

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Breakfast Clubs And Their Challenges

Cathy Street and Peter Kenway

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As ever, responsibility for the content and any errors rests with the authors alone.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This report discusses the state of development of breakfast clubs in the United Kingdom with the key aim of improving the state of information about a topical, but relatively under-researched, area of out-of-school provision. Specifically, it seeks to:

- To describe what breakfast clubs ‘on the ground’ are like.
- To examine why they were formed, how they operate and how many children use them.
- To identify and analyse the problems that appear to be common to many clubs.
- To discuss the opportunities and challenges for government and policy makers.

The report has been written for two audiences: first, those who are already involved with a breakfast club or are considering whether to become involved; and, second, policy makers responsible for services for children and their families.

The study on which the report is based included interviews with staff in a representative sample of 35 breakfast clubs, all of which served food, covering both urban and rural areas and including both established and newly created clubs. It also draws together information from government, academic research, and other surveys of breakfast club provision.

WHAT IS A BREAKFAST CLUB?

A breakfast club is an example of before-school provision, typically open for about one hour before school starts. Some are school-based whilst others use community resources. Some provide food whilst others do not. Learning support or childcare needs feature prominently in some clubs, whereas others are focused on promoting healthy eating. Such diversity can create considerable confusion about this type of provision – which may be one reason why little detailed information is currently available about such clubs.

GENERAL FEATURES OF BREAKFAST CLUBS

Although very diverse, there are some common features of most breakfast clubs. The original reasons for a club’s formation continue to have a lasting influence on its continuing focus, and a basic distinction can be drawn between clubs founded with children’s interests paramount - supporting their education; improving health and nutrition; teaching dental health; offering social opportunities - and those founded with needs of parents, especially for childcare, uppermost.

Predominant characteristics of the breakfast clubs surveyed include:

- Most clubs use school-premises, serve only that school, and only operate during school terms.
- Clubs are typically open for about 45 minutes to one hour, from about 8am.
- Most school-based clubs are on a drop-in basis; most non-school-based require pre-booking.
- Most clubs cater for primary age children, typically at the younger end of this age group.
- Average daily attendance is typically between 10 and 15 children.
- Toast/spreads and milk / hot drink usually served; sometimes also cereals, fruit and hot foods.
- Most clubs are run by school staff (who are paid extra for it).

All types of breakfast clubs faced problems of financial viability and stability, even those able to charge relatively high fees, with both staff costs and staff retention being serious problems. Partly as a result, most non-school-based clubs sampled (and some school-based clubs) develop either alongside or following the starting up of an after-school, homework or holiday club.

INNOVATION AND THE ROLE OF EDUCATION ACTION ZONES

The study found innovative examples of breakfast club, often arising from the efforts of an individual school or local community project's attempt to tackle problems or concerns specific to the children they care for. However, the study also found a more wide-ranging and rapid process of development being driven by some of the Education Action Zones. Enquiries made to 25 first wave Education Action Zones revealed that 11 of them either had the creation of breakfast clubs as a part of their action plan or were using some of their resources to support existing clubs or those being developed by other organisations.

CURRENT LEVELS OF PROVISION

Estimating the number of breakfast clubs is difficult task. In particular, attempts to gather information from local education authorities about schools in their areas running breakfast clubs brought very limited responses and highlight the invisibility of such clubs. Despite these limitations, drawing together information from a range of sources, we estimate that there are between 400 and 600 breakfast clubs currently operating.

With an average attendance of 15 children per day, this implies that there are between 6,000 and 9,000 children attending a breakfast on a typical day. However, since only a few children use a breakfast club every day – most seem to attend a breakfast club say two or three times a week, depending on the working patterns of their parents and the availability of other relatives before school - the total number of children using a breakfast club at sometime will be much higher.

Our tentative suggestion is that breakfast clubs may now be serving between 18,000 and 27,000 children, around 0.5% of all primary school children. Furthermore, our research suggests that attendance at a breakfast club exerts a 'ripple effect' onto other children on the school, possibly in terms of a generally improved and calmer atmosphere at the start of the school day.

MEETING MANY NEEDS: THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

Broadly speaking, breakfast clubs have developed to meet three main areas of need: health, education and childcare. Key findings of our research include:

- Parental demands for before-school childcare were identified by nearly one third of the clubs as one of the main reasons why they had set up a breakfast club.
- Children arriving at school having missed breakfast was reported in nearly two thirds of the interviews and was often the main reason behind the formation of school-based clubs.
- Problems with the unsupervised play of children arriving early, before school opened, were raised by just over half of the interviewees from school-based clubs.

The wish to offer social support, build school cohesion and tackle bullying were significant themes in the interviews with school staff. Although a full scale evaluation of breakfast clubs was not part of this project, it was possible to form certain impressions about what was proving successful and what not. One point which many interviewees stressed in connection with evaluation is that it would rarely be wise to judge a club in isolation from the wider circumstances in which it was borne (for example, as part of a wider process of building up a positive school ethos).

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Main areas where breakfast clubs were felt by interviewees to have had a positive effect include:

- Some overall improvements in attendance and punctuality.
- Improved concentration in class and fewer incidents of disruptive behaviour.
- Improved social cohesion and interaction amongst pupils.
- Improved and more frequent parent and teacher dialogue.
- A calmer start to the day, with noticeable spillover effect into the rest of the school day.

On the other hand, needs which breakfast clubs were felt to be failing to meet include:

- There are continuing problems with children arriving early and being unsupervised in the playground at school, or missing breakfast, even where a breakfast club is operating.
- Many of the children with severe problems with punctuality or attendance mostly fail to benefit from the introduction of a breakfast club.
- ‘Grazing’ behaviour on the way to school remains widespread, with risks of the children buying sweets and snacks with the money they carry for attending the breakfast club.

Long-term survival depends on how well the clubs are integrated into their local community, the extent to which clubs have attracted a wide partnership of external agencies’ support, and the burden of transport costs for rural based clubs.

BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

The range of concerns expressed by those who participated in this study fell into two main categories: funding and staffing. Key findings regarding funding include:

- Breakfast clubs in more deprived areas are highly dependent on other sources of funding since it is unlikely that they will ever be able to charge enough to cover their costs.
- Although many clubs had received start-up funds on the understanding that they would then raise funds themselves, a significant number had found raising money very time-consuming and difficult, with increasing resistance, it was felt, from charitable sources.
- The emphasis on funding for new services means that many existing clubs are by default ineligible for many of the sources of finance introduced under recent government initiatives.

As a result of the pressure of funding, some clubs had cut back on the fresh foods offered and tended to only offer popular foods which they knew the children would eat, thereby limiting the clubs’ capacity to promote a varied and healthy diet.

Staffing emerged as an area of widespread concern amongst breakfast club leaders:

- Plans to use volunteers (possibly parents) had often come to nothing.
- The benefit rules often make it unattractive for unemployed parents to work at the clubs.
- The early start and the relatively short time involved make for unattractive working hours.

In practice, the best arrangement was for the breakfast club staff either to be responsible for other out-of-school provision or be employed in the school in some other capacity.

Finally, a number of respondents expressed concerns about the sheer pace of change and what they termed ‘initiative overload’. They had worries about the administrative burden being placed on them in terms of developing services, often running out-of-school provision themselves and having to fund raise to keep the club going.

CHALLENGES FOR POLICY MAKERS

Our research tends to confirm the wisdom of allowing a bottom-up approach, relying on local initiatives designed to meet local needs. There are, however, still some areas where the development of breakfast clubs may not coincide with government objectives. In particular:

- **Promoting health and nutrition:** Whether the aim of improving children's health and nutrition - for health but also educational reasons - is in practice a sufficiently important element in many clubs, both in their setting up but also in their continued operation..
- **Meeting wider needs and problems with money:** Whether the aim of combating social exclusion is being undermined in areas where many families are on low income and where clubs cannot realistically charge at the levels that would be required to cover their costs.
- **Regulation and inspection:** Whether the complex arrangements for regulation and inspection are permitting clubs to operate to unduly different standards – and are allowing some clubs to remain 'invisible' and thus, not sufficiently monitored by external agencies.

The challenge policy makers face if breakfast clubs are really to help with what children eat in the morning is to find ways of lessening the pressure that almost all the clubs currently seem to face to reduce their expenditure on food as far as possible. There are three parts to this:

- Finding ways of persuading those families who could pay for a breakfast that it is a good idea to do so.
- Finding ways of providing subsidies to pay for the breakfast of those children whose families have difficulty paying for it.
- Finding ways of getting clubs to give breakfast a higher priority.

Although these measures, combined with the Working Families Tax Credit, may be sufficient to promote social inclusion for the children of low income, working families, they will not be enough for families who are ineligible for these benefits. Whilst the overall amount of money potentially available from government initiatives to support breakfast clubs is not seen as a limitation, the fractured nature of the funding regime and the unavailability of ongoing funding are both problems. The challenges for policy makers are therefore:

- Finding ways of providing sustainable funding to cover the non-food costs of breakfast clubs in areas of identified deprivation.
- Encouraging the development of simpler and more efficient ways of applying for funds, perhaps using 'umbrella' organisations to take on this function for groups of breakfast clubs.
- Identifying realistic financial models for breakfast clubs that would allow them a good chance of being viable over the longer term while also allowing diversity and flexibility in provision.

The final subject is that of regulation, where a joint DfEE and DH review is underway, with indicative plans to give OFSTED new responsibilities. We see two challenges here:

- Ensuring that standards are not compromised, given the current rapid expansion in the number of breakfast clubs.
- Encouraging OFSTED to develop an approach which is fully sensitive to matters of child care and child protection as well as children's learning and educational needs.

1. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report discusses the state of development of breakfast clubs in the United Kingdom. Its aim is to improve the state of information about what is a very topical, but relatively under-researched, area of out-of-school provision. In broad terms, it seeks:

- To describe what breakfast clubs are like including why they were formed, how they operate, and who and how many use them.
- To identify and analyse the problems that appear to be common to many clubs.
- To identify the challenges for government and policy makers.

The report has been written for two audiences. The first audience is people who are either already involved with a breakfast club or are considering whether to become involved, probably by setting one up. For this audience, we hope that the experiences from other clubs that we recount here, combined with our reflections upon it, will be of value. The second audience is relevant policy makers working in the areas of children's health, education and family needs for childcare, for whom we hope that this broad ranging assessment will provide a valuable oversight of a developing area.

BREAKFAST CLUBS

Out-of-school services take many forms. They include before- and after-school provision plus services that operate exclusively in school holiday periods. Saturday or weekend clubs have also recently opened in some areas of the country. Provision may be based within a variety of premises and may operate on an open access/drop-in basis or may require pre-booking of a place. Similar diversity exists in terms of who has provided funds, started up and actually runs such clubs.

Breakfast clubs are, naturally, an example of before-school provision. However, some clubs which call themselves a 'breakfast club' are in fact only providing before-school childcare and no food, whilst the core part of the function of others is to provide a meal alongside a safe, adult supervised environment. It is the clubs that provide breakfast as a key part of their provision which is the focus of the research discussed in this report.

THE RESEARCH STUDY

The study was initially stimulated by a seminar which the New Policy Institute and Kids' Clubs Network held in December 1998 which examined the value of breakfast clubs for school children.¹ The seminar highlighted how little was known about the actual operation or numbers of breakfast clubs since much of the research and statistical data gathering about out-of-school provision has focused on 'after-school' schemes. What seemed clear, however, was that breakfast clubs appear to be particularly vulnerable to funding and staffing difficulties that have impeded their sustainability and development.

Our study is primarily based on study of a sample of 35 breakfast clubs, and presents information gathered from interviews with staff in these clubs plus our analysis of some of the issues which were raised . It also draws together other information, from government, from the academic research literature, and from the findings of other studies of breakfast club provision. Further details of the study design are presented in Appendix 1.

As far as possible, our sample of clubs covered both urban and rural areas and included established and newly created clubs. These were identified with the assistance of the Kids' Clubs Network database, information from Training and Enterprise Councils and Children's Information Services officers, data from several health promotion departments (or health boards in Scotland), and a number of the large charities providing services for children.

Project Officers from all of the first wave of 25 Education Action Zones from the five regional Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland and a selection of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships were also consulted.

GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES FOR CHILDREN

The government has set out an ambitious agenda for improving many areas of children's lives.

On the **health front**, identified targets include tackling inequalities in health amongst children, improving the nutritional status of their diets in order to reduce escalating rates of anaemia, dental caries and obesity, and eradicating poverty.² The Department of Health's Healthy Schools Programme is an important national initiative for all of these issues.

In the **education arena**, the key goals are boosting children's academic performance, improving literacy and numeracy and reducing rates of school absenteeism, bullying and exclusions³. Encouraging a more holistic approach to education is another important theme, the idea being that schools should develop much closer links with their local community and promote a 'whole school' approach to meeting the health, education, social and emotional needs of children.⁴

From a **childcare perspective**, central aims in a number of nation-wide initiatives include the expansion and development of new forms of childcare and family support to enhance parenting skills or to assist parents in employment or looking for work, and to reduce the numbers of 'latchkey' children.

Issues about how children are raised and educated always attract much attention at many different levels: political, academic, media and family-based. Emotive discussions about 'investing in the future', about protecting children from abuse and from the harmful elements of adult society, and about their need for freedom and play opportunities, illustrate both the importance and the complexity of actually realising any of this long list of objectives.

What is quite clear, however, is that services for children and families are now in a process of significant change and a large-scale expansion of out-of-school services is central to these changes. This lies at the core of the National Childcare Strategy aimed at children aged up to 14, and the work of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships. Such expansion is seen as one avenue through which many of the objectives mentioned above may be met.

2. WHAT IS A BREAKFAST CLUB?

Breakfast clubs, like many other areas of children's services, are very diverse, reflecting the way they have grown gradually, often in response to some particular local interest or need. Nevertheless, it is still possible to identify a number of more general features of their operation, and a number of specific models of breakfast club emerged spontaneously during our research with quite different objectives. The material in this chapter discusses general features followed by an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of different models of breakfast club.

GENERAL FEATURES OF BREAKFAST CLUBS

The main features of the clubs that we have encountered are summarised below. This is followed by descriptions of four specific clubs which can be seen as representing a particular type of club – one community based and essentially meeting childcare needs of parents; one focused on school identified concerns; one the result of a voluntary sector initiative and focused on family support; and one being an example of a multi-agency project led by health promotion. Each description begins with a brief outline of the reasons why the club was started up and the socio-economic status of the area in which the club is located.

AIMS AND MOTIVATIONS

- Focused on children: supporting their education; improving health and nutrition; teaching oral and dental health; and offering social opportunities.
- Focused on parents: providing childcare or social and learning opportunities.

SITE OF CLUB AND PREMISES USED

- Schools-based premises predominate: nursery, primary or secondary schools.
- Although school dining rooms are sometimes used, the club leaders that we interviewed suggested that usually they are too large and impersonal. After-school rooms, spare classrooms and parents or staff rooms all therefore tend to be used instead.
- Non-school premises, offering services for children only or children and adults, including community centres, sports or church premises and those used by local food co-operatives.

