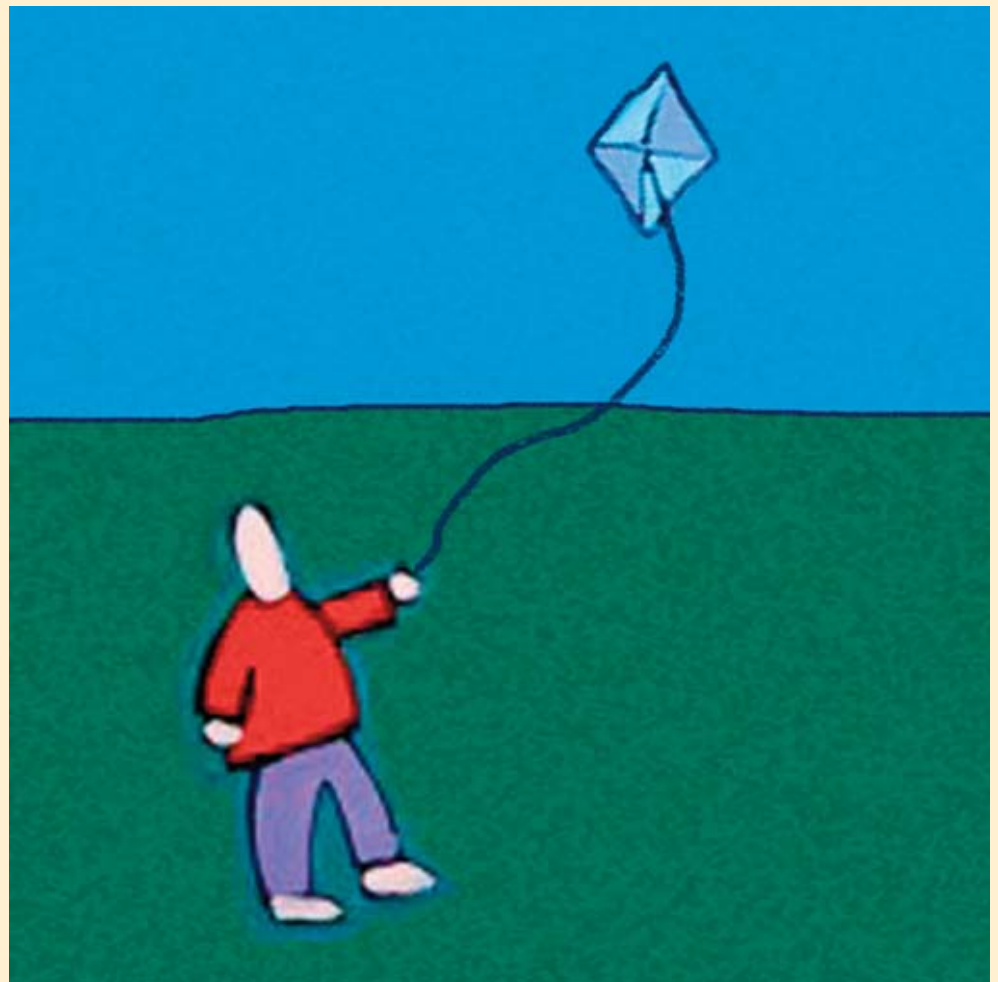




Out-of-school care services for children living in disadvantaged areas



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Authors: Pamela Reid and Douglas White, Blake Stevenson Ltd

Research group: Jonathan Sher and Carol Moore, Children in Scotland, UK; Karin Wall and Patricia Azevedo Silva, University of Lisbon, Portugal; Alain Dubois, Centre d'expertise et de ressources pour l'enfance, Belgium; Dana Knotova and Vladka Kyjankova, Masaryk University, Czech Republic; Mare Leino, Tallinn University, Estonia; Jürgen Schumacher, INBAS-Sozialforschung GmbH, Germany

Research managers: Gerlinde Ziniel, Robert Anderson, Barbara Gerstenberger

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Out-of-school care services for children living in disadvantaged areas

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European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
Wyattville Road
Loughlinstown
Dublin 18
Ireland
Telephone: (+353 1) 204 31 00
Fax: (+353 1) 282 42 09 / 282 64 56
Email: postmaster@eurofound.europa.eu
www.eurofound.europa.eu

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Foreword

The issue of childcare is receiving increasing attention at public and policy levels. Due to a growing understanding that poverty and social exclusion are significant issues for children in the EU, attention has refocused on children's welfare, and – in particular – the role that childcare can play in promoting it. However, the role of out-of-school childcare for children of schoolgoing age (between the ages of five and 12 years) has received less attention. Against this background, the Foundation launched a programme of research into out-of-school care services in the EU for this group of children, with one strand of the research exploring the affordability and sustainability of provision of care for children living in disadvantaged areas. This report, *Out-of-school care services for children living in disadvantaged areas*, draws together the findings of the research that was carried out in six EU Member States: Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

The report reviews the development of out-of-school care services across these Member States, looking at initiatives provided through a range of different types of services. It identifies policies and programmes that are being implemented to support the development of out-of-school care in disadvantaged areas, at national, regional and local levels. The report also argues that the provision of out-of-school care can help address the social, economic and health issues that disadvantaged households face, as well as supporting the social integration of excluded groups.

We hope that the report will provide a useful picture of the existing state of childcare development in disadvantaged areas across the EU, and that it will contribute to shaping childcare policy, in order to improve the quality of provision in the sector and hence promote equality of opportunities for all children in Europe.

Jorma Karppinen
Director

Willy Buschak
Deputy Director

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Introduction

Out-of-school care for children is a vital component of the economic and social development of any area; it plays a particularly crucial role in disadvantaged areas and for disadvantaged groups and households who live in otherwise advantaged areas. The provision of out-of-school care can help address the social, economic and health issues that such disadvantaged households face, and support the social integration of excluded groups.

The main providers of out-of-school care are the public and the voluntary sectors, including community and parent-led organisations. In disadvantaged areas, it is unlikely that the receipt of fees will be sufficient to finance out-of-school care: it is important, therefore, to look at the options for providing such care and for maximising its benefits.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions ('the Foundation') commissioned researchers Blake Stevenson Ltd, in association with Children in Scotland, to carry out a research study to look at the development of out-of-school care (OSC) services for children aged five to 12 living in disadvantaged areas in Europe.

This report presents the results of the research, which has focused on six Member States – Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Portugal and the United Kingdom (UK). The report reviews the development of OSC, whether provided through community initiatives, formally or informally, public or private schemes, as part of the 'social economy' or by means of voluntary measures. It also identifies policies and programmes that are being implemented to support the development of OSC in disadvantaged areas (these may be at national, regional or local levels).

The main objective of the study is not to provide a comprehensive critique of the OSC sector in disadvantaged areas in the Member States examined. Nor does it aim to identify particular gaps or difficulties in the represented countries. Instead, the study focuses on the impact of different activities that have been implemented in each Member State, examining what measures have worked, why they worked and what lessons can be learnt.

Objectives

The research focuses on children living in disadvantaged areas for two reasons. Children and families in disadvantaged areas can gain significant economic and social benefits from good quality accessible out-of-school care. While these benefits are not exclusive to disadvantaged areas, OSC can play a key role in tackling the range of issues that can face people living in such areas and so contribute to breaking the cycle of multigenerational poverty. However, it is unlikely that OSC in disadvantaged areas can be sustained through fee income alone, so it is important to look at options for how it can be provided, what works well and how its benefits can be maximised.

For the purposes of the study, 'disadvantaged areas' are defined as areas designated by their own national governments as 'disadvantaged'. Essentially, these are areas in which a high proportion of households experience poverty and deprivation. The report looks at how the development of OSC services in disadvantaged areas relates to key policy debates on demographic change, economic development and social exclusion. It provides examples of approaches and models from a range of different national settings.

The research builds on a 2006 study commissioned by the Foundation, which examined employment developments in childcare services for school-age children (children aged between five and 12 years) in the EU (Elniff-Larsen et al, 2006). In this study, out-of-school childcare is defined as ‘any arrangement for school-age children outside compulsory school involving elements of physical care, socialisation, play and/or education’.

This new research study reflects the Foundation’s commitment to researching childcare provision for school-age children, in recognition of the fact that this is an area in which limited research has been undertaken to date.

The aims of the study are to:

- develop a framework to examine the development of OSC services and jobs to support school-age children living in disadvantaged areas;
- present three case studies of such initiatives from each of the six countries (18 cases altogether);
- explore how these initiatives have contributed to combating social exclusion and improving the quality of life for school-age children in disadvantaged areas;
- present a consolidated report on the development of OSC services and job creation in this field, with recommendations for policy.

Methodology

A range of methods were used to carry out the research study. Desk-based research was used to develop an overview of approaches, interventions and the policy context for OSC developments in disadvantaged areas in Member States. The research considers the issue at both EU level and national level.

A framework for analysis was developed, based on the findings of the desk-based research. The framework includes topics such as defining disadvantaged areas, current policy on OSC, funding for OSC, key providers, major beneficiaries and so on.

In-depth studies of six Member States were carried out (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Portugal and the UK). In addition, six national reports on OSC policy and practice in disadvantaged areas were drafted. The national-level research involved desk-based research and interviews with key stakeholders. Detailed guidance and support was provided to help researchers in each Member State undertake this research. Each national report provides information on the policy context, on the designation of disadvantaged areas and approaches to OSC in the Member State. The reports then outline how OSC is provided in disadvantaged areas, focusing on such issues as:

- the pattern of growth of OSC in disadvantaged areas;
- variations between different areas;
- the different types and sizes of OSC service that are provided;
- target groups for these services;
- the development of the OSC workforce in disadvantaged areas.

The consolidated report draws on the results of the research from the six Member States in order to identify key themes and issues for consideration.

A case study matrix was constructed to identify key approaches, themes and developments to be explored further in the in-depth case studies.

Finally, 18 detailed case studies – three from each of the six Member States – were drawn up to provide a range of practical examples that highlight the impact that different policies, programmes and initiatives can have on OSC in disadvantaged areas.

Selecting Member States for study

A set of criteria was developed to select the Member States. This was applied to a longer list of 14 Member States that had been identified during an initial selection process. The Member States were selected to be broadly representative, according to a list of criteria:

- geographical spread;
- size/population;
- length of time since joining the EU;
- nature and scale of disadvantage;
- presence of examples of good practice, as well as interesting policies and activities that could be used to inform policy development in Europe.

Selecting on the basis of the first four criteria was quite straightforward. In order to achieve a geographical spread in the final selection, one country was chosen to represent southern Europe (Portugal), one northern Europe (the UK), one to represent eastern Europe (the Czech Republic) and one to represent western Europe (Belgium). The other two Member States selected bridge two regions: Germany covers both eastern and western Europe, while Estonia has elements of both northern and eastern Europe.

Member States were also selected to include a range of countries in terms of size (population was used as the basis for measuring size). Germany and the UK have relatively large populations; Portugal, the Czech Republic and Belgium are medium-sized, while Estonia, with a population of less than 1.5 million, is small.

In terms of length of time as an EU member, Belgium and Germany are original members of the Union, Portugal and the United Kingdom are long-standing members (since the 1970s and 1980s), while the Czech Republic and Estonia are new members (since 2004).

Selecting Member States on the basis of the final two criteria was more complex. For the purposes of representativeness, a mixture was sought in terms of the nature and scale of disadvantaged areas. There are important differences between disadvantaged areas in relatively wealthy countries and those in less wealthy countries. To reflect this, three countries were selected to represent the relatively wealthy countries (Belgium, Germany and the UK), while three were selected to represent less wealthy countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia and Portugal).

To assess the Member States in terms of lessons that can be learnt from practice and policy, a short desk-based research exercise was carried out. In addition, information was gathered from a number of researchers and key sources in each of the countries considered. This exercise highlighted that a wide range of policies, programmes and practices exist dealing with OSC services. Similarities and differences in approaches reflect the particular circumstances and approaches to children and education in the Member States – for example, the length of the school day, the age when children start school, political and economic traditions and practices.

The six Member States selected provide a representative sample of countries on the basis of the chosen criteria. This is not to say that other countries do not also have examples of good or innovative practice.

Case study selection

The national research identified a selection of possible case studies from which the final 18 were drawn. The 18 case studies were selected to represent a range of approaches to OSC services across the six Member States on the basis that they provided examples of good practice that can be learnt from. As a result, they present a more positive picture of OSC in disadvantaged areas than is generally the case.

OSC services can be organised in a number of different ways, and can be designed to meet the needs of specific groups. The case studies were selected to reflect this diverse range of approaches. The case studies help to illustrate some of these different models and rationales for OSC across the EU. For example, some OSC services provide joined-up services for parents while others focus on promoting family cohesion or seek to offer children specific learning opportunities. These OSC services can be organised in different ways – for example, through community-based models, as part of a partnership approach between different agencies, or with the support and involvement of parents and children. Some OSC services are designed to meet the needs of particular groups, such as ethnic minority families, or children who have special needs.

Each case study provides:

- a description of the policy, initiative, activity;
- a basic description, in terms of size, poverty, geography, etc., of the local area in which the initiative/policy/approach operates and other types of services available there;
- evidence of good practice;
- evidence of impact;
- details of lessons learnt;
- a commentary on the opportunities for transferring the initiative, or difficulties that such a transfer may face.

The case studies are listed below.

Belgium

- Pirouline – Pause Cartable
- Kinderwerking Fabota, Leuven
- La Tanière des Petits Ours

Czech Republic

- School Youth Centre
- Rubikon – Centre for Children from Disadvantaged Background
- Drom – Romany Centre

Estonia

- Paldiski
- North-Tallinn
- Youth Centre in Võhma

Germany

- Kinderbetreuungsborse Dudweiler
- Intercultural Children's and Parents' Centre 'Am Tower' Berlin-Neukölln (Schillerkiez)
- Horthaus St. Petri: A Day Care Service in the context of an Integrated Community Development Approach in Bremen-Tenever

Portugal

- OSC services from the National Charitable Society for Gypsies (Obra Nacional da Pastoral do Cigano)
- OSC services from the Cultural Association 'Windmill of Youth'
- OSC services of Ourique

UK

- England: Goddard Park Community Primary School
- Scotland: Childcare 4 All
- Northern Ireland: Sunnylands Primary School

Definitions of terms used

Each of the six Member States uses different terminology and definitions in terms of how both OSC services and disadvantaged areas are classified and organised. Key definitions for the study were agreed at the beginning of the work: 'out-of-school care' and 'disadvantaged areas' are defined below. The other terms are defined in a glossary in the Annex.

Out-of-school care

Out-of-school care (OSC) is any arrangement for school-age children outside of compulsory schooling that children use on a regular basis, so as to enable their parents or carers to participate in employment, training or some other activity. It provides care or activities that start at the end of the school day and continue until the parent or carer collects the child. The school or OSC activity is responsible for the children when they travel from school to the OSC. The activity can include physical care, socialisation, play and education. It includes care during the school holidays.

OSC includes formal care or activities provided by organisations, agencies, services or individuals who are registered as childminders or child carers or otherwise provide care on a regular basis, usually for payment. It does not include informal, irregular care.

Disadvantaged areas

Disadvantaged areas are those areas in a Member State designated as disadvantaged, either by national or regional government or another agency, using the indicators applied in that country. The disadvantaged areas can be large, small, rural or urban, inner city or suburban.

Disadvantaged areas are key to this study and so Chapter 3 describes in more detail how the selected Member States identify them.

Main themes

This report looks at how OSC services are provided, specifically in disadvantaged areas, and what the impact of these OSC services has been for children, parents, families and the wider community.

It explores:

- the policy context for the development of childcare and OSC;
- the policy provision that the case study Member States have made for the provision of OSC in disadvantaged areas;
- the approaches that the Member States take in identifying and designating regions or areas as ‘disadvantaged’;
- the nature of OSC provision;
- the management of OSC and models of delivery in the case study Member States;
- the funding options for OSC services, other available types of support and approaches that make such services affordable to families;
- the regulatory frameworks, monitoring and quality systems for OSC services;
- how OSC targets groups in the community that face particular disadvantages – for example, children from ethnic minority groups and children with disabilities or additional support needs;
- the impact and benefits of OSC services for parents, children, families, communities, employers, governments, trade unions and other stakeholders;
- the key lessons learnt from the case study Member States.

Key findings

EU policy context for out-of-school care

Chapter 1 describes the European policy context that impacts on the development of childcare services. Traditionally, the need for childcare in the EU has been driven by economic, educational and social factors linked to the policy aims of supporting economic growth and helping women participate in the labour market.

Recently, childcare provision has also been recognised as a mechanism for addressing issues arising from demographic change and changing family structures. The provision of childcare has largely focused on children below school age, but the agenda has now widened to include care for children of school age. There have been positive developments in this field across Europe. However, Member States differ markedly in the level of provision they offer, and they are at different stages in addressing the childcare needs of families with school-age children.

The rationale for developing OSC in disadvantaged areas can be particularly compelling. OSC can contribute to the economic development of the area and have a positive impact on educational attainment, social development and the health of people living there. The UNICEF report *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries* (UNICEF, 2007) states that:

‘ . . . changes such as the rapidly increasing participation of women in the workforce and the steep rise in single-parent families has made childcare into one of the biggest issues facing both families and governments’.

It goes on to make the link between the provision of childcare and children’s educational well-being.

Policy development in the case study Member States

Chapter 2 discusses the policy priorities that have influenced the pattern of development in the case study Member States. The priorities vary in emphasis between countries, although the effect on childcare can be the same regardless of the original rationale for developing it. For instance, providing a route out of poverty has been a key priority in the UK, with OSC being used as one of the tools to tackle multigenerational poverty. In Portugal, there has been an emphasis on providing universal OSC to help parents reconcile work and family. The chapter shows that the pattern and rate of growth of OSC depends on both the policy priorities, and on the emphasis placed on OSC in a given Member State.

Disadvantaged areas

It is important to be clear what is meant by disadvantaged areas in the study, how Member States identify them, how resources are targeted at them and how OSC services are developed for them. Chapter 3 considers this issue and indicates that no single approach to identifying or supporting the development of OSC services exists. In some Member States, there is no definition based on boundaries at all; rather, disadvantage is recognised for particular groups in society and is accepted as existing in areas where these groups are concentrated. This has implications for how resources are targeted to develop OSC services that are aimed at tackling inequalities in society.

Characteristics of out-of-school care services

Chapter 4 draws out the characteristics of successful OSC in disadvantaged areas. It shows that public sector support is crucial and where communities are involved, the care provided can be responsive to the needs of the community. Community involvement gives local people the chance to develop new skills, promotes social cohesion and helps to address the needs of disadvantaged minority groups. Some families living in disadvantaged areas have a number of problems that are best addressed in a joined-up manner by a range of OSC services. These can be provided through OSC delivered with other services, for example, social services, education and health.

