas (without traffic problems) thought 5.30pm would be acceptable. Parents were conscious of the need for children to get home at a reasonable time, however, especially younger children. In many cases, late-closing times were needed as a safety net, to give parents flexibility for the times they needed to work late or could not pick their children up on time, rather than as an everyday solution.

Before-school care

Most people who wanted before-school care suggested a start time of around 7am or 7.30am. A very small number of parents suggested start times of around 6am or 6.30am. For the majority of families who required before-school care, most problems would be solved by being able to drop their children at school before it officially opened, around 8am, something many schools do not allow. Parents expressed annoyance at schools that refused to accept children before 8.30am. Most parents did not expect a structured programme at this time of day, just somewhere they knew their child would be supervised and safe.

Non-standard-hour care

A smaller number of families expressed a need for non-standard-hour care, but their needs were acute. This group was mainly made up of people who did shift work, or those who worked long hours in seasonal jobs and who were struggling with a variety of informal solutions.

We live in a 24/7 world and basically policies need to cover that. Families are not the way they used to be. (Wanganui)

Times have changed from the times when Mum is always home while Dad brings in the pay packet. These changes should also reflect in the opening hours for childcare. (Invercargill)

Centre-based care that operated a small number of hours each day was almost completely inaccessible for these families, due to their need to start work before centre opening times and finish after closing times.

LOCATION ISSUES

Beyond the need for a convenient, easy-to-access location, the majority of parents did not have strong opinions about where services should be based. Schools were seen as the most obvious 'default' option.

Before/after-school care

For those who wanted before-school care, almost all agreed that it should be at school to avoid unnecessary disruption to the child's day.

School was also seen as the obvious choice for after-school care:²⁰

School – that would solve all transport issues, plus it's a similar environment, systems, discipline. (Invercargill)

School [would be] a good choice of venue since it [is] a familiar location, convenient, with safe facilities and the likelihood of age-appropriate resources available. (Nelson)

Parents talked about the advantage of children already feeling at home and having existing networks at school. Many parents were concerned, however, that their children did get some change of environment from a structured educational setting to a more relaxed, informal environment at the end of the day. Therefore, they were keen for school-based after-school services to involve some change of scene.

They could be in a school, or attached to a school, but would prefer that it wasn't in a classroom, so that it didn't have a formal feel. (Wanganui)

Possibly after-school services could be provided at school, but not in a formal classroom and not with the same teachers they have during the day. (Dunedin)

The convenience and safety of school was the basis for many preferring it as a location, with some parents talking of incidents of children going missing between school and centre-based care. If parents could be assured of safety and convenience, then many indicated that they wouldn't have any particular preference for a school setting over another. Transport was the key to this – if children could be moved safely and cheaply from school to an after-school service, then most parents saw no problem with a community-based venue.

...held wherever appropriate to meet the community's need, close to school and safe transport. (Warkworth)

A small number of parents said they had specifically chosen schools that provided after-school care, so that transport problems were avoided altogether. One parent reported a two-year waiting list for after-school services at her child's school and how other parents were enrolling their children at new schools just to access the OSS there. Those parents who did have access to a school-based service were pleased to have this support.

A small group of parents had very strong preferences about the location of after-school care. These parents could be split into two groups: parents who definitely wanted OSS to be at school, to ensure their kids stayed with their friends and other familiar faces; and parents who definitely did not want OSS to be at school.

I prefer an out of school service to be away from the school, then my children get to meet children from other schools and make new friendships etc. (Couch)

²⁰ A total of 61 percent of Couch members chose school as their preferred before/after-school venue.

School is almost like work – after work, I like to leave. I don't want them to be forced to stay. (Te Puke)

Those who did not want services to be school-based wanted their children to mix with children from other schools to extend their horizons, or to avoid bullying or peer pressure that their children might be experiencing at school.

School-holiday care

Although parents expressed preferences for the location of school-holiday programmes, for many, the location was of lesser concern than such factors as cost, hours and quality of programmes.

A minority of parents preferred schools as a venue for school-holiday programmes (because this was a period when the buildings were available and because children were familiar with the setting).

I think school-holiday programmes should be part and parcel of every school and should be free. I also think workplaces need to be more family friendly and make allowances for parents who have limited options for childcare, especially in the holidays. (Couch)

The majority, however, preferred an alternative venue,²¹ saying that their children needed a change of environment and the chance to mix with a different group of children. Despite this, as outlined above, most parents were not averse to using a good school-based holiday programme.

Many community-based locations were suggested for school-holiday programmes (such as marae, kōhanga reo, community centres, church halls and sports clubs). Church-based locations were most commonly mentioned by Pacific people, both parents and grandparents. While parents were not averse to locations that required transport (assuming it was affordable, safe and reliable), many expressed a strong preference for a local, community venue.

Marae are often underutilised and could be used for out of school care. Marae experience, farming etc, team-building, camps – access local communities. (Whangārei)

There is a lot of community space that is not utilised – such as the community house. (Te Atatū)

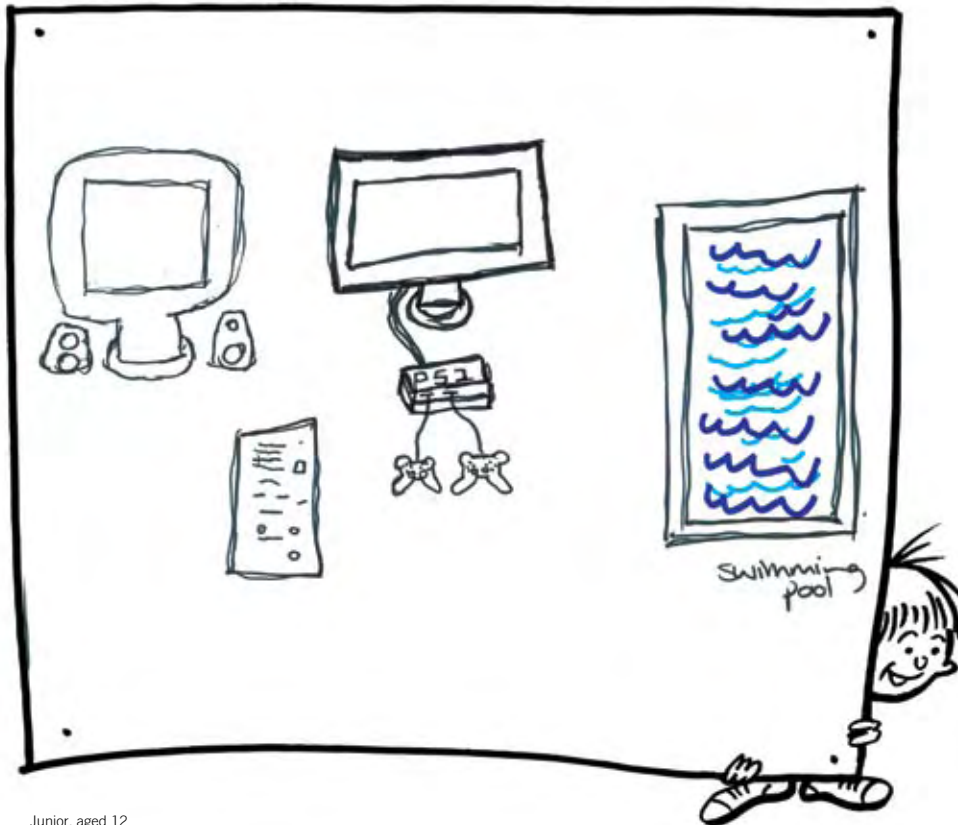
Specialist group camping facilities were mentioned by parents who were keen to see their older children attend overnight programmes. These parents talked about the importance of being able to visit a rural area with opportunities for adventurous outdoor activities.

Workplaces as a possible location

The idea of work-based childcare was seen as a novelty by most parents, with very few having had experience of it. Most who had taken their children to their workplace had done so informally, and had struggled with completing their work and entertaining their children at the same time.

On the issue of work-based childcare, opinion was split between those who thought it would be the perfect solution, and those who either thought it would be too

²¹ Of The Couch members who chose a location for school-holiday programmes, 65 percent chose a non-school location (44 percent chose a convenient community-based location, 13 percent chose a provider's venue with transport and six percent chose their workplace) while 22 percent chose their children's own school.



Junior, aged 12

distracting, or that it would be unfeasible. The few who had experience of formal, work-based OSS programmes were positive about these arrangements and keen to encourage employers to provide OSS on site.

My work used to run a programme, organised by one of the staff. That would have been great – but they decided it was not core business and closed it down. What incentives can we offer corporates to do this? (Couch)

[previous employer had a pre-school on site] I could breastfeed and get straight back to work, it was really good. Too hard to implement in Invercargill. There are too many small employers. Maybe some of the bigger employers, like the hospital, could do it? (Invercargill)

Most parents expressed doubts as to how small employers could realistically offer work-based OSS, and saw it as more feasible for large employers.

INFORMATION NEEDS

For a number of parents, access was complicated by simply not knowing whether or not services were available in their area. Some of those who attended public meetings had no idea about existing services and questioned why such things weren't more widely publicised. Others, who had used a programme based at their child's school, questioned how parents could find out about services provided elsewhere. These parents said that they didn't know where to find information about local programmes and suggested that lists of local providers (and their hours, costs and other relevant information) should be made available to all parents.

A key issue in finding a good programme is obtaining complete and reliable information... it seems that the main information source is by word of mouth, which is a somewhat hit-and-miss approach. (Couch)

Pacific parents, who did not have English as a first language, reported additional difficulties, including finding it hard to read printed information about programmes, as well as having problems filling out programme enrolment forms.

While the majority of parents and carers in the consultation were aware of the OSCAR subsidy, a small minority were not.

I didn't [know I was] eligible for a subsidy from WINZ [Work and Income] – I thought they only worked for parents who weren't working. (Māngere)

A small number of parents had misconceptions about who was able to access subsidies, thinking that because they were offered through Work and Income, they were available only to parents who were not employed.

SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the barriers preventing access to OSS and parents' views about how these barriers can be addressed.

The cost of services was consistently identified as the biggest barrier for parents. Cost is a particular problem for parents with limited incomes and/or those with big expenses (for example, more than two children); cost of holiday programmes is also mentioned in all kinds of circumstances. Parents also reported difficulties with accessing the OSCAR subsidy system.

A lack of programme availability was mentioned by many parents, with many rurally based parents reporting a complete lack of services. Lack of transport is a factor affecting many families' ability to use programmes. Provision of transport or services that do not require travel (such as home- or school-based) would alleviate many of these problems.

The times that services are available and their locations are significant issues for many families, particularly for parents who work non-standard hours, single parents and families with children with special needs. Service times need to reflect parents' actual working hours, and easily accessible locations are preferred by all (most commonly schools and, for particular families, home). Families who found home-based care the most practical solution were also discussed in the earlier chapter, Families' childcare needs and preferences.

The implications of parents not being able to access appropriate services can be far reaching and include: having to pay for an expensive and/or potentially inadequate service; not taking on paid employment or modifying hours of employment; and/or having to rely on informal arrangements (which may be difficult to organise and/or potentially inadequate).

CHAPTER SIX

formal oss – programme
content and purpose

This chapter discusses parents' and carers' preferences for what their children do while they're at OSS – both the activities and the underlying purpose of the activities. Children's preferences are also discussed in this chapter.

One of the key consultation questions, at both the public meetings and in The Couch questionnaire, was about activities that parents would like their children to be involved in at OSS. Both adults and children had a wide range of ideas, with virtually everybody expressing some preference about activities – clearly indicating that families would like children to be active and enjoying their time at OSS. Ten percent of Couch respondents said that not liking the activities on offer at OSS affected their use of services.

Activities were not seen as an issue in before-school care, unlike after school-care and school-holiday programmes. When talking about before-school care, parents did not talk of wanting any particular activities, aside from children having some quiet time to mentally prepare for the day ahead and the opportunity to eat a healthy breakfast. Before-school care was seen as being more about children having a safe and comfortable place.