OPENING TIMES

- Clubs are typically open for about 45 minutes to one hour, from about 8am until school starts.
- Many clubs only operate during school terms, although a few do integrate their breakfast provision into all day clubs that some schools run in the holidays.

ACCESS

- Most non-school based clubs require the pre-booking of a place.
- Most school-based clubs only serve the particular school, although this can include both infant and junior parts of the school even where these operate separately.
- Few schools target specific children due to fears of stigmatisation - most clubs are open to all pupils on a drop -in basis and so are not 'clubs' in the sense of having restricted membership.

BREAKFAST CLUB A	
This club developed in response to the demands made by local parents who were in employment or further education for early morning childcare provision in a rural area suffering from a shortage of provision for children aged over 5. As such, health (poor or inadequate diets) and education issues were not major concerns lying behind its development.	
Location of club:	A local community centre from where after-school, holiday clubs and a variety of sports and mother and toddler activities also operate. The club pays £3 per hour to use these facilities which include a hall and basic kitchen (the hourly rate is subsidised by the local council).
Source of start-up funding & ongoing financial support:	A grant from local Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) in 1995 supported the development of out-of-school provision of all kinds. Now supported by fees, with the after-school activities (attracting many more children) subsidising the breakfast club to a certain extent.
Who attends:	Children from 4 local primary schools.
Foods served:	Cereal, toast and hot drink – many of the children who attend only want a hot drink since they have already eaten something at home.
Cost per child:	£1.50 per session. Some reductions for families on benefit/low income.
Staffing and practical arrangements:	The club is run by local community project worker who also has responsibility for developing after-school and holiday provision in the area. A total of 11 part-time staff are employed who work a different combination of days in the different out-of-school clubs. There have been numerous unsuccessful attempts to develop volunteer involvement. Each day, 2 staff members either walk or drive the children to their schools once the club closes.
Inspection and registration status:	Required under the 1989 Children Act since provision is for children under 8 and exceeds 2 hours per day (counting both before- and after-school provision). Undertaken by the local social services department.

HOW CHILDREN REACH THE CLUB AND AFTERWARDS GO TO SCHOOL

- Usually on foot, either accompanied by parents or quite often alone or escorting siblings.
- For non-school clubs, staff escort children to school once the club ends, usually on foot although in rural areas transport may be needed (at significant time and cost).

AGES OF CHILDREN ATTENDING

- Most clubs cater for primary age children.
- Attendees are typically at the younger end of this age band. Interviewees suggested that this reflected the older age group preferring to meet friends away from adults/teachers.

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN AND PATTERN OF ATTENDANCE

- Average numbers appear to be 10-15 children per day (compared with 24 for after-school clubs), although some clubs average 40 to 50 while a few have reported attendance above 70.
- A small core of children generally attend regularly, two, three or five times a week, with others attending more irregularly in response to parents' work demands or care arrangements.
- Most clubs would welcome an increase in the numbers of children attending – although some would be restricted in this due to the size of the premises they use.

BREAKFAST CLUB B	
<p>The development of this school-based club stemmed from teachers' awareness of their pupils arriving at school having missed breakfast and then being preoccupied with hunger and showing challenging behaviour by mid-morning. The school also wished to tackle problems with children arriving early in the school playground at a time when it was unsupervised and difficulties with poor punctuality and school attendance. The school is located in a deprived, low socio-economic inner city area. About 50% of the school have entitlement to free school meals.</p>	
Location of club:	A school-based club; the club has free use of the school dining room.
Source of start-up funding & ongoing financial support:	A local authority business partnership provided initial practical advice. A local business sponsored the club for the first two years of its existence (1996-98). In 1999, the club secured a £4,000 charitable grant allowing it to run for another year. Core funding, and thus fundraising, are crucial to the club's survival as it could never fund itself through fees..
Who attends:	Children from the school. The club is also open to parents – this is encouraged as a means to developing parent:teacher dialogue and offering social support to isolated parents.
Foods served:	Fruit juices, cereals and variety of hot foods. The menu changes slightly each day to maintain interest in the club.
Cost per child:	The club uses part of its sponsorship money/grant to offer 20 free breakfasts per day, allocated on a rota basis per term. For other children, the cost for attending breakfast club is based only on core food costs – for example, 10p for a piece of toast, 20p for a hot meal, etc.
Staffing and practical arrangements:	School caterers provide and serve the food. The grant is used to cover food costs and the costs of employing a welfare assistant to supervise children attending the club. There is very limited volunteer/parental involvement.
Inspection and registration status:	No inspection by or registration with local social services department is required since school based and runs for less than 2 hours per day. Ofsted is responsible for any inspections of overall education provision.

FOODS SERVED

- Toast and spreads and milk or a hot drink. In addition, some offer cereals, fruit and hot foods (e.g. sausages or bacon rolls).
- Factors influencing decisions on what food to serve include the facilities to store fresh or perishable foods, the need to minimise waste and contain costs, and limitations on the time in which to serve a meal.

COOKING FACILITIES

- Whilst some school-based clubs used their school kitchen (and catering staff), the cooking equipment in many clubs is purchased specifically and often kept in the club's room. It appears that the decision to use the school kitchen or not largely depends on whether the school enjoys a flexible relationship with its school caterers. Several clubs also reported that buying the food themselves was cheaper than the prices allowed through central purchasing by their caterers.
- In many instances, equipment is limited to a toaster, kettle, fridge and possibly a microwave - space and storage limitations, and restricted finances, have been important influences.

BREAKFAST CLUB C	
<p>A school-based club but where the impetus behind the creation of the club was a voluntary sector organisation working on a borough-wide project of family support services in an area of high deprivation. Local health professionals, including community dieticians, and the school catering service, provided advice at the start on the foods to be served for breakfast. A key aim was to try and help parents looking for work with before-school provision. The teachers also had long-standing concerns about some pupils missing breakfast, poor punctuality and unauthorised absences, and wished to find ways of building pupils' self-esteem and school cohesion.</p>	
Location of club:	School-based. It uses small room off the main hall dedicated for free use by the breakfast club.
Source of start-up funding & ongoing financial support:	£5000 charitable grant for 1998, the first year of operation. In the second year, a further smaller grant was made available, with the school also fundraising.
Who attends:	Originally children from the identified school only; however the club is expanding and in 1999, some children from a neighbouring secondary school were invited to attend for breakfast; they then help the younger children with learning activities after breakfast is finished.
Foods served:	Cereals, toast and spread, boiled eggs, fruit and hot drinks.
Cost per child:	25p per breakfast in 1998. In 1999, some free breakfasts were offered using the second charitable grant received by the breakfast club and the price is now 50p (with an extended menu and activities).
Staffing and practical arrangements:	The head teacher and special educational needs co-ordinator are deeply involved in running the club on a voluntary unpaid basis. The school uses its own budget to employ one member of school staff to work in the breakfast club for 2 hours per morning. There is no volunteer or parental involvement. Food is prepared by the staff who run the breakfast club in a kitchen area sited to one side of the room where the club operates. (All of these arrangements describe how the club started up; they are likely to change as the club is expands and develops).
Inspection and registration status:	Not required under the 1989 Children Act.

COSTS AND FUNDING

- Although ranging from 20p to £2.50 per session, the clubs that we interviewed were usually charging 30-50p per day. This charge was seen as necessary to at least cover food costs, with the club covering the staffing costs some other way. It was also thought to be the most that many parents were prepared to pay for their child to attend a breakfast club.
- Three examples were identified of clubs offering free breakfasts. However the majority of club leaders indicated the importance of charging something to build up the status of the club and to encourage the children using the club (and their parents) to value what was on offer.
- Many different sources and combinations of external funding have led to the development of breakfast clubs. Sources include national and local government health, education, childcare, anti-poverty and area regeneration initiatives, as well as voluntary and private sector grants.
- Grants averaged between £2,500 to £4,000 per annum (for a breakfast club alone).

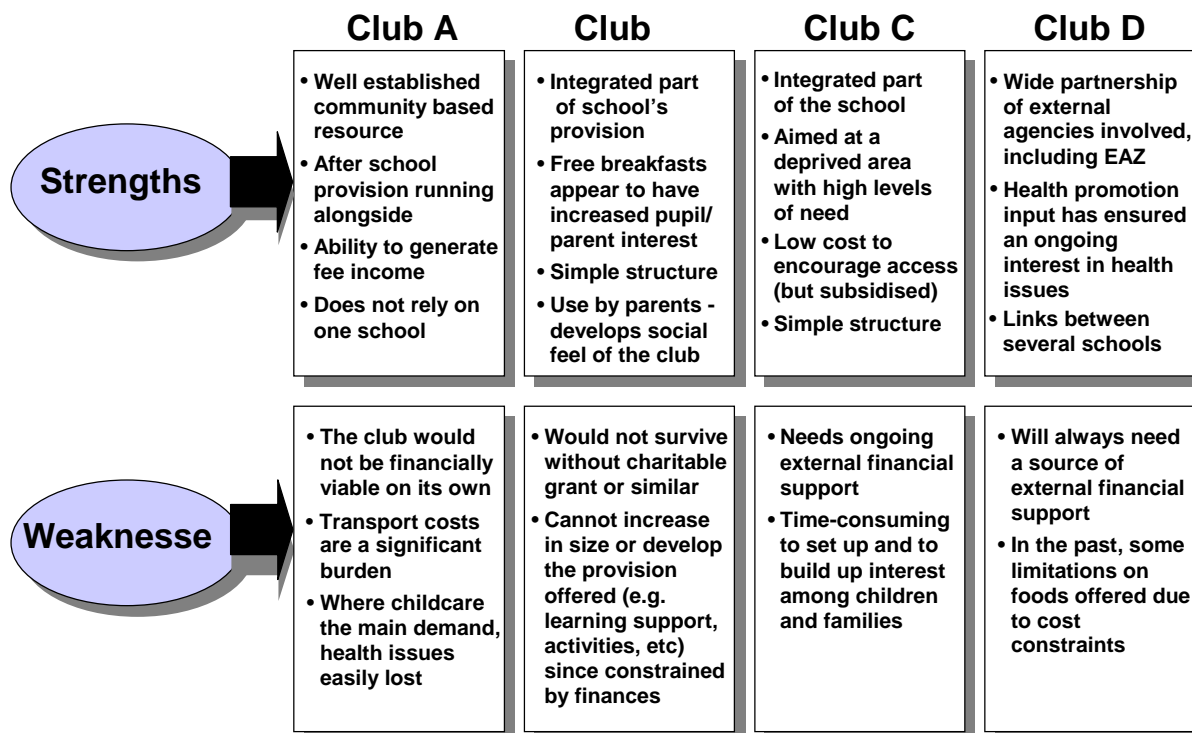
BREAKFAST CLUB D	
<p>This club is a school-based initiative developed in partnership between the school, the local health promotion department and a social services department locality centre offering a range of community based family services. Identified objectives include improving children's diets and overall health (in particular, tackling haphazard eating patterns and 'grazing' on sweets and snacks), with the club based in a deprived small town estate with high rates of unemployment, drug misuse and crime problems. The area also has above national average rates of serious illness (for example, coronary heart disease) and premature deaths. Within the school, there are high rates of free school meal entitlement, emotional and behavioural difficulties and exclusions.</p>	
Location of club:	Based in a junior school. It has free use of the school dining room.
Source of start-up funding & ongoing financial support:	£4,000 for a 1-year pilot club in 1998 was raised from various sources, including the health promotion department plus a wide variety of small grants from local charities, national campaigns and local businesses. The success of the pilot led to the continued running of the club, which then received Education Action Zone and some SRB funding in 1999. This is likely to lead to significant developments in what the club offers.
Who attends:	Children from the junior school and from the neighbouring infants school (often younger siblings) also encouraged to attend. The aim is to provide family support and also to help younger children become familiar with the school they will move up to.
Foods served:	Cereals, toast, fruit and hot drink.
Cost per child:	30p per breakfast session (core funding provides a 5p subsidy per breakfast).
Staffing and practical arrangements:	When the club originally started, the school head, deputy and local health promotion personnel were all heavily involved on a voluntary basis. Children are also encouraged to be involved in the daily registration and collection of money. 2 school meal supervisors are employed. Food is prepared in the school kitchens by the School Meals Service.
Inspection and registration status:	No registration with social services department required, although there is extensive involvement and support via the social workers based at the locality centre.

STAFFING

- Most clubs are run by school staff (paid extra for it) such as special educational needs co-ordinators, classroom assistants, home liaison staff, school catering staff and after-school club leaders (who have sometimes been recruited specifically to run the breakfast club as well).
- Staffing is a serious problem for most clubs, terms of both cost and recruitment/retention. The voluntary involvement and sheer determination of many head teachers appears to have been crucial in both the start-up and survival of a number of school-based clubs.
- Scottish clubs are notable in using more volunteers than elsewhere.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF DIFFERENT MODELS

The diagram below summarises some of the key strengths and weaknesses of these different ways of developing and running a breakfast club.



The summary shows that there are different ways of setting up and running a breakfast club - that in essence, such provision can be developed in a flexible manner to meet local needs or interests. It is quite possible to develop a club either solely through community or school based personnel and resources, or to base provision on a consortium approach to both funding and staff input into the running of the club. However, it is also clear all these approaches have drawbacks in some shape or form and we now review these in turn.

FINANCE

Problems of financial viability and stability emerged in all the models, even including the clubs that were able to charge quite high fees for their provision.

Such difficulties may explain the finding that all the non-school based clubs included in our sample (and a few of the school-based clubs) had developed either alongside, or following the starting up of, an after-school, homework or holiday club, this being because a breakfast club on its own was not seen as financially viable.

This is obviously an important limitation in terms of the possible development of community-based clubs, especially those in more rural areas where there may be considerable transport costs to be taken into account. It also suggests that two major strengths of school-based breakfast clubs are first, that they are on site and second, that the majority operate on the basis of free use of school premises, with only a small number paying a minimal contribution towards use of the room, heating and other utility bills.⁵

LASTING INFLUENCE OF THE REASONS FOR SETTING UP A CLUB

The different models highlight another finding of our research - that the original reasons behind the formation of a club continue to have a lasting and significant influence on the continuing focus and operation of the club.

This is an important consideration in terms of the current government interest in developing breakfast clubs as one way of improving health and boosting academic standards amongst all children, especially those in greatest need.

In particular, as they currently operate, some forms of breakfast club have only limited relevance in being able to contribute to health and education objectives. This refers to those clubs largely responding to parental demands for childcare, where the fees which are often charged will preclude attendance by children from low income families - which is where concerns about diet may be most pronounced. Less attention is often in these clubs paid to health (i.e. foods provided) and education matters anyway, simply because club staff do not see these as not major problems for the children who currently attend.