Management and delivery of out-of-school care

Chapter 5 examines the main management models for OSC in disadvantaged areas. Such care can be managed and delivered by the public sector, which has the benefits of being reliable, sustainable, credible and of having strong links with schools. The public-sector model is not the only model for OSC: it can also be provided by large, non-profit voluntary organisations, trade unions or religious organisations. The benefits of these organisations providing OSC are that it is flexible, responsive to need, involves communities and can be targeted at particular groups within society. It can also be managed by smaller, community-based, parent-led organisations. These can be very flexible and responsive, in turn giving local people a sense of ownership, which can be an impetus for change in an area.

A less common way of providing OSC is through profit-motivated private business. In disadvantaged areas, however, there is little chance that such businesses can make a profit since average household income is low.

Costs and funding

Chapter 6 lists the main costs of providing OSC and then shows that OSC in disadvantaged areas cannot cover its costs purely through the fees paid by parents. Financial support is required to ensure that parents can afford the fees and that services can be sustained over time. Common sources of support include governments, charities, trade unions, trusts and sponsorship. Contributions can be financial, in kind, or may take the form of technical and business support. Funding can be given directly to the OSC service provider to permit reduced-cost places to be provided, or it can be given to individual families to help them pay for their childcare. In some countries, funding is provided through both these routes.

Regulation, monitoring and quality

Regulation and monitoring are important for ensuring the quality and consistency of services, and that adequate health and safety measures are taken. Chapter 7 looks at how this is carried out in the case study Member States. It shows that regulation, monitoring and quality have a higher priority in countries with a more stable, mature childcare sector. There are good examples of regulation that cover the main issues: quality of premises and equipment, the skills and qualifications of staff, staff ratios and the activities offered to children. No specific regulations exist for OSC services in disadvantaged areas and there is no national monitoring of the impact of such care. Where monitoring exists, it is carried out at a local level or on individual projects.

Nature of the workforce

Chapter 8 examines the nature of the OSC workforce in disadvantaged areas. Dedicated OSC workers with specific training are common in the UK and Germany. In other countries, such as the Czech Republic and Portugal, school teachers usually provide such care. In disadvantaged areas, it is likely that specialist staff will provide additional support – notably health services, family support, educational support and social care. OSC services also draw on specialist staff to provide activities such as sport, crafts, drama and music. Unpaid staff working on a voluntary basis can play an important role, particularly in disadvantaged areas where such voluntary work can help reduce costs. In Portugal, parents on low incomes can work in the OSC service as a way of paying for their child's care.

Main target groups

Chapter 9 shows that it is at the local level that particular groups who can benefit from OSC are targeted. In none of the case study Member States is there a national system for targeting OSC at communities that face particular disadvantage – for example, ethnic minority groups or children with disabilities. In Estonia, for example, at the local level OSC is used as a way of addressing the particular problems that face ethnic minority families by helping to improve children’s attendance and achievements at school, providing language support and promoting social integration.

OSC can also be provided for children with physical disabilities, learning disabilities or who live in a household with such problems as domestic violence or drug and alcohol abuse. In the UK, good local examples exist of OSC that is designed specifically for children with disabilities.

Impact of out-of-school care in disadvantaged areas

OSC in disadvantaged areas brings social, economic and health benefits to children and their families. An important tool in reducing poverty, it creates local employment and boosts the local economy. It can reduce problem behaviour in children and young people, promote positive citizenship and help link families with their children’s schools. Chapter 10 shows that, as well as the benefits such care provides to its users, OSC can help governments and other stakeholders achieve their own economic and social objectives.

Where OSC is valued and has been in place for some time, it is more regulated, standards are higher and there is greater investment in it. OSC and the staff who deliver it benefit from its being a more professional sector with better career opportunities and more investment in facilities, premises and workforce.

Conclusion

OSC has an important role to play in tackling the range of issues that exist in disadvantaged areas. It can be a first step in engaging the most excluded people. It can help Member States achieve the aims of the Lisbon Strategy and address the negative effects of demographic and social change. The presence of good quality, affordable and accessible childcare helps governments meet a range of goals: poverty reduction, educational attainment, economic development, social inclusion, community safety, health improvement, greater equality and the reconciliation of work and family.

Employers need a reliable, skilled and productive workforce. OSC can help provide that, by widening the pool of available workers. Trade unions are interested in OSC because it benefits workers, increases female participation in the labour market, enhances women’s career development, reduces the stress of workers and provides employment in disadvantaged areas.

The benefits are greatest when governments drive a national strategic framework that enables local OSC services to provide care that meets the range of needs in the community.

Chapter 11 provides detailed conclusions along with topics for further consideration.

Developments in childcare in the EU are taking place within a range of economic, social and family policy developments. Current European childcare initiatives such as the Barcelona targets are primarily focused on pre-school children. Currently there are no European policies or targets in relation to childcare for children of school age or for out-of-school care (OSC) in disadvantaged areas. This chapter considers the drivers and thinking behind childcare policy in general and draws out key issues in relation to OSC and disadvantaged areas.

EU perspective on children's rights

In the EU, children's rights are included in the full range of human rights. However, it is recognised that the rights of children need to be seen as autonomous and specific to children. The climate for children's rights in the EU has largely been set by this agenda. The United Nation's 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child drives the development of child-centred activities. However, the 2002 UN Special Session on Children highlighted that a gap persists between the good intentions of international treaties and the reality of poverty, neglect and exploitation faced by millions of children.

A 2006 Communication from the European Commission, *Towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child* (European Commission, 2006a), states that parental poverty and social exclusion seriously limit the opportunities and life chances of children; as a result, it is vital to break this cycle of poverty. The Commission and Member States have given priority to child poverty, under the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on social protection and social inclusion. This is aimed at promoting access to social protection systems in Member States, and ensuring the quality of these. Significant progress has taken place in response to safeguarding the rights of the child and ensuring that children's needs are met. A specific objective of the EU strategy on children's rights is to establish a European Forum on the Rights of the Child.

The UNICEF report, *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries*, (UNICEF, 2007) assessed child well-being in 21 OECD countries in six dimensions: material well-being, health and safety, educational well-being, family and peer relationships, behaviour and risks, and subjective well-being. Of the EU25, the United Kingdom was ranked lowest amongst the participating countries, while Hungary was third from the bottom. The Netherlands ranked highest, followed by Sweden, Denmark and Germany. Belgium and Ireland were ranked in the middle of the table. These findings illustrate that EU Member States must continue to consider how the safety, care and well-being of children can be ensured. The EU's Lisbon Strategy (2000) highlights the need to improve the situation of poor children and their families.

EU enlargement is a powerful tool to promote children's rights and improve their lives: these issues are included in the criteria for membership. However, many children in the new Member States are still experiencing high levels of exploitation, discrimination and poverty, and the UNICEF report supports the view that work still remains to be done. The recent EU German Presidency focused extensively on children and family issues, including fertility, quality of life and the needs of disadvantaged children.

Childcare and economic development

Childcare policies in the EU are closely linked to boosting economic growth and improving access to employment by helping women, in particular, better balance their work and family lives. The Social Agenda for 2005–2010 sets out the EU's commitment to expanding Europe's labour market, improving flexibility for working parents and removing barriers to employment for women (European Commission, 2005). To help achieve these goals, the EU is encouraging Member States to take actions to expand the childcare sector to meet increasing demand.

The Lisbon Strategy sets out the EU's aim of becoming 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010'. To achieve this, more people must be recruited to the labour market. By increasing the supply of childcare, the pool of people who can participate in the labour market will be widened.

The demand for childcare in the EU has grown in line with an increase in female employment; the supply of childcare, however, has not expanded at the same rate. The Foundation's European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC) published *Childcare services in the EU – What future?* in 2006, which reports that female employment grew from 51% in 1997 to just under 56% in 2004 (Blackburn, 2006). Women tend to bear the main responsibility for childcare in the household and so their labour market participation can be influenced by the availability, quality and type of childcare. If the rate of labour market participation among women is to continue to rise, it is necessary that adequate childcare services be provided.

The Foundation has found that women often leave the labour market because childcare facilities are unavailable, too expensive, inaccessible or inadequate, and that women without children are more often employed than those with children. A report by Blake Stevenson Ltd, *Assessment of the benefits and costs of out-of-school care* (Davidson and Barry, 2003) found evidence that the provision of appropriate OSC services can enable parents, especially lone parents, to take up employment opportunities or increase their working hours. The 2004 enlargement of the EU has provided a new impetus for challenging traditional female roles across Europe. Many of the new Member States have a history of high female labour market participation rates, supported by a range of high-quality childcare services. However, there are concerns that a decline in these childcare services over the past decade has led to an increase in the number of women working part time or not taking up employment at all (Ziniel, 2006).

According to the Foundation's *First European quality of life survey: Families, work and social networks*, there are some concerns across Europe that the development of pre-school children may suffer if both parents are in employment; however, evidence also exists that these concerns may be lessened if working parents have access to high quality, affordable and accessible childcare services. These concerns are lower in Denmark and Sweden where the childcare sector is more developed. A higher level of concern exists in some new Member States where childcare services have declined over the past fifteen years (Saraceno et al, 2005).

The Foundation's report, *Employment developments in childcare services for school-age children*, indicates that the EU has supported the development of childcare services across Europe, providing financial assistance through the European Social Fund to increase the number of childcare services and improve their quality and diversity (Elniff-Larsen et al, 2006). This support has allowed a greater

number of children to access childcare places. It has provided training for childcare workers to enable them to provide better service and has given parents the chance to take up training and learning opportunities to support their entry into the labour market.

It is clear that childcare must be a key element of any strategy to enable women with children to balance their work and family responsibilities and increase women's participation in the workforce at all levels. Elniff-Larsen et al (2006) report that national governments in Europe are working towards supplying sufficient childcare services to meet the needs of parents with pre-school children, but that only a few Member States are addressing the need for childcare services for school-age children.

Demographic and social change

Demographic trends in Europe support the argument for the provision of quality, affordable childcare. The European Commission's Communication on demographic change outlines the factors that are contributing to an ageing European population: current low fertility rates (around 1.5 children per woman), a peak in the population aged between 45 and 65 years due to the post-war baby boom and the expectation of life expectancy rising by another five years by 2050 (European Commission, 2006b). The Communication points to figures produced by Eurostat, which indicate that at least 40 million people are expected to migrate to the EU by 2050. However, such levels of immigration only partially offset the larger demographic trends. The Communication indicates that the impact of demographic change will be an eventual decline in the size of the labour force, a decline in economic growth and increased pressure on public spending.

The European Commission's Communication, *Promoting solidarity between the generations*, (European Commission, 2007) responds to the issues of demographic and social change. It states that young adults now live in the family home for longer, while their parents are increasingly likely to also be supporting their own parents. These responsibilities fall on the young or intermediate generations and most often on women. The Communication therefore concludes that equality between men and women is a key condition for establishing a new solidarity relationship between the generations and will be crucial in promoting demographic renewal.

How families are supported in Member States is at the heart of this solidarity and can impact on falling fertility rates. Childcare is one of the pillars of support because a lack of childcare facilities can be a disincentive to having children, as can unsuitable leave arrangements, working patterns and issues around gender equality within the family.

The impact of demographic change can be a more significant challenge in particular regions or areas. For example, in regions that are economically disadvantaged, demographic change can be exacerbated if young people move away in search of better employment opportunities. Regions that have a large elderly population are likely to experience lower labour market participation rates and consequently may face difficulties in funding and supplying goods and services, including childcare services (European Commission, 2006b).

Solutions for dealing with demographic change set out in the Communication on promoting solidarity between the generations include encouraging increased female participation in the labour market;

reducing the inequality of opportunities between people with children and those without children; offering universal access to assistance services for parents; and managing working hours to offer men and women opportunities for lifelong learning and work–life balance. Targets for childcare, as agreed at the Barcelona European Council in 2002, support the achievement of these objectives, although they focus on pre-school children rather than children of school-age:

'Member States should remove disincentives to female labour market participation and strive, taking into account the demand for childcare facilities and in line with national patterns of childcare provision, to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age, and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age.'
(European Council, 2002)

Arising from concerns over demographic change, the European Commission's Communication *Promoting solidarity between the generations* emphasises the need for EU Member States to promote demographic renewal by linking actions to the Lisbon Strategy for employment growth and gender equality (European Commission, 2007). By improving the conditions of family life, in particular helping families to balance their family and working lives, it aims to ensure that Europeans can have their ideal number of children, rather than limiting the size of their families in the face of external pressures. An important resource that will help achieve this is the development of services that provide care, education and supervision for children and young people.

As well as having fewer children, women in the EU are now tending to have their children later in life. The report mentioned earlier, *Childcare services in the EU – What future?*, states that older mothers are more likely to use childcare services (Blackburn, 2006). Their careers are more developed and their income is likely to be higher, so the incentive to return to work is greater and they can afford to pay for childcare. In addition, people are now more geographically mobile, often not living close to their families. Increasingly, grandparents are likely to still be in work. The result is that the role of the extended family in providing childcare has been declining over time, more so in some countries than in others, and families are increasingly likely to look to the formal childcare market.

Social policy

The European policy approach to childcare is not only driven by economic considerations. In the early years of childcare development, a strong link was drawn with educational achievement. This recognised that early education – in crèches, playgroups and day-care facilities – can be a vital preparation for schooling, and assist children's achievement in the longer term. This link is still a strong driver, in particular for children below school age.

There is an increasing realisation of the need to develop coherent and comprehensive social policies at a European level, and approaches to childcare form an important part of this agenda.

The social policy agenda for 2006–2010 sets out the vision of 'a social Europe in the global economy: jobs and opportunities for all' (European Commission, 2005). The agenda promotes European, national and regional activity in order to achieve full employment and promote equal opportunities and inclusion.

The aim of achieving full employment is based on the Lisbon objectives for growth and jobs, and seeks to underpin long-term economic growth and combat regional disparities and social exclusion.

As recognised in the Barcelona targets, the provision of adequate childcare services to help remove barriers to women's employment is an important part of this policy aim, particularly in disadvantaged regions where there is a need to increase overall labour market participation rates.

The EU recognises the importance of childcare services in helping to achieve gender equality and increasing female labour market participation. The conclusions from the Brussels European Council in 2006 acknowledge that gender equality and women's employment is essential to continuing economic growth and that in order to achieve this, high quality childcare must be made more available across Europe.

The equal opportunities and inclusion strand of the social policy agenda promotes a range of actions to address issues such as the gender pay gap, female access to the labour market, training, career development and the reconciliation of family and working life. This year, 2007, has been designated as European Year of Equal Opportunities. As part of this, a Commission Communication on the gender pay gap is to be drawn up. This will build on previous EU activities and directives to promote gender equality on issues such as equal pay, maternity leave, parental leave and equal treatment in the workplace.

Although family policy is still progressing in Europe and is not yet developed as a concept across the EU, there is an increasing recognition at European level of the need to balance home and family life, and of the particular needs and rights of children. It has been noted that childcare provision should respond to the employment demands of parents and should also focus on providing a positive educational experience for children, in order to support their continued social and intellectual development (Saraceno et al, 2005).

The social policy agenda emphasises the EU objective of removing child poverty. (Currently, 20% of children in the EU experience relative poverty as against 15% in the population as a whole; moreover, poverty is frequently passed down from one generation to another.) The UNICEF report *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries* (UNICEF, 2007) reports on the evidence that growing up in a household without an employed adult is closely associated with deprivation, particularly if the unemployment is long term and persistent. Childcare has an important role to play in addressing this cycle. For example, research has shown that women's earnings are a significant factor in reducing a family's vulnerability to poverty (Davidson and Barry, 2003).

European childcare initiatives have primarily focused on pre-school children, but there is an increasing recognition among policymakers of the importance of childcare services for school-age children. In the past ten years, Member States have started to consider how they can best deliver services for children in this age group.

The policy approach to childcare in the EU has been driven by economic, educational and social factors. It has been linked to policies and initiatives that seek to support economic growth and to ease women's access to the labour market by helping them reconcile work and family life.

Childcare policy at a European level is increasingly being driven by a more diverse range of policy priorities, including economic considerations, demographic change, the quality of family life and the need to develop a more comprehensive European approach to social policy. There is an increased impetus at EU level to take action to improve and protect the rights of children. The needs of disadvantaged children in particular are likely to receive considerable attention as part of this growing agenda.

OSC in disadvantaged areas is a cross-cutting theme that can contribute to the range of policy areas and should be a key priority for the EU and Member States.

Article 17 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

'Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from childcare services and facilities for which they are eligible.' (UNHCR, 1989)

The Convention makes other provisions that can be addressed, or partly addressed, through childcare services. For example, Article 17 encourages the dissemination of children's books as part of their access to materials and information, Section (d) under Article 28 states that parties should take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and reduce drop-out rates, and Article 31 states that parties should recognise the child's right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age and to participate in cultural life and the arts.

Between 1999 and 2003, the Robert Bosch Foundation carried out a study, *The demographic future of Europe – facts, figures, policies: Results of the population policy acceptance study* (Dorbritz et al, 2005). It identified that the type of family support that most people in Europe want is a more extensive range of care services for children and dependant people.

Childcare is one of the fastest growing sectors in the care market. However, across the EU25, childcare services are at different stages of development and childcare is provided in different ways, as the report *Childcare services in the EU – What future?* indicates: 'No one EU country's childcare model is the same as another's' (Blackburn, 2006). The report found that in some of the 10 new Member States that joined in 2004, the childcare sector is relatively underdeveloped and is therefore expected to undergo rapid growth in the short to medium term. The report goes on to say that in Member States where the sector is most developed, the focus has moved from expanding the sector to ensuring the quality of the services provided.

Chapter 1 showed that childcare policy in the EU was initially developed for children of pre-school age. However, over the past decade, Member States have been addressing the need for childcare for school-age children through the development of a range of strategies and programmes.

Key policy drivers

The policy drivers for the development of OSC, including OSC in disadvantaged areas, vary in emphasis between the case study Member States. They reflect the social and economic reasons for developing OSC that are important at EU level.

In the UK, the OSC sector has grown significantly in the past decade. The driver has been the national government's emphasis on increasing participation in employment and training in order to reduce poverty and fuel economic growth. Reducing poverty in families is a priority issue for the UK government, which has said that it will eliminate child poverty by 2020. OSC services is a key part of the government's plans for achieving this, by improving access to the labour market for families living in or at risk of poverty. It is on this basis that the government has provided significant financial and practical support to OSC services. In addition, there has been a growing trend in the UK towards providing OSC to older children aged 12 and above, recognising that their needs and aspirations are different and thus care needs to be provided in a different format (and with a different name).

