

1. OUT OF SCHOOL PROGRAMME INTER-AGENCY ADVISORY GROUP REPORT

RR 8156

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Corporate Plan Output: Advice to Council	

The purpose of this report is to bring Councillors up to date with the progress and activities of the Out of School Care Inter-agency Advisory Group with relation to its Terms of Reference.

The report will also seek endorsement from the Council for recommendations from the Inter-agency Group about the Council's future role in further developing Out of School Care services in Christchurch.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction and Current Council Involvement

In August 1997 the Community Services Committee received a report which summarised the results of a research project entitled '*The need for, and use of current and future out of school programmes (OSP's) by children 5-12 years of age in Christchurch*'. On the strength of this research, the Out of School Care Inter-agency Advisory Committee was convened by Christchurch City Council, and an Out of School Programme Researcher was employed on a six-month contract to report back to the Inter-agency Group.

The Community Development and Social Wellbeing Policy (adopted 1996) and the Sport and Recreation Policy (adopted 1996) provide the basis for Council involvement in out of school care, in line with the policy priorities below:

Community Development and Social Wellbeing Policy

- **Basic needs met** - providing children with shelter and food in a safe and healthy environment after school.
- **Improving the position of the least advantaged** - by providing a low cost service for families on low incomes.
- **Equitable access to opportunities and community resources** - enabling parents who are working, parents on low incomes and parents with few social resources to access quality care and recreation opportunities for their children.

Recreation and Sport Policy

- Children, youth, people with disabilities and people on limited incomes are aware of, have access to and are increasing their participation in a broad range of recreation and sporting activities.
- Consultation with the Christchurch community, recreation and sport participants and service providers is on-going and effective.
- Resources are allocated and services, facilities and programmes are delivered efficiently, effectively and equitably.
- Services, facilities and programmes meet the recreation and sporting needs of the Christchurch community, particularly its children and youth, and also its people with disabilities and people with limited incomes.
- Research into the existing and future recreation and sports needs and trends of Christchurch is on-going in the planning and provision of all services, facilities and programmes.

Services as prioritised by Council in the Recreation and Sport Policy identifies programmes for children, youth, people with disabilities and people on limited incomes as a first priority.

The following financial resources are currently available to out of school programmes through the Council:

- \$50,000 through the Out of School Programme Social Initiatives Fund (Children's Strategy) in the 1997/98 financial year.
- Financial contracts with service providers (eg, with the YMCA for the provision of holiday programmes).
- Funding allocated at the discretion of the Community Boards/Service Centres for out of school (**after school and holiday**) programmes estimated at \$180,627 (net) for the 1997/98 financial year.

1.2 Definition of Out of School Programmes

For the purposes of the Inter-agency Group, a clear working definition has been developed which focuses on developing appropriate out of school services in Christchurch.

Out of School Programmes are defined as:

- *Supervision and care for children of primary school age (5-13) out of school hours (before school, after school and during holiday periods).*
- *Care and recreation based programmes centred around the needs of the child and family/whanau, where the care of the child is transferred to the programme staff from the parents/carer.*
- *Regular - at least 3 times per week .*
- *Sessions of 2 hours or more.*
- *Does NOT include:*
 - Brownies/Cubs etc.*
 - sports/games practices*
 - Kidsfun After school programmes*

The definition focuses on providing programmes that embrace the care and leisure needs of children, and offer a quality service that also meets the needs of parents and carers.

1.3 Main Findings and Issues Identified

The report into Out of School care provision was commissioned by the Council which had noted an increasing demand from the community, but lacked up-to-date information regarding actual current and future need. Some of the pertinent findings were:-

- **16** of the **21** after-school programmes have been established in the last five years in response to community demand.
- **83%** of parents surveyed would make use of after-school programmes if the programmes were accessible and met the needs of both the parents and the children.
- **60%** of parents surveyed supported having school holiday programmes available during every week of the school holidays.

The issues raised in the research included:

- (i) Issues of accessibility, including:
 - lack of transport
 - cost of programmes, especially for low income families
 - lack of local facilities
 - safety
 - inadequate or unsuitable programme times.
- (ii) Inadequate funding of programmes.
- (iii) Lack of enforceable service standards.

2. OUT OF SCHOOL PROGRAMME INTER-AGENCY ADVISORY GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE

The OSP Inter-agency Advisory Group took a metropolitan focus, with local needs being addressed by Community Boards/Service Centres.