For both after-school care and school-holiday care, providing children with a choice of activities was a recurrent theme. Parents made the point strongly that all children were different and that one size would never fit all. Having a good range of options was also important to encourage children to attend. This was particularly emphasised for older children, with parents talking about children being bored by routine and the same limited number of activities being available every day. The children also wanted services to be more responsive to their needs, with a number saying they would like to be involved in decisions about programme content.

The kids need to have a say in the design, because if the kids are happy, the parents will be happy. Otherwise they won't come. (Te Puke)

[We] don't like being told what we're doing – we need to be consulted! (Group of Whangārei children)

Too often the services are structured to meet the needs of adults (working parents, teachers etc) and not the children. (Couch)

While choice was important, most parents also talked about the need for some sort of structure – so that children still had parameters and felt safe and cared for.

Some sort of menu or rotation of activities so that children can have a say in what they do and exercise choice over how they spend their time. (Dunedin)

A smaller number of parents felt too much structure could be overly restrictive.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the specific activities discussed by parents, carers and children. It identifies a need for care to be tailored to meet differing requirements after school and in the school holidays. The chapter concludes by discussing the importance of age-appropriate care, particularly for older children.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES AND LIFE SKILLS

The majority of parents wanted their children to be learning or achieving something at OSS. However, the focus was not on academic achievement as much as it was on enrichment-type activities. Life skills came up regularly, with many parents talking about children needing to 'get back to basics' and to have the kind of opportunities that they'd like to be able to give them, but don't necessarily have the

time or skills to provide. Activities such as cooking, sewing, gardening, woodwork and budgeting (for older children) were mentioned by both parents and children.

We don't want children plonked in front of a TV – they should be doing something educational, like gardening; activities that build skills and self-esteem. (Wanganui)

Basic life skills are needed; things like this aren't really being taught today. (Warkworth)

Cooking something different every day and kids helping. (11-year-old, Petone)

Creative pursuits were also commonly mentioned by both parents and children – such things as art, craft, music, dance and drama.

A round robin of varied activities like crafts, drawing and making things. Learning new things – for example, workshops in make-up artistry, photography, movies. (Māngere)

Dancing in the auditorium every day. (7-year-old, Māngere)

On the whole, school holidays were seen as an opportunity for more intensive activities – day trips to farms, camping trips, movies and fun days out were all mentioned. A preference for outdoor or countryside activities was common. During school holidays, the opportunity to go on fun excursions was also mentioned by children as well as parents and carers.

I like to take them to at least one fun thing in the holidays, like a movie, so at least they have something to talk about when they go back to school. That's important. (Grandparents)

Doing fun activities with peers was recognised as a good way to 'treat' children following a long school term.

Cultural activities

A strong preference for Māori language or tikanga was most often mentioned by Māori participants. The small additional meeting of Māori participants (in Nelson) had very strong ideas about the provision of Māori cultural activities. They believed that Māori self-esteem would increase through programmes with a strong Māori kaupapa. They suggested that a lot of Māori tikanga could be covered, including taiaha and the teaching of whakapapa. It was suggested that the best way to do this may be through school holiday nohoanga or wānanga, involving both mātua and tamariki. For them, it was important that programmes be initiated by Māori, and that they use the knowledge and mana of kaumātua.

Māori language or tikanga were mentioned spontaneously by only a very small number of parents at the public meetings. When specifically prompted in The Couch questionnaire, however, almost a quarter of respondents said they'd like their children to learn te reo Māori or tikanga at OSS. This would seem to indicate that while not all parents would seek out such opportunities, many would be happy if they were available.

There is a lack of cultural/ethnic variety of carers and facilities – Māori cultural requirements [are] not being identified or met. (Wanganui)

Strong views about cultural activities were also aired by Pacific parents and carers, who expressed a strong desire for language and cultural maintenance. A number stated a very strong preference for Pacific programmes – run by and for individual Pacific groups.

A number of refugee parents also talked about the importance of services being culturally 'safe' – for example, having appropriate food available or having staff from a similar background. As a consequence, a number liked the idea of having their own services. Conversely, one group of refugee parents had already tried to run their own service and found that their children preferred to mix with a wider group of children.

Mix them [refugee children] with the Kiwi kids, [it's] good to learn different cultures – mix them up. We tried our own programme... they don't want to be treated differently; they want to mix with others. (Refugee)

Unlike other refugee parents, this one group expressed a strong preference not to have separate services.



Mele, aged 8

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Not all parents agreed that homework should be a part of after-school care. It was a topic that many parents felt very strongly about.

The majority of parents wanted to have homework completed at after-school care (approximately two-thirds of the parents who answered The Couch questionnaire). For many parents, completed homework meant a less stressful evening and time for the family to relax together. Some parents and carers also made the point that not all families were able to assist their children to complete homework. One group that was very keen to see homework completed, were parents who did not have English as a first language (for example, refugees and new migrants).

Me and my wife are new to New Zealand and we would like our children to be able to get help with their homework. (Māngere)

Most parents who wanted homework done also said that homework should not be the focus of after-school care, instead, time should be put aside for homework,

followed by an equal or greater amount of time for other activities or relaxation. Other parents placed even less emphasis on homework, suggesting there be a 'homework area' with staff to help out. Children could choose, or not choose, to be involved. Perhaps surprisingly, a number of children also expressed a desire to complete their homework at OSS.

Do it [homework] for half-an-hour at the start of the programme then play. It would be in a separate room with heaps of laptops and someone would be around helping you. (12-year-old, Petone)

Group homework so it is easier on everyone. (Group of children, Warkworth)

A small number of parents didn't think it appropriate for homework to be part of an after-school service. They felt strongly that it was important for them to do homework with their children themselves – seeing it as a key parental role. One child explained that she needed to do her homework at home as no one at her after-school service had the necessary skills to help her because her homework was entirely in te reo Māori.

[I have to do my homework] at home because it's Māori and it's hard. (8-year-old, Petone)

When it came to school holidays, almost all the parents did not want their children doing homework, preferring their children to have a complete break from the academic focus of term time. A small number, however, talked about giving their children the opportunity to catch up or to do special projects.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Following on from this, most parents made a distinction between the educational focus that they expected from school and the broader, more relaxed focus they wanted from OSS.

It should be a middle ground between school and home – where they get to unwind and do different activities. (Dunedin)

For after-school care, some form of free, unstructured time was desired by most parents and some children as well.

Option of quiet time, bean bags. (Group of Warkworth children)

Lots of free time for children to explore new things and make new friends that will help them develop social and personal interactive skills. (Nelson)

Parents wanted the right balance between stimulating and relaxing activities during school holidays, with many parents saying children needed some kind of 'down-time' between school terms.

I worry about sending my kids to school-holiday programmes, it feels like they never get a break. But the last holidays I was off all the time and they were bored, so now I don't feel guilty any more! (Invercargill)

Parents also suggested a huge range of physical activities, including rugby, soccer, ball skills and running around. Parents saw physical activity as a healthy way for children to run off some energy before they get home. Such things couldn't necessarily be done at home, and OSS was seen as a good opportunity for children to engage in exercise and participate in team sports.

Physical play to exert their energy; build good habits for life... 30 minutes a day etc. (Te Atatū)

Indoor activities were also suggested, including such things as playing games with friends and reading.

Parents were not so keen on children simply watching television or DVDs. Those who felt television and DVDs were okay as part of a balanced programme, suggested tight restrictions on viewing with monitoring of time and content. In this situation, movies or programmes needed to be of a high quality or have some kind of educational value. The one exception to this was the parent of a child with special needs who said her child needed the complete 'switch off' that television offered. Watching television, DVDs and playing computer games was much more popular with children.

I would like games to be much cooler than they are. I would like computer games and X Box. (8-year-old, Nelson)

In contrast to parental preferences, many children suggested television, movies and games as their preferred activities.

CHILDREN'S CHOICE OF ACTIVITIES

When asked what activities they'd like to do at their ideal OSS, children had no difficulty coming up with ideas. They were clear that they like to have choices about what they do and that activities needed to be exciting and stimulating. Common complaints by children who attended OSS included not getting enough opportunities to run around outside, not liking the food and being bored.

[I don't like] doing boring stuff, things that take ages. (8-year-old, Māngere)

On the whole, children who attended services were happy to go, with most of them acknowledging that their parents needed them to be cared for during these hours. Children's attitudes to OSS tended to depend on the programme that they attended; while some were fairly neutral, others were highly enthusiastic – reporting that they enjoyed the activities and the opportunity to spend additional time with friends. While some children were happy with the number of days/hours they attended, others would have preferred to spend less time.

Sometimes I like going, sometimes [I] don't, [I] just want to go home with mum and dad. (11-year-old, Christchurch)

Children identified a huge range of activities they'd like to do, from the fantastic (visiting the Queen and going to New York) to the feasible (arts and crafts, sporting activities, dance and learning different languages). As indicated earlier, many shared the views of their parents and were interested in life skills and recreational activities.

I would like them to organise cool things to do like cooking, art, flax weaving and learn a new language. (12-year-old, Petone)

Computer games, dancing, soccer, movies, horse riding, visiting whānau elsewhere. (Group of Whangārei children)

Someone famous could come and teach us what they have a passion for, what they want to be when they grow up. (11-year-old, Christchurch)

Children also made it clear that having family and friends around them was important. When asked who should run services or where they should be, children often mentioned people and places they knew. A number of children also expressed a wish to be at home rather than attending services.

[School-holiday programme] would be cool to do for only one week not two because you still need time with your family. (Group of children from Warkworth)

Some parents talked about feeling guilty that they weren't able to be home for their children, especially during long school-holiday periods.

THE NEED FOR AGE-APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES AND PROVISION

The inability of services to cater to the needs of children of different ages was widely reported. Older children (nine or 10 years and above) were perceived as being particularly affected – with a lack of available services (especially for children aged 12 to 13) or a lack of appropriate services (for example, after-school services branded with childish names that did not appeal to older children). Conversely, in some areas, parents talked of programmes not being willing to take children aged under seven years.

Many parents talked about the importance of having challenging, appealing services for their older children, in order to keep them engaged with the community and the educational sector in a positive, constructive way. Without such services, parents feared the possibility of children getting into trouble, and worried about keeping track of their whereabouts. In order to engage older children, parents suggested that children aged 10 years and older be put into separate groups, and for activities to be tailored to challenge them (physical outdoor activities and mentoring from older students were mentioned).

Younger children also needed special consideration – with very young children needing more opportunities for rest and relaxation after long hours at school. Prevention of bullying was mentioned as another reason to keep older children and younger children separate.

In contrast to this, two groups of Māori parents talked about the importance of not splitting older and younger children. They felt that having children of all age groups together allowed for better, more culturally appropriate social development. In particular, it would allow the Māori concepts of tuakana and teina (older and younger siblings or whānau) to come into play – whereby older children have a responsibility for the younger ones, and the younger ones can learn from their elders.

Tuakana/teina concept of older children looking after younger [is] an important value. (Whangārei)

The lack of care for children aged over 13 was a concern for many parents, an issue that was also raised in a previous Families Commission consultation (*What Makes Your Family Tick?*). Although children are legally old enough to be left on their own from the age of 14, many parents did not think that their children were necessarily mature enough to be left alone at this age. On the contrary, many parents thought that it was around this age that children needed to be in supervised environments to keep them out of trouble or potentially dangerous situations.