In the UK, eliminating child poverty has been a particularly important policy driver in disadvantaged areas, where there is a relatively high proportion of families living in poverty. For example, in Scotland, the Working for Families Fund (WfFF) has been established to develop services to support people in disadvantaged areas who find that childcare is a barrier to taking up training and employment opportunities. The WfFF provides funding to 20 local authority areas based on the number of children in the area who live in households in receipt of out-of-work benefits.

More affluent parents and families in the UK use a range of OSC provision, to help enable them to undertake further education, work-based training and to participate in employment. This demand has driven the development of OSC in the UK in recent years and reflects the fact that OSC has an important role to play in helping to achieve the government's goals of developing the labour force and sustaining economic growth.

The rationale for OSC development in Portugal has traditionally been to support parents to reconcile their work and family lives, and to promote gender equality in the labour market. There has been recent legislation in Portugal that stipulates that OSC activities must be delivered in all primary schools. Although the needs of parents, and labour market considerations, were important in driving this new legislation, the main driver behind it was a formal recognition by policymakers of the positive impact that OSC can have on children's development, in providing a safe and secure place to play, promoting social integration, integrating children with learning difficulties or disabilities, and encouraging children to engage with the education system and participate in different activities. It is acknowledged in Portugal that providing opportunities for social integration is particularly important for children living in disadvantaged areas.

Concern over the low birth rate in Germany has been an important policy driver behind moves to help people reconcile work and family life. In turn, the aim of reconciling the two has been central to the development of OSC in Germany.

In some Member States, the emphasis on the growth of OSC in order to support children's development is not a new driver in policy circles. In Estonia, OSC is provided through 'hobby schools'. Policymakers see these hobby schools as important: they provide a range of activities for children and help to engage them in society.

In the Czech Republic, the key policy drivers for the development of childcare have traditionally focused on the needs of the child: to support children's development and to promote social inclusion from an early age. This can be particularly important for children from disadvantaged social groups. There has been significant focus on how the needs of Roma children – a group facing particular disadvantage – can be addressed by OSC services and activities.

Patterns of growth

OSC has developed at different rates and in different forms in disadvantaged areas in each of the six Member States included in this research study. These different trends reflect the variety of policy considerations and priorities driving the development of OSC.

In the UK, OSC services have expanded rapidly in the past decade. For example, between 1997 and 2004, the number of OSC places rose from 137,000 to 490,000. The national government supported

this expansion by providing financial and practical support to both new and existing schemes through the 'Out-of-school Care Initiative' in the mid-1990s. Since then, much of the new provision has been funded through the New Opportunities Fund. The UK government has set a target that all children aged between three and 14 years should have access to an OSC place by 2010.

Although the provision of OSC services in the UK has expanded significantly in recent years, they tend to be concentrated in economically prosperous areas, with fewer OSC services in disadvantaged areas. At regional level, this means that there is a higher level of provision in south-east England than in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, there is still a diverse range of OSC services in disadvantaged areas in the UK, being delivered through a variety of different models.

In Portugal, there has been a dramatic increase in the level of OSC provision in the past year. This is due to new legislation, passed in 2006, making it compulsory for all primary schools to deliver after-school activities between the hours of 15.00 and 17.30. The Portuguese Ministry of Education estimates that this legislative change means that 99% of primary school children now have access to OSC services, compared to around 25% in 2005. Prior to this new legislation, government priorities for the development of childcare services had focused on those children aged six years and younger.

OSC services in disadvantaged areas in Portugal are further supported by the 'Escolhas' programme, which provides activities for children and young people aged between six and 24 years living in disadvantaged areas. The programme has been in place since 2001. There are currently around 120 local initiatives operating in different disadvantaged areas and many other disadvantaged areas are keen to become involved with the programme. The Escolhas programme builds on the work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and projects that have been providing OSC services to children in disadvantaged areas since the mid-1980s.

The growth of OSC in Belgium has been very much a mixture of federal, regional and local developments. The French and Flemish linguistic communities have responsibility for childcare services in their regions. In Flanders and the Brussels-Capital Region, the regional government has provided support and funding for the establishment of OSC initiatives in 229 out of 327 local municipalities, providing care to more than 47,000 children aged between two and 12 years.

In Belgium's French community, 183 out of 253 local municipalities are currently delivering 'care for free time' programmes, funded and supported by the regional government. These provide supervision, care and activities for children aged between two and 12 years. A number of Brussels municipalities – 16 in all – are also participating in this programme.

Although the 'care for free time' programmes can be implemented in any area in the Walloon region, many of them are in disadvantaged areas and are delivered by, or have links to, voluntary organisations and social initiatives in these communities.

There is a range of community and voluntary OSC projects across Belgium, and at federal level the Joint Equipment and Services Fund (FESC) provides funding and support to nearly 300 OSC services across the country. Many of these services are also part of the regional governments' OSC networks.

In Estonia, 300 'hobby education' schools provide OSC services to around 48,000 children. These schools are a mixture of public and private sector institutions. They provide OSC services based on

the national curriculum for music, art, sport, the environment, information technology (IT), history and other interests. No national strategy exists for hobby education, which is the responsibility of local government, and hobby schools are developed by schools themselves, NGOs and youth associations, based on local needs and in response to local circumstances.

In eastern Germany around two-thirds of children have places in local OSC services. The corresponding figure in western Germany is around 6%.

In the Czech Republic, there is a diverse network of OSC services for children. These are established and operated by a range of different actors, including regional and local government, civic associations, churches, private companies and so on. Prior to the fall of Communism in 1989, there was an obligation on all towns with more than 5,000 inhabitants to provide OSC services for local children. Many of these OSC services remain in place, and therefore there has been little impetus on national government to significantly drive forward OSC developments. After-school centres are a key form of OSC provision in the Czech Republic. There are around 4,000 such centres, providing care and activities for more than 215,000 children. There are no national programmes specifically for OSC in disadvantaged areas, but there are dedicated programmes and projects for Roma children.

The key policy drivers for developing OSC are to enable women to participate more fully in the labour market, to reconcile work and family life, and to broaden the potential workforce and contribute to economic growth. A specific driver in disadvantaged areas is to support families in carving a permanent route out of poverty by removing childcare as a barrier to employment, enabling women to work, in turn raising the household income and the aspirations of the children. It is anticipated that this will break the cycle of poverty that is often passed from one generation to the next.

Whilst OSC is an integral strand of economic development, a strong social development driver has been emerging that complements the economic objectives. This social driver dimension is particularly noticeable in disadvantaged areas and in OSC activities targeted at disadvantaged groups. The aim of social development initiatives is to help children and young people contribute in their community, develop social skills, widen their experiences and influences, and for some, divert them from problem or anti-social behaviour.

In some countries, OSC activities are directed at improving children's engagement in formal education and enhancing educational attainment levels both of the individual and of the community as a whole. This can be done through homework support, project work and breakfast clubs, which have been shown to have a positive impact on school attendance, concentration and behaviour in the classroom.

Policymakers have recognised that OSC provides a range of benefits that cut across other policy areas and can help them meet their objectives – for example, developing a skilled workforce, alleviating poverty, tackling anti-social behaviour and fuelling economic growth. These can be particularly pertinent in disadvantaged areas and it is important that this continues to be built on to maximise the benefits.

Classifying disadvantaged areas

3

Chapter 1 highlighted the priority that the European Commission places on eradicating child poverty in the EU. It recognises that poverty and social exclusion are passed from one generation to the next. The EU's Lisbon Strategy highlights the need to improve the situation of poor children and their families (European Council, 2000) and this report links to that agenda by focusing on children living in disadvantaged areas. This chapter examines how disadvantaged areas are designated as such in Member States. Designation or formal recognition of disadvantaged areas impacts on how services, including childcare and OSC services, are supported, funded and delivered to families living there.

Some of the countries in the study have official, nationally agreed mechanisms for determining if an area is classed as 'disadvantaged'. Others do not have an official method of designation, but have a range of national-level indicators that are commonly used to identify areas or communities that have particular needs. In some Member States, disadvantaged areas are defined at regional or local level, and therefore there may be differences in what is seen as a disadvantaged area depending on the region that it is located in.

How disadvantaged areas are defined

Member States across the EU may define an area as 'disadvantaged' at national, regional or local level and some use a mixture of these different approaches.

In some Member States, a national-level approach is taken to categorising disadvantaged areas, for example in the Czech Republic. In Germany, by contrast, a major national-level programme targets 'districts with special development needs'. This programme is designed for urban areas that face the threat of social exclusion. In rural areas, Germany uses the guidelines of the LEADER II programme in order to determine whether a rural area should be classed as disadvantaged.

The particular constitutional arrangements of a Member State can play an important role in determining the level at which disadvantaged areas are classified. The UK and Belgium are both comprised of distinct regions or linguistic communities, each with a range of devolved powers and a significant degree of autonomy.

In the UK, this means that separate indices are used to identify areas of deprivation in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. These indices are broadly similar but have been developed in recognition of the differences between the four constituent regions. The key factors that influence the extent of deprivation in a particular area vary between jurisdictions, reflecting, for example, the effects of high population density in one area versus low population density in another. The indices use different underlying indicators and domains that are updated at different intervals and employ different definitions and criteria when the level of deprivation is being calculated in a particular area.

In Belgium, disadvantaged areas are determined at both federal and at linguistic community level. The federal government has determined that 15 towns and municipalities have particular needs and has issued 'town contracts' for these districts. The Walloon Region, the Flanders Region and the Brussels-Capital Region have all established their own programmes and initiatives to support disadvantaged areas within their jurisdiction.

Not all Member States have arrangements or systems in place for denoting particular regions or areas 'disadvantaged'. Instead, these Member States may take a wider view of 'disadvantage' and place the emphasis on tackling this issue across the country as a whole rather than focusing on particular areas. The evidence from the research suggests that this approach may be particularly prevalent within some of the less affluent Member States. In such countries, the differences between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged areas may be less extreme than in some wealthier countries, but the country as a whole is relatively less wealthy compared to other EU members. For example, in Estonia, no region is officially classed as 'disadvantaged' by either national or regional government. There is a general recognition that certain areas, such as eastern and southern Estonia and the northern part of Tallinn, face particular issues and difficulties. Up to three-quarters of the country may be classed as disadvantaged and issues of poverty and deprivation are dispersed across it. In Portugal, there is no national designation of disadvantaged areas, although there are a series of indicators and surveys that have been used systematically by public agencies to identify and target particular areas that are most in need of support.

It is important to note that areas designated as 'disadvantaged' may be occupied by significant numbers of people who are not disadvantaged. Conversely, many disadvantaged families live outside 'disadvantaged' areas. This fact should be considered to ensure that OSC is provided to those who need it, irrespective of where they live.

Criteria used to classify disadvantaged areas

In defining which areas should be classified as disadvantaged, the six Member States participating in the study take a range of criteria and indicators into account.

Indicators used by Member States to identify areas of disadvantage tend to cover a range of social and economic issues such as income, housing, employment, education, health, industry, environment and crime. In some countries, for example Portugal, consideration is given to certain factors that may not indicate deprivation themselves but the prevalence of which suggests that an area is more likely to suffer from disadvantage – for example, the proportion of the local population who are from an ethnic minority background.

In some countries, such as the four jurisdictions within the UK, criteria and indicators for disadvantage are implemented on a systematic basis. Each of the constituent regions in the UK has a well-established and accepted framework and process for measuring deprivation. The data relating to each indicator are gathered, analysed and aggregated to provide an overall measure of deprivation for each small local area, which is then awarded its own score and national ranking.

In other Member States, different public agencies may identify areas of deprivation according to different criteria. In Portugal, for example, there are a range of indicators and surveys that public services may use to categorise disadvantaged areas. Each public agency may not use exactly the same indicators, although there are a series of indicators that are the most commonly used.

Patterns of disadvantage

There are patterns that can be identified across the six Member States in terms of the nature and characteristics of disadvantaged areas (or at least in terms of those areas that have been classified as disadvantaged by national or regional governments).

According to the designations of disadvantaged areas identified in the national reports, areas of deprivation are most commonly found in large cities and urban areas.

In the UK, the city of Liverpool is the most deprived local authority area in England, with Manchester the second most deprived, and Nottingham, Birmingham and Newcastle all within the 10% most deprived areas. Meanwhile, more than 50% of datazones in Glasgow are amongst the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland; parts of Belfast are the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland, while areas of Cardiff and Swansea are amongst the most deprived in Wales.

This pattern is replicated in other Member States. For example, of the 15 areas in Belgium receiving 'town contracts' from federal government, seven are Brussels municipalities and another four are the other four cities in Belgium with a population of more than 150,000 – Antwerp, Gent, Liège and Charleroi. In Portugal, most of the areas commonly identified as disadvantaged are the inner city areas and peripheral suburbs of the country's three largest cities – Lisbon, Porto and Setubal. In Germany, previously industrialised urban areas, such as the Ruhr and the Saar regions, have particularly high concentrations of deprivation.

It would be a mistake, however, to ignore the very real and significant poverty that exists in many rural areas across the EU. In Portugal, although the extent of deprivation tends to be more severe within the main urban areas, there is a high incidence of rural poverty, particularly in Alentejo in the south of the country. In Estonia, one of the main areas facing disadvantage is the south of the country. This is predominantly rural and suffers from a limited local economy and poor transport links with other areas.

Individuals living in areas and regions experiencing deprivation or disadvantage face a range of social and economic problems. This may include high levels of unemployment, a lack of appropriate and quality housing, insufficient transport links, high incidences of crime and anti-social behaviour, poor health, low educational attainment and difficulties in accessing a wide range of public services. This last issue is particularly pertinent to this research study, in terms of the ability of people living in disadvantaged areas to access appropriate, high quality and affordable childcare and OSC.

There is no single approach to designating areas of disadvantage in the six Member States selected for this study and some countries do not have any national system for identifying, designating and targeting resources at areas of disadvantage. However, in Member States that lack a systematic approach to identifying areas of disadvantage, there is a national recognition of which areas do face deprivation, based on indicators such as low employment, low household income, poor educational attainment, poor quality housing and poor health.

Definitions of disadvantage are often not based on geographical boundaries. Frequently, they relate to disadvantaged groups or communities – for example, the Russian population in Estonia and the Roma population in the Czech Republic. Where there is a concentration of these groups, then the area as a whole will show signs of multiple and sometimes severe disadvantage.

Disadvantaged areas, both those that are officially designated as such and those that are recognised but not designated, tend to be in urban areas, although by no means exclusively so. There are areas and communities facing considerable disadvantage in rural parts of the six Member States studied. This has implications for OSC provision, which may need to be provided in a different model in rural areas. For example, group care may not be viable and transport issues can further add to the complexity of both problem and solution.

No official designation may exist. This has implications for how, and if, resources can be targeted to support activities, including OSC, in these areas. It also has implications for how the impact of those activities can be monitored and evaluated. However, large numbers of disadvantaged people do not live in officially designated or recognised disadvantaged areas. This needs to be taken into account in planning and providing OSC that helps to tackle poverty and disadvantage when it exists outside the designated areas. The question is then raised as to whether activities to support OSC should be targeted at disadvantaged areas, at disadvantaged households or at a combination of the two.

Characteristics of successful out-of-school care services

Chapters 1 and 2 showed how OSC fits with the current and emerging EU and Member State agendas for families, the economy and social affairs. These issues are important across the population as a whole. However, the way in which they are addressed in disadvantaged areas and for disadvantaged groups often differs from areas that do not face the same issues. This chapter explores the common characteristics of successful provision of OSC services in disadvantaged areas.

Public sector support

In the case study Member States, there is a range of providers of OSC services in disadvantaged areas. In order that sustainable and effective OSC services be established in these areas, higher-than-average levels of involvement and support from public agencies are needed. This includes capital support to establish the OSC services and ongoing revenue support to provide for them.

For example, in Scotland, up to half of OSC services in disadvantaged areas are run by local government, compared to one-third of OSC services in wealthier areas. Fewer OSC services and activities exist in remote rural towns and villages in Estonia than in towns and cities. In Portugal, the Escolhas programme has been established by national government to provide OSC in disadvantaged areas, and national and local governments provide financial and practical support to non-governmental organisations providing OSC in these areas. The types of funding and support provided are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

The reasons why OSC services in these areas may require public sector support are detailed and complex. Parents in disadvantaged areas are less likely to have the financial resources to pay the full cost of OSC. Private sector providers are less likely to invest in disadvantaged areas where there is less potential to charge fees to cover costs and generate a profit.

In disadvantaged rural areas, OSC services can find it difficult to attract a sufficient number of children to make it economically viable. In these circumstances – for example, in Fife, Scotland (in the UK) – local authorities are a major provider of OSC. In Portugal, OSC projects in disadvantaged areas receive support from non-profit organisations and the voluntary sector.

Community involvement in OSC service provision

A characteristic of successful OSC provision is community involvement in the management and delivery of these services. Different models for community involvement are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

In the UK, parents are responsible for the strategic management of a significant proportion of OSC services, including OSC services in disadvantaged areas. This level of community involvement in OSC services is evident in other Member States. Local residents in Vohma, Estonia, run a youth centre that provides activities for children out of school hours. Similarly, in the Cova da Moura neighbourhood in Amadora, Portugal, the local community established a Cultural Association, 'Windmill of Youth', which provides a wide range of services, including OSC services.

Even where communities are not involved in the day-to-day management of OSC services, there are other ways in which local people can have a role to play in the development of OSC. In Germany, the Horthaus St. Petri day-care centre is based in a disadvantaged area of Bremen. It is a member of the local community development group, through which public and non-governmental service providers and local residents' groups work together to organise and develop a wide variety of local services.

On a more informal level, many OSC services in disadvantaged areas gather regular feedback from parents through meetings, surveys and discussions to plan future service delivery. In addition, examples exist of area-based local consultations on services development (including OSC), which involve parents, local authorities, schools and non-governmental organisations. Examples of both of these approaches can be found in the Intercultural Children's and Parents' Centre in the Schillerkiez district in Berlin, Germany, or the 'La Tanière des Petits Ours' OSC services in Schaerbeek in Belgium.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

'Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those freely in all matters affecting the child.'