Overall, our research suggests that active involvement from local health and education professionals working in children's services is crucial, right from initial planning stages of a breakfast to ensure that health and education needs are fully considered in what breakfast clubs provide.

THE DANGERS OF ISOLATION

Another major weakness that has been identified is that a considerable number of breakfast clubs appear to be operating in isolation with little support from external professionals or awareness of other breakfast clubs (possibly because they may be the only breakfast club in the area). These circumstances clearly prevent the dissemination of useful information or the building up of shared knowledge about good practice.

External support has been identified as a key factor influencing the sustainability of community food projects: *“projects that build links with different organisations are more likely to be sustainable. They support and learn from one another, and are able to exploit others’ agendas, for example, for new funding opportunities”* (McGlone et al 1999).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has summarised the general features of breakfast clubs identified in our research, including such matters as the premises used, club opening times, costs and funding and the ages and numbers of children currently using breakfast clubs. Four different models of club have been presented, with some discussion of their relative strengths and weaknesses. We suggest that these models deserve attention since they may provide valuable ideas as to what sort of club is best suited to certain situations. Or they may illustrate the infrastructure and sources of external support required if breakfast clubs are to successfully meet particular needs.

Our research has demonstrated that diversity exists in both the purpose and organisation of breakfast clubs, with breakfast by no means central to many clubs' role. In addition to the shared characteristics, a number of common problems and limitations also emerged. In particular, finance is a problem for almost all but those clubs which were set up to provide before-school childcare for parents who are able to pay for it (and even here, our research identified that often some degree of cross-subsidisation from after-school provision is needed by the before-school club given the generally smaller numbers of children attending set against staffing costs). Staffing is similarly a widespread concern.

Another common characteristic which can limit the development of a breakfast club is the way in which the original reasons for founding a club tend to predominate even as the club becomes established. The isolation of breakfast clubs tends to exacerbate this tendency. Overall, this suggests that there may be a considerable challenge in promoting the provision of breakfast in clubs where this was not an original core aim.

A final challenge lies in promoting the sharing of information about good practice in breakfast clubs. This highlights the importance of building networks amongst clubs, publishing practical guides and reports about how to set up and establish breakfast clubs, and developing models of evaluation. We hope that this report may provide a useful start point in all these aims.

3. NEW AND UNUSUAL WAYS OF USING BREAKFAST CLUBS

In addition to the four models presented in the last chapter, our research identified a number of other ways in which breakfast clubs had started up - or more unusual ways of running the club. It is also apparent that many clubs are in a process of quite considerable change, possibly to develop new aspects of their service in response to Education Action Zone (EAZ) input or in an attempt to secure New Opportunities Funding.

These examples are valuable in terms of illustrating the potential of breakfast clubs to be developed or expanded. It should, however, be noted that financial difficulties were again reported, which obviously raises questions about the long-term sustainability of these projects.

SOME UNUSUAL BREAKFAST CLUBS

Some of the more unusual projects included the following:

- A school-based breakfast club running once a week for parents only, where the aim is to offer support and a social forum to parents, many of whom speak only very limited English. Started with a small voluntary sector grant, it was hoped that the club might help to increase the amount of parent teacher contact/dialogue about the children's needs and any areas of concern. It also provides a positive, practical message about the importance of breakfast. The club has proved to be very popular and "has made parents feel they have a voice in the school".
- Breakfast offered by school catering service on a cafeteria basis in a secondary school operating on continental hours. The school has a large catchment area and many of the pupils have a long journey to school. This, plus the early start of teaching, led to development of the breakfast service, which has proved to be popular with both children and teachers.
- A community-based breakfast café based in a charity-run Youth Information Project located opposite a large secondary school which already offered after-school activities (and snack foods) on a drop-in basis. The project, which opened for breakfast in response to a local health promotion initiative as well as requests made by young people already using the project, is funded by a variety of organisations, including the area Social Inclusion Partnership. The club is popular with both the young people who attend and the school, which on occasion has provided free vouchers for breakfast to try and encourage more young people to attend.
- A breakfast club based in a purpose built community play-scheme run by a voluntary charity organisation founded by parents where the impetus for the breakfast club came from childcare problems experienced by working parents when their children moved from nursery to primary school where the daily hours are shorter. The scheme, which received some local council and some TEC funding, offers breakfast and after-school activities for school age children and in the mornings, offers playgroup activities. These are for children aged 2 years 9 months up to 5 years. The club supports three local primary schools, all within walking distance.

- A school-based breakfast club run by the local careers service one morning a week for Year 8 pupils (13 year olds) to try and improve attendance of this age group. The club (which offers free breakfast) also aims to boost career aspirations and ‘widen horizons’ by inviting local professionals in to talk to the children about their work.
- There are a number of breakfast clubs in Scotland with a major focus on oral and dental health, where the clubs are providing toothbrushes and toothpaste as well as advice and information sessions on how to care for teeth. Rates of dental caries amongst children are extremely high, particularly in the Glasgow area (above 85% of children aged up to 5years, have been found to have some level of dental disease)⁶ – thus these clubs provide a particular example of breakfast club provision being developed in response to specific local needs, within a bigger health/dental promotion area based initiative.
- A secondary school already offering an extensive range of lunchtime and after-school activities and where a ‘whole school’ approach of linking education, health and social activities was being actively pursued. The existing out-of-school clubs were open to both the school’s own pupils and a number from neighbouring primary schools. The school is investigating the possibility of extending this still further to include the provision of breakfast, with the aim of easing the transition from primary to secondary school by increasing the ways in which younger pupils could become familiar with their senior school beforehand.

INNOVATION BY EDUCATION ACTION ZONES

Inquiries made to 25 first wave Education Action Zones, revealed that 11 zones either had the creation of breakfast clubs as a part of their action plan or were using some of their resources to support existing clubs or those being developed by other organisations. Within these 11 Action Zones, breakfast clubs were identified under a variety of different action plan categories. These included:

- The development of mechanisms to support families and communities to assist young people to succeed in education.
- As a strategy to tackle the disadvantage of rural isolation;
- As a part of an overall zone target to develop parent participation in extra-curriculum services.
- As a means of curriculum enrichment.
- As a means of building pupil self-esteem.

Within the different Education Action Zones, several notable examples of the project teams supporting the overall development of new breakfast clubs across the whole zone were identified. Alternatively, some EAZ teams has focused on providing certain types of support, for example, the input of Curriculum Support Advisors (CSAs) to existing clubs.

OVERVIEW OF 1ST WAVE EDUCATION ACTION ZONES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF BREAKFAST CLUBS (* EAZ IDENTIFIED ROLE)	
Barnsley	No information available
Blackburn	No plans to develop clubs at present
Grimsby (N.E. Lincs.)	Focus on after-school provision
Hereford *	2 breakfast clubs receiving support
Lambeth *	3 school clubs supported in 98/99. 1 closed March 99 due to poor take-up
Leicester (S. & W.)*	Some plans to develop breakfast clubs
Middlesborough *	5 schools supported to develop clubs
New Addington*	5 schools supported to develop clubs
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	No plans for breakfast clubs
Newham *	Working with local health promotion to support existing breakfast clubs
Salford & Trafford *	6 school received support to set up breakfast clubs
Weston-super-mare *	2 school clubs receiving support
Birmingham (Aston & Nechells)	No current plans
Birmingham (Kitts Green & Shard End)	No plans for breakfast clubs; research in progress re: demand for all forms of out-of-school provision
Brighton & Hove	No plans for breakfast clubs; focus is on literacy, numeracy and pre-school provision
East Basildon *	2 school breakfast clubs receiving support
Halifax	No active plans but plan to support a New Opportunities Fund bid from a number of schools for out-of-school programmes, including breakfast
Kingston-upon-Hull *	Not developing clubs but funding each school with half-time Curriculum Support Advisor; schools free to use this to develop a breakfast club
Nottingham	No plans to develop breakfast clubs
Plymouth	No plans to develop clubs; some general support to existing clubs
Sheffield	No information available
South Tyneside	No plans to develop breakfast clubs
Southwark *	Plan to pilot in 2 schools Autumn 1999
Thetford	No current plans.
Wigan – Leigh	Focus on after-school provision (from which breakfast clubs may evolve)

SALFORD

Salford EAZ 's breakfast club strategy provides free breakfasts every school day to 20 identified children in each of 6 schools (5 primary and 1 secondary).

The aim of the Salford scheme is to improve learning within schools and to offer family and child support. It also offers an employment opportunity for local parents who are paid £5 per hour from EAZ funds to run the breakfast clubs.

Each school was given £500 with which to buy equipment and set up the club. The EAZ has arranged free provision of breakfast cereals from a well-known breakfast cereal manufacturer (until August 2000) and pays for the milk. Overall, the EAZ estimates that it costs the zone £75 per week to support each breakfast club.

The children who receive breakfast were selected by the individual schools. Teachers were asked to identify children who had particular problems with punctuality, poor concentration and who appeared to be hungry in school.

The scheme has proved extremely popular to date, with no problems with stigma reported and in fact, demand for the breakfast places far exceeding supply. The plan to recruit parents has also been successful in that parents already working as school dinner ladies, or as classroom assistants have been recruited. This has minimised any difficulties with the need for police checks or extra employer insurance and has meant that adults already known to the children are running the clubs.⁷

BREAKFAST 'BUDDIES' IN A NEW ADDINGTON (CROYDON) EAZ BASED PRIMARY SCHOOL

The main aim of EAZ support to breakfast clubs in this zone is to promote learning support as a part of an overall strategy to boost the academic performance of the children in the area.

Financial support from the EAZ has taken the form of the zone paying the school caterers directly for the food and their time in preparing breakfast. In one particular school, funding from the EAZ also covers the cost of the school employing 4 breakfast 'buddies' to help run the breakfast club – these are learning assistants already employed in the school. Buddies work in the breakfast club to ensure that it offers a nurturing and supportive role to the children who attend. Their aim is to provide consistency, positive adult feed-back and individualised support, and to develop within the club an atmosphere which encourages pupil self-esteem and motivation.

The breakfast club has proved to be successful and attracts approximately 25% of the total number of children on roll at the school. Although too early to judge whether the club will bring clear improvements in educational outcomes (since only in operation for just over 6 months), feedback from class teachers throughout the school has reported noticeable improvements in the social cohesion and support amongst the children attending the breakfast club. This is seen as particularly beneficial for those children described by school staff as 'loners', and this success is largely attributed to the work of the 'breakfast buddies'.

Future plans include the development of more developed study support, including a programme of before-schoolwork aimed at specific year groups/classes.

TARGETED BREAKFAST CLUB AND LINKED LEARNING SUPPORT VIA COMPUTER COURSES

In another EAZ based primary school, attendance at the breakfast club is offered to 20 different children each school morning alongside a programme of different computer courses, each lasting for 5 weeks. With SRB funding, the school had already purchased 20 computers and recent EAZ involvement allowed the purchase of a further 18 computers as well as funding for the breakfast club.

The aims of this scheme are to boost attendance and punctuality, to improve computer-based skills (and via their use, to help improve basic mathematics and other core curriculum skills), and to provide a means of supervising children whom would otherwise be roaming around the local estate before school. By offering places to different children each day, the school tries to maximise the number of children in receipt of this type of support.

To date, the scheme has proved popular and school staff have reported a more relaxed and sociable atmosphere amongst the children. A reduction in the school exclusion rate is also partly attributed to the introduction of this scheme.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has outlined some of the more unusual and innovative ways in which breakfast clubs have developed around the UK, including community-based provision which emerged out of a wider area-based health promotion initiative and a club run essentially to support parents and to improve parent:school teacher dialogue. The broader policy aim of schools developing a ‘whole school’ approach to the services they provide has also been clearly evident in these developments.

Our research has highlighted the rapid process of change being driven by some of the Education Action Zones. Equally important, it has shown that innovative examples of clubs are often the result of an individual school or local community project’s attempts to tackle problems or concerns specific to the children they care for.

The flip-side of appreciating that diversity and flexibility characterise breakfast clubs, and that this appears important in terms of their ability to respond to local or school level needs, is to understand the wide array of needs they may be trying to meet or the positive outcomes they wish to promote. These needs, the areas of shortfall identified in this research, and the complexities of evaluating breakfast clubs, are discussed in the next chapter.

4. MEETING MANY NEEDS – THE POTENTIAL OF BREAKFAST CLUBS

HEALTH, EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE NEEDS

Broadly speaking, breakfast clubs have developed to meet three main areas of need:

- **Health needs** in terms of contributing to children's nutritional requirements for a balanced diet by providing a meal at the beginning of the day.
- **Education needs** in terms of providing a form of before-school care where the informally structured atmosphere of the club can help children start the school day on time, calm and ready for learning - and crucially, not preoccupied and unable to concentrate due to feeling hungry.
- **Childcare needs** in terms of providing adult-supervised care for approximately one hour before school starts – the time when many parents need to travel to their place of employment or to leave home to look for work.

The principal research findings in these areas are summarised in Appendix 2. In addition to these three main categories, a number of other associated sub-categories can be identified:

- **Social learning needs** in terms of providing opportunities for children and adults to interact on a social basis, to create opportunities for conversation, for nurturing, for sharing responsibilities, and for children to learn from the positive adult role models provided by staff running the clubs.
- **Building children's confidence and self-esteem**, and developing the overall caring ethos amongst their peer group, may be important routes through which to tackle the increasing problems in schools of bullying, truancy and unauthorised absences. Such developments may have an important role to play in promoting the mental health of children and young people (where again, rates of recorded problems are rising).⁸
- **Opportunities for socialisation** and structured play as a means of countering the isolation and limited community-based play resources experienced by many children.
- **Quiet space and support for homework**, and opportunities for small group learning support, are increasingly recognised as vital to the educational success of a significant number of children.
- **Health education needs and promotion** (of both children and their parents) not only in terms of actually feeding children, but also by providing opportunities to learn about different 'healthy' foods, about the importance of vitamins, minerals and good dental care, and about related issues such as food hygiene and safe food handling. It is also more widely accepted that children need advice and information from a much earlier age on healthy behaviours such as not smoking and about drinking alcohol.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THIS STUDY

The information gathered from the 35 breakfast clubs revealed that clubs are often responding to a wide range of needs, often in combination, across the different dimensions just outlined. Thus, at the level of individual breakfast clubs, the delineation of needs is a key issue which many clubs struggle to deal with. Key findings include:

- Parental demands for before-school childcare were identified by over one third of the clubs as one of the main reasons why they had set up a breakfast club. Parents often wanted after-school provision as well; in other words, they needed childcare spanning the hours of 8am-6pm, to correspond with their working hours.
- Problems with before-school supervision in terms of children arriving early (before school opened) and then playing in the playground unsupervised were raised by more than half of the schools surveyed. This was noted to be a longstanding problem which had possibly become more marked in recent years. Several of the community-based resources noted that concerns about children playing out on the streets/in local playgrounds before school had influenced their decision to offer a breakfast club.
- Children arriving at school having missed breakfast and hungry were widely reported, with well over half of the schools expressing concerns about missed breakfasts such that, in their opinion, school lunch was the only meal that many children received each day. This was often the main reason behind the formation of many school-based breakfast clubs (and in some cases, the introduction of more extensive snacks sold via the tuck shop at break time).⁹ Examples were given of children ‘hanging around’ the school dining room or kitchens at lunch-time, in the hope of receiving second or third servings of lunch, and in one case, of a school experiencing problems with packed lunches being stolen and eaten during the mid-morning break.
- High levels of consumption of crisps, sweets and fizzy drinks purchased on the way to school, were a cause of significant concern. Whilst anecdotal, several teachers described some children having a ‘sugar high’ early in the morning, followed by lethargy and listlessness later in the morning. A number of schools reported that, they had totally banned sweets and fizzy drinks from school in response to these concerns – although several others talked of the dilemma of wanting to keep children on site at lunch-time and thus needing to sell what was popular. Alternatively, some schools were constrained in their response due to the needs for their school caterers to sell high profit goods in the school shop.
- The wish to offer social support, build school cohesion and tackle bullying were all significant themes. A number of club leaders talked of the need to provide opportunities for children to sit and talk about any worries they might have. They suggested that often this aspect of children’s emotional needs was overlooked in the rushed pace of their daily lives.