Nothing formal for older children (11, 12 and older) – there are no options for them. (Te Puke)

Concern about the lack of care for teenagers, OSCAR care not 'cool', seen [as being] for little kids, [I] see groups of teenagers wandering the street. (Nelson)

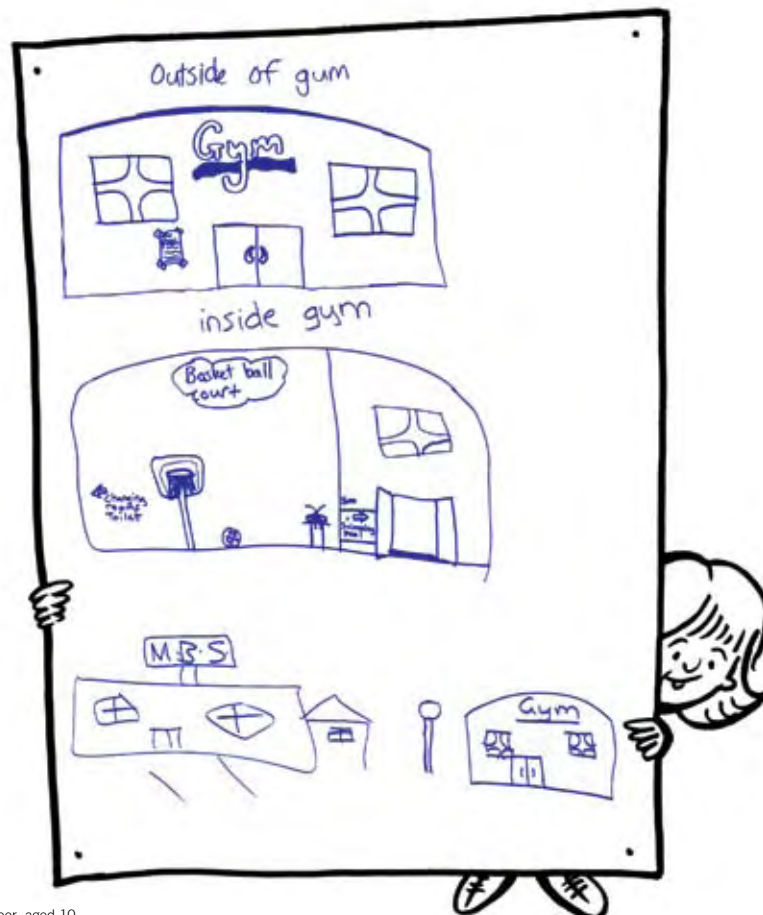
As mentioned previously, concern about care for older children (14 and above) was particularly relevant for parents of children with special needs, as many still had very real care needs (not just supervision needs) at this age.

SUMMARY

There is increasing evidence that for children to experience positive outcomes, OSS must offer more than just basic physical and emotional safety (Ministry of Women's Affairs 2006). The provision of a range of enriching, educational and recreational experiences would help to engage children and address parents' concerns about the quality of care provided in OSS.

This chapter presented strong evidence that the development of OSS needs to have a much more purposeful direction than simply 'babysitting' services offering care and safety for children. While parents and children saw time-out and relaxation as an essential part of services, they also wanted a good range of activities to be available.

Parents expressed a strong preference for their children to be learning and extending themselves, but in quite different ways from the strict educational focus of school. Parents talked of wanting their children to engage in fun, stimulating activities that they might not otherwise get the opportunity to do. Cultural activities were identified as important for the Māori, Pacific and refugee parents; and age-appropriate activities were identified as being important to attract older children. At the heart of both parental and children's preferences, is that children enjoy themselves, be given a chance to have some down time and have real choices about what they do.



Amber, aged 10

CHAPTER SEVEN

formal oss – quality of services

This chapter discusses parents' and carers' ideas on the quality of OSS. When asked to design their ideal future services, one of the key questions at the consultation meetings was, "Are there any quality issues which need to be taken account of?" The Couch also asked whether or not OSS programmes should be regularly assessed to ensure the quality of care they provided. Concerns about the quality of existing services were consistently raised at public meetings and were identified by almost a quarter of Couch respondents (22 percent had doubts about quality and level of supervision in OSS services).

While some parents had a lot of ideas about quality, for others, things were much more straightforward – they simply wanted their child to be happy.

If children [are] happy at the end of the day [we] know it's good. (Nelson)

The quality of such programmes is pivotal [but] I do not equate quality to formal education... I equate it to warm, caring environments where kids are treasured and encouraged to try out new activities, but also left to rest and relax appropriately. (Couch)

At consultation meetings, parents most commonly raised issues about the quality of staff and supervision levels, the quality of facilities and the activities offered for children at OSS. Parents talked of services with high child-to-staff ratios as being undesirable and unsafe for their children. Safety was a core issue for parents and carers. A consistent message from consultation meetings was the need for staff to undergo police checks to ensure they had no convictions indicating they should not be alone with children. For most parents, this was a bottom line that should apply to all staff including permanent staff, volunteers and people brought in for special activities. Some parents also gave anecdotes about children going missing between school and centre-based care. This was seen as a serious safety issue and there was discussion about the need for strict policies to be developed to prevent this happening.

The need for children to have some sense of autonomy and choice was emphasised by many, as was the opportunity for children to engage in age-appropriate activities and rest (if needed).²² Parents also wanted a degree of input into the design of programmes, asking that services be tailored to local needs, ideas and aspirations. Some parents using services complained that providers did not listen to their feedback or seek their input; while others stated that they simply did not know what their children did at services with activities seeming to bear little resemblance to published brochures.

Trust in the provider is really important. This means that providers need to be open to feedback, to listen to parents and children and to undertake ongoing review to improve the service. (Wanganui)

The provision of food was something that most parents expected as part of a quality service – with many specifying the type of food that needed to be provided. Muslim refugee parents wanted halal food provided, while other parents talked more generally about nutritious, healthy, filling food being available at appropriate times. Both children and adults suggested the preparation of food as a good activity for OSS. One group of children, who attended an out of school programme, pleaded for more variety in what was given to them – asking for fruit and vegetables in addition to sandwiches.

This chapter goes on to more fully discuss a range of issues regarding staff training and qualifications, staff characteristics and the need for quality standards and monitoring.

²² These topics were discussed in the previous chapter, Programme content and purpose.

STAFF TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

According to some commentators, the most important ingredient of quality OSS is the on-site staff. The importance lies in 'how' the programme is done rather than in 'what' is done (Meagher-Lundberg and Podmore 1998). If this is true, then the quality of the staff is crucial to the running of a quality service. The overwhelming impression given by most parents is that, on the whole, they are unhappy with the way OSS is staffed.

At the current after-school care there is not enough supervision – sometimes there is just chaos when I pick them up. (Petone)

Concerns about 'bad discipline' – lack of adequate supervision. Too few adult supervisors for children. Lack of leadership and the right staff with the skills and passion for the job. (Wanganui)

I'm not going to pay someone to watch my kids watch TV. You have to be careful with the lack of quality care. (Te Atatū)

Staff qualifications are a highly visible indicator of quality. Almost all parents and carers expressed a desire for trained, qualified staff to be involved in running OSS. A total of 88 percent of Couch members agreed or strongly agreed that at least some OSS staff should be qualified or trained. Some parents had very high expectations about the level of qualifications required, while others had much lower expectations.

Trained staff are essential. Trained on the same level as early childhood educators. (Te Puke)

At least one person must hold a diploma of teaching. (Petone)

If I'm paying for it, I want them to be qualified. (Dunedin)

Trained staff, eg first-aid, OSCAR certificate. (Christchurch)

In terms of specific qualifications, parents mentioned child development and teaching qualifications, training to deal with children with special needs, specially designed OSS qualifications and outdoor education qualifications. The training that parents thought staff needed was to a large degree dependent on the age/type of children they would be supervising (for example, child development was seen as more important for younger children). Training requirements were also dependent on the type of activity staff would be supervising. Musical competence or experience of sports coaching was seen to be adequate for staff brought in to run specific activities. On the other hand, an understanding of the school curriculum and tutoring was important for staff supervising homework. Some knowledge of child psychology and mental health issues was important to a number of parents.

That they had some training around issues such as abuse/mental health so they could be aware of and know how to spot/manage/refer/deal with anything that may be going on for the child. (Couch)

They should be trained in how to look after children physically, mentally and emotionally. (Māngere)

Very few parents were aware of the OSS training that is now available to staff.²³ It was also clear that some parents and carers had higher expectations regarding staff training and qualifications than others. Past experience of services involving inexperienced staff or volunteers influenced the extent to which parents and carers were comfortable with different levels or types of supervision. Most did, however,

²³ Namely, a Certificate in Out-of-School Care and Recreation provided by the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. OSCAR Foundation advisors also run in-house training sessions for OSS workers in their area.

see the value of having some lesser trained staff, including volunteers, working alongside more highly qualified staff.

A mixture of qualified (in early childhood) and volunteer staff. The volunteers could even be student teachers. (Māngere)

There should be one person who is qualified, but the rest could be volunteers – I'd love to do that for one day a week. (Grandmother, Dunedin)

Suggestions regarding appropriate volunteers or additional staff included grandparents and parents who were willing and able to contribute to these services, as well as students or young people in need of work experience.

An aunty or grandmother type – that would be great. (Whangārei)

Qualifications? No, not needed. Just need to understand kids, like us, mothers. (Refugee)

I am fed up with the assumption that caregivers need formal qualifications – what about the value of practical experience caring for one's own children? (Couch)

Often young people with an interest in children are passionate and full of energy, they tend to be very creative in creating interesting activities. (Nelson)

Some parents and carers saw young people as a group that could bring energy and new ideas to OSS. Other parents, however, were adamant that it was not appropriate to use young people. The use of inexperienced or less qualified staff without adequate supervision from more highly qualified staff was a concern for many parents.

[I] would prefer older staff with a bit of experience – not 20-year-olds... I don't want [just] any Joe Bloggs taking care of our kids. (Dunedin)



Anaru, aged 9

In situations where volunteers were used, parents said there still needed to be some kind of basic standards or guidelines for the selection of staff and for their day-to-day interactions with the children. The acceptability of having a range of staff usually came with the proviso that all staff should receive relevant on-the-job training – first aid was commonly mentioned, as well as ensuring staff had a basic understanding of safety procedures and the purpose of the programme.

Volunteers would be okay too, but they should get training too. Don't want them giving the kids inconsistent programmes. (Invercargill)

However, concern was voiced by a few that things should not be too formal and complicated, as this could result in fewer people wanting to work in OSS.

The services should be run by trained staff, but the training should not be so much and so complicated that it would put off potential staff. (Māngere)

It would be good to have volunteers, but only as extra people and not as part of the main group of staff and, again, the training for them should not be to the level that they get put off by the whole thing. (Māngere)

The vast majority of parents believed that in order to get better quality staff for OSS, good levels of pay would be necessary. Parents understood that this may result in services being more expensive and expected that this was a cost that should be met by government.

Staff should be paid, not volunteers. It's a good incentive for good staff. (Refugee)

To get quality staff, you have to pay quality pay. (Wanganui)

Parents who wanted to be able to use subsidies to pay family or friends for the provision of informal services did not hold the same expectations about training and qualifications as parents did for formal services.

Children with special needs/disabilities – staff training and qualifications

Lack of appropriately trained staff was seen as a key barrier to families with children with special needs having access to existing OSS. In particular, there was a perception that staff did not understand the implications of many conditions or impairments and, as a result, parents felt unable to trust providers with their children and their care needs. High staff turnover greatly contributed to this problem.

A perception that most staff did not have the necessary skills or knowledge to deal with children with special needs was common. Parents talked of communication difficulties involving children with sensory impairments or an autistic condition. These communication difficulties could be between the children with special needs and staff and/or with other children. Another concern was that some providers did not take severe food allergies seriously enough (younger children especially require extra supervision and careful vigilance).

Access is impossible. [I] can't put [son] in any regular after-school or school-holiday programme – these programmes do not have any people trained in special needs. (Couch)

It isn't possible to find such programmes in our small town that have knowledge about and can cater for my autistic son. (Couch)

Most out of school services are not qualified to look after a special needs kid – I'm too scared to use out of school care. Some activities may be too dangerous for special needs kids. (Warkworth)

Very little understanding or appreciation of dealing with children with ADHD or ADD and they are often victimised. (Couch)

As OSS stands, staffing issues are a major barrier to families who have children with special needs.