A specific objective of the EU strategy on the rights of the child explicitly states the importance of involving children in decision-making processes (European Commission, 2006a). It is important that children are involved in OSC service planning and evaluation – for example, by working with staff to develop the programme of activities, being given the opportunity to comment on what they have enjoyed and being asked for their suggestions on how the OSC service could be improved. This will benefit all children, whether they live in disadvantaged areas or not. However, it has a particular contribution to make in tackling some of the issues faced by children living in disadvantaged areas or children belonging to disadvantaged groups. It will help them to learn to work as a team, make them see that their views are important and valued, increase their confidence, help to engender a sense of ownership of the OSC service and teach them important skills that will benefit them in other areas of their lives.

Kinderwerking Fabota

Leuven, Belgium

The Belgian project, Kinderwerking Fabota, is committed to participation from parents and children. The staff involve children in developing the programme of activities and gather feedback from them on the activities and the project. Children have the opportunity to ask questions and express their views. In addition, they develop their own listening skills by hearing and discussing other people's points of view. The staff have monthly meetings with parents to support them, to help develop their parenting skills and to gather feedback from them about the projects and the activities.

The involvement of local communities in OSC services in disadvantaged areas can help to ensure that these OSC services respond to local needs. Such involvement can also play a role in supporting social integration and help to develop a sense of community empowerment.

Joined-up service provision

A positive impact of the relatively high level of public sector involvement in OSC in disadvantaged areas has been that local and national governments have involved other partners, actors and the local community in the management and delivery of OSC services to offer joined-up services to children and families.

In the UK, for example, 'Children's Centres' have been established in England and similar facilities known as 'Integrated Centres' have been set up in Wales. These centres provide OSC, as well as a range of other services for families. These include education opportunities, family support, health services and support for parents to take up training and employment. The centres are based mainly in disadvantaged areas.

Integrated School

Caerphilly, Wales

The first integrated school to open in Wales was the Caerphilly Integrated Children's Centre in New Tredegar. This brought together a range of services to support children and their families, including a playgroup, nursery, breakfast club, after-school club for 4–11 year-olds, family services (e.g., baby massage and open-access play in a 'garden of excellence'). The Centre is part of a wider GBP 18.5 million regeneration scheme for this disadvantaged area, which includes a new school and community wing and environmental works. The Centre was funded by the New Opportunities Fund, with the Welsh Assembly Government funding the post of Centre Coordinator. High levels of community involvement and ownership have been identified as factors of its success.

The centres can also be used as a base by children using other types of OSC. For example, childminders liaise with the Children's Centres and Integrated Centres to allow the children they care for to use the services, activities and facilities in the centres.

The UNICEF report on child well-being in rich countries refers to the many commentators who argue that the lack of educational and cultural resources should rank alongside lack of income as a factor influencing well-being (UNICEF, 2007). It argues that educational resources in the home play a critical role in a child's educational achievement. Where these resources are missing from the home, they can be provided by OSC services. As an example, the OSC services in Sunnylands Primary School in Northern Ireland, UK, has worked with the children's charity Barnardo's to offer a range of OSC activities and other services at the school. These include recreational activities, confidence-building sessions and homework support for children, along with parenting classes and behaviour management courses for parents. A key aim of these OSC services has been to raise confidence and increase well-being among children and parents, to facilitate access to training or employment for parents and carers, and to develop positive attitudes to education amongst children. There are similar projects in other Member States. 'La Tanière des Petits Ours' provides OSC services in Schaerbeek in Belgium. It provides support for families, strengthens links between parents and children, and establishes links between different families. Examples of this type of approach can also be found in Germany, where there are 'Mothers' Centres' or 'Community Centres' in some disadvantaged areas that offer OSC for children, as well as a range of different services for parents, including training to support access to employment.

In Portugal, OSC services in disadvantaged areas established by public authorities and non-profit organisations often have a broad aim to promote social inclusion, and therefore have much wider objectives than simply providing OSC. This results in an integrated approach to OSC services being more common. An OSC centre in the town of Ourique, in the rural Alentejo region in the south of Portugal, has established close partnerships with local institutions, such as the health centre, fire service and police department.

There is a strong emphasis in Portugal on the social development of children attending OSC services and supporting children in integrating with the wider community. The case study below demonstrates that a joined-up, diverse and varied range of activities is seen as important in developing new skills and interests amongst children.

Cultural Association 'Windmill of Youth'

Amadora, Portugal

The 'Cova da Moura' neighbourhood is situated in the western part of Amadora, a large peripheral suburb on the outskirts of Lisbon. There is a high proportion of lone parents, educational qualifications tend to be low, and there are high rates of school drop-out. Economic activity rates are high, both for women and men, but most jobs are low-skilled and low paid with long and often atypical working hours. The cultural association 'Windmill of Youth' provides OSC activities in a wide range of areas, including homework support, English, IT, music, theatre, mathematics, art, and physical education. A close relationship has been established with local schools, and coordinators of OSC services are always aware of how children are doing in school. There are also close relationships with the local Association for the Physically Handicapped, the local health centre, and with a group of elderly persons from a local care home. The local police department organises regular activities with the OSC centre in order to promote social inclusion. The association provides specific support for lone mothers, including a support group for adolescent mothers, which receives support from social workers and psychologists; information on family planning; parental training courses; and employability support. Other activities include a residents' support group, literacy courses, an anti-violence project, a counselling office and a range of training courses for women at risk.

OSC projects in Portugal delivered as part of the Escolhas programme have a wide remit in terms of promoting integration between children, families and communities. Again, as part of an attempt to offer a joined-up approach, a range of services are included in these projects, including education, social inclusion, arts courses, psychology services, health services and mediation. The emphasis placed on the provision of these different services can depend on the particular needs that have been identified in the local community. For example, as part of the OSC services provided by the National Charitable Society for Gypsies in the Ameixoeira district in Lisbon, there is a specific focus on the health needs of children and families using the services. Furthermore, activities dealing with free medical care, vaccinations and family planning are delivered in conjunction with the local health centre.

Support for ethnic minority groups

In many of the Member States included in the research, OSC schemes in disadvantaged areas often need to provide services to a relatively high number of children and families from ethnic minority backgrounds. In these situations, OSC can play an important role in supporting social cohesion in the local area, and in addressing particular needs amongst disadvantaged minority groups.

The national research found that in some countries, such as Germany, Estonia, Portugal and the Czech Republic, a higher-than-average proportion of disadvantaged areas are often home to ethnic minorities. This can pose particular challenges for the providers of OSC services. In many cases, children from ethnic minority families – for example, Roma children in the Czech Republic or Russian children in Estonia – face language barriers in communicating with other children and may be less integrated into wider society and so face disadvantages in education and later in the labour market. However, as the case study below shows, there are a number of good examples of OSC providers implementing particular measures and approaches to help these children participate in OSC services.

Hobby Education

Paldiski, Estonia

Paldiski is a small town in north-west Estonia. It was formerly a Soviet Navy and nuclear base, and it remained closed off from the rest of the country until the base closed in the mid-1990s. Partly due to its history, the town suffers from severe economic and social difficulties since the naval base was the primary source of employment in the area. The town has a significant Russian minority population.

Local schools provide a range of ‘hobby education’ for children in the town. Some of this is delivered free of charge. Activities include sports, acting, music, art, dancing and IT. Hobby education is available to all children, while children from Russian families can receive additional classes in the Estonian language and culture.

There are a number of characteristics that can contribute to the successful delivery of OSC services in disadvantaged areas. Public sector support in terms of covering or contributing to the funding of OSC services is essential in order for OSC provision to have maximum impact for families in disadvantaged areas. Other forms of public sector support are also needed: for example, technical support, practical support, advice and information.

Some form of community or parental involvement in OSC service management or delivery is important and there are benefits to be gained from involving children in developing and evaluating the activities provided. Again, support from government or non-governmental organisations is likely to be required in order to enable this community involvement and to build skills and capacity amongst local residents. It is important to consider how this support can be provided and community involvement thus maintained. It is also important to consider a strategy for monitoring such involvement, so that it can be reviewed and the benefits to the individual, the community and the OSC service maximised.

In disadvantaged areas where there is a significant ethnic minority population, community involvement in OSC provision is important as a mechanism for supporting and sustaining social integration.

Families living in disadvantaged areas often have a broad range of complex economic and social

needs. OSC services in these areas can be more effective if they take a holistic approach to meeting the needs of parents and children, and engage with a range of other service providers in order to address these issues. It will be important to look at what structures and working arrangements need to be in place to provide this holistic OSC service and to ensure that its impact can be monitored across the different service areas.

Policymakers should consider the characteristics of successful OSC in disadvantaged areas and assess the existing infrastructure and approaches in their own country against these characteristics. This will enable them to identify the gaps and look at how they might be addressed to enhance the supply of OSC. They need to look at how the public sector can ensure that a holistic approach is taken to OSC service provision in disadvantaged areas – one which involves key partners, agencies and the community.

Management and delivery of services

5

Chapter 4 gave an overview of the characteristics that are common in effective OSC services in disadvantaged areas. This chapter looks in more detail at the types of management and delivery models in these areas.

Public sector providers

The public sector is heavily involved in the provision of OSC in disadvantaged areas in the six countries included in the research. The nature of this involvement varies between Member States. However, it should not be assumed that there is a single method by which the public sector supports OSC *within* each Member State: the nature of provision is often complex and involves a wide range of actors, including the public sector. The next chapter looks in detail at the funding and support that the public sector provides for different OSC services. This chapter considers how the public sector is involved in the direct delivery of OSC services.

The national research identified a variety of approaches through which the public sector delivers OSC in disadvantaged areas in European countries. One of the most prominent models is the provision of OSC through schools.

This approach has become particularly important in Portugal since the introduction of new national legislation in 2006, which made it compulsory for all primary schools – including those in disadvantaged areas – to offer after-school activities.

The legislation sets out that OSC in schools in Portugal can be organised by a range of providers, including local authorities, parents' associations, schools, or independent non-profit organisations. The Ministry of Education has encouraged local authorities to set up OSC services and so it is the local authorities who tend to decide how those services are to be delivered – either by directly employing the workforce themselves or by entering into a contract with local independent groups or organisations who may already be delivering OSC services.

The approach taken in Portugal varies from region to region. For example, in the Amadora district in Lisbon, the local council had previously supported non-profit organisations to develop OSC services for families with young children. When the new legislation was introduced, the council signed agreements and provided funding for some of these institutions to deliver the new statutory OSC services for primary school children. A flexible approach is used, with non-profit organisations delivering these OSC services either in a local school or on their own premises.

In other disadvantaged regions – such as in Lisbon or in Ourique – local councils have established their own new OSC services in schools and have not sought to link in with previously established providers. Evidence from the case studies suggests that where local governments do make links with OSC services already operating in the region, there are significant benefits for children in terms of the diversity of activities on offer to them,

In the UK, a similar approach of providing OSC through extended school hours has been in place on an optional basis in England and Wales since 2002. It has recently been introduced in 'Neighbourhood Renewal' areas in Northern Ireland. This model is known as the 'Extended Schools Initiative', which gives school governors the option of offering additional learning, care and other

opportunities before and after the normal school day. These OSC services are available to children, parents and the wider community. The rationale is that providing solely academic education is insufficient to tackle the problems of multiple disadvantage and social exclusion. In light of this, schools should seek to offer a wider range of services to the local community. This approach is particularly relevant in disadvantaged areas.

Extended Schools

West Midlands, England, UK

Solihull Childcare Cluster is a cluster of five primary schools in the West Midlands region of England. These schools work in partnership to offer year-round extended schools services to children up to the age of 12. The hub of the cluster is Coleshill Heath Primary School, which runs a full range of extended services, including day care and a before-school and after-school club based on its premises. A child and family worker operates in each school to help manage and develop the services. The head teachers of each school meet regularly to discuss progress and development and to share good practice. Other staff involved in the extended services also meet regularly. The clubs are open from 07.00 to 18.00, with places charged at an hourly rate. Older children pay slightly less due to staff ratio requirements. Nearly all of the children attending are from families that receive family tax credits, which is an indication of low income.

Another approach adopted in the UK is OSC programmes that have a more specific and narrow focus on learning opportunities, rather than a wider social remit. The UK government has invested in this type of out-of-school learning to enable schools to specifically offer additional educational support to pupils. The following case study provides an example of how this type of model operates.

Out-of-school learning

Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK

In 2006, more than half of the pupils at St. Colm's, a secondary school in Belfast, Northern Ireland, chose to participate in an out-of-school learning programme. The school serves a very disadvantaged area of Belfast, in which there are a disproportionately high number of lone-parent families. Every Monday to Thursday, two teachers offer after-school vocational and non-vocational courses, as well as one-on-one tutoring to help students succeed in school. It has both academic and personal benefits for students, who find the experience motivational and feel it has a positive effect on their in-school experiences.

Local authorities run up to half of the OSC clubs in disadvantaged areas in Scotland in the UK. An example is in Fife, where Fife Council runs over 40 OSC clubs, including five aimed specifically at children with special needs.

In the Czech Republic, primary schools can establish after-school clubs. These clubs aim to provide children with a wide range of social and recreational activities and support their education and learning in a secure, care environment. The centres operate before and after school times. The head teacher has responsibility for the OSC service and it is funded through school finances. In Belgium, too, OSC is delivered through schools, although the not-for-profit sector is often involved in the actual provision of these OSC services.

In Estonia, local governments have a responsibility for organising hobby education appropriate for their own area. Local authorities organise hobby education activities themselves, or through a range of local groups and organisations, such as schools, community centres, youth associations, and voluntary groups. For example, in Paldiski, a deprived town in north-west Estonia, most hobby education services are organised through local schools in the area.

In some Member States, public agencies may not have the lead responsibility for the provision of OSC in disadvantaged areas. However, they may be required to fill the gaps in OSC services in areas where there are no other providers. In the Flemish community in Belgium, for example, this is the responsibility of 'Kind en Gezin', a public interest body established to approve and subsidise childcare services for children under the age of 12.

Where public agencies do not take primary responsibility for the establishment and delivery of OSC services, they are often involved in coordinating the different agencies and organisations that do provide them. In the French community in Belgium, the lack of coordination in the OSC sector led to the 'Care for Free Time' decree being adopted in 2003. The aim of this decree is to encourage local coordination programmes to be established, focusing on the needs of children aged from two to 12 years. Coordination programmes in the community identify appropriate arrangements for providing care and supervision to children in this age group between the hours of 15.30 and 17.30. Coordinators are employed through local municipalities to support the development and management of these programmes, and there are subsidies to providers who participate.

Similarly, in Germany, as part of the national policy on the 'Alliance for the Family', 'Local Alliances for the Family' have been established throughout the country, including in disadvantaged areas. As the case study below demonstrates, the aim of these local alliances is to combine and coordinate the wide range of different OSC services that are available in order to help identify childcare solutions for individual families. The flexible outcomes offered by this type of service are important: they can enable families to access employment; they also help to sustain and enhance childcare and OSC provision by ensuring that providers are able to access a sufficient number of clients in order for their services to be maintained.

Kinderbetreuungsborse (KBB) Dudweiler

Saarbrücken, Germany

The area of Saarbrücken-Dudweiler is a disadvantaged urban area, suffering from high levels of unemployment and ethnic segregation, and a lack of high-quality public services. Kinderbetreuungsborse-Dudweiler is an information and matching service, created as part of a local network of parents and private childcare suppliers in Saarbrücken-Dudweiler. It is part of the national framework of 'Local Alliances for the Family'.

The need for flexible childcare was identified as a priority in the local area, and KBB was established to help address this need. The service created a database of childcare providers (including for OSC) and requests for services, and it attempts to match these supply and demand sides as appropriate. It focuses on the times when regular childcare is not available – before 07.00, after 18.00, at weekends, during holiday times and in cases of emergency. For example, to meet the caring needs of a mother who works changing shifts, it may identify a patchwork set of services from different providers. Single-parent families are an important client group because their needs for flexible childcare are particularly high. It is estimated that

the service has established around 200 stable long-term caring arrangements during the last two years. The project currently receives European funding, which means it is able to provide services free of charge to both those supplying and accessing childcare services.

Voluntary sector providers

Voluntary sector and non-profit organisations are important providers of OSC in disadvantaged areas in the case study Member States.

There are a number of benefits to OSC that is provided through the voluntary sector. This sector has the flexibility to provide OSC activities in conjunction with a range of other services to support social development in disadvantaged areas. The voluntary sector is able and willing to work in areas that are not viable for private sector providers and they can be flexible in meeting the needs of children and families who have particular support needs.

In Germany, the ‘Caring Elementary School’ projects are OSC projects attached to schools run by voluntary sector agencies. They provide care before and after school hours, and during school hours when children do not have classes. There are a wide variety of initiatives in the German voluntary sector that promote volunteering in a range of fields, including OSC care.

There are around 150 ‘volunteer centres’ in Germany, and around 80 ‘senior citizens bureaux’ which are intended for older people looking for new opportunities after they retire. These centres and bureaux operate a wide range of voluntary initiatives, including OSC projects within disadvantaged areas. For example, a ‘Rented Grandmas’ initiative provides voluntary OSC services in cooperation with the volunteer centre in the city of Saarbrücken. This can strengthen cross-generational ties and increase mutual intergenerational understanding, so helping social cohesion in disadvantaged areas.

In the Czech Republic, churches, religious societies and civic associations provide OSC services in disadvantaged areas and for disadvantaged communities. They are often targeted at children from disadvantaged families, or children with special needs. In Teplice in Bohemia, the church operates a ‘House of Children and Youth’ that provides OSC activities for children, including leisure activities, tutoring and programmes that seek to prevent problems such as anti-social behaviour.

The non-profit sector was the key provider of OSC in disadvantaged areas in Portugal until the introduction of new legislation requiring schools to remain open until 17.30. The sector is still an important provider. In some areas, such as Amadora, local governments have outsourced the statutory requirement for the provision of OSC to voluntary organisations and passed on the funding that they receive as part of the new OSC legislation. The introduction of the new legislation has led to the displacement of some of the OSC services that were provided by non-profit organisations. It is too early to determine whether this is a long-term trend.

One of the key impacts of many OSC services provided by voluntary sector organisations in deprived areas in Portugal is how they engage with groups facing particular disadvantage, such as ethnic minority communities. Voluntary sector OSC providers in other Member States have a similarly important role to play in the delivery of services to traditionally isolated or excluded groups. For example, in the rural area of Aberdeenshire in Scotland, ‘Capability Scotland’ – a non-governmental

organisation – provides support workers, as well as toys, equipment and resources, for children who have a disability or who have additional support needs.

In Belgium, the non-profit sector provides OSC across the country, but it is particularly active in areas that have multiple disadvantages and social problems, as the following case study demonstrates.

