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VS

Everyone's Children



The Cost of the School Holidays Event Report

28th March 2017

Event Outline

- 9.30** **Introduction**
Liz McEntee, GCVS
- 9.45** **Cost of the School Holiday Report**
John Dickie, CPAG in Scotland
- 10.20** **Scotland-wide Perspective**
Jackie Brock, Children in Scotland
- 11.15** **PEEK Project Case Study**
Melodie Crumlin, PEEK
- 11.45** **Group Discussion**
- 12.15** **Summary**
Suzie Scott, GCVS

Introduction

The Cost of the School Holidays – Helping Children and Families was hosted by Everyone’s Children alongside Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland, Children in Scotland and the PEEK Project, to look at the ways in which many low-income families in Scotland struggle over the school holidays. The event allowed delegates to hear and discuss best practice ideas for overcoming these barriers.

The event was well attended with representatives from schools, third sector organisations and local authorities; allowing for interesting and engaging discussion around the ways in which holiday provision could better meet the needs of families.

This report provides a summary of presentations given on the day and key messages that came out of the group discussions.

Summary and Key Messages

John Dickie, CPAG in Scotland: Cost of School Holidays Report

- Child poverty in Glasgow
 - 1 in 4 or 260,000 children across Scotland live below the poverty line (set at 70% of minimum income needed to have a decent life)
 - Figure rises to over 1 in 3 in Glasgow
 - Almost 70% of children who are living in poverty across Scotland are from a working family
 - Rising levels of acute income crisis
- Challenges
 - UK govt. abandoned child poverty targets and duties
 - By 2020/21 welfare reforms are expected to take £1bn out of household incomes in Scotland
 - Projected increase in child poverty of 50% by 2020
- Cost of school holidays - key questions:
 - What are holidays like for low income families?
 - How does the current holiday provision match with the realities of life for low income families?
 - How can service providers better meet the needs of low income families during the holidays?

1. What are the school holidays like for low income families

- Cost pressures
 - Additional food costs leading to parents skipping meals
 - Summer clothing
 - New school uniforms
 - Heating costs
- Difficulty accessing childcare
 - Reliance on family and friends for childcare
 - Alternating annual leave
 - Reducing working hours
 - Difficulties signing on at job centre
 - Guilt arising from working and not spending time with children
- Emotional pressures

- Children expecting same holiday experiences as their peers; leads to parental guilt if they cannot provide this
- Feelings of indebtedness to grandparents if they are providing significant childcare
- Lone parents in particular struggle with isolation, financial issues and a lack of emotional support

2. Barriers to accessing current holiday provision

- Financial barriers
 - Costs of holiday activities are too high
 - Advance payments and block booking requirements can be prohibitive
 - Hidden costs for snacks, clothing, transport and equipment
 - High costs and oversubscription of Out of School Care
- Availability and awareness of provision
 - Lack of timely information in advance
 - Lack of availability – services frequently have waiting lists
- Type of provision
 - Difficulties finding age appropriate activities, especially for teenagers and under 5s. Particularly difficult for parents with children of different ages
 - Lack of activities available for children with additional support needs
 - Timings often unsuitable for work hours
 - Transport costs apply even to free activities such as libraries, parks and museums and there are perceptions that these spaces may be unwelcoming/parents lack confidence to access them

3. How can service providers better meet the needs of low income families?

- Better planning and promotion
 - Improve partnership working between Glasgow Life and third sector
 - Raise profile of Glasgow Life
 - Use of school facilities could be arranged to make up for lack of other spaces

- Improving access and participation
 - Provision of lunches
 - Address lengthy waiting lists
 - Stop requiring block booking and advance payments
 - Provision of holiday travel passes for families
- Childcare
 - Address unsuitable timings
 - Make out of school care more affordable and widely available
- Content and delivery
 - Co-design services with local people
 - Diversify services for all ages and interests
 - Improve provision for ASN
 - Address barriers to use of libraries, parks and museums e.g. Providing transport and helping parents interact with children at these places

John pointed out that this research is now a few years out of date, and asked delegates what they felt has changed since the report was initially written.

Discussion noted that there are often bureaucratic issues that prevent organisations from using school facilities. Parents also have to pay for any trips that the childcare organises on top of the normal childcare costs. There is often a postcode lottery for good and suitable provision and a lack of confidence in parents when it comes to asking for the services they need.

Jackie Brock, Children In Scotland

Jackie talked about why the cost of the school holidays matter: children's rights, child poverty, health and wellbeing, quality of family life, learning outcomes and community and social engagement.

- If we believe in child-centred work a new and radical approach is needed
- UNCRC Arts. 27 and 28 guarantee children's right to live with dignity
- We need an all year-round approach to tackling child poverty
- Effect of austerity: lack of food security; reliance on food banks
- UK Has higher infant mortality rates than comparable EU countries

- More 2-5 year-olds not eating any fruit or veg; 43% of children in most deprived areas whose parents eat no fruit or veg also eat none. Must look at health and wellbeing as a whole family issue
- Attainment gap between children in most vs least deprived areas – cannot address learning needs without looking at wider context of children's lives

Jackie gave the example of pilot projects in Ibrox and Dalmarnock primaries which have high uptake of free school meals. The schools were open during the summer holidays in order to run a play scheme. 143 children registered and on average 81 participated in activities daily. 2000 places in total were offered over 4 weeks (100 per day). Around 29 individual parents/carers participated and 10 volunteers were required. The importance of a dignified approach was emphasised as was the impact of the project on children's attainment. £200k has now been made available in order to expand the provision to at least 12 schools. Jackie said we shouldn't look be 'rationing' places via arbitrary criteria or attempting to recreate school meals/the school day. Again, the discussion brought up bureaucratic issues that prevent access to school facilities and kitchens and issues with paying Glasgow Life for use of schools after 5pm.

Melodie Crumlin, PEEK – Dalmarnock Primary Case Study

Melodie spoke about the summer camp scheme which was run by PEEK at Dalmarnock Primary. It took 8 weeks to design in conjunction with parents. A day at the camp started at 11am with some group stretching exercises etc. then a play session with a wide variety of activities while parents had time to relax. At lunch time families would sit down to a meal together and in the afternoon there would be a family play session before the day ended at 3pm. It was important to have use of school playgrounds as these provided appropriate space where children felt safe. Parents also had time to explore their own interests, such as gardening, alongside their children.

Activities for parents included relaxing with a cup of tea, getting money advice, having beauty treatments, support with English if needed, help with employability, learning cooking and taking part in exercise. Parents set up social enterprises to provide these activities and this provided employment, gave parents confidence and inspired others.

The summer camp involved having ongoing conversations with parents in order to plan what activities would be available and once a week took trips to different places such as adventure playgrounds, parks and the zoo. Coordinators helped to facilitate play between parents and children at these places which helped to give parents the confidence to access them.

Learning from the project:

- Partnership working is important but only works if there are shared aims and values and everyone buys in
- There is a need to listen to people in the community and build up relationships and trust with them