CHARACTERISTICS OF OSS STAFF

The fact that the majority of parents were happy to have a combination of highly qualified and lesser-trained staff reflects the fact that most did not see the purpose of OSS as purely educational. Parents wanted their children to be having fun and enjoying their break from school. As a consequence, the personal characteristics of staff were seen as vitally important.

Parents talked at length about the skills and qualities they would like staff to have. Key characteristics included having life experience and a love of working with children. Parents emphasised the need to be able to trust staff.

I prefer people who know kids and understand them... mainly just to listen to the kids. Kei te awahi ratou me whangai hoki. (Couch)

It changes on different days – one day you need to be like a teacher, one day you need to be like a parent. You really need a super nanny. (Invercargill)

I know this sounds dumb, but I want someone warm and cuddly. Having love and compassion and being sensitive to their feelings. (Te Puke)

Someone who is dynamic, understanding, innovative and creative. (Whangārei)

Parents also talked about wanting specially skilled people brought in occasionally for particular activities, such as music, drama or art.

In addition to this, some parents made the point that there should be more men involved in OSS. According to these parents, many children did not have enough positive male role models in their lives, and there were now too few men involved in children's education.

I lament the lack of men in the childcare field... this leaves play centres, kindergartens, schools and other similar facilities staffed almost entirely by women. Where are the strong male role models for our children (boys and girls) to look up to? (Couch)

Parents from a minority ethnic background commonly talked about the importance of staff, or volunteers such as grandparents, coming from a similar ethnic background to their children. This would help to overcome language difficulties and provide a culturally appropriate atmosphere and activities.

YMCA employed ethnic youth, which encouraged [ethnic] mothers to enrol. (Refugee)

It should be a mix of ethnic people plus Kiwis. Ethnic people who can understand our language and our background. If it was just Kiwi staff it would be hard, not so good. (Refugee)

[Ideal staff would be] Samoan grandparents, Samoan people with teaching experience, wives of church ministers [and/or] Samoan people who have the time to work on programmes like these. (Samoan group, Christchurch)

Good to have volunteers, always welcome – mamas and papas [elders], mapu [youth] and kopu tangata [family]. All bring different skills, ie costume-making culture, men's drums, making of umu. (Cook Island group, Christchurch)

Similar sentiments were expressed by a group of Māori parents at an additional Nelson meeting.

QUALITY STANDARDS AND MONITORING

A number of parents were surprised (and extremely unhappy) to learn that not all services are regulated or assessed for quality and safety.²⁴ These parents had assumed that standards for OSS were basically the same as those for the early childhood education (ECE) sector, and that staffing, facilities and activities were highly regulated and closely monitored.

Parents were unanimous in wanting OSS to be held in an appropriate environment – one that was clean, warm and safe, and with facilities and equipment appropriate for children of different ages. This included having games, educational material, sports equipment and resources for doing homework. Parents also expected that services would comply with relevant health and safety regulations, rather than having to identify any problems or hazards themselves.

Government legislation and standards need to apply to OSS. (Māngere)

Assurance [wanted] that OSS was OSH safe, hygienic and clean with policies in place to cover discipline, bullying, fire safety, safety of play equipment etc. (Dunedin)

There should be standards for facilities at the venue – kitchens, toilets, child-friendly facilities... fenced and above all accessible. (Hastings)

Parents discussed a range of issues regarding the day-to-day running of OSS programmes. An idea mentioned by a number of parents was to have agreed codes of conduct or clear policies that detailed staff members' roles and responsibilities, discipline procedures and ways to avoid bullying.

There should be a national standard and code of practice for all of the individuals and organisations who are running out of school services in the future. (Māngere)

A total of 93 percent of Couch respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that OSS programmes should be regularly assessed to ensure the quality of care they provided.

There should be a national governing body which administers the operation of out of school services. There is too much variation in services, quality of service and cost. (Couch)

At the public meetings, many parents talked about the desirability of having some kind of assessment or audit process to report on the general quality of services, including staff ratios and the activities that were being offered. A number of parents expressed a desire for assessment against agreed national standards, so that parents could be confident that their children were attending a quality service, no matter where they lived.

²⁴ As outlined in the Policy chapter, approved OSCAR programmes must meet CYF approval standards for basic health and safety, staff/volunteer management and financial accountability.

Services should be somehow audited by people who know what's good for kids, so that one programme is as good as the next. (Hastings)

There should be independent ERO [Education Review Office] style assessment. (Invercargill)

[I] want services to be audited, in a similar model to that used for ECE. (Wanganui).

Only a small number of parents expressed concern that the sector not be over-regulated.

I also worry about the impact on these services if there is a cumbersome auditing/checking-up type process – maybe making them too hemmed in or too much trouble to run. (Couch)

My fear is that some services provided by government or civic agencies are required to follow too much PC crap to be of any use to our family. I'd want kids to get good commonsense care and activities, without all the fluff of OSH, cultural, and other PC stuff. (Couch)

All in all, the majority of parents and carers preferred that services be regularly monitored and that results be publicly available so that service quality was more transparent.

SUMMARY

The extent to which parents are willing to trust and therefore use OSS is integrally bound to their view of service quality. Included in parents' basic expectations are that their children enjoy their time at OSS, that children and parents have a degree of choice and input into programmes and that good food is available.

Staffing is particularly crucial to parents' perceptions of quality. Parents want to be assured that suitable staff are employed to look after their children. They want staff to be police vetted, trained in relevant areas and for some staff to hold higher-level qualifications.

In addition to this, parents want clear policies (about discipline, conduct and safety procedures) and audit processes to report on the quality of services, including staff ratios and the activities that are being offered.

Improving quality standards, especially with regard to staffing, will impact on the levels of pay for OSS workers. It is important that any move to improve quality doesn't negatively impact on the supply of quality services, or increase costs to families.

CHAPTER EIGHT

conclusions

The provision of OSS can benefit families in a number of ways. Research shows that by offering children a range of enrichment activities and experiences, quality OSS can affect children's health, social, behavioural and educational development (Ministry of Women's Affairs 2006). At a basic level, access to quality OSS also ensures that children are safe and well-supervised when their parents are unable to look after them. For parents, the provision of affordable, accessible and appropriate OSS helps to remove barriers to participation in paid work and to ensure that families are able to access quality care for their children without placing living standards at risk. OSS is also able to provide useful support to families with challenging care responsibilities, study or voluntary work commitments. It is the Families Commission's view that all of these aims are important and that a well-developed OSS sector needs to pursue a range of objectives for the wellbeing of children, parents and families as a whole.

The Government's *Choices for Living, Caring and Working* Action Plan aims to ensure parents and carers have better access to quality, affordable and age-appropriate care for their school-aged children. Such services should be reliable, at convenient locations and accessible to all school-aged children whose families want them to participate (New Zealand Government 2006). A key focus of this work is the development of an OSS Five-Year Action Plan, for consideration in mid-2007. This report is intended to stimulate public debate and influence the nature and content of the Action Plan.

New Zealand's OSS sector is at present relatively underdeveloped. Wilhelm Adema, from the Social Policy Division of the OECD, has described OSS in New Zealand as being "more or less in its infancy" (Adema 2006:54). Government investment in childcare is low by international standards,²⁵ and New Zealand families face significantly higher childcare costs than those in many other OECD countries (Bradshaw and Finch 2002; OECD 2004a, b). The OECD (2004b) has recommended that New Zealand increase its investment in OSS, and suggested that making better use of schools would provide a cost-effective and convenient way of improving supply.

Families' care preferences and needs depend on a wide range of factors, including the age and number of children, parents' partnership status and nature of employment. Other considerations include caring commitments within the family, whether any of the children have special needs, cultural background of the family and where the family lives. Accordingly, families spoke about many different care solutions for their school-aged children. The development of strong, appropriate policy needs to reflect this diversity, and be flexible enough to cater for a range of situations.

Of the parents and carers who took part in the consultation, many more wanted to use OSS than currently did. Those who did, told us they face significant barriers to accessing services. Many parents and carers found themselves in one of the following situations:

- > Some were having to pay for an expensive and/or potentially inadequate service (concerns included unsuitable hours, expensive transport and low quality of the services).
- > Some parents were not taking on paid employment or were modifying hours of employment (working part-time, or juggling hours between more than one caregiver) to care for their own children.

²⁵ According to Adema, our spending is low compared to other OECD countries – 2004/5 \$7.8 million to providers and \$4.3 million to parents (Adema 2006).

- > Some were having to rely on informal arrangements. Most parents and carers who said that they had to use informal arrangements – as opposed to those who chose to – found these arrangements to be makeshift, stressful, burdensome and often unreliable. Some parents reported that they left children unsupervised or in other potentially unsafe situations due to a lack of options.

Enabling these families to have real choices – and providing children with quality care options – will require substantial policy changes to increase the affordability, supply and quality of OSS in New Zealand. Government support for the development of the OSS sector is vital.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF OSS

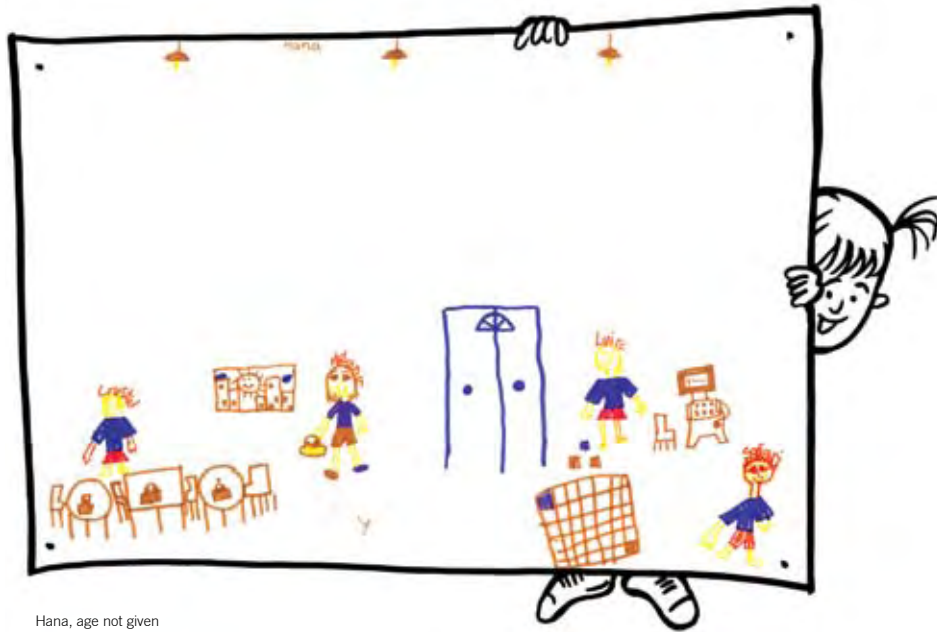
The following policy advice is based on the findings of our consultation with parents, carers and children. Conclusions are drawn from the views of the participants and shaped by our understanding of the New Zealand policy context, research literature and international policy developments. We did not talk to OSS providers, so their views are not reflected in this report. The MSD has consulted the OSS sector, and the Families Commission recognises that working with OSS providers will be critical to the success of any reforms.

Major government investment is required to reduce the cost of OSS and a new universal funding model should be developed

Families say the most important priority for the development of OSS is to make services more affordable. The high cost of school-holiday programmes, in particular, is difficult for many families. To address the cost of OSS, government investment needs to increase substantially. The current model of funding OSS provision in New Zealand should also be revisited. The dual system of (low-level) funding to establish and maintain services through OSS provider grants, combined with a tiered, income-tested OSCAR subsidy for families is overly complex and difficult for parents and carers to navigate. Take-up of the OSCAR subsidy is low. Many parents and carers express strongly negative views about the administration of the OSCAR subsidy by Work and Income and say an alternative mechanism for funding OSS should be developed. This would avoid the situation in which families have to negotiate access to the OSCAR subsidy through Work and Income for a payment that is paid directly to OSS providers on their behalf.