Pirouline – Pause Cartable

Seneffe, Belgium

The non-governmental organisation Pirouline – Pause Cartable organises and provides OSC services in a number of schools in the Seneffe administrative district in Belgium. Although the Seneffe region as a whole is relatively wealthy, the centre of the area, where a social housing estate is located, is disadvantaged.

Pause Cartable provides OSC every day of the school term and during the school holidays. A variety of excursions are delivered in partnership with other organisations. Organising OSC in school premises helps to ensure that the services are geographically accessible to children and families, while Pause Cartable employs a district coordinator, in addition to the eleven staff it employs to deliver the OSC service. This coordinator helps to simplify the administrative procedures for OSC service-users and to establish links with other local partners, such as the Young People's Services team who can provide sports courses or cultural activities. A survey of parents using the OSC service found a high level of satisfaction with the OSC services, which are seen as providing high-quality care.

Trades unions have been involved in delivering OSC in disadvantaged areas in Belgium. They have helped to create jobs in the sector in areas that have suffered particular economic difficulties, such as Charleroi and Hainaut.

In the UK, home-based OSC services, known as 'sitter services', have expanded in recent years and the voluntary sector has played an important role in this development. The first sitter service in Scotland was established by the voluntary organisation One Parent Families Scotland, which initially sought to provide lone parents with regular breaks from their caring responsibilities. This sitter service offers flexibility to parents and has acted as a model for the development of others, with government funding and support to set up similar services in Scotland. Sitter services are aimed at both school-age children and also provide care to children aged up to five years. An advantage of sitter services is that they can often provide care outside of normal working hours.

Community-based and parent-led providers

In disadvantaged communities, local communities and parents can play an important role in the delivery of OSC. Providing OSC services through local community organisations can be a sustainable approach, and can help ensure that the services provided are appropriate and suitable for the needs of the local community.

In the UK, a significant proportion of OSC provision is parent-led. For example, in Scotland, more than half of all OSC clubs are run by parent-led committees, which employ staff to deliver the services on a day-to-day basis. It should be noted, however, that in disadvantaged areas only around one-

third of services are parent-led. There are a number of reasons for this. Parents in disadvantaged areas may be less able to set up and manage OSC clubs; also OSC services in disadvantaged areas often rely on more complex funding arrangements and government support rather than simply on parents' fees. Research has shown that parental involvement in OSC provision – even if only in an advisory capacity – is beneficial for these OSC services.

There are examples of parental involvement in OSC services in other case study Member States. In Portugal, OSC services in some disadvantaged areas are operated by local parents' or community groups – for example, the cultural association 'Windmill of Youth' in Amadora. In the Czech Republic, parents are sometimes involved in running OSC services. For example, at the school youth centre in Nove Veseli, parents help to run different activities. Parents are also involved in the operation of the 'buurt en nabijdiensten' (BND) OSC services, which are being delivered on a pilot basis in the Flanders community in Belgium.

Local communities as a whole can also be involved in operating OSC in disadvantaged areas in different Member States. In Germany, communities are often involved in operating OSC services. For example, in some disadvantaged areas in Germany, 'Mothers' Centres' have been established by groups of local women in order to offer childcare, OSC, and cultural and leisure activities and training for mothers. Local people may also be involved in the delivery of OSC through their participation in neighbourhood management models. For example, the Horthaus St. Petri day-care service in the Tenever district in Bremen is a member of the local community development network, in which local residents have a key role in planning and developing services. It has been found that such close cooperation between local service providers, in tandem with local communities, can create a positive atmosphere for change within a disadvantaged area and can help motivate local people to contribute to the community development process. OSC can be an important part of this process, not only through the services provided, but also through the opportunity for involving children in their local community at an early age.

OSC in the context of community development

Tenever, Bremen, Germany

Tenever is the most disadvantaged area in the city of Bremen. Of the inhabitants of Tenever, 40% are social benefit recipients, around 30% are under 18 years and nearly 75% are from an ethnic minority background. The majority of children face poverty and social exclusion. The area is funded through the federal programme 'The socially integrative city', which provides funding for a range of projects and for the development of a coordinated approach to neighbourhood management. Horthaus St. Petri is a day-care centre that provides specialised OSC for children aged between six and 14 years. A range of activities are provided, including swimming, football, theatre and dance workshops and projects in the area of arts and environmental education. Horthaus St. Petri is a member of the Tenever local community development group, through which public and non-governmental service providers and local residents' groups work together to organise and develop a wide variety of local services. The development group has several subsections, two of which, for children and for employment, are closely concerned with OSC, as provided by the day-care centre. Horthaus St. Petri uses its premises to act as the host for community development group meetings.

Local communities have similarly been involved in developing some OSC services in Estonia. For example, local residents established and operate a youth centre in Vohma, which offers a wide range

of different activities for children between 14.00 and 20.00 each day. The centre was the first youth centre that was not run by the Estonian government. The local government has provided premises and funding, and further support has been secured from a wide range of local and national sources.

This 'neighbourhood approach' to OSC can help to strengthen community relations and can support social integration. For example, a local neighbourhood association provides an OSC service, 'Kinderwerking Fabota', in a disadvantaged area in Leuven in Belgium. This OSC service is accessible to all children in the district and therefore caters for a mix of children from disadvantaged families, more affluent families and ethnic minority communities. This openness and inclusive approach helps support social cohesion and community development.

The Escolhas programme in Portugal, which provides OSC services in disadvantaged areas, has a similar emphasis on establishing strong roots within local communities and it relies on good relationships with a range of partners at local level. This builds on approaches adopted by OSC projects (such as those delivered by 'Windmill of Youth' in the Cova da Moura neighbourhood in Amadora), which have developed strong networks with a variety of key actors in the local community. By developing a strong network with local service providers – such as health services, the police and fire services – projects following this approach hope to achieve their multiple aims of providing OSC, helping families reconcile work and family life, raising school attainment rates and improving the social development and integration of children.

There are a range of different models of OSC provision for children living in disadvantaged areas. The key ones are OSC services managed by the public sector, OSC services managed by non-profit and voluntary organisations, and OSC managed at a local level through a community group or parent-led committee.

The model that is less common in disadvantaged areas is of OSC managed by private businesses with a profit motive. In areas with a low average household income, there are few opportunities for profit-making.

State provision is very important in providing accessible, affordable OSC in disadvantaged areas either by providing services directly, or by funding community or voluntary organisations, including parent-led OSC, to establish and provide OSC. It can be provided through schools, be based in schools or operate independently of schools. Without funding in some form, it is unlikely that OSC services in disadvantaged areas or targeted at disadvantaged groups could be self-sustaining through fee income. State provision has the advantage of very likely being sustainable in the long term and parents often perceive it to be of high quality. It can link closely with the activities and projects that children are involved in during the school day. (Other types of providers, of course, can also work in cooperation with schools.)

Parent-led OSC is usually established in response to a local gap in OSC services. It has the advantage of being locally managed by the service users, so can respond quickly and flexibly to change in need. This flexibility in approach is important in disadvantaged areas, where parents and children may

have a diverse range of needs, issues and priorities to be addressed.

However, in disadvantaged areas, parents may not have the skills or confidence to set up and manage an OSC service and, if it is to be successful, they will require capacity-building and support. It therefore contributes to the agendas of social inclusion and equalities by building community capacity, developing skills and aiding cohesion between mainstream communities and minority groups.

Policymakers in Member States need to review the state provision of OSC that currently exists and how, in the future, the state can support OSC either directly or indirectly – for instance, by supporting parent-led OSC. The parent-led model has many advantages but it can be vulnerable, so thought needs to be given to how financial, technical and practical support can be provided, either by the public sector or by large voluntary organisations.

How OSC services are delivered is crucial to their impact. The model for delivery needs to fit with local needs and circumstances, and needs to take into account existing infrastructure. Policymakers need to look at ways of capitalising on the different models to best meet needs and to ensure a choice for parents. Group care is the most usual form, where children come together in one place to be looked after by a number of staff. This is often, though not always, the most viable and convenient option. An interesting OSC service delivery model that has developed in the UK in recent years is the sitter service, in which local government or voluntary organisations coordinate and employ a network of carers who look after children in the child's own home. This is a good example of a flexible model of service delivery for children of all ages, including school-age children. Importantly, care can be provided outside of normal hours – for example, early-morning care, care in the evenings and care at weekends. The need for OSC services to fit with parents' working patterns can be particularly important in disadvantaged areas, where parents may be more likely to work irregular or shift hours. Sitter services can also be useful in rural areas, where group care may not be viable. Examples exist of sitter services being developed to target school-age children with special needs in rural areas.

Policymakers should be aware that a mix of management and delivery models gives parents a choice and can help to ensure sustainability of provision. Local development should be planned strategically to avoid unnecessary duplication or over-provision, which can make it difficult for providers to sustain their OSC services in the long term or which can mean that new OSC services displace existing ones.

Costs, funding and affordability

6

As Chapter 4 has shown, a key characteristic of OSC in disadvantaged areas is public sector or other external support. OSC services receive funding or support from a wide variety of sources, including local government, trusts or non-governmental organisations. Many OSC providers rely on support from a combination of these different sources.

Support provided to cover costs may include the free use of premises, equipment staffing, business support and outreach of OSC services. The availability of support is important in ensuring that OSC services meet the needs of local communities, are of good quality and are sustainable in the long term. The need for support is particularly important in disadvantaged areas, where economic and social needs are often greater and the financial resources of parents lower than average. Measures to ensure the affordability of OSC services are therefore particularly important for families living in disadvantaged areas.

Affordability can be improved for parents in a number of ways. Funding can be provided to OSC services to cover set-up and capital costs. Revenue funding can be provided to assist with ongoing costs. Funding can also be provided directly to parents through tax credits, vouchers and subsidies, or paid to providers but linked to specific children.

Costs of providing out-of-school care

The costs of setting-up and providing OSC are not straightforward and are affected by a range of factors and variables. Costs will be determined by factors such as management models, location and services, and will not necessarily be consistent over time.

Costs can be broken down into two main categories: capital and revenue. Examples of the likely costs for a typical OSC service are set out below.

Table 1 Breakdown of costs for a typical OSC service

Capital costs:	Revenue costs:
Purchase, upgrade, refurbishment of premises	Rent and rates for premises
Purchase of equipment and toys	Staffing
Staff recruitment costs	Utility costs (heat, light, telephone)
Telephone costs	Caretaking and cleaning costs
Health and safety related costs, e.g. purchasing fire extinguishers	Staff development and support costs
	Office costs
Initial marketing and promotion	Insurance
Purchase of transport (where relevant)	Management functions
	Legal and accountancy
	Consumables
	Transport (where relevant)

These costs are not consistent across OSC services nor are they necessarily static or fixed. For example, some OSC services can be provided with free premises. The costs of equipment and staff training will vary, depending on the activities and services offered and the children cared for. Costs will be higher if provision is available to children with additional support needs or if a wider range of activities is offered, such as sports or crafts.

There are a number of variables that can impact on costs and that must be taken into account in considering the costs of OSC. The most likely variables are:

- the location of premises (whether rural, urban, affluent or disadvantaged areas);
- type of OSC service (it may be a network of childminders, a sitter service or group care);
- management model (public, voluntary or paid management);
- hours of operation (before school, after school, during holidays);
- staff ratios required;
- type of premises (school, community building, church premises, private premises);
- space per child required;
- specific requirements for children with additional support needs.

These are visible costs and variables in providing OSC. But there are also a number of 'hidden' costs that impact on the overall costs of OSC. The most obvious of these is time provided by volunteers, either as staff or as management committee members.

OSC services operating in disadvantaged areas cannot usually raise enough money through fees paid by parents to cover these capital and revenue costs and so need support to provide a sustainable OSC service.

Government funding

Chapter 5 described the public sector as an OSC service provider. However, support can be provided by the public sector to other agencies who then deliver the OSC service.

In Portugal, the national Ministry of Education provides funds to each local authority to pay for the OSC services delivered in all primary schools. These OSC services are then provided to families free of charge. The Portuguese national government funds the Escolhas programme, which delivers OSC services specifically in disadvantaged areas, and it provides financial support to the non-profit organisations delivering OSC in these areas.

Some local authorities in Portugal have established specific funding streams to provide services, including OSC services, to children living in disadvantaged areas in their region. For example, the municipal authorities in Lisbon have a funding programme to support after-school activities established by parent associations or voluntary organisations, while local authorities in the Amadora region fund specific activities for children from disadvantaged areas.

In the UK, parents usually have to pay some or all of the costs of the OSC services that they use, although free care can be provided to the most disadvantaged families. The expansion of OSC in the 1990s was supported by the 'Out-of-school Care Initiative', a government policy that provided financial and practical assistance to new and existing OSC clubs to increase provision. These developments were later built on with the introduction of childcare strategies in each of the four constituent regions of the UK. The childcare strategies were supported by funding from the New Opportunities Fund (NOF, now the Big Lottery Fund) in order to enable the creation and development of OSC services. OSC services in disadvantaged areas were given priority status for funding. More than half the OSC services in the UK received NOF funding.

Along with the NOF funding, specific funding for OSC has been directed at children and families living in disadvantaged areas. In England, the 'Children's Fund' provides funding for a range of services, including OSC clubs, for children aged from five to 13 and at risk of social exclusion. As the following case study shows, the OSC activities supported by this fund seek both to provide care for children and to help tackle wider social issues in the local community.

Children's Fund

Lancashire, England

Lancashire Children's Fund supported a one-year partnership between the Burnley Good Food Project and Burnley Borough Council Health Lifestyles, aimed at tackling childhood obesity. Piloted in four primary schools, the initiative was targeted at children aged between nine and 10 years and was delivered as an integrated package of food education, nutrition, physical activities and gardening. During the school day, 149 children took part, and 102 took part in after-school activities. An evaluation showed that children who took part were more active in their everyday lives, consumed a healthier diet and were less likely to become overweight. The benefits of this are likely to be long term.

In Wales, the Cymorth Fund provides funding support for children's services in the fields of health, play, family support and childcare, including OSC. It is particularly focused on the needs of children and young people living in disadvantaged areas. In Scotland, the Scottish Executive provides the Working for Families Fund, which is targeted at disadvantaged areas. This fund provides assistance to parents seeking to access training or employment by helping them solve issues of childcare and by providing subsidies to help parents pay for care.

In Germany, government provides around two thirds of the running costs of the day-care centres that it operates, with parental contributions covering the remaining costs. The government also funds a range of community-based and voluntary sector OSC programmes. A federal programme aimed at districts with special development needs funds a range of projects for children and young people. OSC is the main focus of some of these projects and is a key element in many others.

A separate federal programme in Germany funds the development of 'Houses for all Generations', which is a nationwide programme that operates in disadvantaged areas as well as other areas. The houses provide a wide range of services for families, including OSC.

In the Czech Republic, the public sector has an important role in the delivery of OSC services. Where public agencies are responsible for the delivery of OSC services, these receive financial subsidies from national, regional or local government. These subsidies are designed to cover staff salaries and other operating costs.

The level of funding provided by government to OSC services can often depend on the number of children attending a particular OSC service. For example, in the French community in Belgium, each provider who is part of the 'Care for Free Time' programme receives a daily subsidy for each child who attends the OSC service. A double subsidy is provided for children from low-income families in order to reduce the financial burden on these families.

Some funding provided for the development and delivery of OSC is provided only in the short term or for a limited period of time. It can be difficult for OSC service providers to establish effective and

efficient OSC services when relying on such short-term funding. Long-term funding is needed to establish sustainable and viable OSC services. However, while long-term funding provides security, to avoid complacency it should be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure quality and that it continues to respond to changing needs.

Short-term funding is unstable and time-consuming when OSC services are required to apply for it on an ongoing basis. However, it is useful for piloting new approaches and responding flexibly when it is needed – for example, in response to a sudden, sharp increase in demand due to migration.

Other support for OSC services

Even where national or local governments do not directly deliver OSC services in disadvantaged areas, or do not provide financial assistance to support such services, there are examples of practical and technical support being provided to OSC services in disadvantaged areas. This support can be provided either through government or through the voluntary sector.

In the UK, the ‘Out-of-school Care Initiative’ provided a wide range of advice and information, in addition to financial support, to the OSC services that it helped set up and develop. Development support is still available to OSC clubs, including those in disadvantaged areas, in each of the four regions in the UK. In Scotland, the Scottish Out-of-school Care Network provides research, information and development support to OSC services. For example, it produced a step-by-step guide to setting up an OSC service. In Northern Ireland, Playboard, a voluntary sector organisation, provides advice and support for organisations delivering OSC, including support for gaining access to funding. Meanwhile, local authorities, through childcare partnerships and their officers, plan and support the provision of OSC, and often employ a childcare development officer.

The Escolhas programme in Portugal provides practical support to participating OSC projects. Support provided includes technical assistance to help set up projects – such as identifying key issues to be addressed and drafting local intervention plans. Training is provided for ‘mediators’, who are involved in the project to help them engage with the local community, and staff time is often provided free of charge by different partner organisations as an in-kind contribution. For example, a project in the Currealeira neighbourhood in Lisbon has established a partnership with the medical organisation Doctors of the World. In addition to providing health services for children, such as vaccines and medical appointments, this organisation also helps to provide some administrative support for the project.

Even outside a programme such as Escolhas, non-profit organisations that deliver OSC in disadvantaged areas in Portugal receive support from local governments, such as premises and equipment to help provide certain activities – for example, computers for Internet access.

Affordability

OSC providers in the Member States included in the research have implemented different measures to try and ensure that the OSC services they offer are affordable and can be accessed by families living on low incomes. Although few Member States have dedicated policies or approaches to improve the affordability of OSC specifically in disadvantaged areas, it should be recognised that national approaches to lower the costs of childcare are likely to have particular relevance in deprived areas.

In Portugal, the OSC services delivered by primary schools from 15.30 to 17.30 each day are provided free of charge in all areas. Subsidised care is also provided before school starts, usually from 07.00 to 08.30, and after 17.30. Measures are also in place to make OSC provided by non-profit organisations affordable to all families. These OSC services often operate within disadvantaged areas and are subsidised by the government. Fees are means-tested and are dependent on income, with reduced rates for those parents on low incomes. Some families may be exempt from any fees. In certain projects, such as those delivered by the cultural association 'Windmill of Youth' in the Cova da Moura neighbourhood in Amadora, may have the opportunity to do some voluntary work for the OSC provider rather than paying a fee.

In most Member States studied, parents generally have to pay towards the cost of OSC services either fully or partly, but for some the charges are minimal. In the Czech Republic, parents throughout the country have to pay towards the cost of children using after-school centres. However, these costs are low – usually less than 1% of the average monthly salary.