EVALUATING THE CONTRIBUTION OF BREAKFAST CLUBS

While a full scale evaluation of breakfast clubs was not part of this project, a number of partial assessments and impressions gained along the way are worth presenting as ideas to be borne in mind when decisions about clubs are being made.

THE COMPLEXITIES OF EVALUATION

It is rarely wise either to judge or indeed to conceive of a club in isolation from the wider circumstances in which it was borne, which many of the interviewees stressed when describing and discussing their clubs.

For example, a number of head teachers described a process of change aimed at building up a positive school ethos, which might include a new code of behaviour to be expected in school and new policies on attendance. Others talked of offering introducing new after-school clubs or support to families and forging new community links. The impression gained from the interviews was that only very rarely was a breakfast club started up in isolation. Thus there are a number of important contextual factors that must be carefully considered in any evaluation.

THE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION OF BREAKFAST CLUBS

All of the head teachers and club project leaders that we interviewed reported positively about the benefits of having a breakfast club. This may not be surprising given that they are already in some form ‘advocates’ of out-of-school provision. Particular points included:

- Some overall improvements in attendance and punctuality were reported by a number of the schools.
- Other issues highlighted include improved concentration in class, fewer problems with children feeling ‘unwell’ or appearing obviously tired by mid morning, and fewer recorded incidents of argumentative or disruptive behaviour.
- Just under a third of the schools reported improved social cohesion among their pupil group and better social interaction between different class groups, developments seen as particularly beneficial to those children described as ‘loners’ who were now seen to be possibly more integrated into their peer groups. This has obvious implications for the risks such children face of being bullied.
- Improved and more frequent parent and teacher dialogue were also reported, and involvement of parents in some of the activities offered by schools.
- The social support and nurturing dimension of breakfast clubs emerged as a prominent issue for both the clubs being driven primarily by parents’ demands for childcare and those responding to concerns about deprivation and children’s diets and general health,.
- Even amongst club leaders who felt unable to comment on whether the club had brought improvements in specific areas such as punctuality or behaviour, there was a general consensus that a beneficial aspect of breakfast clubs provision is the way they allow for “a calm start to the day” which is felt then to have a noticeable spillover effect into the rest of the school day.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE ‘GOOD’ BREAKFAST CLUB

<i>Assess parental demand/ interest beforehand then build and sustain it</i>	Although demand was most often for childcare rather than health and education, many clubs flagging this as important had either sent questionnaires to parents before embarking on the setting up of a club to check if they would be interested or had held a meeting to discuss in more detail what was to be offered. This was typically followed by regular newsletters or forms asking for feedback.
<i>Encourage parents to use the club</i>	Several club leaders thought this had been crucial in getting children to attend and to build up general support for and awareness of the club.
<i>Check what the children like and vary what is offered to keep the club fun</i>	More successful clubs checked what the children liked, acting on their suggestions if possible, and had involved them in collecting the money, choosing the menu, etc. Other effective techniques included different menus, games and activities; ‘special days’, and packs to reward good attendance.
<i>Use open access unless children can be persuaded it is good to have been selected’</i>	Most club leaders thought open access was important in terms of minimising stigma and encouraging maximum uptake. But some EAZ models had been successful with pre-identification because the children had seen it as special to have been selected to have breakfast and be involved in a specified education activity.
<i>Community clubs need good links with their schools</i>	The support of the local schools was identified as crucial by a number of clubs in terms of the school actively encouraging their pupils to attend and reinforcing the importance of breakfast through their teaching.
<i>Integrate school-based clubs into the overall provision of the school</i>	Ensuring that teachers promote the club, sometimes using it themselves, and not seeing it as unrelated to the school, was highlighted by all the head teachers. Teacher resistance to the introduction of out-of-school clubs is a major cause of failure and so it is very important to ensure that teachers understand the potential benefits. Where relevant, encouraging school caterers input into a club is seen as a key to success.
<i>‘Keep it simple in terms of staffing, funding, activities’</i>	The general wisdom from club leaders was that being too ambitious was the road to failure. By using existing resources, costs (especially start-up) can be kept as low as possible and difficulties and delays with matters such as insurance avoided. Complex transport arrangements for rural clubs are a major stumbling block. But taken too far, simplicity can also mean no cooked foods and a basic menu, avoiding difficulties with health and safety, but raising questions about the adequacy of the foods offered.
<i>In schools, use existing school staff</i>	Using existing staff avoids the need to advertise and interview, run police checks, etc. It is clear that many clubs would not be feasible if they had not recruited dinner ladies or classroom assistants to run the club.
<i>Use volunteers</i>	This was an issue highlighted in Scotland, where success or otherwise in recruiting volunteers has been key to the operation of a breakfast club.
<i>Keep the fees low</i>	This is seen as essential by the majority of interviewees: parents are only prepared to pay a limited amount for before-school care/breakfast.
<i>Have a source of core income</i>	This was highlighted as the only way that many clubs can survive / operate. While all clubs struggle, the stronger are aware of the need to fundraise, pursue new possibilities for raising money, get free foods from local supermarkets, get in the local paper, etc.

AREA OF SHORTFALL OR LIMITATIONS

These included:

- Continuing problems with children arriving early and being unsupervised in the playground at school, or missing breakfast, even where a breakfast club is operating. Suggestions for this included lowering the cost of attending a club - even 20 pence (the lowest end of the scale found in this study) was thought to be too much for some families, especially those with more than one child.
- Many of the children with severe problems with punctuality or attendance have largely failed to benefit from the introduction of a breakfast club: they simply arrive too late or not at all. This illustrates the need to develop strong parent support and motivation to get children to attend. It also suggests that family support of a number of varieties may be needed. Finally, it highlights that breakfast clubs have got to be attractive to children, to offer something they are likely to enjoy.
- ‘Grazing’ behaviour on the way to school remains widespread and over which breakfast clubs have little control. It does, however, suggest that there is a risk that if children are given money with which to attend a breakfast club, then this may easily be diverted elsewhere unless there is clear parent school communication, encouragement to attend and a system of checking attendance. This reinforces the importance of health education in terms of giving children clear advice about what they should be eating for breakfast. It also highlights the need for school-based strategies to be supported by their community colleagues.
- Breakfast clubs mostly operate on extremely limited budgets. This has meant that many have restricted the foods that they offer (particularly more perishable foods such as fresh fruit) and some only offer a limited number of places (often to minimise staff costs). Both of these developments obviously have implications in terms of breakfast clubs being able to reach all the children who need them and to be one vehicle for promoting a varied and healthy diet.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has discussed the different dimensions and combinations of needs which breakfast clubs may address - essentially, health, education and childcare needs. More detailed statistics about the current concerns in these different areas, are presented in Appendix 2 and illustrate the very serious issues which breakfast clubs may have a role in tackling.

Our research identified a wide range of issues which clubs are struggling to meet, many of which pick up the bigger worries about children’s health, physical and emotional development, as well as their safety. Parents’ needs for childcare were highlighted. Worries about bullying in schools, which it is known can lead to school absenteeism, truancy and at worst, result in children attempting to harm themselves, were also widely raised.

While there is clearly some consensus about the positive benefits of breakfast clubs, there are also significant limitations and complexities to be considered. Evaluating the positive contribution of breakfast clubs is a particularly difficult task given the many external factors which impact upon breakfast clubs in different ways. The development of breakfast clubs cannot be seen in isolation from overall developments in the education arena, in out-of-school generally and in terms of childcare policy. These surrounding issues are discussed in the next two chapters.

5. THE GROWING SCALE OF PROVISION

EXPANSION OVER THE LAST DECADE

There has been a considerable increase in out-of-school provision of all types over the last decade, most notably after-school clubs. Originally stimulated by parental need for childcare, the Out-of-School Childcare Initiative (OSCI) formulated in 1992 and the subsequent introduction of TEC (Training and Enterprise Council) funding in 1993¹⁰ both gave a considerable boost to this growth.

DEVELOPMENTS UP TO 1997

In 1997, a survey by Kids' Clubs Network (KCN) of its membership suggested that there were around 3,500 kids' clubs operating in England and Wales, providing services for up to 70,000 children. 8% of these provided both before- and after-school care and fewer than 0.1% opened only for breakfast. The survey showed more places available for after-school sessions than for any other period in the day or year – including half term and holidays (Smith & Barker 1997).¹¹

78% of the KCN clubs also reported that they had received TEC help. The impact of the TEC initiative is clearly seen from an analysis of earlier KCN database entries: throughout the 1980s, there were fewer than 500 clubs; by 1992/93, numbers had grown to around the 1,000 mark, climbing thereafter to reach 3,500 in 1997. 1995 is identified as the year when the greatest increase was evident – which is when the effects of the TEC Initiative were being fully realised. A levelling off in the numbers of clubs is also apparent as the TEC Initiative ended.

Smith and Barker's report also illustrated other important changes in the out-of-school sector:

- Significant growth of clubs in the voluntary/registered charity sector, whilst increases in other types of clubs (employer run; local business run and school run) were more moderate, and local authority clubs showed only a small expansion.
- A substantial increase in the use of school premises, although this did not reflect an increase in school-run clubs – rather that other organisations were now making use of school premises.
- Considerable growth in rural areas and low rates of growth in city areas, in part due to the fact that it was only in the first half of this decade that the expansion of rural clubs has begun.
- Overall, areas which historically had little or no provision have shown the greatest growth of out-of-school clubs which to some extent has helped to make the distribution of provision more evenly spread than in the past.

RECENT ANALYSIS OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROVISION

In 1998, a follow-up survey was undertaken and an update of the KCN database was published - 'The Childcare Revolution: facts and figures for 1998' - which showed almost 4,400 clubs. Other key findings included the following:

- One in four clubs reported having a waiting list with the number of children waiting for a place showing a rise of 40%.
- 9% of clubs now provide both breakfast and after-school provision, although this would still mean only places in a breakfast club for 1 in every 187 children (compared to 1 in 50 for after-school clubs).
- Provision for children aged 11 and above is particularly sparse.
- Over half of all kids' clubs are based in schools with the proportion of school/education run schemes increasing in 1998 by 4% to 17%.
- Rural clubs now make up 32% of all clubs; clubs in urban areas account for 48% and in cities, the figure is 20%.
- Affordability remains a crucial issue – 60% of clubs do not offer a concessionary fee scheme.

THE GROWTH OF STUDY SUPPORT

In the last few years, there has been a considerable expansion in study support and learning activities which take place in out-of-lesson-time. In 1998, a survey by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) found almost all primary and almost three quarters of special schools providing some form of this activity. The survey also found that over a third of secondary and special schools received external funding for some of these activities, whereas only one sixth of primary schools did so. The activities included computer clubs, study skills, sports, drama and arts and the main sources of funding were charities and local authorities.

In two other pieces of allied research by NFER for the DfEE, considerable Local Education Authority (LEA) involvement in study support was reported and a range of benefits were identified:

- In 72% of the LEAs who responded to the NFER survey, involvement in study support activities was noted (Keys & Wilkinson 1999).
- Over half of the LEAs were involved in activities aimed at specific groups; these included low achievers, gifted pupils and ethnic minority pupils (Keys & Wilkinson 1999).
- The two main activity areas in which LEAs had been involved were study skills / homework clubs and English language, reading and writing (Keys & Wilkinson 1999).
- Benefits of participating in study support include the development of personal and interpersonal skills, self-esteem, confidence and motivation to learn (Sharp, Osgood and Flanagan 1999).¹²
- Study support would appear to have a particular role in helping children from a range of target audiences including those from disadvantaged backgrounds – although it must be noted that the evidence for the positive effects of study support is suggestive rather than conclusive (Sharp, Osgood and Flanagan 1999).

- The study identifies a number of key positive components of study support – “the voluntary nature of participation; enjoyable, challenging experiences; and supportive relationships with adults” (Sharp, Osgood & Flanagan 1999).

The research by NFER reports that out-of-school activities are often discontinued when “*staff who used to run activities have left; and teachers do not have enough time to run them*” (Keys et al 1999). Some of Local Education Authorities who responded to the NFER survey were reported to be “*concerned that current provision was ad hoc and others were worried about the sustainability of current schemes once external funding had ceased*” (Keys & Wilkinson 1999).

THE CURRENT LEVEL OF PROVISION

Acquiring an accurate estimate of the number of breakfast clubs (as defined in this study – namely, that the club is not simply before-school childcare but has the serving of food as one of its core components) is a difficult task. This is due to a number of factors: the diversity of clubs, the fact that new clubs are opening whilst some have closed, and because some clubs do not show up in the statistics since they are registered in the after-school category.

The complicated legislative framework which applies to out-of-school care compounds these difficulties still further, particularly with respect to school-based and school-run clubs which are not covered by the 1989 Children Act. Attempts made in the course of this study to gather information from local education authorities about schools in their areas running breakfast clubs brought very limited responses and highlighted the invisibility of such clubs.

There is also the general problem of data being partial since it is based on survey returns, with the KCN database only referring to KCN member clubs and local TEC information only referring to TEC funded projects.

Despite these various limitations, drawing together information from the KCN database, from local TEC Childcare Project Co-ordinators, a number of Childcare Information Services¹³ and from our interviews with the breakfast clubs, it would appear that there are somewhere in the region of 400 to 600 breakfast clubs currently operating.