The current funding system is also unfair to families. Many families are not able to access 'approved' services that are linked to an OSCAR subsidy. Other families who can access OSCAR services remain unable to afford the cost of these programmes because the level of subsidy is too low, or the family is above the income threshold for receiving the OSCAR subsidy. The cost of school-holiday programmes is a particular problem for all types of families, severely impacting on access to holiday programmes. Families with two or more children face particular cost barriers.

The Families Commission recommends changing the way services are funded, from subsidies linked to employment status and individual family circumstances, to a universal funding solution related to hours of provision. Services should receive adequate funding to enable OSS to be offered to all families for a minimal cost. This approach is used in Sweden, where families are required to pay no more than three percent of their total income (for the first child, and less for subsequent children) for OSS.



Hana, age not given

A universal approach would allow children of parents and carers, who are not in paid employment, easier access to OSS, particularly during the school-holiday period but also when they may need occasional care, such as to attend job interviews and doctor's appointments. In this consultation, single parents on the DPB and grandparent carers who were not in paid work were concerned that their children's ability to access stimulating, enriching and fun activities during school-holiday periods was limited. Removing work-test requirements would also mean that full-time family carers of children with special needs would be able to use OSS for respite purposes.

Increased government investment should begin now. During a move to a universal approach to OSS funding, an interim solution would be to increase government assistance to OSS providers in a series of stages, in order to reduce parental fees over time. Until increases in direct funding result in a substantial reduction in parental fees, providers should continue to receive higher levels of funding for children from low- to middle-income families who use their services. However, responsibility for accessing this funding should rest with OSS providers rather than individual families. This would substantially simplify the system for families. A system for recording accurate information about the fees charged by OSS providers needs to be put in place to monitor progress towards more affordable OSS.

The supply of centre-based OSS needs to significantly increase

This consultation found that a lack of OSS options (both approved OSCAR programmes and unapproved programmes) was a problem for many families. Many families had particular difficulties getting access to school-holiday services. A significant increase in funding to the OSS sector as a whole should result in the increased supply and availability of quality services, both before- and after-school and during school holidays. Ways to provide new services should be actively explored, in partnership with existing and potential OSS providers.

Much greater effort is required to provide parents and carers with information and advice about local OSS services. There is a need for better co-ordination of information about availability of local services, costs, hours and activities. A strategy for disseminating this information is also required.

As a priority, quality services available at times and places that suit local families need to be established and maintained. Providing funding designed to cover the hours that local families require services would enable these services to remain open for longer hours in areas where shift and/or non-standard hours are common. Support for small-scale services in rural areas is another important priority. Inadequate hours of OSS provision appear to be a particular problem during school-holiday periods and providers should be encouraged to provide full-day provision at this time.

Services need to be provided in locations that are convenient for the families who want to use them. Transport to and from services was identified as a major barrier for a number of families, especially in cases where parents or carers did not drive or own a car. Families gave strong feedback that services need to be conveniently located. In most situations, the preferred location was schools. Encouraging schools to offer some form of supervision for children (from around 7.30am or 8am) would solve many families' needs for before-school care. In order for the supply of school-based OSS to be increased, there needs to be appropriate funding incentives and guidance to support schools to directly run or host OSS provision on school grounds.

Schools were not necessarily seen as the best location for families who preferred services to be culturally specific. These families tended to suggest alternative venues, such as existing cultural centres, churches or marae. Funding incentives and support should also be available to providers who are able to supply appropriate services in these locations.

Services should receive funding incentives to increase access for children with special needs

Inclusion funding should be made available to centre-based services to ensure that children with special needs or disabilities can have access to services of their choice. Additional funding would need to be sufficient to cover the cost of any extra staff, necessary building modifications and/or special equipment.

Funding for OSS needs to be more flexible

Appropriate funding models and regulatory changes are required to support home-based care for families for whom centre-based services are inappropriate or inaccessible. Such circumstances would include families living in rural areas where centre-based care is not available or feasible; families with children with special needs that cannot be catered for at a centre; and families where the parent(s)' work hours cannot be met by centre-based services. Consideration should also be given to a means of registering friends and relatives as home-based carers so they can be eligible for some form of financial assistance, support and training.

The quality of OSS needs to improve and minimum standards should be introduced

Parents consistently raised concerns about the quality of existing OSS services. Parents' trust in OSS provision would be greatly enhanced if mandatory minimum standards were introduced for all services. Currently, New Zealand has no mandatory minimum standards for OSS. OSCAR-approved programmes meet basic requirements covering health and safety, staff/volunteer management and financial accountability, but unapproved programmes are entirely unregulated. Comprehensive, mandatory minimum standards apply in Australia, the United

Kingdom, the United States and Sweden for all types of services (except for home-based services in a family's own home).

Quality standards for centre-based services should encompass staff qualifications and training, supervision ratios of adults to children, policies covering staff and child behaviour, programme content and equipment, and premises. At present, there is no requirement in New Zealand for OSS staff to hold any qualifications. Parents expressed a strong desire for at least one supervisor to be qualified in an appropriate field related to working with children. It was believed that all staff involved in centre-based services should receive basic training covering programme objectives, policies and basic safety. Parents and carers also wanted all carers, including volunteers, involved in the provision of formal home-based or centre-based services to be police vetted. The development of a means for monitoring and assessment of quality standards within OSS programmes would also help to give parents peace of mind.

Parents also strongly believed that for services to be of good quality, they need to be offering more than just care (or 'babysitting'). Programmes need to offer a range of options offering children real choices between relaxing, fun, educational and recreational activities. In order to attract children and maintain attendance, activities need to be stimulating, culturally appropriate and age-appropriate. The majority of parents wanted homework to be completed at after-school care, but emphasised that it should only be a small part of the programme. School-holiday programmes were seen as an opportunity for activities that would offer more in-depth learning and achievement opportunities.

Many Māori, Pacific, migrant and refugee communities wanted culturally appropriate services to be available, run by staff from the same ethnic background as the children attending. Both Māori and Pacific parents suggested older community members as a good staffing option.

Moves to improve the quality of OSS provision have implications for the cost and supply of services. It is critical that any reforms are introduced in such a way that does not endanger existing services or discourage the development of new programmes. It is equally important that government assistance to the OSS sector is sufficient to meet the costs of implementing higher standards of OSS provision.

SUMMARY

This consultation found that significant improvements to the OSS sector are needed. Lack of appropriate, affordable and quality services means that a significant number of parents and carers do not have access to the formal childcare support they want and need for their school-aged children. Placing users at the centre of OSS policy reforms is critical. OSS policy and practice need to reflect the needs and preferences of families and provide opportunities to involve parents, carers and children in the future development of the OSS sector.

REFERENCES

- Adema, W. (2006). 'Towards Coherent Care and Education Support Policies for New Zealand Families'. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 28:46-76.
- Barker, J., Smith, F., Morrow, V., Weller, S., Hey, V., & Harwin, J. (2003). *The Impact of Out of School Care: A qualitative study examining the views of children, families and playworkers*. Department for Education and Skills, Research Report RR446. Accessed 29 September 2006, from <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR446.pdf>
- Beckett M. K., Hawken, A., & Jackowitz, A. (2002). *Accountability for After-School Care: Devising standards and measuring adherence to them*. Rand Corporation, Labor and Population Program, Santa Monica. Accessed 26 September 2006, from www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1411/
- Bradshaw J. & Finch N., (2002). *A Comparison of Child Benefit Packages in 22 Countries*. Research Report 174, Department of Work and Pensions, London. Accessed 26 September 2006, from <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrep174.asp>
- CAAL Ad Hoc Committee on *Work-Life Balance*. (2002). *Work-Life Balance: A report to Ministers responsible for labour in Canada*. Accessed 26 September 2006, from http://www.dsc.gc.ca/asp/gateway.asp?hr=en/lp/spila/wlb/rtm/14table_of_contents.shtml&hs=wnc
- Child, Youth and Family. (2005). *Standards for Approval for Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) Programmes*. Child, Youth and Family, Wellington.
- Cooper, H., Valentine, J. C., Nye, B., & Lindsay, J. J. (1999). 'Relationships Between Five After-School Activities and Academic Achievement'. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 91(2):369-378.
- CTU. (2002). *Thirty Families. Interim Report of the Thirty Families Project: The impact of work hours on New Zealand workers and their families*, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, Wellington. Accessed 26 September 2006, from <http://www.union.org.nz/files/THIRTY.pdf>
- Department of Labour. (1999). *Childcare Families and Work: A survey of early childhood education and care arrangements for children*. Department of Labour, Wellington. Accessed 26 September 2006, from http://www.nacew.govt.nz/Publications/labour_report.pdf#search=%22childcare%20survey%22
- Department of Labour. (2003). *Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Work-Life Balance in New Zealand: A qualitative study*. Department of Labour, Wellington. Accessed 26 September 2006, from <http://www.dol.govt.nz/PDFs/WLB%20UMR%20research.pdf#search=%22Dol%20perceptions%20and%20attitudes%20towards%22>
- Department of Labour. (2004). *Achieving Balanced Lives and Employment: What New Zealanders are saying about work-life balance*. Department of Labour, Wellington. Accessed 26 September 2006, from <http://www.dol.govt.nz/PDFs/wlb-consultation-summary.pdf#search=%22achieving%20balanced%20lives%22>
- Department of Labour. (2006). *Work-Life Balance in New Zealand: A snapshot of employee and employer attitudes and experiences*. Department of Labour, Wellington. Accessed 26 September 2006, from <http://www.dol.govt.nz/worklife/wlb-snapshot.pdf>
- EEO Trust. (2005). *Parenting and Paid Work*. Equal Opportunity Trust, Wellington. Accessed 26 September 2006, from <http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/content/docs/reports/EEO%20Trust%20Working%20and%20Parenting%20Report.doc>
- Huang, D., Gribbons, B., Kyung Sung Kim, Lee, C., & Baker, E. L. (2000). *A Decade of Results. The impact of the LA's BEST after school enrichment program on subsequent achievement and performance*. UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation (CSE), California.
- Little, P., & Harris, E. (2003). 'A Review of Out of School Time Program Quasi-Experimental and Experimental Evaluation Results'. *Out of School Time Evaluation Snapshot No 1* Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP). Accessed 1 November 2006, from <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources/snapshot1.html>
- Malcolm, H., Wilson, V., & Davidson, J. (2002). *Out of School Care: A brief review of the literature*. The Scottish Council for Research in Education, for the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED), Scotland. Accessed 25 January 2006, from www.scre.ac.uk/resreport/rr106
- Meagher-Lundberg, P., & Podmore, V. (1998). *Out of School Care: A review of quality provision*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Wellington.
- Ministry of Social Development. (2004). *Source Data for the 2004 Living Standards Survey*. Unpublished.
- Ministry of Social Development. (2005). *Work, Family and Parenting: Research findings*. Draft report prepared by Colmar Brunton for MSD, Wellington. Accessed 26 September 2006, from www.msd.govt.nz/documents/work-areas/csre/work-family-parenting-report.doc
- Ministry of Women's Affairs. (2006). *Outcomes Associated with Out of School Services: Conclusions drawn from the literature*. Ministry of Women's Affairs, New Zealand. Unpublished draft.
- Murrow, K., Dowden, A., Kalafetalis, E., & Fryer, K. – BRC Marketing and Social Research. (2005). *OSCAR Programmes: Evaluation of the Ministry of Social Development's package of assistance*. Prepared for Centre for Social Research and Evaluation, Ministry of Social Development, Wellington.
- New Zealand Government. (2006). *Choices for Living, Caring and Working: A ten-year plan to improve the caring and employment choices available to parents and carers*. New Zealand Government, Wellington.
- OECD. (2002). *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling work and family life, Volume 1, Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands*. OECD, Paris.
- OECD. (2004a). *Reconciling Earning and Caring: Social policies for working families: Summary and conclusions*. DELSA/ELSA (2004)8. OECD, Paris.