In a number of Member States, particular financial support is provided to families with low household incomes. This support is usually provided on the basis of an individual family's particular circumstances, rather than being dependent upon the area of the country in which they live. However, it is likely that families living in disadvantaged areas may be more likely than others to meet the criteria for receiving financial support.

There are different models for how this support is provided. In the French community in Belgium, regional government provides 'double subsidies' to OSC providers for each child cared for from a low-income family. This reduces the fees that these families have to pay. In Belgium's Flemish community, disadvantaged parents may be eligible for an assisted rate for OSC costs, which can offer reductions of up to 50%. For families facing particularly severe deprivation, OSC is provided free of charge.

In Estonia, families with incomes below a particular level are eligible to claim the fees back. There is a maximum amount that each family can claim and this is usually quite a low proportion of their overall OSC costs.

In Germany, parental contributions generally cover around one third of the operating costs of the OSC day centres run by local authorities. Families with low incomes and parents receiving social welfare benefits can claim for reductions in these costs, or for free childcare vouchers. Similarly, in the UK, a range of measures exist through which disadvantaged families can receive support for the costs of OSC. These include tax credits, 'salary sacrifice schemes' for tax-exempt vouchers, and childcare subsidies linked to specific projects, criteria and activities. Some of these are national – for example, tax credits and exemptions. Others are driven at local level – for example, where individual OSC projects attract funding from trusts and charities to subsidise places. These measures are important in ensuring that parents in disadvantaged areas can afford to access suitable OSC services. For example, Goddard Park Community School in a disadvantaged area in Swindon, England, delivers an OSC service that is self-financing, in that it is paid for by parents' fees rather than from direct government subsidies. However, it is the ability of parents to claim Child Tax Credit from the government that enables them to use the OSC service. Low-income parents can reclaim up to 80% of their childcare costs through these tax credits.

In the UK, there are examples of OSC being provided in a cluster, meaning that the OSC service, while operating across a number of sites, is one entity. The fees paid by parents in more affluent areas subsidise the OSC services provided in disadvantaged areas. This makes the fees lower in such areas and therefore more affordable.

To maximise the social and economic benefits to families and children living in disadvantaged areas or who are in disadvantaged groups, OSC must be affordable and accessible. It is unlikely that many families will have a sufficient household income to be able to afford the full cost of OSC provision: as a result, OSC in disadvantaged areas is unlikely to be self-financing through fee income. It will require funding support to cover all or some of the costs and this is done through two routes: to the provider and to the OSC service-users.

Funding can be provided directly to the OSC service provider to cover capital and start-up costs. It can then be provided on an ongoing basis to cover or contribute to running costs – for instance, staff, heat, light, premises and materials. Sometimes this will mean that money changes hands, so funding will be given to the OSC service, which then budgets and pays its costs. Sometimes money does not change hands, but funding is routed to pay directly for expenses: for example, staff time and premises can be provided rent-free.

The second route for interventions to make OSC affordable in disadvantaged areas is funding that is linked to individual families and children. This can be paid or directed to the family, for example, through tax credits and exemptions and subsidies. Alternatively, it can be paid in to the OSC service provider's account, but be linked to a particular child or family – reducing or eliminating their payable fee. This benefits disadvantaged families who do not live in recognised disadvantaged areas by making OSC more affordable.

A key question is: Should support be targeted at disadvantaged families, regardless of where they live? Should it be targeted at supporting supply in disadvantaged areas and enhancing affordability or is a combination of both needed? It may be that flexibility is required regarding this issue in different Member States and in different areas within Member States, depending on the profile and geographical spread of disadvantage.

It is important to consider the best combination of long-term funding (which is required to create a stable supply of services) and of short-term funding (needed to test innovative approaches, pilot new OSC services and respond quickly to changing situations).

Regulation, monitoring and quality

7

The Foundation's report *Childcare services in the EU – What future?* confirms that countries with a more mature childcare sector are now concentrating on developing the quality of those services (Blackburn, 2006). Regulation, monitoring and quality standards are features designed to improve and maintain quality. Those countries with a less developed childcare sector have little regulation or quality monitoring of OSC, aside from some local-level and project-level evaluations.

Regulation and monitoring requirements for OSC are often established at a regional or national level, rather than particular systems that specifically focus on disadvantaged areas. Where funding streams have supported OSC services in disadvantaged areas, they sometimes have their own regulatory or monitoring systems.

Regulatory frameworks

There are different levels of regulation for OSC in the case study Member States. A number of Member States have regulatory frameworks for OSC, which cover key issues in relation to staffing, premises, equipment and numbers of children who can be cared for. For example, each of the four regions in the UK has a regulatory framework, which sets out requirements in relation to the registration and inspection of OSC services. Each framework establishes requirements for qualifications and training of OSC staff, size of premises and staff-to-child ratios. Until recently in England and Wales, regulatory requirements have been less onerous for children over the age of eight than for younger children. However, the regulations are now being strengthened. Each constituent region in the UK also has its own quality-assurance framework, against which the quality of OSC provision can be assessed. For example, 'Aiming High Scotland' is the national accreditation scheme for OSC clubs in Scotland and it has been developed in consultation with clubs across the country.

In the Belgian Flemish community, a similar wide-ranging regulatory framework for OSC exists. OSC providers must comply with regulations governing the minimum number of children who must be registered with an OSC service, staff-child ratios in each OSC service, the health, safety and size of OSC premises (including the requirement to provide an outside play area). The regulatory framework also covers issues regarding the cost of OSC in Belgium, as highlighted in Chapter 6.

Similar requirements also exist in Portugal, where there are specific regulations in relation to OSC venues, staffing and equipment. OSC premises must allow for two square metres per child in each room and must have enough different rooms to allow the different activities organised by the service to take place. Staff must be qualified and there must be a maximum of 20 children per room in each OSC facility.

However, although these different frameworks cover similar key issues, there are important variations in terms of the motivations for implementing these frameworks. For example, in Portugal, the regulatory frameworks for OSC focus on developing OSC in particular areas. Regulatory guidelines stipulate that, aside from the OSC provided through primary schools, OSC services should be set up near schools, in areas with a high concentration of potentially vulnerable children, families and young people, and where there are low coverage rates of other childcare services. The guidelines also state that priority should be given to children who are 'at risk'. This includes children whose parents may have difficulty in providing care, those from either lone-parent families or particularly large families, and children whose mothers are in employment. The guidelines also emphasise the

importance of developing a community aspect to OSC by involving families and local groups in developing and running its provision.

In some Member States – for example, the UK – the development of regulatory frameworks for OSC has followed a significant expansion in the provision of OSC services and has been designed to improve the quality of the care by ensuring that the services meet particular requirements.

In other Member States, fewer requirements are placed on OSC providers. In Estonia, few national regulations are in place for hobby education providers, although each hobby education service does require a licence from its relevant local government body. Regulatory frameworks do not always apply to all the OSC services within a Member State. For example, in Germany, there are state regulations relating to staff ratios and qualifications. These, however, apply only to government-run OSC provision and not to the voluntary and community sectors, which are accountable for a significant proportion of provision.

Quality monitoring at national level

A variety of arrangements for monitoring quality exist in the Member States; however, there can be a lack of overall consistency in approaches. Monitoring arrangements usually seek to assess the development and quality of OSC services in each country.

National-level monitoring and assessment procedures exist in some Member States. In the UK, national care standards are in place in each constituent region, and OSC services are regularly inspected to ensure that the standards are met. In England and Wales, the standards are ‘minimum’ standards: quality should not fall below this. In Scotland, the standards are applied differently: if a standard is not met, the Care Commission (an independent regulatory body) takes enforcement action to ensure that the OSC provider improves the service and adheres to the standard.

In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Schooling, Youth and Physical Education visits and inspects OSC services to ensure that they meet the required standards. Local government offices deal with comments and suggestions from OSC providers, parents, children and other partners in relation to the development and provision of OSC. The Ministry of Social Affairs has recently implemented a new policy to monitor quality in all of its services, including quality standards in OSC.

Monitoring at local level

Although the quality of OSC is closely monitored and regulated in the UK and the Czech Republic, there is very limited monitoring at national level of the impact of OSC in the Member States. Moreover, no specific, national, regular monitoring takes place of OSC for children living in disadvantaged areas. In the UK, the Department for Education and Skills conducted a review of existing evidence as part of a research report in relation to the development of the ‘Extended Schools’ scheme. Most evaluation and monitoring tends to take place at a local or project level: for example, in the Czech Republic, some OSC providers carry out a process of self-evaluation. This approach is also taken in the UK.

This pattern of local evaluation, project evaluation or self-evaluation is common in a number of other Member States included in the research. In Estonia, some national research has been conducted on

parents' views of OSC services, but research tends to be carried out at a more local level. Some local hobby education providers gather feedback from parents and children in order to inform OSC development. In the western Viru region, the local government has carried out a survey to measure the take-up of hobby education and to identify reasons why some children may not be using these OSC services.

In Portugal, there is ongoing national-level assessment to review the progress and impact of the new legislation for OSC in primary schools. This review will identify the level of coverage for OSC that the new legislation is achieving and highlight any difficulties with the new arrangements.

It is clear from the study that regulation is important to ensure quality and consistency in OSC provision. Moreover, it acts as a mechanism for identifying, disseminating and sharing good practice. The development of regulation usually follows, rather than underpins, an expansion in provision.

There are good examples of regulation in the six Member States studied, designed to ensure the health and safety of OSC staff and children and to provide quality OSC services. They are universal rather than specific to OSC in disadvantaged areas. Good, comprehensive regulation relates to premises, equipment, staff–children ratios, facilities and the need for specific policies and procedures. There should be specific regulation for OSC in every Member State, as part of the regulation of childcare services as a whole, which encompasses the range of factors that impact on provision.

Quality-monitoring systems usually build on regulatory requirements, but are not compulsory. There are no consistent quality-monitoring systems specific to OSC in disadvantaged areas. However, in the UK, for example, quality assurance systems exist that have been specifically developed for OSC by publicly funded voluntary organisations.

At a local level, or through particular funding streams, quality-monitoring systems sometimes exist. However, they tend to be focused on the impact and progress of the OSC service and the experience of service-users rather than specifically examining quality assurance.

Quality standards are very important in ensuring that providers are encouraged to continually strive to improve their OSC services. Such standards should be developed in every Member State as part of an OSC strategy. This could be done by government or, as is the case in the UK, through government-funded voluntary organisations.

To establish a stable, high-quality OSC sector, there must be a skilled, stable workforce in place. A lack of a suitable workforce can be an obstacle to creating new childcare in response to demand and could limit the ability of Member States to meet their targets.

This chapter examines the nature of the workforce responsible for providing OSC in disadvantaged areas. The make-up of this workforce is largely similar to the OSC workforce in non-disadvantaged areas. However, for some types of provision in disadvantaged areas, a wider range of individuals may be involved in delivering OSC. This relates to the trend highlighted previously of some OSC providers in disadvantaged areas seeking to address a range of social issues through their services, rather than simply providing childcare.

Dedicated OSC workers

OSC provision in some Member States is delivered by a specialist OSC workforce. Members of this workforce may be employed solely in the OSC sector or they may be involved in the delivery of other forms of childcare. In Germany, for example, a formalised, three-year vocational training scheme is in place to become a 'kindergarten worker'. This scheme also applies to staff working in OSC in services operated by public sector agencies. In each of the government-run OSC services in Germany, at least one member of staff must be a fully certified kindergarten worker.

In the UK, dedicated OSC workers run OSC clubs, including clubs in disadvantaged areas. National care standards in the four constituent regions set out requirements in relation to qualifications and training for these staff. Specific organisations have been established in each region to improve access to training and staff development opportunities, and to register particular groups of staff. For example, since October 2006, the Scottish Council for Social Services has required managers of OSC services to register with them and abide by a standard Code of Practice. A benefit of this type of staffing arrangement in disadvantaged areas is that OSC staff are perceived as being well trained and so contribute to a quality OSC service. Staff are also seen as being more approachable and less authoritative than teachers. This can be particularly important to vulnerable and disadvantaged families. Families are therefore more likely to seek emotional and practical support and advice from these OSC workers. For example, Ofsted, the government body that inspects education and childcare services in England and Wales, recently evaluated the OSC services at Goddard Park Community Primary School in Swindon, England. The evaluation found that the school had strong links with the community and that the OSC services provided had helped promote better liaison with parents.

School teachers

In some Member States, school teachers have a key role in delivering OSC services. These arrangements are more likely to be in place where OSC is delivered through schools.

In Portugal, primary schools have a statutory requirement to provide OSC for two hours each day and as part of this arrangement teachers from each primary school provide homework support for 90 minutes per week. External teachers, who have expertise in particular subject areas, then provide activities in their particular area of knowledge. The regulatory framework for universal OSC provision in Portugal stipulates that these activities should include English, music and physical activity, although individual local authorities and schools can decide to provide additional activities.

Teachers are involved in the delivery of activities at after-school centres in the Czech Republic. Each centre is operated by a number of permanent teachers, known as ‘educators’. For example, the OSC services provided by the school youth centre in Nove Veseli are delivered by three specialised educational workers, who each have qualifications in this field. In the UK, teachers may be involved in the delivery of out-of-school learning activities, such as those offered at St. Colm’s secondary school in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Other specialists

As previously highlighted, some Member States may involve a range of specialist staff in the delivery of OSC provision in disadvantaged areas. In Portugal, the Escolhas programme provides OSC specifically in disadvantaged areas. Non-profit organisations also offer OSC in these areas. The OSC services offer a diverse range of activities and support to children and families. Professionals such as social workers, psychologists and performing arts specialists can all be involved in the delivery of OSC provision through these routes. Recently ‘mediators’ have become increasingly prevalent amongst the staff teams of organisations offering OSC services in disadvantaged areas in Portugal. These ‘mediators’ are often young people who have participated in the activities offered by the non-profit organisations and who have gradually become involved in the delivery of different activities. They receive training through courses organised by the Institute for Employment and Professional Training; they also have their own regulatory framework for training, skills and responsibilities. Mediators are also involved in OSC services delivered by non-profit organisations in disadvantaged areas in Portugal. For example, in the OSC services provided by the National Charitable Society for Gypsies in the Ameixoeira district in Lisbon, mediators are recruited from the local community to help integrate ‘gypsy families’ into the wider community.

A similar diversity of personnel is involved in delivering OSC activities in disadvantaged areas in other Member States. In the UK, Children’s Centres and Integrated Centres in England and Wales offer OSC in conjunction with a wide range of services for children and families. Specialists in fields such as family support, health and social care, adult education, and speech and language therapy may be involved in delivering these services. In Germany, OSC in disadvantaged areas is offered through local community centres. These centres are operated by social workers and the OSC staff in the centres work under the supervision of the social workers.

In OSC services that have not been specifically designed to include a wide range of service providers, there can still be scope for specialist staff to be involved. For example, different specialists are involved in some of the OSC services delivered by primary schools in Portugal. In Ourique, children participating in OSC through primary schools take part in a wide range of activities, such as regular classes on the environment and swimming lessons. These activities are delivered by trained specialists. In Amadora in Lisbon, the OSC services include arts and crafts workshops and ‘citizenship’ activities, delivered by experts from local cultural associations.

In Estonia, hobby education services offer a wide range of different activities, including activities in the fields of music, art, sport, the environment, history and IT. Specialist instructors are responsible for the delivery of activities in their particular area of expertise.

Support staff and volunteers

The diverse combination of OSC provision that exists in many Member States often relies for its successful operation on a range of different staffing models and structures.

These models can include a variety of different staff. For example, in Germany, much OSC is provided through community and voluntary services, which rely on a patchwork of low-paid part-time workers, volunteers, ‘paid volunteers’ and people who work on the basis of mutual aid. For example, volunteers contribute in a variety of ways to the activities offered at the Intercultural Children’s and Parents’ Centre in the Schillerkiez district in Berlin, and a ‘Rented Grandmas’ initiative provides voluntary OSC services in cooperation with the volunteer centre in Saarbrücken.

In Portugal, ‘school helpers’ are involved in delivering OSC in primary schools. These helpers have a broad range of duties, including supervising children, preparing meals and cleaning the premises.

Volunteers play an important role in the delivery of OSC in a number of other Member States. For example, in the Czech Republic, volunteers help organise activities in after-school centres and are almost entirely responsible for the provision of OSC by non-governmental organisations, including those offered by churches and other religious groups. New systems of licensing and accreditation are currently being introduced for individuals working with children outside of a school setting.

Volunteers can also play a role in managing OSC services, as well as in its delivery. In the UK, a significant proportion of OSC services are led by a volunteer management committee, which is usually made up of parents. Many of these clubs have developed from a group of parents, who have no local OSC service, working together to develop and run provision. For example, parents played a key role in establishing OSC services at Goddard Park Community School in Swindon, England.

Parents have also played an active role in developing and delivering OSC in other Member States. In Portugal, local associations have been particularly involved in developing OSC activities in disadvantaged areas over the past 20 years. Some parents’ associations are now working with schools and local authorities to contribute to the OSC provided by primary schools as part of the new legislative OSC arrangements in this Member State.

Children benefit from care that is provided by skilled, experienced staff. Furthermore, children and OSC services benefit where there is continuity of staffing rather than a high turnover of staff.

Staff skills, qualifications and type of OSC services in disadvantaged areas do not vary significantly from staffing in non-disadvantaged areas. However, where there is a social or educational element to the care, then the workforce will include teachers, counsellors and other specialists. In the UK, there are specific qualifications for OSC workers; staff must have these or other relevant childcare qualifications, or be working towards them.

Unpaid volunteer staff form a significant proportion of the OSC workforce in some of the Member States, but are not particularly common in others. Where parents in disadvantaged areas cannot

afford to pay for childcare, in some cases they can contribute to the OSC service by working on an unpaid basis. This can be a benefit because it gives such parents an opportunity to engage in new activities, develop their skills and so increase their confidence.

In general, non-teaching staff in OSC services have relatively poor terms and conditions of employment, which can make OSC work less attractive than other career options. OSC staff need to be valued, need to be rewarded for their work and need clear career routes that they can follow, with specific training and qualifications that are relevant to the work that they do. There should be investment in recruiting, developing and retaining the OSC workforce. OSC in disadvantaged areas can provide valuable employment opportunities for local people and positive efforts should be made to recruit and train staff locally.

This chapter examines how OSC services target groups in the community. There are few national systematic approaches for engaging these groups in OSC services in disadvantaged areas. However, there is evidence of specific targeting at local or project level.