- This figure is slightly higher than the 9% estimate given for the 1998 KCN survey of almost 4,400 clubs (which includes some ‘breakfast’ clubs that are not actually providing food).
- It includes clubs identified in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- It includes school-based and school-run clubs wherever identified, including via the Education Action Zones.
- It is based on an averaging out of the numbers supplied from the returns which we received from a number of the regional TEC offices; these ranged from no identified breakfast clubs up to 40 clubs, with the large majority reporting 6-8 breakfast clubs in their area.¹⁴

Multiplying the 400 to 600 breakfast clubs by an average attendance of about 15 children per day suggests that there are between 6,000 and 9,000 children attending a breakfast on a typical day. However, since only a few children use a breakfast club every day, the total number of children using a breakfast club sometime in the year will be much higher than the number using it at any one time: at a guess, perhaps three times as many. If that is right, breakfast clubs are now serving between 18,000 and 27,000 children, which is around 0.5% of the population of primary school children.

INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

At one level, the current policy environment is highly conducive to developing out-of-school provision. Increasing the number of childcare places is a key government objective, driven by its wish to support children and families, to develop early education opportunities and thus boost later academic attainment, and by its 'Welfare to Work' strategy. Running alongside, there are various health-driven objectives which, as discussed before, have a particular relevance to breakfast clubs. As a result, considerable expansion in childcare provision is forecast, with a government estimate of new places for approximately 865,000 children being created by 2003 (Walker, in Donovan & Street 1999).

The following summary highlights the government initiatives and recent reports of most relevance to breakfast clubs. Some analysis of their actual impact on breakfast clubs to date is also presented, wherever the interview responses gathered in this study made reference to these initiatives.

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships are responsible for delivering the National Childcare Strategy at the local level. On average, each partnership is made up of around 30 people drawn from local authorities, TECs, schools and other services for children and young people. A key responsibility is to encourage and support childcare in disadvantaged areas. £44 million has been committed for distribution to Partnerships on approval of their local childcare plan, which must include the number of out-of-school places which are planned between 1999-2002.

Education Action Zones (EAZs) bring together partnerships of parents, schools, businesses, LEAs, TECS and others to find innovative ways to raise standards in clusters of schools - typically up to three secondary schools with their associated primaries and SEN provision. Each zone runs for between 3-5 years. In return for setting challenging targets for improvement across the zone, they receive up to £1m per year in additional support from the DfEE and the private sector. EAZs are generally set up in particularly challenging urban or rural areas. Each zone is required to draw up a three year action plan which is reviewed by the Secretary of State. In addition, all zones will be evaluated by the DfEE. The first 25 EAZs began in the 1998/99 academic year. Round 2 zones will begin work in the near future.

Analysis of impact - as noted in chapter 3, the creation or support of existing breakfast clubs featured in 11 out of 25 Action Plans. Already a number of unusual, and it appears often successful, models of breakfast club have emerged as a result of EAZ input and financial support.

Fair Funding: Improving Delegation to Schools (DfEE, May 1998) set out a range of proposals for changing the funding of school meals and delegating budgets to school. These moves provide a practical means through which new and innovative ways of providing food for school pupils can be developed and then supported – which could, if a school chose to do so, include the use of some of the school budget towards a breakfast club.

Analysis of impact - most of the breakfast club leaders/head teachers interviewed in the course of this study suggested that they would not be using their new powers in this way. Indeed, to date, many had not chosen to assume responsibility for their main school catering contract since they already had, as one put it, “far too many things to manage already”.

11 **Health Action Zones (HAZs)** were created in April 1998, followed by a second wave of 15 zones in August 1998. Responsible for developing new ways of improving health services and tackling health inequalities, they are expected to develop new partnerships, new financial arrangements and new structures. £78 million was committed to the first wave of zones, followed by a further £15 million when the second wave of zones was announced.

Analysis of impact - while 3 of the first 11 zones have identified the development and support of Healthy Schools as a part of their programme, the development or support of breakfast clubs has not been specified within these plans to date. Several of the respondents in this study were exploring the possibilities of developing out-of-school provision, including breakfast clubs.

The **Healthy Schools Programme (DfEE/DH, May 1998)** to some extent built on an earlier strategy, the European Network of Health Promoting *Schools*.¹⁵ The Programme aims to ensure that schools do all that they can to improve the health and well-being of children and staff, as well as tackling the inequalities in health which affect children's ability to learn. Total funds of £2 million in 1998/99 will rise to £4 million in 1999/2000. The programme consists of a number of sub-projects including:

- The 'Safe and Sound Challenge' encourages schools to develop safer, healthier ways of travelling to school and is complemented by a project promoting safe and healthy travel for pupils attending out-of-school hours learning, with £100,000 being available to local authorities to introduce or supplement travel for Study Support.¹⁶
- The National Healthy Schools Scheme originally consisted of funds (£150,000) awarded to 8 pilot projects, one from each regional health authority, to develop new initiatives to improve the health of their schools and the wider community. Important objectives include the promotion of joint working between Health and Education Authorities and developing the 'whole school approach'.

Analysis of impact - although a number of the schools included in this study were aware of this initiative, including one who had previously received an award as a European Health Promoting School, the impact to date on breakfast club development appears to be slight. It is important to note, however, that the National Healthy School Standard is due to be launched in October 1999 and that there will be national guidance criteria on healthy eating, including breakfast clubs.

Ingredients For Success (DfEE 1998) outlines a 'whole school approach to food and nutrition' and, as such, has clear relevance to breakfast clubs in terms of trying to provide a coherent and integrated approach to healthy eating running throughout the school day. It sets out plans for nutritional standards for school lunches, which had been abolished by the 1980 Education Act. At present, the legislation only allows the Secretary of State to set standards for school lunches, but there is obviously potential for such standards to be expanded to cover all foods provided by schools to their pupils, including at breakfast time.

A non-departmental public body, the **New Opportunities Fund**, gives out lottery money for a variety of causes including Healthy Living Centres, Out-of-School Hours Learning and Study Support (£205 million allocated)¹⁷ and Out-of-School Hours Childcare (£220 million allocated). The latter includes £20 million allocated for integrated out-of-school learning activities and childcare.

The **National Childcare Strategy** covers children aged 0-14 years and will co-ordinate and fund a large expansion of out-of-school childcare. £470 million (including the New Opportunities Fund money for Out-of-School Hours Childcare) has been committed to the strategy which aims to improve the availability of affordable childcare. Within the overall budget, some money is earmarked for the training of childcare workers and there is a strong emphasis on the use of quality assurance schemes.

Analysis of impact – the impact is likely to be considerable in the near future since the strategy will be the key policy vehicle in which breakfast clubs are currently being developed. An important component of the strategy will be the introduction in October 1999 of the working families tax credit which is aimed to help low income families pay for registered childcare.

Funding for capital projects from the **National Lottery** is available at a number of different levels, including smaller capital projects (which can include groups of smaller schemes with a common theme who would otherwise be too small to apply for the minimum grant of £100,000). Clubs run by registered charities, or school-based projects ‘taken under the wing’ of a registered charity, are two examples of projects which would be eligible to apply for lottery funding.

Schools Plus is the responsibility of a DfEE based Policy Action Team which is due to report in December 1999 on the most ‘cost-effective’ approaches to reducing failure at school and using schools as a focus for other community based services. The Action Team is exploring all relevant approaches, including breakfast clubs, homework centres, Saturday schools and individual mentoring schemes. They will examine how schools can be encouraged to develop these activities more extensively; how they can encourage parents to become more involved, and how schools can be used to engage the community and open up their facilities to a greater number of people. The view underlying the Action Team’s brief is that strategies to tackle educational under-achievement are more likely to succeed if they are complemented by out-of-school educational activities.

Sure Start (DfEE/DOH) is essentially a programme for pre-school children not those at school and thus its relevance to breakfast clubs is quite limited. Nevertheless it is important to mention since it may provide a model by which breakfast clubs could be developed, not least through its focus on offering a package of services, working with parents and providing good quality play and learning opportunities. With funds of £540 million, the aim by the end of 2002 is to have 60 programmes set up in areas of deprivation covering 150,000 children (5% of age group).

The EU School Milk Subsidy Scheme and various other food subsidy schemes are examples of important international initiatives which clearly have the potential to help the development of breakfast clubs through the provision of lower cost goods in kind.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has outlined the process of expansion which has been evident in out-of-school care of all types over the last decade and has described some of the structural and organisational changes which have accompanied this growth. Study support has been a key dimension within this picture and the recent findings from the DfEE commissioned survey by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER 1999) illustrate both the widespread nature of this activity and its accepted benefits for the children in receipt of this sort of support.

Accurately estimating the numbers of breakfast clubs currently operating however remains difficult and the reasons why relate not only to the diversity of clubs but also the complicated legislative framework which applies to out-of-school care. Our estimate of between 400-600 clubs is based on drawing together information from a number of different sources, but even then, this will not pick up on the many clubs which have recently opened – or those which have closed.

There are a large number of current government initiatives which have the potential to support the development of breakfast clubs, and to ensure that clubs have both a health and education agenda as well as meeting childcare needs. To date, however, the practical impact of many of these initiatives in relation to breakfast clubs has been limited and that much of the focus has remained on after-school provision. Existing clubs have been funded by a diverse array of sources, often as a result of a club's own applications rather than in response to some larger government strategy. Money is a serious issue for many clubs and as such, these circumstances raise critical questions about the funding infrastructure needed - not simply to create new clubs but to provide ongoing support to existing clubs.

6. BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Our research has revealed a variety of practical problems and concerns about the viability of individual breakfast clubs. Information about the limitations and constraints facing those running these clubs had also emerged. These problems were particularly marked in those clubs operating in areas of high deprivation, where tackling concerns about nutrition and educational under-achievement were high priorities and where children had been identified as being in considerable need.

Alongside this, there is some unease about some of the developments currently underway more generally in out-of-school childcare and in services for children. Taken together, it is clear that if breakfast clubs are to expand in the way envisaged by the government, then there may need to be some significant amendments made to the policy initiatives supporting these services.

CONCERNS AT THE CLUB LEVEL

The range of concerns expressed by those who participated in this study fell into two main categories: funding and staffing. A number of respondents also expressed concerns about the sheer pace of change and what they termed ‘initiative overload’. They had worries about the administrative burden being placed on them in terms of developing services, often running out-of-school provision themselves and having to fund raise to keep the club going.

FUNDING

Money emerged as a significant worry in many of the interviews, especially for the schools operating breakfast clubs in the more deprived areas of the country. These clubs are highly dependent on some central source of funding since they will never be able to charge enough for the breakfasts they provide to cover their costs.¹⁸

Two comments with respect to funding were made repeatedly:

- Although many clubs had received start-up funds on the understanding that they would then raise funds themselves to continue, a significant number had found raising money very time-consuming and difficult. Successfully acquiring funds from charitable sources was increasingly difficult, and many of the sources were felt to be over-subscribed and increasingly restrictive in the applications they would consider. Some head teachers noted how difficult it was to find the time to raise funds in this manner and several expressed the opinion that it felt inappropriate for them to have to “almost beg for something so basic to a child’s daily needs”.
- The other major problem raised was the emphasis on funding being used to create new services; this has meant that already up-and-running clubs were, by default, ineligible for many of the source of finance introduced under recent government initiatives. Alternatively, some had experienced problems demonstrating that their breakfast club was sustainable, one of the criteria for certain sources of government instigated funding.

SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR EXISTING BREAKFAST CLUBS

The breakfast clubs that participated in this study illustrated the diversity of funding sources in this field. A number of the more recently started clubs had received funds from some of the recent initiatives, notably, the Education Action Zones and the Single Regeneration Budget, but the majority owed their existence to other sources, often in combination.

TEC funding	9 clubs had received at least a small amount of money, and for those clubs which had been running since the mid 1990s, the Out-of-School Childcare Initiative was often mentioned. Typically these breakfast clubs had been set up along with an after-school club.
Local health authority / health promotion funding	Used to develop 6 clubs. In one area, as a part of an area-based anti-poverty strategy, breakfast clubs were piloted in a number of primary schools located in areas of high deprivation. This had proved successful in 3 schools and the clubs had continued, although with increasing responsibilities to fund raise for themselves.
Charitable Grants	Identified source of funding (or-part funding) in 8 clubs.
National Charitable Awards	Funding from such sources (e.g. 'Children in Need') identified in 7 examples.
Private business grants	The main source of funding for 3 of the clubs.
Education Business Partnership Funding	1 club had received start up and running costs from a consortium made up of the local authority, the local TEC, the education department for the area and the health promotion department.
Lottery Funding	Several clubs had received this as part of a bigger area-based application to develop after-school, holiday and community based provision.
Supermarkets	2 clubs had also received help in kind in the form of foodstuffs from national supermarkets.

As a result of these difficulties, some of the clubs included in this study were threatened with imminent closure. Others were actively considering this option, with a plan to then re-launch the breakfast club, perhaps with more study support or other forms of out-of-school provision built into what was offered, in the hope that they then be able to access New Opportunities Funding.¹⁹ Five breakfast clubs also reported that the only reason they were viable was because they were also offering an after-school club which, to some degree, subsidised the breakfast club's costs.

A number of schools explained how they covered some of the costs of their club themselves, either by making savings elsewhere in the school budget or by fund-raising. Several of these were also able to charge £1.50 per session and above since they were largely used by children of professional working parents and most were also part-subsidised by after-school provision.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO RUN A BREAKFAST CLUB?

Using information obtained during our research, we have drawn up the following estimate of the cost of running a club for 1 hour each morning for 40 weeks of the year. The club is assumed to require two paid staff, at £5 per hour each, and to attract an average of 15 children each day.

Cost of providing:	Per child per day	Per 40 week year
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Barriers To Development And Sustainability

Basic healthy meal (cereal, toast and spreads, hot drink, juice or milk)	£0.35	£1,050
Basic healthy meal plus share of direct staff time	£1.10	£3,300
Basic healthy meal plus share of direct staff time and direct administrative costs	£1.20	£3,600
Basic healthy meal plus share of direct staff time, direct administrative costs and rent	£1.50	£4,500
Supplement for cooked food/wider choice of food	£0.25	£750
1 st year equipment costs		£300

Six Implications

- A fair rule of thumb is that 3 breakfast club places for a year costs about £1,000.
- About £16 million would therefore be the cost of breakfast club places for 1% of the primary school population for a year.
- Food is not the major cost of a club, being about 25% for a basic healthy meal rising to 40% for a meal with a wider choice, including something cooked.
- A club that attracts 7½ children per paid member of staff will be break even with a charge of about £1.50 per child per day.
- Provided there are sufficient staff and other fixed costs are already covered, this cost falls to £1.20 per child per day for a club that can attract 10 children per paid member of staff.
- The financial priority for a club is therefore to attract as many children as it can cater for with the existing staff and current premises.

The overall impression is that many breakfast clubs were not able to further develop what they provided, truly embedding their club into the community or school, and that the recurring search for funds dominated much of their forward planning. Other adverse consequences included:

- **Health implications:** four clubs reported that they had cut back on the fresh foods offered and tended to only offer popular foods which they knew the children would eat, in an attempt to minimise wastage. Whilst practical, such moves mitigate against breakfast clubs being the means of promoting a varied and healthy diet, of encouraging children to experiment and try new foodstuffs which they might not have access to at home, and ultimately, of helping to instil healthy eating behaviours which they might carry through into adulthood.
- **Facilities used:** cost pressures had meant that a number of clubs had not been able to move to more suitable premises. Rooms often had to double-up for different uses, which put pressure on the club to vacate the room and which could make it difficult to create a homely, personal environment - something the majority of club leaders/head teachers felt was important if the club was to offer nurturing and more individual support to the children who attended.