OECD. (2004b). *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling work and family life: New Zealand, Portugal and Switzerland*. OECD, Paris.

OECD. (2005a). *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling work and family life, Volume 4, Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom*. OECD, Paris.

OECD. (2005b). *Babies and Bosses: Balancing work and family life*. Policy Brief. OECD, Paris.

Robertson, J. (2006). *Parental Decision Making in Relation to the Use of Out of School Services*. Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families, Victoria University, Wellington. Unpublished.

Ryan, P. M. (1995). *The Reed Dictionary of Modern Māori*. Reed Books, Auckland.

Sanderson, I., & Percy-Smith, J. (1995). *The Out of School Childcare Grant Initiative: An interim evaluation*. Research Series No. 44. Department for Education and Employment, London.

Seth-Purdie, R., Cameron, A., & Luketina, F. (2006). *What Makes Your Family Tick? Families with dependent children – Successful Outcomes Project, Report on public consultation*. Families Commission, Wellington.

Stevens, K., Dickson, M., & Poland, M., with Prasad, R. (2005). *Focus on Families: Reinforcing the importance of family*. Families Commission, Wellington.

Talbot, J., & Graczer, P. (2006). *Literature Review. International models of out of school services (OSS)*. Ministry of Social Development, Wellington.

The After-School Corporation (TASC). (2004). *Quality, Scale and Effectiveness in After-School Programs*. TASC, US. Accessed 15 February 2006, from www.tascorp.org/publications/catalog/qseas/Binder1.pdf



APPENDIX ONE

INFORMATION ABOUT INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATION MEETINGS

A total of 19 consultation meetings were held, including 13 public meetings and six additional meetings targeting specific population groups.

The public meetings were all advertised as widely as possible in order to attract the maximum possible number of parents, carers and children. For each meeting, advertisements were placed in local newspapers, followed up by articles in local and community newspapers. Local hosts worked to ensure that information about individual meetings was widely disseminated. They distributed invitations

and posters through a range of community networks, including schools, community noticeboards (including supermarkets, churches and GP waiting rooms) and placed ads on community radio stations. In addition to this, local hosts distributed personal invitations through their own networks to personally target families.

The additional meetings targeted specific participants through host organisations' networks and were not widely advertised.

The following two tables summarise the consultation meetings held around the country. Further details about each location and host are listed (geographically, north to south) after the tables.

TABLE TWO: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETINGS

PUBLIC MEETINGS					
REGION	DATE	HOST ORGANISATION(S)	ADULTS	CHILDREN	TARGET GROUPS
Whangārei	1 August	He Puna Marama Trust	15	8	General public; Māori
Warkworth	25 July	Homebuilders Family Services	37	24	General public; rural families
Auckland	2 August	Te Atatū Intermediate	11	1	General public
Auckland	7 August	Māngere Bridge School	23	15	General public
Pukekohe	3 August	Family Support Centre	14	11	General public; rural families
Te Puke	23 August	Fairhaven School	16	6	General public; seasonal workers
Hastings	9 August	Family Works	15	2	General public; shift, seasonal workers
Wanganui	19 July	Wanganui Community House	22	8	General public
Petone – Wellington	25 July	Petone Central School	11	9	General public
Nelson	17 August	Māori Women's Welfare League Family Works	34	6	General public; Māori
Christchurch	7 August	Addington Primary School Tagata Atumotu Trust	42	7	General public; Pacific families
Dunedin	26 July	Methodist Connect	18	15	General public
Invercargill	27 July	Southland Multi-Nations Waihopai Rūnaka Parent to Parent	36	25	General public; Māori, ethnic community, families with special needs

TABLE THREE: SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION MEETINGS

ADDITIONAL MEETINGS					
REGION	DATE	HOST ORGANISATION(S)	ADULTS	CHILDREN	TARGET GROUPS
Auckland	19 July	Grandparents Raising Grandchildren	15	0	Grandparent carers
Wellington – Refugees	10 August	Change Makers Group Inc.	18	6	Refugee families
Petone – Wellington	25 July	Petone Central School	0	24	Children
Nelson	18 August	Māori Women’s Welfare League	6	0	Māori
Christchurch	7 August	Addington Primary School Tagata Atumotu Trust	0	15	Children
Dunedin	26 July	Methodist Connect	16	0	Second-chance learners attending adult education

WHANGĀREI

Host organisation – He Puna Marama Trust

He Puna Marama Trust is a charitable trust formed in October 1997 to provide services to Māori whānau and their children. The vision of the Trust is to provide educational services to Māori whānau through a Māori kaupapa-based medium. The Trust is also part of PPP (Promoting Participation Project), which is a project working with families in communities where the current level of participation in ECE is low. Local contractors work in communities alongside families so that they learn more about the value and importance of ECE. Contractors then help families to link up with ECE services. The Trust is also a PAFT (Parents as First Teachers) provider.

Whangārei is located in the far north of the North Island. It is a thriving urban centre servicing a large rural area.

WARKWORTH

Host organisation – Homebuilders Family Services

Homebuilders was established 16 years ago in Warkworth. It offers a wide range of programmes that include home-based social-work support for families

under stress, youth counselling, trauma/distress-related programmes for children, benefit advocacy, disability information service, parenting education programmes and a wide range of other courses collectively termed ‘Living Well’. Homebuilders Family Services also hosts the local Strengthening Families co-ordinator and is closely linked with other local agencies, such as the Refuge and local Stopping Violence programmes.

Warkworth is a small service town just under an hour north of Auckland. The town services the widespread North Rodney area, which is primarily a viticulture and horticulture district.

AUCKLAND – TE ATATŪ NORTH

Host organisation – Te Atatū Intermediate School

Te Atatū Intermediate School is centrally located in an area with many housing developments in progress. Te Atatū Intermediate recognises the importance of family and social issues and encourages community participation in its development. The school has a decile rating of 4²⁶ and does not offer any OSS.

The Te Atatū peninsula is an urban area in West Auckland, within Waitakere City.

²⁶ A school’s decile rating indicates the extent to which the school draws its students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 1 schools are the 10 percent of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities, whereas decile 10 schools are the 10 percent of schools with the lowest proportion of these students. A school’s decile does not indicate the overall socio-economic mix of the school. Census information is used to calculate the decile.

AUCKLAND – MĀNGERE BRIDGE

Host organisation – Māngere Bridge School

Māngere Bridge School is well supported by the community and is proactive in consulting with Māori and Pacific families. The school provides special programmes and services for children with special needs. The school has a decile rating of 3 and hosts an OSCAR-funded after-school programme.

Māngere Bridge Village is located on a peninsula in the Manukau Harbour, in Manukau City, South of Auckland.

AUCKLAND – MT ALBERT

(Additional meeting for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren)

Host organisation – Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG)

GRG is a national organisation representing grandparents and other carers responsible for raising grandchildren. Grandparents are most commonly involved in raising their grandchildren following some kind of family disturbance or disruption (including family violence, addiction or death) and in such situations usually have legal responsibility for raising their grandchildren. Grandchildren in these situations have often been exposed to trauma and as a consequence many have behavioural problems. Grandparents often end up caring for children following an intervention by CYF.

This was an additional meeting and was not publicly advertised. Grandparents were invited to this meeting using the networks of GRG's National Convenor. The meeting included grandparents who had exclusive, full-time responsibility for their grandchildren as well as some who provided regular care for their grandchildren.

PUKEKOHE

Host organisation – Family Support Centre, Pukekohe

The Family Support Centre in Pukekohe offers a range of services, including budgeting, counselling, transport by volunteer drivers and information about parenting education. The organisation has been long established and aims to enhance family wellbeing.

Pukekohe is a town servicing the rural Franklin district, less than an hour's drive south of Auckland.

TE PUKE

Host organisation – Fairhaven School

Fairhaven School is for Years 1-6 students and has a diverse ethnic population from the town's diverse labour force. The school serves as a learning and recreational focus for the community. The school has a decile rating of 4 and does not provide OSS.

Te Puke is a rural town within the Te Arawa rohe in the Bay of Plenty, located a short drive from the major centres of Tauranga, Rotorua and Whakatane.

HASTINGS

Host organisation – Family Works

Family Works is a service of Presbyterian Support East Coast. It works alongside families/whānau with children and young people to build strengths to ensure children are nurtured, young people are guided and adults are supported. Its work aims to promote sustainable, positive relationships within the family/whānau. Family Works services are focused around the key social issue of preventing or breaking inter-generational cycles of disadvantage so as to create long-term change.

Hastings is a city situated on the east coast of the North Island, servicing a rural area.

WANGANUI

Host organisation – Community House

Community House (Wanganui) is based in the centre of Wanganui. There are currently 18 community organisations housed in Community House and statistics show that more than 25 percent of Wanganui's population use Community House facilities through the various groups housed there. Community House also provides administrative services for many external community organisations in the Wanganui area through its central office. Community House produces and distributes a monthly newsletter *Com.Chat* on community issues to 430 organisations in and around the Wanganui region.

Wanganui is a city located in the lower central North Island.

PETONE

(Public meeting and additional meeting for children)

Host organisation – Petone Central School

Petone Central School has children from a range of ethnic backgrounds, including a high percentage of Māori and Pacific families. The school is decile 4 and has its own after-school programme, which is not OSCAR-funded.

Petone is a suburb within Hutt City, just north of Wellington.

WELLINGTON – REFUGEE FAMILIES

(Additional meeting for Wellington’s refugee community)

Host organisation – Change Makers Refugee Forum

Change Makers Refugee Forum is a relatively new group that manages most social and other matters relating to the refugee communities in Wellington. The group has been established as part of the Refugee Resettlement programme. The members of this group are community leaders of the diverse refugee groups within the Wellington region, and the advice obtained from other agencies and government departments is that effective engagement with the target communities will be achieved through working with Change Makers Refugee Forum. As English language proficiency is an issue for some members of the refugee community, the consultation questions were provided to the host organisation in advance and were translated and discussed with other members of the wider refugee communities.

This was an additional meeting and was not publicly advertised. Participants who could speak and understand English were targeted as attendees and they were encouraged to talk to their wider communities before attending. The Somalian, Sudanese, Ugandan, Assyrian, Zimbabwean and Iraqi communities were represented at the meeting.

NELSON

(Public meeting and additional meeting for Māori parents)

Host organisations – Māori Women’s Welfare League (MWWL), Whakatū branch, with assistance from Family Works

The consultation meetings were organised in conjunction with two hosts – primarily the MWWL with some assistance from Family Works.

The kaupapa for the MWWL is to work for Māori women and their families. The League promotes the health, culture, history and wellbeing of Māori. The MWWL works closely with the Government through formal programmes.

Family Works group, part of Presbyterian Support Services in Nelson, volunteered to help disseminate details of the consultation meetings to its networks within the community.

Nelson is a city located at the northern end of the South Island.

CHRISTCHURCH

(Public meeting and additional meeting for children)

Host organisations – Addington Primary School and Tagata Atumotu Trust (TAT)

The consultation meetings were organised with the help of two hosts – primarily Addington Primary School, supported by Tagata Atumotu Trust (TAT).

This school serves a culturally diverse community with a large number of Māori and Pacific students. The school has a conductive education unit to support students with physical disabilities and is committed to raising student achievement and providing a safe learning environment for all students. The school has a decile rating of 3, and has both an after-school and a school-holiday programme.

TAT is a Pacific Social Services provider in the Canterbury area and is governed by a Charitable Trust. The Trust is made up of representatives from the seven Pacific Island groups and provides social support and services to the Pacific people within the Christchurch area. The Trust also provides interpreting, translation and facilitation services to government agencies.