There is evidence about the important role that OSC activities can play in engaging with the hardest to reach, most disadvantaged groups. The OSC services can engage in a non-threatening way by providing supportive activities to families. Over time, they will build trust and confidence with the result that the families will increase their level of use of OSC services and be introduced to and use other services, from which they can also benefit. This incremental approach is very effective.

Ethnic minorities

In some countries, ethnic minority families are a key priority group for OSC providers operating in disadvantaged areas. Language and cultural barriers can mean that certain ethnic minority groups may be more susceptible to social exclusion and therefore may be more likely to live in disadvantaged areas. Some Member States, such as Portugal, take the number of ethnic minority individuals living in an area into account when classifying areas as 'disadvantaged'.

Member States included in this research have adopted various approaches to address the needs of ethnic minority families living in disadvantaged areas. One approach involves using OSC services as a tool for integrating ethnic minority groups into the wider community and for helping reduce conflict between different ethnic groups. This is an approach that has been adopted in Estonia, where a significant minority Russian population lives, many of them in disadvantaged areas. As the following case study shows, a similar approach has been taken in some areas in Germany, particularly where a high proportion of children living in a disadvantaged urban area come from ethnic minority families.

Intercultural Children's and Parents' Centre 'Am Tower'

Schillerkiez, Berlin, Germany

The Intercultural Children's and Parents' Centre (ICPC) provides a range of projects and initiatives, including childcare and OSC, for parents and families in the Schillerkiez area in Berlin. This is a socially disadvantaged area that receives funding as part of the federal programme 'The Socially Interactive City'. There are many low-income households in the area. In addition, there are a large number of young families, and more than half of all school-age children are from an ethnic minority background. Ethnic and cultural conflicts have been common in the area.

The ICPC provides a range of activities for children between 12.00 and 18.30 each day, including sports, IT classes, dancing, cooking and so on. Although the centre caters for children of all ages, more than half of those attending are school-age children and almost all are from ethnic minority families. A significant feature of the centre's approach is the 'neighbourhood mothers' approach. This is a group of around 20 local women who visit families in the area to inform them of different opportunities and to encourage social integration and the reduction of conflict. Neighbourhood mothers visit families from their own ethnic group to inform them of different services. Conflict between different ethnic gangs has declined in recent years. Although children aged from five to 12 years tend not to be involved in such conflicts, it is thought that the opportunities provided for them to participate in shared activities at the ICPC have contributed to this fall in conflict.

A similar approach is also being taken in Portugal, particularly through the Escolhas programme, which is specifically targeted at disadvantaged areas, and through the OSC services delivered by non-profit organisations in disadvantaged areas. ‘Mediators’ play an important role in the OSC activities offered through these initiatives. The mediators are often young people from an ethnic minority background who have previously participated in the activities offered by the non-profit organisation and who have gradually become involved in OSC service delivery. Their role within the OSC setting is to support the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the OSC service and the wider community, encourage cultural exchange and promote social cohesion. Mediators have, for example, been heavily involved in the OSC services provided by the National Charitable Society for Gypsies in the Ameixoeira district in Lisbon. It was found that the delivery of these mediation services by an organisation or individuals rooted in the local community was an important element in a successful engagement with the target group.

A different approach taken by some Member States involves using OSC to help address some of the specific social issues or barriers faced by ethnic minority groups. For example, in the Czech Republic, there are a number of after-school care centres where the majority of children attending are from a Roma background. As the case study below shows, these centres provide specific programmes and activities in order to meet these children’s particular needs – for example, additional support with the Czech language, additional help with school work or new interest activities such as sports, music or dancing. Although the focus of the activities may be different in this approach, the overarching objectives are similar, in terms of encouraging the engagement of ethnic minority groups within the wider community.

Rubikon Centre

Vsetin, Czech Republic

Vsetin is a medium-sized town in the Czech Republic, with a large Roma population. The Rubikon Centre is located in the most disadvantaged area of the town and specifically targets its activities at Roma children. The centre operates from 13.00 to 17.30, four afternoons a week, and services are mainly provided free of charge. The centre provides a range of educational, recreational and support services to children. For example, activities in relation to language skills, counselling, sports, arts and music are all provided. Children are encouraged to develop a sense of personal responsibility, are given the opportunity to express their opinion about different activities, and are invited to suggest new activities or services. It has been found that the work of the centre has supported a reduction in behavioural problems in the children attending, and has also enabled them to improve their educational performance. The work of the centre has helped to build stronger links between the Roma population and the wider community.

Services such as this exist in many disadvantaged areas in the Czech Republic. For example, the Drom-Romany Centre in northern Brno provides a wide range of services, including OSC services, for all members of the local Roma community.

Other target groups

In addition to ethnic minority groups, a range of other target groups exist that may be the particular focus of OSC provision within disadvantaged areas.

Some children have additional needs: they may have a physical disability, a learning disability or they may live in a household where domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse or mental health difficulties exist. Children facing these problems need to be able to use OSC; arguably, they stand to benefit most from such services. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that children with mental or physical disabilities should ‘enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child’s participation in the community’ (UNHCR, 1989). It goes on to say that children with disabilities should have access to special care, where resources allow.

In the UK, OSC services have been developed in a number of disadvantaged areas with a particular focus on supporting children with additional needs and enabling them to access childcare services.

Childcare 4 All

Aberdeenshire, Scotland

Aberdeenshire is a rural area in Scotland. Because of its mountainous coastal nature, geographical access in the region to OSC services can be problematic for many people. Deprivation tends to be concentrated in five specific communities in the area.

Childcare 4 All was established by Capability Scotland (a national non-governmental organisation) and the Aberdeenshire Childcare Partnership. The project works with a wide range of early-years providers and OSC providers, including out-of-school clubs, nurseries and childminders. Trained workers provide practical assistance and advice to providers on how best to interact with, and assist, children with additional needs. A mobile resource vehicle offers equipment, toys and resources on loan to providers who work with children with additional support needs.

To date, the support workers have supported a total of 54 children and 69 providers in Aberdeenshire. The mobile resource unit has been used by more than 170 children with additional support needs. An evaluation of the project found that it has given children and parents access to life opportunities that they may otherwise not have had – children to meet other children and experience new activities, and parents to take up employment or training. Childcare providers, including OSC providers, reported being more aware of disability issues as a result of the project and therefore better able to provide OSC services to other children with similar needs in the future.

In Fife in Scotland, the Council operates five OSC clubs specifically for children with learning and physical disabilities. The Council also provides funding for children with less severe disabilities to attend mainstream out-of-school clubs with the support of a ‘playfriend’. The playfriend helps to enable the child to become integrated into the overall activities of the OSC service and at the same time ensures that their specific needs are recognised and met. A number of these OSC services in Fife operate in disadvantaged areas.

In Germany, the Horthaus St. Petri day care centre, which is based in a deprived district in Bremen, employs two additional specialist staff members to work closely with disabled children who attend the centre and help the centre to meet their needs.

OSC services for disabled individuals may not only be targeted at families where there is a child with a disability. In disadvantaged areas across Scotland, the Working for Families Fund supports parents

who wish to take up employment but who either have a disability themselves or have a child who is disabled, and who find that childcare, including OSC, is a barrier to employment.

The Working for Families Fund also targets a range of other groups with additional support needs. For example, it aims to provide help to lone parents and to parents who have drug or alcohol problems or mental health issues.

An emerging target group for OSC in the UK is children aged from 12 to 16 years. This development recognises the educational benefits of OSC and the need to provide young people (particularly vulnerable young people) with a safe place to be cared for out of school hours, so diverting them from the risk of problem behaviour and activities. Young people in this age group need a different format of care: it needs a name and description that is appropriate and sets it apart from care for younger children.

If OSC is to meet the needs of the whole community, it must take into account the different groups within that community. This includes those who face additional problems and barriers to inclusion and families with older children. There is some targeting of OSC at specific target groups, most notably ethnic minority groups. This targeting includes providing free or subsidised places, specific activities for children from disadvantaged families and support within the service aimed at enhancing educational attainment and achieving social integration.

There are good examples of OSC provision that seeks to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream OSC services; however, these are not specific to disadvantaged areas. There are also limited examples of OSC provided specifically for children with special needs, usually attached to specialist schools.

Overall, OSC targeted at children with additional support needs or who have disabilities is not widespread. Rather, it exists in pockets. It can be difficult for children with additional needs and disabilities to attend and integrate into mainstream services and it can be expensive to ensure that there is provision for them. However, it is crucial that they and their families are offered the same opportunities to access the social and economic benefits of OSC.

There needs to be a commitment to ensuring that OSC services are available and accessible. Where there are examples of how it can work, these need to be built on and replicated to improve provision. This could be achieved through putting dedicated provision in place for these groups or by establishing the structures to integrate them into mainstream provision. Some disadvantaged groups and families need additional encouragement to motivate them to use OSC services over and above simply making such services available. This can be done by providing bridging activities that are non-threatening and bring a very quick tangible benefit to the child or the parent. This is particularly effective where intermediaries engage with the family and help them to identify the social, economic and educational benefits. The most appropriate approach will depend on the group being targeted and the reasons for any lack of motivation.

The report has reviewed how OSC is provided to children in disadvantaged areas, and the important role it has to play in the lives of children and their families.

In this chapter, we examine the impact of OSC for children living in disadvantaged areas. Very few studies have been carried out on the specific benefits of OSC and even fewer that provide rigorous evidence of the impacts in disadvantaged areas. Evidence tends to be anecdotal, especially for the non-economic benefits. What is clear is that OSC can have a variety of different impacts for children, parents and families living in disadvantaged areas in EU Member States. It can also have positive impacts on employers who, if women are enabled to participate more fully in the workforce, can recruit from a wider pool of potential staff.

While overall only limited work has been done at national level to establish the impacts that OSC might have, there is significant anecdotal evidence at regional, local and project level that indicates the benefits of OSC to disadvantaged families. The impacts can be quantifiable – for example, the number of parents who have been able to take up employment or increases in household income. Others are more qualitative in nature – for example, a more positive environment for children, increased confidence and so on. The picture is complicated by the fact that it can be difficult to isolate the specific impacts of OSC from other interventions in the area or interventions targeted at the family, such as regeneration activities, employment and training projects, and social service interventions.

It should also be recognised that in many Member States and for many individuals, the benefits of OSC can take time to emerge and can be difficult to quantify. This issue can be particularly pertinent in disadvantaged areas, where a wide range of projects and initiatives in a number of different spheres may provide support to disadvantaged children and families. It is important therefore that OSC is seen within this wider context.

Benefits for children

OSC can have a number of significant benefits for children in disadvantaged areas. The report *Assessment of benefits and costs of out-of-school care* (Davidson and Barry, 2003) identified the following key economic and social benefits for children:

- assumed economic benefits from parents' access to earnings;
- opportunities for play and fun;
- a safe and secure environment;
- social interaction with children of different ages and other ethnic backgrounds;
- increased confidence and self-esteem;
- broadening of experiences and skills;
- curriculum enrichment and a learning environment;
- health benefits through healthy eating and physical activity;
- opportunities for consultation with children.

A particularly important benefit that OSC can have for children is to support them in their social and personal development. This can happen in a number of different ways. In Portugal, for example, it has been found that the provision of a wide range of different activities as part of an OSC programme can help children develop new interests and learn new skills.

A report by the Department of Education and Skills in the UK on the impact of OSC found that OSC provides children with opportunities for safe 'free play'. Without OSC, such children would otherwise have limited access play because of busy family lifestyles, lack of resources at home or fears over safety in public places. These issues can be particularly relevant for children living in disadvantaged areas who may not have safe, secure or attractive environments to play in.

The same report found that, through OSC, children are able to make new friendships with children of different backgrounds and ages and can also strengthen existing friendships. In one study highlighted in the report, over half of respondents said that participation in OSC services contributed to increased self-confidence and improved social skills among children by providing them with opportunities to make friends and participate in new activities. Similar benefits have been identified in relation to hobby education in Estonia, which has been found to provide specific opportunities for supporting children's personal and social development. In line with Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, OSC provides children with the opportunity to participate in cultural, recreational, artistic and leisure activities.

These benefits are likely to be particularly pronounced in disadvantaged areas. It should be noted, however, that evidence from some Member States, such as Portugal, suggests that benefits for children in disadvantaged areas are likely to be more substantial if a diverse range of out-of-school activities are provided in conjunction with a range of other support services – for example, counselling, community integration and other similar services.

Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children should be encouraged to attend school. The UNICEF report on children's well-being in rich countries demonstrates the importance of educational achievements (UNICEF, 2007). It concludes that people who lack qualifications and skills face a steeper incline of disadvantage.

Children's participation in OSC can have an impact in the wider educational environment. For example, some small-scale studies in the UK suggest that many teachers believe that OSC can lead to improved behaviour at school. In addition, an evaluation report published in 2001, covering schools in England and Scotland that provide out-of-school learning opportunities, indicated that children who participate in such activities often do better than would have been expected in terms of school attendance, academic achievement and overall attitude to school. Indeed, evidence from the case study of Goddard Park Community School in Swindon found that the breakfast club provided as part of the school's OSC activities has helped improve time-keeping and has improved attendance, behaviour and performance among pupils. This is supported by anecdotal and local-level evidence in Glasgow (Scotland) where breakfast clubs are provided by Glasgow City Council in primary schools.

Similar benefits have been identified with the Escolhas programme in Portugal, which provides OSC services in disadvantaged areas and is found to have had a positive impact on children's behaviour, educational attainment and future aspirations. These benefits are particularly relevant in disadvantaged areas, where levels of educational attainment may traditionally be lower and where behavioural difficulties in children are more prevalent.

Similar benefits can be identified for children in disadvantaged areas who are also members of particularly disadvantaged groups. In the Czech Republic, there is some evidence to suggest – for

example, from the Rubikon Centre in a disadvantaged area of Vsetin – that participation in OSC can have a positive impact on children from the Roma community. It can prepare them for the demands of school education, encourage them to attend school more regularly and support them in developing a range of leisure interests and hobbies.

As well as having a developmental impact on children in disadvantaged areas, OSC can also play a preventive role. For example, in Estonia, it has been found that providing activities and opportunities for children in a safe and supervised environment can help reduce the possibility of their becoming disengaged from society, or engaging in problem behaviour or anti-social activities. The OSC services provided by the National Charitable Society for Gypsies in the Ameixoeira district in Lisbon, Portugal, were found to have a similar impact.

Benefits for parents

OSC clearly benefits parents by enabling them to take up employment or a better paid job with better prospects (and so improve their circumstances). The assessment report by Davidson and Barry (2003) on the benefits of OSC identified the following economic and social benefits for parents:

- access to employment, education and training;
- increased or stable earnings;
- reduced dependency on benefits;
- increase in working hours;
- move from part-time to full-time employment;
- increased ability to perform job and increased job satisfaction;
- fewer unplanned absences from work;
- promotion or ability to apply for a better paid job;
- respite care;
- lowered stress, leading to improved physical and mental health;
- increased confidence and improved social interaction as a result of employment.

In the UK, one third of families have reported an increase in income as a direct result of using OSC provision. However, in deprived areas this is not always a primary motivation. Indeed, in some deprived areas in the UK, there is evidence of more affluent parents using OSC services. Although this can have a number of benefits, for instance, providing much-needed income for the OSC service and enabling a wider social mix of children, it can make it more difficult for low-income families living nearby to access the OSC service.

Nevertheless, it is clear that OSC can play an important role in supporting access to the labour market for parents in disadvantaged areas. For example, in Germany, 'local alliances for the family' have been established in many disadvantaged areas in order to identify, plan and organise suitable OSC solutions, in order to allow parents to access employment. In the Czech Republic, OSC services, such as after-school centres, are generally organised in order to cover traditional working hours. In Portugal, new legislation requiring primary schools to provide OSC until 17.30 presents new levels of childcare support for parents in employment.

Indeed, as highlighted previously, some OSC services in disadvantaged areas in the EU provide a holistic range of services for children and families, which may include support, encouragement and training to enable parents to enter or re-enter the labour market.

Furthermore, the development of OSC services can in itself have a positive impact on the range of employment opportunities that are available in disadvantaged areas. For example, trade union organisations in Charleroi in Belgium have helped to develop OSC projects that have themselves provided job opportunities within the local area. Meanwhile, the Intercultural Children's and Parents' Centre in the Schillerkiez district in Berlin, Germany, has provided employment opportunities for local mothers to work in informing the local community about different services in the area.

OSC can also deliver a wide range of non-economic benefits to families living in disadvantaged areas. For example, evidence from Portugal suggests that OSC services, particularly when provided as part of a programme of joined-up service provision, can enable families in these areas to access a wide range of relevant services. Similarly, in the UK, parents who have used holistic, supportive and integrated out-of-school services, such as those provided at Goddard Park Community School in Swindon or Sunnylands Primary School in Northern Ireland, have found that they have grown in confidence themselves as a result of using these OSC services; this is enabling them to better communicate with their children and facilitate family learning.

In the UK, it has been found that families in disadvantaged areas have been able to use OSC services to cope with immediate crises, such as health problems or bereavement, or over the longer term to access respite care. Meanwhile, OSC staff may be perceived by families in disadvantaged areas as less authoritative and more approachable than teachers: parents are therefore more likely to seek emotional and practical support and advice from them.

Benefits for the community

Evidence from the national research suggests that OSC in disadvantaged areas can impact communities positively in a variety of ways. The assessment by Davidson and Barry (2003) identified a range of benefits, showing that OSC:

- contributes to regeneration of communities and to tackling poverty and disadvantage;
- creates a positive environment and experiences for children;
- creates employment opportunities in the OSC service;
- increases the income of an area that has a low average income and so injects more money into the local economy;
- develops positive citizenship amongst children and young people;
- diverts children and young people from anti-social and problem behaviour;
- increases the integration of services;
- links families and schools to the community.

The Foundation's report *Childcare services in the EU – What future?* notes that the provision of childcare for children from disadvantaged areas of up to three years of age tends to improve their ability to benefit from education and learning in the long term (Blackburn, 2006). It has also been found to reduce crime, unemployment and healthcare costs. This study has shown that care services for school-age children also delivers such benefits. This 'preventive' nature of OSC provision is a key benefit. For example, the evaluation of the Escolhas programme in Portugal from 2004–2006 found that the provision of OSC as part of this programme has helped to integrate children into the community and has helped to reduce the likelihood of children engaging in anti-social behaviour. Evidence also suggests that local people in the disadvantaged areas in which the programme operates are beginning to develop a more positive perception of children and young people. Similar benefits have been found in relation to hobby education in Estonia.