STAFFING

Alongside funding, staffing emerged as an area of widespread concern amongst breakfast club leaders and original plans to use volunteers (possibly parents) had often come to nothing.²⁰

- The inflexibility of the **benefit system** has proved a major barrier with regard to some plans to use the introduction of a breakfast clubs as a means of generating employment amongst unemployed parents. In essence, parents lose benefits if they earn money through working in the breakfast club.

- **Hours of operation** form another barrier, being a combination of the unattractive early start and the relatively short time involved. Furthermore, the rates of pay most clubs can afford (linked to the overall finances of the club just outlined) are not high.

For these reasons, it is important that people running the clubs have access to some other source of income - which is obviously why paid breakfast club staff are often also responsible either for the other forms of out-of-school provision or are employed during the day in the school in some other capacity, such as classroom or learning support assistants, or school meals supervisors at lunch-time.

Finally, for a considerable number of school breakfast clubs, our research suggests that the only reason why there were in any way viable lay with the determination of the head teacher to keep the club going and their willingness to give significant part of their time on a voluntary basis.

RAISING ATTENDANCE AT BREAKFAST CLUBS

Several clubs described serious difficulties actually getting enough children to attend the club for it to be viable. We were made aware of two clubs (not included in the survey) which had closed for this reason during Spring 1999²¹, despite an obvious need, in terms of children clearly being hungry in the morning. Cost was thought to be a deterrent, also building up parental awareness, support and motivation to get their children to attend the club.

The importance of cost was illustrated by the finding that in several breakfast clubs, when they put up their prices only slightly (or in one case, were no longer able to offer free places due to the ending of their charitable grant), numbers of children attending the club noticeably fell.

MORE GENERAL CONCERNS

'INITIATIVE OVERLOAD'

A variety of concerns were expressed about the different objectives and targets providers of childcare services and schools in general, were supposed to meet. National plans for the expansion of out-of-school places were seen as unrealistic by 5 of the interviewees, 2 of whom came from community based resources. In their opinion, the basic infrastructure and availability of trained and experienced staff were both lacking and needed attention first.²² Several also highlighted the widespread shortage of community based play resources for children, which many out-of-school clubs were trying in some limited way to make up for.

A lack of co-ordination between the different agencies involved in developing out-of-school provision of all types was another key issue. This particularly referred to local education authorities and local social service departments. The latter were also viewed as being "only interested in the under 8s" and their inspection officers preoccupied with bureaucratic and procedural details (such as room size) rather than the more personal, environmental details such as whether the club promoted good child:adult rapport and whether the children seemed happy.

A lack of support and advice from these agencies – most notably, from local education departments to school-based and school-run breakfast clubs – was also apparent. And as discussed earlier, many breakfast clubs are currently operating in isolation – with external sources of support, if available, generally coming through the after-school activities, possibly via the TEC who may have originally provided funding or from the Education Action Zone (if applicable).

DEEPER CONCERNS

In recent months especially, concerns have been evident about the direction in which services for children, notably young children, are developing. One issue raised has been the length of time children are now spending each day in formal, organised activities. Another is the number of different carers and settings children may experience each day, an area of concern highlighted in earlier research (Dykstra et al 1997).

There is also an active debate underway about children's needs for play, about the right balance between play and learning, and about children's emotional needs in terms of being provided with opportunities to explore and learn independence.²³

Finally, there are the long-standing questions about parental participation and responsibilities – and about children having choices or being simply “the passive dependants of parents and recipients of services” (Moss & Petrie 1997).

Some of these reservations and questions also emerged in the interviews with breakfast club project leaders and were obviously an influence on how they planned to develop their breakfast club.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has reviewed the difficulties faced by breakfast clubs that can pose a real threat to their survival. In line with a number of other studies of community food projects, funding and staffing difficulties have emerged as significant barriers to the development and sustainability of many breakfast club projects.

Financial constraints are clearly a problem for those clubs which are trying to address diet and health inequality issues: they cannot realistically charge at the levels required to cover their costs and therefore require some other source of funding, but ongoing funding is difficult to obtain.

Cost is a potential deterrent to breakfast club uptake – which will make the forthcoming NHS executive evaluation of breakfast clubs particularly interesting since this scheme is based on the provision of free breakfasts. Even when breakfast is provided for free, our research suggests that engaging parents and gaining their active support are crucial factors.

A lack of external and community support also appears widespread – both factors being identified in McGlone's study as hindering the sustainability of community food projects of various types (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1999).

7. CHALLENGES FOR POLICY

THE GOVERNMENT'S BASIC APPROACH

The purpose of this chapter is to identify some matters which merit government attention in the interests of helping breakfast clubs to flourish. Action here can have two, slightly different aims:

- To strengthen breakfast clubs in general.
- To increase the degree to which the clubs can serve particular government objectives, such as advancing education, tackling health inequalities and combating social exclusion.

In considering these aims, there are two key facts to be borne in mind:

- The development of breakfast clubs is still in its infancy. Even using our upper estimate of the number of such clubs (600), and assuming that each of these is on average in touch with between 40 and 50 children at one time or other in the year, breakfast clubs would only be serving about 0.5% of the population of children aged between 5 and 11.
- The government's current approach to the development of breakfast clubs is to leave that development to take place from the bottom-up, with the initiative resting firmly at the local and even individual level. The extent to which government can actually act in such a situation is therefore necessarily limited if it is not to undermine its own approach.

We support the government's 'bottom-up' approach. Both the diversity of approaches and the range of motivations for setting clubs up suggest that there is neither a single, clear model that government should promote, nor a consistent set of needs which any such club could be expected to meet. Furthermore, the fact that there are still relatively few clubs does not suggest that there is yet a widespread desire for such provision which a more centrally-directed push from government could seek to satisfy. Finally, breakfast clubs are not seen by everyone as an unmitigated good because of how they may lessen the time the child spends with its family, the preference they imply for organised and structured time over freer play, and how they may imply a cost for families where none may previously existed. In the context of this report, these are not decisive arguments against breakfast clubs, but they do to our mind show the wisdom of allowing the development of breakfast clubs to be led by the local assessment of local need.

However, there are certain areas where the actual development of breakfast clubs may not be as well in accordance with overall government objectives and policies as it could be. In particular:

- **Promoting health and nutrition:** Whether the aim of improving children's health and nutrition - for health but also educational reasons - is in practice a sufficiently important element in many clubs, both in their setting up but also in their continued operation..
- **Meeting wider needs and problems with money:** Whether the aim of combating social exclusion is being undermined in areas where many families are on low income and where clubs cannot realistically charge at the levels that would be required to cover their costs.
- **Regulation and inspection:** Whether the complex arrangements for regulation and inspection are permitting clubs to operate to unduly different standards – and are allowing some clubs to remain 'invisible' and thus, not sufficiently monitored by external agencies.

PROMOTING HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Among the more striking and perhaps paradoxical findings of our research is that breakfast itself is often rather peripheral to many breakfast clubs. We have found two separate, but surely linked, explanations for this. First, food generally, and healthy food in particular, figure rather rarely among the reasons given for *starting* breakfast clubs. Given the extent to which the original rationale for founding a club continues to predominate even when a club has become well-established, this lack of an original motivation influences the longer term character of the club and its provision. Second, in a club where it is not seen as one of the main elements of the service provided, food costs quite enough (a minimum of, say, £1.75 per child per week) to make it a natural target for economy or cut-back.

On the other hand, in those clubs where food *is* the main motive, similar pressures to cut back on the spending on food may arise, but for the quite different reason that the parents simply cannot afford the cost of the breakfast.

The challenge that policy makers face if breakfast clubs are really to help with what children eat in the morning, is to find ways of lessening the pressure that almost all the clubs face to minimise their expenditure on food. There are three parts to meeting this challenge:

- ***Finding ways of persuading those families who could pay for a breakfast that it is a good idea to do so***, for example through some form of public campaign designed to persuade families generally of the importance of proper nutrition at this time of day. Self-evidently, this can be done most more efficiently at a local level rather than at the level of the individual club and would seem to fall most naturally under the remit of either the Health Action Zones or the National Healthy Schools Scheme.
- ***Finding ways of providing subsidies to pay for the breakfast of those children whose families have difficulty paying for it***. In terms of eligibility, the natural criterion is the entitlement to a free school dinner. Given the plurality of breakfast club providers, such a subsidy could not just be restricted to school-based clubs but would in principle need to be available to all providers. This issue would be helped by a greater awareness of existing subsidies such as the EU school Milk Subsidy Scheme and other schemes which allow for the distribution of surplus fruit and vegetables to schools and charities.
- ***Finding ways of ensuring that there is involvement in the development of breakfast clubs from key health professionals***. These could include community dietitians, dentists and school nurses, whose input is obviously crucial in ensuring that clubs are aware of both the correct and current dietary recommendations for school age children and also the long-term health consequences. Again, it would appear that the Healthy Schools Programme would be a natural lead agency for this task.

MEETING WIDER NEEDS AND PROBLEMS WITH MONEY

Promoting social inclusion, through better educational attendance and - ultimately, better educational outcomes - is clearly an important objective for some breakfast clubs. When combined with the Working Families Tax Credit, measures to relieve the pressure on food costs in breakfast clubs may be enough to achieve this objective for the children of low income, working families. For families ineligible for the new benefits, however, they will not be enough. Once again, the economics of breakfast clubs is the problem, with the non-food elements accounting for the lion's share of the total costs (£1.15 out of £1.50 a day). Many parents cannot or will not pay this to obtain a free breakfast valued at 35 pence.

Our research has found numerous methods being adopted to try to get round this round problem, ranging from grants, cross subsidies from after-school clubs, direct fundraising by the school and often considerable voluntary effort by school staff. On the basis of what have seen and heard during our research, we would argue that these are all too precarious a means of funding on which to sustain a breakfast club.

At current levels of breakfast club activity, we do not view the overall amount of money potentially available from national initiatives to support such clubs as a limitation. Our upper estimate of 600 clubs serving 15 children per day on average would imply a total breakfast club turnover of around £3 million a year. Since the external support from whatever source that would be needed is only some fraction of this, even a ten-fold rise in the level of activity would hardly pose a financial burden when judged against the funds potentially available.

What is less clear, however, is whether breakfast clubs will be able to gain access to enough of this money to allow them to thrive. We see two problems. First, the fractured nature of the funding regime, with many potential funders, imposes disproportionate costs of searching for funds on those running the breakfast clubs. This is compounded by the fact that the clubs are only seeking relatively small sums of money in the first place and the costs both of making and processing a small application for funds is little different from that for a much larger application.

Second, funding appears to be much more readily available for either start-up, or some new initiative, rather than continuing funding. This problem is most acute in those areas where charging anything full cost is not an option and we have already identified the particular challenges involved there. This still leaves the broader question, of the basis on which an 'average' club is expected to remain viable over a longer period.

Combining all these points, the challenge for policy makers is threefold:

- ***Finding ways of providing sustainable funding to cover the non-food costs of breakfast clubs in areas of identified deprivation.*** In order to ensure that such money is put to good effect, it seems essential that there be some degree of local planning and control above the level of the individual club. One possibility which therefore suggests itself is that this money should be provided via Education Action Zones, who are not only in designated areas of deprivation but have also (during our research) revealed themselves capable of developing innovative forms of breakfast club provision. Another might be for government to more actively promote the use of subsidised milk and foodstuffs, provided for under EU legislation.
- ***Encouraging the development of simpler and more efficient way of applying for funds.*** There are broadly two possible ways of responding to this. First, ‘umbrella’ organisations could take on this function for groups of breakfast clubs; Action Zones are an example of such an organisation but clearly their coverage is limited. The second way is to seek a simplification of procedures among potential funders; this could be complemented by the creation of specific government-funded programme for breakfast clubs, with an emphasis on continuity and sustainability.
- ***Identifying a realistic financial model for breakfast clubs that would allow them a good chance of being viable over the longer term while also allowing diversity and flexibility in provision.*** In many ways, we see this as the greatest challenge: whilst clubs founded to meet a childcare need may be viable on a full charging basis, other models and meeting wider needs are less financially viable. Unless this challenge can be met, breakfast clubs will inevitably remain a niche activity only.

REGULATION AND INSPECTION

The current framework of regulation and inspection, which has been described as a “diverse system of regulation and inspection, with its differing standards” (DfEE/DH 1998), is currently undergoing and extensive government review. The DfEE has been nominated as the lead department for the future development of breakfast clubs, with new inspection responsibilities planned for OFSTED. Considerable changes lie ahead in this area, with a significant challenge being to arrive at a coherent and unified approach to regulation and inspection of a very diverse array of services for children and young people. In particular, it will be important:

- ***To encourage OFSTED, in undertaking this new aspect of its work, to develop an approach which is fully sensitive to matters of child care and child protection as well as children’s learning and educational needs.*** The discussion in the previous chapter about the deeper concerns about the direction of developments in children’s services, including the complex questions about the amount of time many children now spend in organised activities, highlights the need for services to be child centred and focused in what they provide.
- ***To ensure that, whatever new framework is adopted, it promotes the raising of standards in all areas of provision to a uniformly high level.*** In a field undergoing rapid expansion, often with only limited financial resources, it is all too easy for standards to be compromised. This was highlighted in Petrie’s work for the Thomas Coram Research Unit (1996): this study, which took place before regulation under the 1989 Children Act had really taken effect, highlighted overly high children:staff ratios, low numbers of qualified staff, shortcomings in material conditions and problems in the safety of equipment and premises.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Finally, in actually undertaking this research, it very quickly became apparent that whilst there may be considerable interest in breakfast clubs, actually finding out exactly where clubs are operating is in itself no small task. Our research was not designed to achieve this but it would seem that any proper monitoring of the progress of this important sector of out-of-school provision would need reliable information and acquiring it is clearly itself a challenge that those concerned with policy must meet.

This chapter has briefly explored the government's basic approach to the development of breakfast clubs and in doing so, has raised the crucial question about where the promotion of health and nutrition fit into this overall picture. It is apparent that there are a number of significant policy challenges in this area, not least how to develop a way of effectively subsidising breakfast clubs for those children whose daily diet is a cause of concern, or for those families who need this form of support but are unable to afford it.

As the whole of this report has emphasised however, whilst clearly very important, breakfast clubs are not just about health. Parents' needs for childcare, children's education and their social and emotional needs, are other important dimensions which have to be considered. Here again, our research has raised many issues about how to successfully address these different areas and in particular, poses questions about how to firstly, determine local levels of need and secondly, encourage and support locally driven initiatives.