Christchurch is the largest city in the South Island.

DUNEDIN

(Public meeting and additional meeting for second-chance learners attending adult education)

Host organisation – Methodist Connect

Methodist Connect is affiliated with the Methodist Church but its work is non-religious. The organisation is well connected with local schools and the wider community and adopts a social justice perspective in its work. This work includes running one of two New Zealand-based Microsoft Unlimited Potential IT projects, a pre-school and nursery, adult education programmes and other programmes. It also runs an OSCAR programme called 'Walk Tall'.

Dunedin is the second largest city in the South Island, and is located towards the bottom of the island.

INVERCARGILL

Host organisations: three organisations shared hosting responsibilities equally.

Southland Multi-Nations

Southland Multi-Nations assists new migrants and refugees with settlement and provides a forum for people from different cultures to engage with one another. Through the organisation's membership, as many as 80 different cultures have been identified in the Southland region.

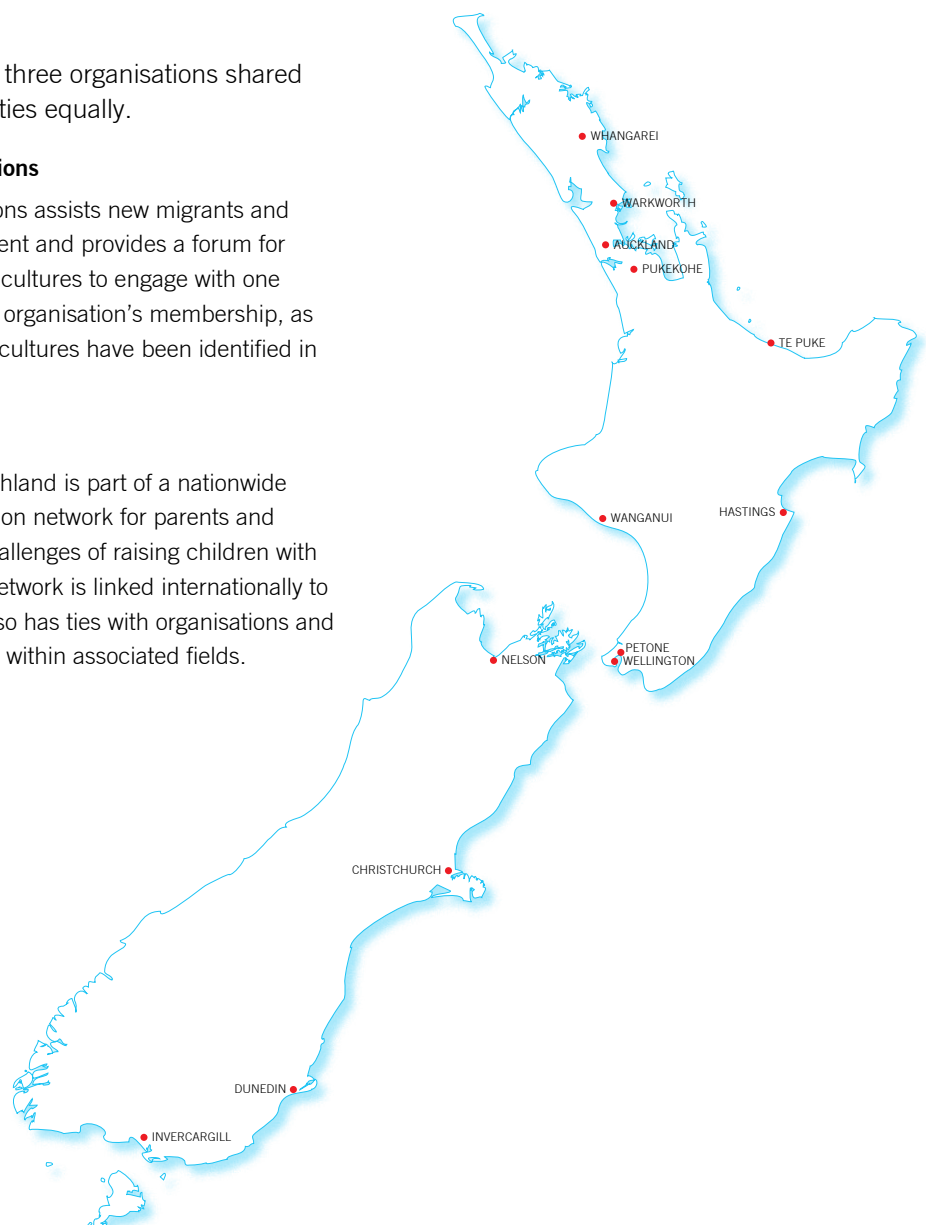
Parent to Parent

Parent to Parent Southland is part of a nationwide support and information network for parents and families facing the challenges of raising children with special needs. This network is linked internationally to similar groups and also has ties with organisations and professionals working within associated fields.

Waihopai Rūnaka

Waihopai Rūnaka is one of 18 members of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, a body corporate established by statute to (among other things) act as a representative body of Ngāi Tahu Whānui. This organisation is charged with looking after the social, cultural, health, educational and economic needs and aspirations of its members.

Invercargill is New Zealand's southernmost city, situated by the south coast of the South Island.



APPENDIX TWO

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Below are the questions used at the consultation meetings (both public and additional). Each meeting was run by a facilitator, and questions were asked in a variety of ways: verbally, using flip charts, and, for question three, questions were written on cards for participants to work through.

Each group of participants recorded their responses on flip charts. In addition to this, comprehensive notes were recorded for each meeting by up to three Families Commission staff members.

Question 1

(Discussion in pairs, followed by a show of hands)

Think about who looks after your children before/after school and in the school holidays:

- > Do you use formal services, family, friends or a combination of things?
- > Are you happy with your current arrangements?

Question 2

(Group work)

- > What is not so good about your current arrangements?
Identify any barriers, problems or issues that you might have.
- > If you do not use any formal services, why not?

Question 3

(Group work)

If you were able to design services or care to fully meet your needs, what would they look like?

- > What activities would you like your children to do? (prompts: homework, free-time, run around, learn new skills, any others?)

- > Where would it be? (prompts: school, community, workplaces, how would they get there, other issues?)
- > Who should staff it? (prompts: do staff need to be trained, what about volunteers, other issues?)
- > What times should services be available?
- > How much should it cost? (prompts: who should pay, cost issues, other issues?)
- > Are there any quality issues which need to be taken account of? (prompts: should there be standards for the facilities, should there be standards about what the kids do, other quality issues?)

For those who did not wish to use formal services, the following question was asked:

- > How could your situation be improved or better supported?

All group work was reported back to the room as a whole, followed by a discussion about the ideas of each group.

Each group was asked to identify their top three priorities out of all the ideas they came up with.

Children's question

(Used with children who wanted to participate)

- > What would you most like to do before school, after school and in the school holidays when or if mum/dad/nanny/koro are unable to look after you?
- > Where would you like to go for this?

The questions were written on flip charts and discussed with the children. The children responded by drawing pictures or writing answers, and/or gave verbal feedback if they were more comfortable that way.

APPENDIX THREE



COUCH QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Childcare needs for school children Questionnaire results

These questionnaire results were originally published on the Families Commission's website www.thecouch.org.nz

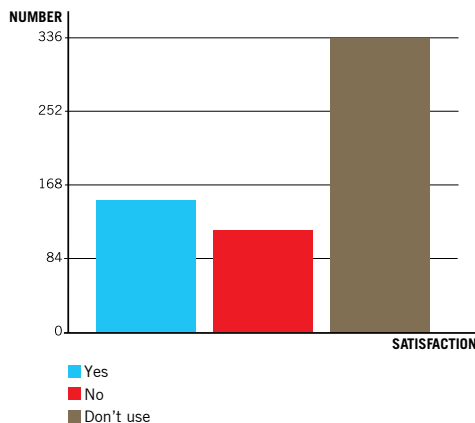
Summary

Couch members who took part in this questionnaire were asked how satisfied they were with out of school services (OSS). Of those who used these services, 43 percent were dissatisfied with their current arrangements. Parents and caregivers identified a range of factors that affected their use of these services, the most common being the cost (34 percent), followed by a lack of local services (25 percent) and doubts about the quality and level of supervision (22 percent). At the same time, a large proportion of respondents said they preferred to care for their children themselves (47 percent). Despite this, there was a clear message that if suitable, quality care was accessible and affordable, many more Couch members would use these services (73 percent would like to use at least one type of care, compared with the current rate of 44 percent).

Thank you to the 603 Couch members who completed this questionnaire.

Are you satisfied with the out of school services that you currently use (organised before-school and after-school care, and school-holiday programmes)?

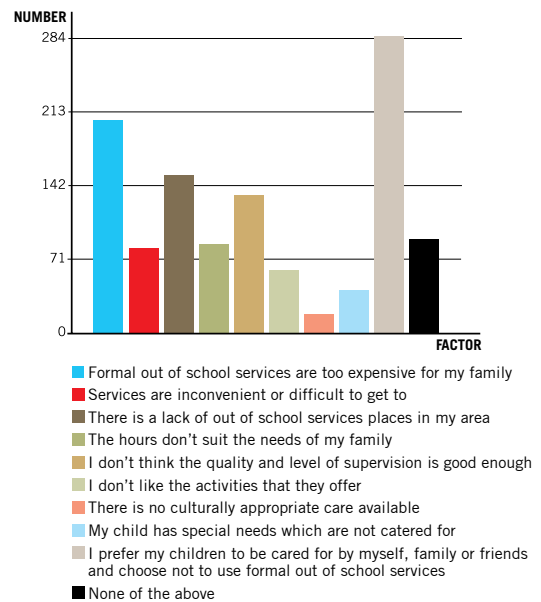
Satisfaction with OSS currently used



Just over half the Couch members who responded to the questionnaire said they did not use OSS. Of the 312 who did use these services, 57 percent were satisfied with them and 43 percent were dissatisfied.

Which, if any, of the following factors affect your use of before-school, after-school and school-holiday programmes for your children? (Choose as many as apply.)

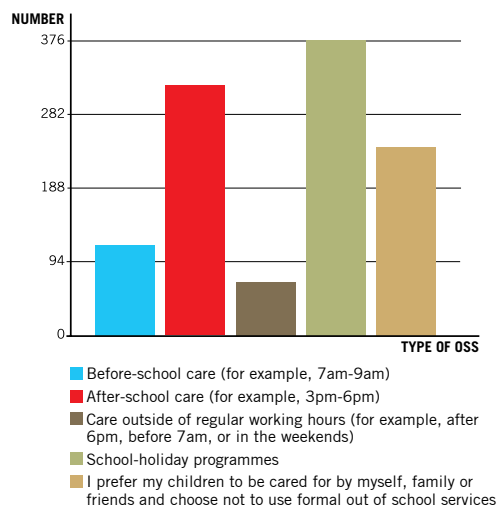
Factors affecting use of OSS



The most significant barriers identified by Couch members were to do with affordability and accessibility (34 percent identified expense and 25 percent identified a lack of local services), followed by concerns about the quality and level of supervision of existing services (22 percent). Of those who responded, 47 percent said they preferred not to use formal services.

Thinking about the formal care arrangements that you'd ideally like to have for your school-aged children, if a suitable programme was available and affordable, would you use: (Choose as many as apply.)

