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Corporate Plan Output: Out of School Care	

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Board regarding community based After School Programmes in Christchurch, with reference to programmes in the local ward areas.

DEFINITION

After School Care Programmes are for children aged between 5 and 13 years. The main objectives of these services are:

- To provide a safe venue for children after school when their parents are unable to be at home.
- To provide a reliable, regular service for parents when they are working or in training.
- To provide an affordable service accessible to all parents/caregivers.
- To provide a local service in the local community.

In order to provide a regular, reliable service for parents, after school programmes operate at least three sessions each week during school term, starting at 3.00 pm, for up to three hours. This does **not** include programmes that are offered for purely recreational purposes such as basketball workshops, or Kidsfun after school programmes. The children are cared for by trained staff, who provide a snack and opportunities for the children to rest and play.

After School Programmes may have up to 60 children on the roll, and many have waiting lists.

RESEARCH

A number of research projects have been carried out in Christchurch, most notably the “Community Safety from Crime“ Report (1998) carried out on behalf of the Riccarton/Wigram Community Board, the “Youth Needs in Linwood “ Report (1997) carried out on behalf of the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board, and “The current use of and future need for out of school programmes in Christchurch” (1997) carried out on behalf of Christchurch City Council. The following issues have been highlighted which after school care services may help to address in the local community:

1. Safety

Safety for young people was seen as an issue by parents, children and the wider community, with a need to address:

- (i) Safety for young people from crime.
- (ii) Aimless activity of just “hanging out with friends”.
- (iii) Reduction of opportunities for mischief, leading to crime.

2. Needs of Young People

Pertinent points related to the needs of children and young people around Christchurch were:

- (i) Children and young people from lower income areas have far more unstructured time.
- (ii) The lack of local facilities for children who cannot access transport.
- (iii) Young people like to meet their friends at a safe venue.
- (iv) After school programmes offer children and young people the opportunity to take part in activities, so they may learn to make use of their leisure time constructively.

3. Demand for Programmes

Key findings from around Christchurch were:

- (i) At least $\frac{2}{3}$ of parents surveyed said they would use an after school care and recreation programme.
- (ii) A priority for parents for having after school care programmes available was to have a place to send children while the parents were at work.

CURRENT SITUATION

There are currently 14 community based after school care programmes operating in the Christchurch area. The organisation which provides these programmes with professional support and resources is the OSCAR Network. The OSCAR Network *does not* operate the programmes, but provides staff training, resources and advice.

COUNCIL'S CURRENT ROLE

A number of recommendations were endorsed by Council in a report submitted in September 1998, including:

- That Council continues to advocate for improved recognition for out of school care services at a national level, and promotes out of school care at a local level.
- That Council recognises the OSCAR Network in Christchurch as the central professional body for out of school services in Christchurch.

In line with this commitment, a strategy in the form of a working document has been developed to identify areas of Christchurch where there is a potential need for after school care programmes, targeting low income families, in line with the Community Development and Social Wellbeing Policy, Sport and Recreation Policy and the Children's Policy.

After school care services are also pertinent to other Council initiatives, in particular the Strengthening Communities Initiative, with the focus on crime prevention through local community services and initiatives.

FUNDING

Community based after school care programmes currently rely heavily on funding from Trusts and Charitable organisations. Wages for staff are the most significant ongoing cost for programmes. Wages are rarely funded by Trusts or charities. The lack of continuity in funding leads to a lack of stability in programmes. Community based after school care programmes often charge a nominal fee, which does not cover the costs of the programme operation.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

A new Government initiative takes effect from 1 February 1999, to help lower income families with the cost of out of school care for their primary school age children. The subsidy is for people who need out of school care for their children so they can:

- Attend paid work.
- Undertake work-related activities such as community work and training and is paid on a sliding scale to the parent, according to the parent's income.

The programme must comply with minimum quality standards set by the Government in order to qualify for the subsidy.

As part of its advocacy role, Council made a submission to Central Government in May 1998, highlighting the fact that there were no legal minimum standards for out of school programme operation at that time. This has now been partially addressed, although enforcement of these standards still remains an issue.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: That the information be received.