How to develop an infrastructure which will support the growth and sustainability of breakfast clubs - especially in terms of the financial resources required - and how to inspect and regulate these services, remain areas of considerable debate. We suggest that it would be highly beneficial to clubs if the existing funding systems were reviewed and simplified.

APPENDIX 1: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

This report follows on from a seminar held in December 1998 with the Kids' Clubs Network.

The seminar provided valuable information about the main areas of concern about the current development of breakfast clubs. A number of the audience had 'ground level' experience of either trying to develop such clubs or to develop ways of evaluating provision and determining outcomes measures. Others were working in the broader field of trying to improve children's diets overall, or to improve school attendance, or tackle family poverty, or were trying to improve the existing research knowledge about these areas. The insights, issues and key themes raised during this event helped to frame the research which is presented here.

This study is primarily based on interviews with the staff from 35 breakfast clubs.

The sample covered both urban and rural areas and included established and newly created clubs. These were identified with the assistance of the Kids' Clubs Network database, information from TEC and Children's Information Services officers, data from several health promotion departments (or health boards in Scotland) and a number of the large charities providing services for children.

Project Officers from all of the first wave of 25 Education Action Zones (EAZs), from the 5 regional Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland and a selection of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships were also consulted. In addition, several announcements about the research were placed in specialist magazines/ journals inviting those in charge of breakfast clubs to contact the New Policy Institute if they had information they wished to share. These, plus '*Fit for School...*' (a collection of edited essays which resulted from the December seminar), brought forth a number of responses.

A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect information about particular breakfast clubs and the format of the interviews were deliberately planned to elicit both factual and attitudinal information. Wherever possible, the interviews took place where the breakfast club operated (visits included actually observing the breakfast club in operation wherever possible), although in some cases the interview took place at an alternative location or by telephone. Most were completed during one visit, which lasted on average two and a half hours.

Throughout, the intention was to allow breakfast club staff and those in any way involved with the club – for example head teachers – to discuss what was of most relevance to their particular club or school or community, to identify both concerns and positive developments. Specific questions explored the funding basis of the club, the needs it wished to address, staffing arrangements and any plans for the future development of the breakfast club. At the end of each meeting, feedback was given to ensure agreement about the data recorded. Occasionally where information was unclear when writing up the interview, a follow-up telephone call was made to clarify the points in question.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

In addition to the interviews with breakfast club staff, information was gathered from a variety of professionals with responsibility to develop breakfast clubs provision, or at a more general level, working to promote healthy eating in schools/ amongst children.

These included health promotion advisors, project directors from the EAZs, staff from the *Healthy Schools Programme* and from the 3 Health Action Zones identified as having a specific plan to support healthy schools within their areas. The NSPCC Family Support Development Team in Hackney was also interviewed.

Discussions were undertaken with the DfEE, the Scottish Executive Children and Young People's Group and the Northern Ireland Office. These concerned the study support potential of breakfast clubs and the legislative framework which covers out-of-school provision and the use of school premises.

Wherever possible, documentary evidence was collected from the different study participants, to both enhance and validate the information gained from the interviews. This included Education Action Zone action plans, health promotion department strategy reports and a number of evaluation reports of individual breakfast clubs projects.

In addition, an advisory panel meeting and an informal seminar were held mid way through this second phase of the project. These allowed discussion of some of the issues arising from the interviews and a sharing of information about recent developments in out-of-school care overall.

ANALYSIS

Analysis of the interview data was undertaken throughout. Quite quickly, it was possible to identify several different models of breakfast club and a number of dominant themes became apparent. These were clustered into a number of categories which in turn provided a framework for identifying any subtopics to be discussed.

Wherever possible, attempts were made to interrelate the data obtained from different sources and alternative explanations for any conclusions reached were considered.

APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH FINDINGS REGARDING HEALTH, EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE

FROM A HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

MANY CHILDREN FREQUENTLY MISS BREAKFAST

- Survey data published in 1998 revealed that 18% of 15-16 year old girls surveyed, 12% of boys of the same age, and 6% of all children aged 8-16 (400,000 pupils) miss breakfast.²⁴ Missing breakfast may mean that children find it difficult to eat enough to satisfy their daily nutritional needs (Chan, in Donovan & Street 1999). An earlier study found that 1 in 3 of the children studied ate nothing before starting school in the mornings (Doyle et al 1994).
- Such meal skipping may encourage unhealthy eating habits such as snacking or ‘grazing’ on crisps, sweets and fizzy drinks; this may lead to poorly balanced diets, high in fat and sugar and low in iron, fibre and the important micro-nutrients needed for healthy growth and development. The end result of this may be increased rates of dental caries, anaemia and obesity.
- It has been estimated that 30% of children do not go home to a cooked meal and that for some, a school meal is the only real meal they get each day (CPAG 1999).

THE CONSUMPTION OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLES IS LOW AMONG CHILDREN

- The latest nutritional advice from national and international bodies recommends that each individual should be eating five or six portions of fruit and vegetables per day (Whitehead 1998). Such consumption is viewed as important in reducing high blood pressure and safeguarding against premature mortality caused by a variety of serious illnesses including cancer, stroke and coronary heart disease (Rehman 1998).
- One study identified that an average 11 year old will consume the following in one week: 3 portions of chips; 4 bags of crisps; 42 biscuits; 6 cans of soft drink; 7 puddings and 7 bars of chocolate. By comparison, weekly consumption of fruit and vegetables comprised 3 small apples and 2 small carrots (Church & Doyle 1997).
- Increasing numbers of children are overweight or obese. The prevalence of clinical obesity in Britain doubled between 1980 and 1991 and is still increasing (British Medical Association 1999). Obese children tend to remain obese as adults. Obesity increases the risks of morbidity and mortality from a wide range of serious medical conditions. Furthermore, overweight children are more vulnerable to low self-esteem²⁵ and may be more at risk of being bullied in school.

RATES OF DENTAL CARIES ARE RISING AMONG CHILDREN

- Dental caries is the commonest disease of childhood in the UK – less than 50% of children are disease free when they start school (Blair, 1998). Problems are particularly evident in Scotland where 10% of children have five times their share of dental disease. Prevalence rates overall are rising at the current time (BMA 1999).

- Whilst fluoridation of water and good tooth brushing routines are clearly important, minimising the amount of sugar consumed is particularly critical. More recently, research has indicated that the pattern of meals/sugar consumed throughout the day (e.g. three ‘proper’ meals rather than a constant stream of snacks) is significant in terms of reducing dental caries (WHO/FAO 1997).

FROM AN EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

THE LAST DECADE HAS SEEN CONSIDERABLE RISES IN SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS

- In the school year 1997/98, there were 12,300 permanent exclusions from schools in England and Wales. Although high, this figure reflects a 3% decrease from the previous year. 13% of these permanent exclusions were from primary schools, 83% from secondary schools and 5% from special schools (DfEE Statistical First Release June 1999). The government has now set out targets to reduce these figures and to encourage the development of projects and procedures that promote school inclusion.

EFFECTS ON COGNITION AND CHILDREN’S INTELLECTUAL FUNCTIONS

- Whilst there are limitations with some of the data currently available, and more studies are needed, research has indicated that there are clear and positive links between nutrition and cognitive development right from the moment of conception onwards (Larry Brown in Donovan & Street 1999).
- Eating breakfast has been shown to help improve children’s problem solving abilities, their memory, concentration levels, visual perception and creative thinking (Ani & Grantham McGregor in Donovan & Street 1999). An earlier study also highlighted the positive effects of breakfast on children’s concentration and reported that they were ‘less fidgety’ in class (Rehman 1998, citing findings of Nursery World 1995).
- Other studies have reported positively on energy levels (Wyon et al 1997; Payne 1998) and have suggested that breakfast initiatives may reduce anxiety and contribute to improved social behaviour (Meyers et al 1989). Links between anaemia and slower intellectual development have also been suggested (Ameghino 1999; Ehrdart 1986).

EFFECTS ON PUNCTUALITY AND ATTENDANCE

- Ani and Grantham-McGregor (in Donovan & Street 1999) reviews a number of international studies²⁶ that have examined the effects of school breakfast on school attendance. They note that these studies ‘consistently showed an improvement in attendance when breakfast was provided’.

RATES OF BULLYING IN SCHOOLS HAVE INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY IN RECENT YEARS

- Bullying is a widespread problem. In 1996/97, over 14,000 calls to the helpline run by the charity ‘Childline’ concerned bullying, the second largest category of calls to the organisation in that period (Howarth et al 1998). Bullying can drive children and young people away from school, and in extreme cases, to attempt suicide (Mental Health Foundation 1999).

FROM A CHILDCARE PERSPECTIVE

INCREASING NUMBERS OF MOTHERS ARE NOW EMPLOYED OUTSIDE THE HOME

- 1998 DfEE figures report an increase from 52% to 62% in ten years. This shift is particularly marked for mothers of young children – the proportion of mothers with children under 5 years of age who are employed outside the home has increased from 32% to 51% over the last decade (DfEE 1998). These patterns are expected to continue and highlight the growing need for affordable childcare of all types – an issue highlighted in a recent MORI survey of parents (Daycare Trust 1999).

SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF CHILDREN ARE UNSUPERVISED

- In 1996, a national survey by Kids' Clubs Network (*Home Alone Too?...KCN 1997*) revealed that almost a quarter of all primary school age children go to and from school unaccompanied by an adult. The survey highlighted that 35% of parents worry about their children after school, about this lack of supervision and about the safety implications. The report notes that road accidents “consistently show that the majority of children’s accidents take place while they are unsupervised by an adult...”

AN INCREASED NUMBER OF CHILDREN NOW LIVE IN POVERTY

- In 1998, it was noted that “nearly a third of children now live in poverty, compared to one in ten in 1979” (Jowell 1998). Whilst there are many ways to define and measure poverty (for example, being on means tested benefits), “however it is defined it is accurate to say that households with children shoulder a disproportionate amount of the burden of poverty in Britain” (Dowler, in Donovan & Street 1999).
- Such circumstances have serious implications in terms of the amount of money families can spend on food - especially healthy food such as leaner meat, fresh fruit and vegetables, which tend to be more expensive.²⁷ ‘Food poverty’ is now a widely recognised issue. Highly relevant to breakfast clubs, research by Barnardos in 1995 indicated that one in nine children regularly missed breakfast for economic reasons (in *Nursery World 1995*; cited by Rehman 1998).

APPENDIX 3: INSPECTION AND REGULATION

A joint Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and Department of Health review of the Regulation and Inspection of Early Education and Day Care is currently underway. The consultation paper (1998) notes that “the Government is committed to the reform of regulation across all social care services”. It also notes that the “diverse system of regulation and inspection, with its differing standards” is not viewed as satisfactory.

The consultation paper also mentions the intention to transfer responsibilities for day care from the Department of Health to the Department for Education and Employment set out in the policy document Early Excellence – A Head Start for Every Child. Significant changes therefore lie ahead which will affect the following summary of the current regulatory framework and the comments noted on existing limitations.

THE CURRENT FRAMEWORK

There are a number of pieces of key legislation²⁸ applicable to breakfast clubs. These include the 1989 Children Act, the School Inspections Act 1996 and the Nursery Education and Grant-Maintained Schools Act 1996. The 1995 Food Safety Act, the 1974 Health & Safety Act and certain forms of liability insurance to cover the public (children, parents, volunteers and the general public) and employers (to cover their employees) against injuries which might be sustained in the club, are also relevant.

THE 1989 CHILDREN ACT

Under this legislation, providers of day care for children up to the age of 8, for more than 2 hours in any day or 5 days in any year, are required to register with their local social services department. They are then visited prior to opening and thereafter, are subject to annual inspection, and in many cases, unannounced visits. This includes day nurseries, kindergartens, nursery schools (which are neither maintained nor independent schools), playgroups, pre-schools and childminders.

Day care under the Act is defined as “any form of care or supervised activity provided for children during the day (whether or not it is provided on a regular basis)”.

The Children Act and the associated Regulations and Guidance covers such matters as who is deemed a ‘fit person’ to run the provision (which includes consideration of their background, qualifications and experience), requirements on premises and adult:child ratios for different ages of children. These ratios are as follows:

- For children aged 0-2 years: 1 adult for every 3 children.
- For children from the age of 2 up to the age of 3: 1 adult for every 4 children.
- For children aged 3-8 years: 1 adult for every 8 children.

Local authorities have some discretion in how they carry out their inspection duties - the consultation paper notes that “some authorities provide developmental support and advice as part of the inspection process, whilst others believe that such activity can conflict with the registration and inspection officer’s prime role of quality control.”

Limitations of Children Act cover with regard to breakfast clubs - the current cover afforded by the Children Act does not include some forms of day care, such as care for children aged over 8 and the care of young children in maintained and independent schools. Out-of-school schemes that cater for the over-8s alone, are not currently subject to any regulation.

The DfEE/DoH consultation paper also highlights a worrying loophole – “there have been reports of providers found to be inadequate by a social services department inspector seeking to continue to operate whilst applying for registration as an independent school.”

SCHOOL INSPECTIONS ACT 1996

Ofsted has responsibility to inspect maintained nursery schools, nursery classes and reception classes under section 10 of this Act. Inspections are largely concerned with the quality and standards of the educational provision, but health and safety and some aspects of children’s welfare are also covered. They are carried out against a national framework that is under constant review.

An annual report is submitted to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment by Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools. This comments on such matters as the quality, standards and efficiency of education in schools, and related matters such as the leadership and management of schools.

Schools must also conform to the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1996 and Circular 2/73 from the DfEE gives advice on appropriate staffing levels for maintained nursery schools and nursery classes attached to primary schools. This recommends an adult:child ratio of 2:26, or 2:20 where the headteacher also teaches.

The DfEE has recently sent a letter to all Early Years and Childcare Partnerships outlining what school governing bodies may or may not do with regard to the provision of childcare on school premises. This highlights that childcare services may be operated on maintained school premises by an outside provider, or that in those situations where school staff are involved, a properly constituted voluntary management committee should be set up.

Limitations of School Inspections cover with regard to breakfast clubs - at present, schools are only inspected on a four-year cycle. It also appears that the current focus, perhaps understandably, is largely on education/curriculum issues and does not fully encompass the out-of-school provision offered by a growing number of schools.

NURSERY EDUCATION AND GRANT-MAINTAINED SCHOOLS ACT 1996

Ofsted is again responsible for inspections under this legislation, which covers institutions which are not maintained schools. The aim is to ensure they provide an educational regime “which will promote desirable learning outcomes.” This group of providers will therefore be subject to two inspections – one under this legislation at least every 4 years and an annual inspection under the 1989 Children Act (by which they are still bound).

Limitations – similar to those noted for the School Inspections Act.