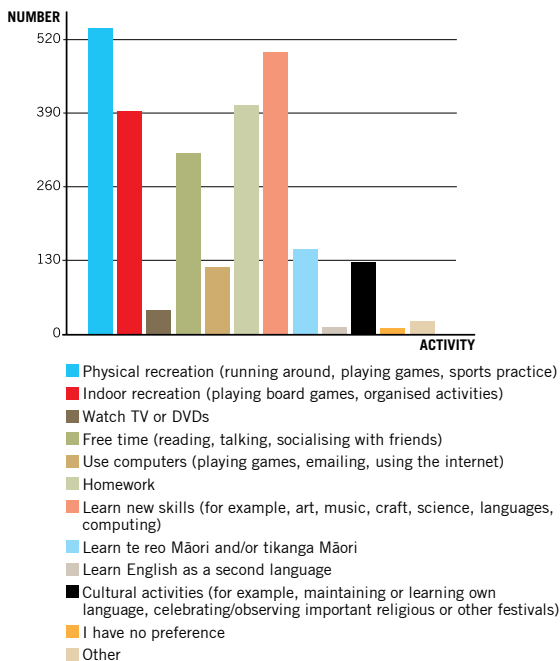
Demand for different types of OSS



If a suitable programme was available, 53 percent of respondents said they would use after-school care and 63 percent would use school-holiday programmes. Although smaller numbers said they would use before-school care (19 percent) and non-standard hours of care (11 percent), this still represents a sizeable response. In total, 73 percent of those who answered this question indicated they would like to use at least one type of care. Note that multiple responses were allowed for this question. A number of respondents chose the last option (“I prefer my children to be cared for by myself... and choose not to use formal OSS”) in combination with one or more different types of OSS (for example ‘after school care’ and/or ‘school holiday programmes’). Because of this, the total who indicated that they would like to use at least one type of care (73 percent) is larger than the number who chose the last option would indicate.

If you were to use after-school services, what activities would you most like your children to do? (Choose as many as apply.)

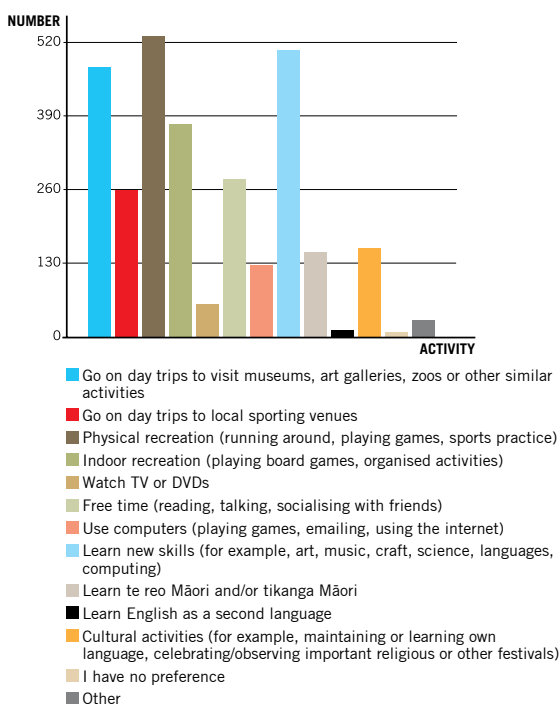
Activity preference for after-school services



When asked which activities they would most like their children to do during after-school care, physical activity (90 percent) was ranked the highest, followed by learning new skills (83 percent), homework (67 percent) and indoor recreation (65 percent).

If you were to use school-holiday programmes, what activities would you most like your children to do? (Choose as many as apply.)

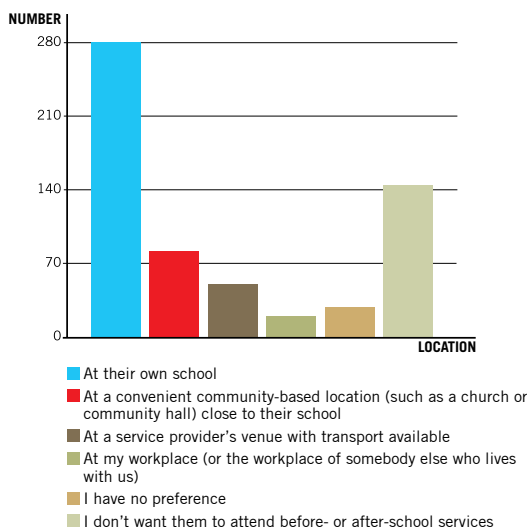
Activity preference for school-holiday programmes



When asked which activities they would most like their children to do during school-holiday programmes, most parents chose physical activity (88 percent) and learning new skills (84 percent), followed by day trips (79 percent). Other highly-rated activities included indoor recreation (62 percent), free time (46 percent) and trips to sporting venues (43 percent).

Where would you most like your children to attend before- or after-school services?

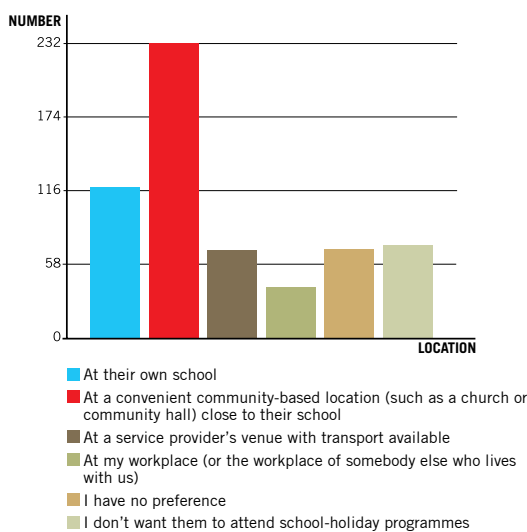
Preferred location for before- or after-school services



Of the Couch members who would use before- or after-school care, many wanted it to be based at their children's school (61 percent).

Where would you most like your children to attend school-holiday programmes?

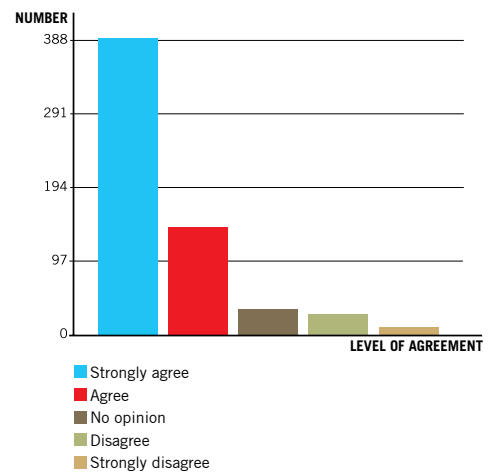
Preferred location for school-holiday programmes



Of those people who would use school-holiday programmes, 44 percent would like them to be based at a convenient community location.

Please rate your view of the following statement: At least some staff should hold appropriate formal educational qualifications or training (for example, training specifically for out of school services).

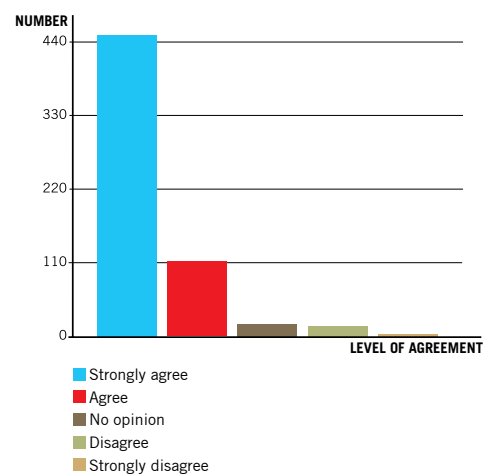
Number agreeing that some staff should hold appropriate formal qualifications or training



Most respondents (88 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that at least some OSS staff should be appropriately qualified or trained.

Please rate your view of this statement: Before-school, after-school and school-holiday programmes should be regularly assessed to ensure the quality of care they provide.

Number agreeing that OSS should be regularly assessed to ensure quality of care



Most people (93 percent) either agreed or strongly agreed that OSS should be regularly assessed to ensure quality of care.

If you have a child with a disability or other special needs, please outline any additional issues you and your family face regarding access to before-school, after-school or school-holiday programmes.

Eighty Couch members caring for children with special needs responded to a question about additional issues they faced accessing OSS. Lack of choice, appropriately trained staff and cost were all highlighted as major factors affecting these Couch members.

There is just nothing out there available, access is impossible.

A child with a disability can't attend a [programme] without their own caregiver (which normally comes as an expense to the parents on top of the programme fees).

In addition to this, many talked about their inability to trust providers with their children's special needs, meaning that they felt unable to use most services.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your preferences or needs for out of school services? Are there any other issues that haven't already been covered?

There was a huge response to the final open-ended question, with 256 Couch members making additional comments. Many of the comments emphasised issues raised earlier in the questionnaire such as cost, lack of options and the need for care outside 'standard' hours.

Two other issues that came through strongly were the need for employers to be more flexible with staff who have school-aged children, and the need to value the parenting role.

Instead of having to have children in before- and after-school care, employers should be more flexible with working hours to enable parents to spend more time with their children. The answer is not more childcare, but less, more flexible working hours for parents.

I strongly believe that (generally) it is best for children to be looked after by their own parents, and so I think parents should be encouraged, empowered and equipped to do so.

Conclusion

This questionnaire highlighted a number of concerns Couch members have about the current provision of OSS, including cost, quality and suitability for children with special needs. At the same time, however, there was a clear message that if suitable, quality care were accessible and affordable, many more Couch members would use these services than at present – 73 percent of those who responded said they would like to use at least one type of care, compared to the current rate of 44 percent.



Jessica, age not given

GLOSSARY

A brief definition reflecting common usage is given for all Māori terms used in the report. Definitions are derived from Ryan (1995).

Kaumātua	Elders
Kaupapa	Philosophy
Koha	Donation or gift
Mana	Integrity, charisma, prestige
Mātua	Parents, uncles or aunts
Nohoanga	Seat (live-in learning opportunity)
Rohe	District or area
Te reo Māori	The Māori language
Tautoko	To support
Taiaha	Long club (traditional weapon)
Tamariki	Children
Teina	Junior (younger brother of male; younger sister of female)
Tikanga	Customs
Tuakana	Senior (older brother of male; older sister of female)
Wānanga	Seminar, learning (often held over a number of days and nights)
Whakapapa	Genealogy, cultural identity
Whānau	Extended family

“Kei te awhi rātou
me whāngai hoki
To help and
nurture them”.

—quote from a Couch respondent.

Families Commission research reports

- 1/05 *Review of New Zealand Longitudinal Studies*, Michelle Poland and Jaimie Legge, May 2005.
- 2/05 *Review of Parenting Programmes*, Anne Kerslake Hendricks and Radha Balakrishnan, June 2005.
- 3/05 *Beyond Zero Tolerance: Key issues and future directions for family violence work in New Zealand*, Janet Fanslow, August 2005.
- 4/05 *Focus on Families: Reinforcing the importance of family*. Families with dependent children – Successful Outcomes Project. Report on literature review and focus groups, Katie Stevens, Marny Dickson and Michelle Poland with Rajen Prasad, October 2005.
- 5/05 *Methodologies for Analysing the Impact of Public Policy on Families: A conceptual review*, Jacqui True, October 2005.
- 1/06 *What Makes Your Family Tick?* Families with dependent children – Successful Outcomes Project. Report on public consultation, Robyn Seth-Purdie, Andrew Cameron and Francis Luketina, March 2006.
- 2/06 *Review of the Empirical Literature Assessing the Impacts of Government Policies on Family Form: A report for the Families Commission*, Jeremy Robertson, Vanessa Rogers and Jan Pryor, April 2006.

Reports are available on the Commission's website www.nzfamilies.org.nz or contact the Commission to request copies:

Families Commission
PO Box 2839
Wellington
New Zealand
Telephone: 04 917 7040
Email: enquiries@nzfamilies.org.nz

Wellington office

Public Trust Building, Level 5
117–125 Lambton Quay
PO Box 2839, Wellington 6011
Phone 04 917 7040
Fax 04 917 7059

Email

enquiries@nzfamilies.org.nz

Website

www.nzfamilies.org.nz

Auckland office

Level 5, AMI House
63 Albert Street, Auckland 1010
Phone 09 970 1700