The Group's Terms of Reference were to undertake further investigation into :

- (i) Central co-ordination and networking with other providers and organisations.
- (ii) Feasibility of a city-wide training package.
- (iii) Developing a medium to long term city-wide implementation strategy (including priority areas for Council support) in consultation with stakeholders.
- (iv) Setting service standards and monitoring and evaluation criteria to assess on-going need.

The Inter-agency Advisory Group has worked within this framework to address the issues and draw up broad recommendations for the Council.

3. OUTCOMES OF THE INTER-AGENCY ADVISORY GROUP

The Group met monthly from October 1997, and comprised a diverse range of representatives:

- the Children's Advocate
- Community Activities Officers
- Community Board representatives
- Leisure and Community Services Unit
- Christchurch Employment Services
- private and community organisations involved in Out of School Care and Recreation provision and support.

The Group has addressed the Terms of Reference as follows:

TASK 1:	Central co-ordination and networking with other providers and organisations
Issue:	Recognition of the need for a centralised professional support body to co-ordinate services to out of school programmes
Action:	<p>(i) Submission: A submission was made to central government by the Inter-agency Advisory Group seeking action on the need for :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - training for OSP workers - funding for OSPs - regulations and standards <p>In the budget of 14 May 1998, a subsidy for low income earners using out of school care was introduced along with minimum enforceable programme standards, to take effect from 1 February 1999.</p>
Action:	<p>(ii) Co-ordination/Networking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-ordination and consultation was undertaken with the OSCAR Network. - The Group resolved to recognise the OSCAR Network as the centralised professional body for out of school services. - Information and progress reports for Community Boards. - Informal networking was done with other Council units including Environmental Policy and Planning Unit, Funding Office Resources and information from these units was made available to OSP services. <p>Networking and information sharing took place with other organisations such as Compass (New Zealand Income Support Services) and the National Association for Out of School Care and Recreation.</p>

TASK 2:	Investigate the feasibility of a city-wide training package
Issue:	There are currently no locally or nationally run courses <i>specifically</i> for out of school programme staff, although there are three providers of training programmes <i>related</i> to out of school programmes in Christchurch - OSCAR Network, YMCA and Christchurch City Council.
Action:	<p>The OSCAR Network in Christchurch is initiating a proposal for a 10-week accredited course for 16-20 year olds to work specifically in out of school care. Compass (NZISS) have agreed that this be supported and will assist by promoting the course to their clients. Possibilities for further professional training to be explored.</p> <p>The need for an accredited training course for OSP workers was included in the submission to government.</p>

TASK 3:	Implementation of city-wide strategy
Issue:	The need for the development of a broad based children's policy in Council from which to undertake a comprehensive city-wide strategy for out of school care.
Action:	<p>(i) Children's Policy: The need for a children's policy for the 0 to 13 age group was recognised and is currently being developed.</p> <p>(ii) Database:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An up to date database of all current out of school programmes in Christchurch was developed. This should be maintained and used as an information resource. • The database has been mapped to show a visual representation of the distribution of out of school programmes in Christchurch. <p>(iii) Preliminary investigations into the possibilities of business sponsorship and support of out of school programmes has taken place.</p> <p>(iv) Further research will be carried out over the next 12 months to develop a city-wide implementation strategy for new OSPs, in areas of identified need.</p>

TASK 4:	Setting service standards and monitoring and evaluation criteria to assess on-going need
Issue:	There are currently no enforceable national regulations, guidelines or standards governing the operation of out of school care
Action:	Criteria and formal contracts have been developed with OSPs that receive CCC funding in order to establish a basis for quality service delivery and evaluation.

Action:	<p>The need for national enforceable standards was included in the Group's submission to central government. Councillors will recall a report endorsed by the Community Services Committee in which a submission was made to central government to draw attention to the need for support for organisations and services involved in the delivery of out of school care for primary school-aged children. The setting of national operating standards for out of school care must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child staff ratios • Minimum health and safety requirements • Programming standards • The development of a recognised policy to cover the 5 to 13 age group. <p>The Group recognises and will adopt the standards developed by the National Association for OSCAR (tabled).</p>
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- Recommendation:**
1. That the Council recognise and adopt the National OSCAR standards of operation for Out of School programmes, pending the development by government of national standards.
 2. That the Council continue to lobby government:
 - (i) for the development of National regulations;
 - (ii) for the urgent development of a nationally recognised NZQA approved qualification for Out of School programme workers.
 3. That the Council recognises the OSCAR Network in Christchurch as the central professional body for Out of School services in Christchurch.
 4. That the Council continues to advocate for improved recognition of Out of School Care services at a national level, and promotes Out of School Care services at a local level.