THE 1974 HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT AND THE 1995 FOOD SAFETY ACT

These Acts (the latter of which complements the 1990 Food Safety Act) cover such issues as the quality of premises, the safety of equipment, requirements for food storage and preparation, the provision of fresh water and how to dispose of food waste. The 1974 Act sets out general requirements for employers to have a ‘duty of care’ towards their employees and to ensure the safety of non-employees - i.e. children in breakfast clubs. Under the 1995 Act, local environmental health departments are charged with the responsibility to inspect clubs and to issue a certificate or to require changes (or even closure) if conditions are found to be unsatisfactory.

CHANGES AHEAD

The consultation paper highlights the need not only to unify and streamline the existing system of inspection and regulation, but also to ensure that a future framework is developed which provides “incentives for the continuing improvement of quality, together with the ability to respond to new developments in the provision of services which meet the needs of children and their families.” It suggests that, as a part of this, a debate will be needed as to what constitute good quality day care and how this can benefit children before and after they begin education. It also suggests that “this is especially important as the provision of childcare places expands.” Finally, it emphatically states that there must be “coherence and agreement over what constitutes good quality in both child care and early education.”

APPENDIX 4: RESEARCH PROJECT GLOSSARY

The following list gives details of a number of organisations, central government departments, and research projects relevant to the development of breakfast clubs.

(1) THE FOOD RESEARCH GROUP, SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF WALES, BANGOR

Over the last seven years, the group has conducted extensive research concerned with children's food preferences. A 'video-based modelling and reward' package has been devised which has proved very successful in bringing long-term changes in children's fruit and vegetable consumption. One part of the work has been the creation of video characters, the Food Dudes, who are hero figures who eat and enjoy fruit and vegetables, and encourage all children to do the same. The research team would welcome contact from schools who would like to be involved in the ongoing development of the work.

Contact details: Professor Fergus Lowe or Mr Michael Bowdery, School of Psychology, University of Wales, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 2DG.

(2) BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL CONTRACT SERVICES, CATERING DIVISION

An area-based initiative to support healthy eating in local Bristol schools, primarily through the provision of 'healthy' tuck shops for the mid morning break but also through some breakfast clubs.

Contact details: Sue Burke, Project Manager. Telephone 0117 980 1301.

(3) BRUNEL UNIVERSITY

Has undertaken various research projects on out-of-school care. Forthcoming research includes child-centred after-school and holiday care and community responses to out-of-school childcare.

Contact details: Fiona Smith. Telephone: 01895 274 000

(4) COUNCIL FOR BRITISH TEACHERS (CFBT)

CfBT is a leading independent provider of education and training services. It works with clients worldwide to develop high quality, innovative and cost effective solutions to their needs. It manages educational resources, providing all necessary professional and logistical support to assist educationalists. CfBT is a registered charity and all surpluses generated from the servicing of contracts are reinvested in education.

Contact details: CfBT Education Services, 1 The Chambers, East Street, Reading, RG1 4JD. Telephone: 0118 952 3900. Fax: 0118 952 3939. Email: gen@cfbt-hq.org.uk. Website: www.cfbt.com.

(5) CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP.

One current campaign is calling for the extension of entitlement to free school meals to all families receiving the new tax credits. Of relevance to breakfast clubs, the campaign is also calling for the introduction of minimum nutritional standards for school meals and the development of nutritional education in schools.

Contact details: Will McGann. Telephone 0171 837 1228.

(6) THE DAYCARE TRUST

A national childcare charity which promotes affordable, quality childcare for all. Offers advice to parents, providers, government and policy makers on childcare issues.

Contact details: Childcare helpline open Monday-Friday, 10am-5pm. Telephone 0171 739 2866.

(7) DFEE STUDY SUPPORT TEAM

The team works with a wide range of partners to promote and expand good quality study support provision within schools.

Contact details: DfEE, Sanctuary Buildings, Westminster, London, SW1P 3BT. Telephone: 0171 925 5957/6654.

(8) DFEE CHILDCARE UNIT

The role of the Childcare Unit within the DfEE is to develop and implement the national childcare strategy and to promote family friendly employment.

Contact details: Marc Cavey, DfEE, Sanctuary Buildings, Westminster, London, SW1P 3BT. Telephone 0171 273, 6267.

(9) DUNDEE UNIVERSITY

Recently undertook research for the Scottish Office into the impact of a dietary intervention in a community based breakfast club. The aim of the study was to examine the feasibility of changing breakfast food choices and assessing the impact of this on taste preferences and nutrient intake.

Contact details: Professor Annie Anderson, Centre for Applied Nutrition Research, Matthew Building, University of Dundee, Perth Road, Dundee DD1 4HT.

(10) EDUCATION EXTRA

A charity set up in 1992 to enable schools to put after-school activities within the reach of every child and every school as a way of raising achievement, enriching young lives, helping to reduce juvenile crime and regenerating communities. The charity has launched over 60 local extra-curricular projects (e.g. on family literacy) and has a membership network of 1200 schools.

Contact details: Education Extra, 17 Old Ford Road, London, E1 9PL. Telephone 0181 709 9900.

(11) ESRC RESEARCH PROGRAMME – CHILDREN 5-26: GROWING INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

Comprises 22 projects which explore children's experience of, and responses to, contemporary society.

Contact details: Dr Alan Prout, Programme Director, Centre for the Social Study of Childhood, University of Hull. Telephone 01482 346 311

(12) ESRC RESEARCH PROGRAMME – THE NATION'S DIET

Six year, multi-disciplinary programme arranged in three parts. The first phase of eight projects began in 1992, followed by another eight projects in 1994. The final phases consisted of two one-year programme research fellowships. Several of the projects refer specifically to children.

Contact details: Professor Anne Murcot, Programme Director, South Bank University. Telephone 0171 815 8065.

(13) HEALTH EDUCATION TRUST

Charity offering advice on policy structure and partnership developments in food in schools. Useful information source for school caterers looking to develop new services.

Contact details: Joe Harvey, Director. Fax 01789 773915.

(14) KIDS' CLUBS NETWORK

A national organisation promoting out-of-school childcare for school-age children (3-14 years). Extensive publications on how to provide high quality, child focused services.

Contact details: Runs an information line: 0171 512 2100

(15) LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE AND TROPICAL MEDICINE, PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITION UNIT

Has undertaken research on food, poverty and social exclusion in the UK and other industrialised countries. Current research includes economic food access in areas of high social and economic deprivation and evaluating local community food initiatives. The unit works collaboratively with universities, health authorities and voluntary agencies.

Contact details: Dr Elizabeth Dowler, Public Health Nutrition Unit, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Keppel Street, London, WC1E 7HT. Website: www.lshtm.ac.uk.

(16) MILK FOR SCHOOLS

A company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It runs a parents information line and works to promote good nutrition for children and the provision of milk in schools, with particular interest in building awareness of opportunities offered by the EC School Milk Subsidy Scheme.

Contact details: PO Box 412, Stafford, Staffs, ST17 9TF. Website: www.dairynet.co.uk/mfs/. An action pack is available free of charge on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

(17) NATIONAL EARLY YEARS NETWORK

An independent charity concerned with improving the quality of life for all young children. It provides practical support to people who provide services for young children and their families through professional publications, training programmes for childcare workers, and projects to create new ways of working.

Contact details: The National Early Years Network, 77 Holloway Road, London, N7 8JZ. Telephone: 0171 607 9573.

(18) NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (NFER)

Over the last five years, NFER has undertaken research into a wide range of health and education areas, including recent work commissioned by the DfEE on study support.

Contact details: NFER, The Mere, Upton park, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 2DQ. For health education, contact is Jim Jamison - email address: j.jamison@nfer.ac.uk.

(19) NATIONAL HEALTHY SCHOOL STANDARDS TEAM (NHSS)

Offers advice on a wide range of health and education programmes across the country and practical advice about where to get more information about breakfast clubs and health initiatives focused on improving children's diets.

Contact details: Team administrator, telephone 0171 413 8896.

(20) 'RIGHT START'

A joint 3 year, £3 million initiative between Barnardo's and Glaxo Wellcome that "aims to transform the way young people learn about health and understand the implications of living a healthy lifestyle". Healthy eating, diet and anti-smoking strategies are all of interest, with Right Start providing support to 45 projects last year. Another key theme is empowering young people to get their views and needs recognised.

Contact details: Nellie Maan, Partnership Manager. Telephone 0181 550 8822.

(21) RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE TRUST

The community dieticians of this authority have worked closely with Hammersmith and Fulham Education Department in supporting the recent development of a number of breakfast clubs within the borough. Some evaluation work of the effectiveness of a primary school based breakfast club has been undertaken and the department has also produced an information pack.

Contact details: Riverside Community Health Care, Community Dieticians, Richford Gate Primary Care Centre, 49 Richford Gate, Richford Street, London W6 7HY.

(22) SCOTTISH COMMUNITY DIET PROJECT

Has undertaken research into breakfast clubs for the Greater Glasgow Health Board (GGHB) in conjunction with the Health Education Board for Scotland. Stage 1 of the research involved identifying good practice and assessing effectiveness in five existing breakfast clubs to inform the creation of three pilot initiatives whose progress will be evaluated during the second stage of the research. The project is also working on a 'toolkit', to be launched later next year.

Contact details: Phil White, Greater Glasgow Health Board, Dalian House, PO Box 15328, 350 St Vincent Street, Glasgow, G3 8YY. Telephone 0141 201 4890. Email: phil.white@glasgow-hb.scot.nhs.uk.

(23) SUSTAIN: THE ALLIANCE FOR BETTER FOOD AND FARMING

Works in the area of food policies and practices, representing voluntary, professional, health, consumer and environmental bodies working at all levels. It has particular interests in supporting the development of local food initiatives such as food co-operatives, community cafes and cooking clubs. Sustain's Food Poverty Project gathers information on projects working to help people on low incomes improve their access to good quality, affordable food.

Contact details: Jacqui Webster, Project Officer, Sustain, 94 White Lion Street, London, N1 9PF. Telephone 0171 837 1228.

(24) THOMAS CORAM RESEARCH UNIT

A designated research unit of the Department of Health conducting research on factors relating to the care and well-being of children and their families. With a multidisciplinary staff of more than 50, the unit has an extensive programme of research and consultancy funded by international and government agencies, health and local authorities and the voluntary sector. Ongoing work includes activities to support the introduction of the National Healthy Schools Standard, a programme of out-of-school studies and research in the field of day care and children's services.

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END NOTES

¹ This seminar led to the publication of a collection of essays: *Fit for School: How Breakfast Clubs Meet Health, Education and Childcare Needs*, London, New Policy Institute.

² The 1998 report by Sir Donald Acheson, the Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health recommends that a 'high priority' should be given to such policies.

³ The Government target is to reduce the number of school exclusions by one third by 2002. This aim has been backed by an investment of £500 million.

⁴ See Ball, M (1998) *School Inclusion: The School, The Family and the Community*, York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

⁵ Five of the school-based breakfast clubs in the study reported paying some level of rent to the school for the use of school premises. One club reported making some contribution towards essential bills.

⁶ Information obtained from Dr Yvonne Blair, community dentist for the Greater Glasgow Health Board.

⁷ Several other breakfast clubs in our research sample also originally aimed to employ parents in this capacity. Unfortunately, where parents were unemployed, this plan did not turn out to be feasible in that many parents reported losing more in state benefits than they were able to earn from working in the breakfast club. Only one school reported successfully employing parents by putting them onto the same employment basis as school support staff and thereby, spreading smaller payments throughout the year (rather than in term-times only).

⁸ For recent analysis of these trends, see *Bright Futures*, Mental Health Foundation 1999.

⁹ These concerns were identified as often behind the decision of a number of local health promotion departments and voluntary sector organisations to become involved in developing breakfast clubs.

¹⁰ TEC funding originated from the Employment Department, the forerunner of the DfEE.

¹¹ *Profile of Provision: The Expansion of Out-of-school Care*.

¹² See also Education Extra (1998) *Succeeding at Study Support: A Review of 12 Pilot Projects*.

¹³ These are newly created services, which in some areas have superseded the TECs. Additional money has been made available through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to cover their running costs.

¹⁴ 6 TEC Childcare Project Co-ordinators who we consulted in the course of this research, suggested that many of the before-school clubs listed for their areas did not serve food. It was noted, however, that this picture was changing as interest in breakfast clubs serving food became more widespread. More interest in developing clubs (serving food) in areas of high deprivation was reported. But it was also confirmed that, in many areas, most interest is still focused on developing after-school and holiday provision.

¹⁵ See 'The Whole School, the Healthy School – an Essential Guide to the Health Promoting School' by the Health Education Authority and NFER (1999) for analysis of this initiative.

¹⁶ Both of these also come under the DETR programme *Strategies for Safer Travel to School*, which aims to reduce the number of private care journeys to school, where there are safer, healthy alternatives.

¹⁷ The DfEE has also allocated £6.7 million to Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in 1999-2000 to support existing provision. From April 2000, Standards Fund money for study support will also be available from the DfEE.

¹⁸ The analysis by Gatenby (DfEE 1998) of the long term sustainability of out-of-school provision highlights that there are many similarities between schemes that are viable and those which turn out to be non-viable, or rather, that the differences between them are not statistically significant. However the ability of parents to contribute financially is important – “the contribution from parents is less for non-viable schemes”.

¹⁹ This process of constant re-invention as a result of financial instability is highlighted in McGlone’s study of community food projects; this noted that “some projects are trapped in this cycle; this is not only time-consuming but hinders the natural development of the project”. The study also found that projects tend to take time to set up and become established and often only really ‘get going’ just as the start-up money is running out.

²⁰ Funding and staffing difficulties were significant themes in the recent Greater Glasgow Health Board evaluation of the breakfast club projects they had set up in their area. Whilst Scottish clubs appear to have developed with more volunteer involvement than in England and Wales, recruitment of volunteers remains a considerable problem, which threaten project viability. (Stage 1 report, Scottish Health Feedback 1999).

²¹ Gatenby (1998) identified that “just a few more children recruited to a scheme can make a difference to viability”.

²² Recent analysis by the Daycare Trust suggests that at least 60,000 new trained play-carers will be needed over the next 5 years to staff out-of-school provision. At present, many childcare staff are unqualified and staff turnover is high (Smithers 1999).

²³ See Brindle (1999); Garner (1999); Gill (1999).

²⁴ Gardner Merchant, *What are Today’s Children Eating?*, Gardner Merchant 1998.

²⁵ Walsh-Pierce et al (1997) - research cited by the British Medical Association (1999).

²⁶ For example, see Kennedy et al (1998) who describe a US Department of Agriculture School Breakfast Programme.

²⁷ See *Myths about Food and Low Income*, National Food Alliance 1997; also *Out of the Frying Pan: the True Cost of Feeding a Family on a Low Income*, Save the Children 1997.

²⁸ This Act applies only to England, Wales and Scotland. In Northern Ireland, the following legislation applies: the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995; the Childminding and Day (Applications for Registration) Regulations Northern Ireland 1996 and the Disqualification for Caring for Children Regulations Northern Ireland 1996. These Acts are very similar to the 1989 Children Act but apply to children up to the age of 12 (as opposed to 8).