The evaluation of the Portuguese Escolhas programme also found that schools have benefited from the programme: participants are less likely to become involved in school conflicts or disputes and have engaged more with the school curriculum and other activities. Similar results have been identified in Estonia, where hobby education is seen as a complementary service in relation to general educational aims and objectives, helping to develop children's confidence and abilities and providing opportunities for pupils to make new friends. The 2003 assessment report found that schools can also benefit from OSC: the school becomes more popular, develops better relations with the local community and integration with other services is improved (Davidson and Barry, 2003).

As indicated, the provision of particular services in the field of OSC can result in employment creation in local communities. For example, by ensuring that providers are able to access a sufficient number of clients in order for their OSC services to be maintained, the 'Kinderbetreuungsbörse-Dudweiler' project has helped to sustain and create jobs in the childcare sector in the disadvantaged German region of Saarbrücken-Dudweiler. In the UK, Intermediate Labour Market projects provide supported training and employment in OSC services. These projects are usually targeted at disadvantaged people, including those living in disadvantaged areas. As well as providing employment, they contribute to the development of a skilled, qualified and experienced childcare workforce.

In a number of disadvantaged areas across the six Member States in this study, community models have emerged or have been developed for the delivery of OSC. An intrinsic benefit that these models can bring is the sense of empowerment and skills development in the local community as local residents become actively involved in organising and providing OSC services. This can help to bring about further economic and social change in disadvantaged areas.

Benefits for OSC service providers

If OSC is recognised as a valuable service that enables stakeholders to achieve their own economic and social aims and objectives, service providers and staff will benefit. It is likely that there will be a higher degree of regulation of OSC services; in turn, this will raise standards and encourage investment in premises and equipment.

Staff will benefit from the professionalisation of the sector, enhanced career opportunities, increased investment in training and skills development, and better pay and conditions.

There is a lack of specific evidence-based research to quantify the impact of OSC for children living in disadvantaged areas. The evidence that does exist either relates to OSC as a whole, is anecdotal or is focused on local areas or projects. Some of the benefits have a long lead-in time and will only become apparent in the longer term.

What is clear, however, is that there are a great many social and economic benefits from OSC and that these are often particularly important in disadvantaged areas and for disadvantaged groups.

Economic benefits result when parents are able to take up employment or improve their employment circumstances and where OSC provides training and employment opportunities to local people. These impacts are felt by the household, the community and employers. While the economic benefits are crucial in tackling poverty and disadvantage, social benefits are also very important in improving quality of life, raising aspirations and boosting personal confidence. This will bring long-term benefits to families and children living in disadvantaged areas.

The evidence illustrates the crucial role that OSC has in the economic and social development of disadvantaged areas and how it can contribute to the regeneration of an area and the integration of excluded groups.

OSC therefore needs to be an integral strand of the relevant economic, social and other development strategies in disadvantaged areas in Member States. Key partners need to be made aware of the contributions that OSC can make. They may need guidance to understand how they can contribute to OSC development and how they can benefit from it. In each country, the government should identify the key potential players and begin to work with them to look at how they can take a partnership approach to developing and sustaining OSC in disadvantaged areas.

This report has looked at the provision of out-of-school care for children and how it plays a particularly crucial role in disadvantaged areas and for disadvantaged groups and households. This chapter reviews the main findings and presents policy pointers for future action that can be taken to improve the provision and quality of such services.

Research goals

This study has:

- identified how OSC for children living in disadvantaged areas fits with EU strategic priorities and contributes to economic, social and family agendas, and how it links with a range of articles contained in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- explored how OSC is provided to children in disadvantaged areas and children from disadvantaged groups;
- illustrated how important it is that OSC is affordable, accessible and of a high quality and looked at the range of mechanisms for achieving this;
- identified the benefits to children, parents, communities, employers, OSC service providers, OSC staff, governments, trade unions and other stakeholders;
- established that there is a need for Member States to take a strategic approach to developing and supporting OSC;
- highlighted where gaps exist in research and evidence.

It is clear that children and families are high on the EU agenda. The UNICEF report on child poverty in rich countries shows that children in many Member States could fare much better than they currently do in terms of certain criteria of well-being (UNICEF, 2007). The Lisbon Strategy identifies the need to improve the lives of poor children and their families in the EU. The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child reports that the life chances of children are severely hampered if their parents face deprivation and social exclusion (European Commission, 2006a). It concludes that addressing the needs of disadvantaged families is crucial if Europe is to make progress in breaking the cycle of multi-generational poverty.

The principal route out of poverty is through employment. The Social Agenda for 2005–2010 sets out the EU's commitment to expanding Europe's labour market, improving flexible working options for parents in employment and removing barriers to employment for women – lack of childcare in particular (European Commission, 2005).

To sustain this movement out of poverty, children need to be equipped and supported to benefit from opportunities in the areas of education, health and social development. This report has shown that OSC has an important contribution to make to all of these.

Current estimates predict a decline in the size of the labour force in Europe, coupled with an ageing population, a decline in economic growth and increasing pressure on public spending. The European Commission's Communication *Promoting solidarity between the generations* (European Commission, 2007) addresses the issues of demographic and social change. It sets the agenda for demographic

renewal by providing an environment in which Europeans are supported in having the number of children that they would like rather than deciding to restrict their family size because of external factors. (Such external factors may include limitations on women's career development, barriers to participation in employment, financial considerations and the pressure of caring for supporting children and elderly dependants.) The Communication identifies the provision of childcare as a key factor in promoting this solidarity. It also states that, if childcare helps children to achieve at school, it will contribute to their becoming valuable workers, thus helping to ease the pressures of demographic change.

The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child promotes a child-centred approach to developing activities. It identifies particular rights to which OSC can contribute – for example, the right to play and leisure activities, the right to services for children with disabilities, the involvement of children in decision-making, the right to safety and security, and the right to support to enable children to benefit from education (UNHCR, 1989).

This report has shown how OSC contributes to meeting a range of policy goals in the EU. OSC is a vital component of the economic and social development of any area. It has a particularly crucial role in disadvantaged areas, as well as for disadvantaged groups and households outside of disadvantaged areas, because it can help to address some of the social, economic and health issues that they face. It is an important element in providing a continuum of services and support for children and parents, ranging from early-years' childcare, to preschool care and education, to OSC and school.

OSC can be a first step for authorities to engage with the most excluded groups of people, by providing non-threatening activities. It can be the key that helps the main carer in the household (usually a woman) to take up new training and employment or improve their existing employment situation. This will, in turn, improve the economic circumstances of the household, provide a positive role model to children and provide social benefits alongside the economic ones.

The economic impacts of OSC help Member States contribute to achieving the aims of the Lisbon Strategy by widening labour-market participation and giving employers a greater potential pool from which to recruit their workforce. It enables women to return to and remain in the labour market, so improving staff recruitment and retention rates for employers.

OSC generally, and OSC in disadvantaged areas in particular, enables a range of organisations and sectors to meet their own aims and objectives. Trade unions are interested in OSC because it benefits workers, increases female participation in the labour market, enhances career development opportunities, reduces the stress levels of workers with children, brings health benefits and provides employment in disadvantaged communities. Trade unions are also interested because they have an opportunity to enhance the employment conditions and career opportunities of OSC staff.

Employers in many Member States operate in an increasingly competitive labour market. Moreover, since they compete in global markets for goods and services, they need a good quality, reliable and productive workforce to compete effectively. OSC helps this by widening the pool of workers from which they can recruit. It can make it easier for employers to keep existing staff in whom they have invested. Given that the average estimated costs for replacing and training a new member of staff –

in the UK, for example – run up to GBP 20,000, this is very important. In disadvantaged areas, if household income increases, businesses will benefit from more money circulating in the local economy.

Governments have a lot to gain from ensuring that good quality, affordable and accessible OSC is available, both generally and in disadvantaged areas in particular. It can help them meet their strategic aims and objectives of reducing poverty, boosting educational attainment, improving economic development, promoting social inclusion, enhancing community safety, improving health indicators and helping workers reconcile work–life balance. It can also assist them in addressing the longer term challenges posed by demographic change and global competition.

If OSC services are not available in disadvantaged areas, women who live in these areas are less likely to be able to enter employment, the pool of available workers will diminish and children and young people whose mothers are in employment will not have safe after-school places. Hence they will be at greater risk of becoming involved in problem behaviour. The added benefits of OSC for children in disadvantaged areas – social development, educational attainment, social integration, greater self-esteem and improved health outcomes – will also be unavailable. These lost opportunities have a knock-on impact on employers, trade unions and governments. Accepting this, policy-makers must consider:

- the strategic priorities for developing OSC;
- the current profile of OSC in their country;
- the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in existing provision, and the available opportunities for developing such provision;
- who the key partners currently are, who are potential partners in the future and the role that each will take in the strategic development of OSC in disadvantaged areas;
- whether support should be targeted at disadvantaged areas, disadvantaged groups and households, or a balance of both;
- the required regulatory framework and what needs to be done to ensure that it is established;
- the required development of the OSC workforce;
- how quality can be monitored and enhanced;
- how the qualitative and quantitative impacts can be measured and used to plan future OSC service delivery.

Public policy and strategic development

Recently, there has been a growing recognition in the EU of the importance and benefits of childcare services for school-age children. It appears that Member States are beginning to consider how they can best provide appropriate childcare services for children in this age group. The provision of such childcare links directly with a range of other policy areas, the key ones being the promotion of solidarity between the generations, the eradication of child poverty, the drive for equality in the work place and the promotion of children's rights and the support of their well-being.

However, there are no specific European-level policies or targets for childcare for children of school age or for OSC in disadvantaged areas in Europe. To date, policies have primarily focused on childcare and early education for children who have not yet reached school age. There is evidence in some Member States that OSC policies are in place, that OSC-focused strategies flow from these policies and that particular consideration is being paid to developing OSC services in disadvantaged areas. But this is by no means the case in all EU countries.

The research shows that there are significant advantages when OSC services are developed in a national strategic framework that encourages, enables and supports OSC development at regional or local level in response to the particular needs and circumstances of the area. A national framework helps to promote the development of OSC. It puts in place the regulatory and workforce development structures that are required to provide good-quality OSC. It also addresses the issue of affordability at a national level through funding support for OSC services that make OSC affordable for parents living in disadvantaged areas. This might, for example, be achieved through the tax system and the benefits system.

Policy drivers

The provision of OSC for children living in disadvantaged areas helps government and other bodies achieve their own strategic aims and objectives, such as economic and social objectives. In recognition of this, in all the Member States included in this study, developments at national, regional and local level have sought to drive forward the provision of OSC in disadvantaged areas.

A number of key policy agendas have driven policies for OSC: economic development in order to support economic growth, facilitating women's participation in the labour market and the reconciliation of work and family life. In disadvantaged areas, a more specific economic driver for OSC development has been the goal of removing childcare as a barrier to employment and learning, and so enabling families to move out of poverty. Supporting parents in taking up work or improving their work situation will result in higher household incomes, bring personal benefits to parents and provide a positive environment that will influence the experiences and aspirations of children.

OSC can play an important role in economic development at both local and national level. In recognition of the social benefits that OSC can deliver, social development has also been a driving force behind its adoption in some areas and in some Member States. This can, of course, be combined with economic objectives. The social development agenda is particularly prominent in disadvantaged areas and in OSC activities targeted at disadvantaged groups. Social development focuses on the specific needs of children, aims to provide children with new opportunities, helps them participate in their local community, enhances their social development and, for some children and young people, reduces the potential for problem or anti-social behaviour. In some countries and communities, OSC activities have the particular aim of improving children's engagement in formal education and enhancing the educational attainment levels of individuals and of the community as a whole.

OSC for children living in disadvantaged areas should take a holistic approach to addressing the issues that lead to, or arise from, poverty and social exclusion. Thus OSC should be an integral part of the economic and social regeneration of disadvantaged areas.

Service delivery and affordability

OSC in disadvantaged areas is usually delivered by public sector providers or voluntary organisations. In some Member States, OSC is also managed by parent-led management committees employing staff to deliver it on a day-to-day basis. It will often be delivered through a combination of these three main models. Private sector providers with a profit motive are less likely to provide OSC in disadvantaged areas and tend to offer care in more affluent areas where parents can pay the full cost.

OSC in disadvantaged areas cannot in the long term rely solely on parents paying the full cost of care. In order for effective sustainable OSC services to be provided in disadvantaged areas, financial support from external sources is required. This can come from national or local government or from other sources such as trusts or non-governmental organisations. The reality for some OSC initiatives is that such support will comprise a combination of two or more of these. It is important that the funding is long term, set at realistic levels and is proofed against inflation. Short-term or annual funding is not effective in ensuring a reliable efficient OSC service that will bring long-term sustained benefits.

The funding can be directed through two routes: to the provider and to the OSC service-user. Funding can be provided directly to the OSC service provider to cover capital and start-up costs, and – on an on-going basis – to cover or contribute to operating costs. It can also take the form of grants, or mainstream budgets, which means that it is included in the core budgets of the funding organisation. ‘In-kind’ support may also be provided, such as staff time or rent-free premises.

Alternatively, OSC services can be made affordable and sustainable in disadvantaged areas through funding directed at individual families and children. This funding can be in the form of tax credits, exemptions or subsidies provided directly to the family. Alternatively, it can be paid directly to the OSC provider but be linked to a particular child or family, thereby reducing the amount that they need to pay for the services.

Whichever route the funding is directed through (sometimes both are used within the same OSC service), the evidence from the research indicates that this financial support is essential in order to provide good quality, effective OSC services in disadvantaged areas and to disadvantaged groups.

Community involvement

Although state support is generally required in some form in order to provide OSC services in disadvantaged areas, these services tend to operate more successfully and have a greater impact if the local community is involved in their development and operation. Involvement of parents, or of the wider community, in the delivery of OSC services can help to ensure that these services meet families’ needs and can respond to the changing priorities in an area.

Where parents or other community members have a role in the management of OSC services, or are involved in an advisory capacity, this can raise their skills level, confidence and experience and can promote social integration. This is particularly significant when different ethnic groups occupy a neighbourhood, where community-led OSC can help to support social cohesion and integration in the local area and enhance social and educational development amongst disadvantaged ethnic minority groups.

Furthermore, an intrinsic benefit of community involvement in managing OSC services is the consequent sense of local empowerment, as residents play a key role in the delivery of important local services. This empowerment of individuals can help to bring about further economic and social change in disadvantaged areas. However, the evidence from the research indicates that in disadvantaged areas, many parents or community members lack the skills and confidence to set up and manage an OSC service. Therefore, if community involvement in OSC services is to be successful and sustainable, local parents or residents will require capacity-building and support.

Integrated and diverse services

OSC services in disadvantaged areas have a particularly positive impact on families when a holistic approach is adopted to meeting individuals' needs.

OSC providers can offer a range of services for parents and children, in addition to the basic OSC service. Additional services may include family support, parenting classes, health services, employability support, community safety sessions, counselling, confidence-building courses. By providing a range of services to families, OSC can meet these individuals' needs holistically and can enable a whole range of economic and social benefits to be achieved for disadvantaged children, parents and communities.

Furthermore, evidence from the national research has indicated that where OSC services in disadvantaged areas provide a diverse and varied range of activities for children, this can have an important impact in ensuring the development of new skills and interests amongst children. It can also help to improve children's self-esteem and encourage learning.

Accessibility

If OSC is to be delivered effectively within disadvantaged areas, then it must be accessible to all families in those areas.

Locally managed OSC services can respond quickly and flexibly to changes in need. Such flexibility in approach is important in disadvantaged areas where families are likely to have a diverse range of needs.

Flexible approaches can be particularly important in disadvantaged rural areas, where group OSC services may not be viable and individual solutions may have to be identified.

OSC services in disadvantaged areas also need to be flexible to the needs of families and children who have specific needs, such as children with special needs. While this is an important consideration for OSC services in all areas, it can be particularly important in disadvantaged areas, where parents of children with additional needs may not have access to transport in order to take their child to services in other areas.

If OSC is to have an impact on the economic situation of families living in disadvantaged areas, then services should be available year-round and at times that fit with the working patterns of families. There should be a seamless link between OSC services and school hours.

Quality, monitoring and regulation

In order for OSC services to achieve maximum benefits for families in disadvantaged areas, OSC service provision should be of a high quality and be perceived as such by parents and children. The quality of OSC services should be transparent and therefore a system of assessing and ensuring quality is beneficial.

At present, there is little rigorous work done at national level to assess the progress of OSC development in disadvantaged areas; limited evidence exists on the impacts of OSC services for parents, children and communities. This evidence is crucial to enable evidence-based planning. Some assessment of the impact of OSC services does take place at local or project level within disadvantaged areas; where this happens, OSC services can respond to the changing needs identified through this monitoring. Service monitoring can also be an important tool in demonstrating the benefits of provision to funding bodies, parents and other stakeholders.

In some Member States, there are well-established systems for regulating OSC services, including OSC services in disadvantaged areas. Such regulation is beneficial in ensuring that OSC services are of a high quality. OSC services can benefit from the presence of a national framework for the development of OSC staff, taking into account the needs of the different age groups. Such a framework would automatically cover staffing in disadvantaged areas. However, it is likely that there will be a greater need for specialist staff in these areas in order to tackle particular local issues.

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Annex

Glossary of terms

Government provision

Provision that is directly owned and managed by national, or more likely, local government.

Voluntary organisation

A voluntary organisation is any organisation that is managed by a board or committee whose members are not paid for their involvement other than having expenses, such as travel, reimbursed. The organisation can employ staff on a paid or an unpaid basis to deliver OSC services. In the study, churches or a church group are identified separately from voluntary organisations.

Private providers

These are individuals or companies that own and manage the OSC service with the aim of making a profit.

Social enterprise

A social enterprise is a non-profit distributing business that can take the form of a company, a voluntary organisation, a workers' cooperative or some other structure. Its distinguishing feature is that in addition to the presence of a profit motive, the organisation also has a social focus. Crucially, any profits are redistributed in the business rather than being distributed to shareholders.

Training

Training in care provision can be certified and so lead to a qualification or award. It can also be uncertified, in which case it does not result in a qualification.

Grant funding

Grant funding is funding provided by a charitable organisation, a governmental organisation, a church, a private company (in which case it may be termed 'sponsorship') or some other organisation. No repayment of monies is required, but conditions are usually attached.

Loans; 'soft' loans

Loans are monies that are provided and are require to be repaid, usually with interest. Typically they will be lend by banks or other commercial lenders. Sometimes, other organisations, for example government agencies, will provide loans. 'Soft' loans are loans whose terms and conditions, usually the interest rates, are more favourable.

Fee income

This is income that comes from fees paid by parents or carers or other sources, including colleges, universities, employment and training providers. It is linked to individual users, as opposed to a grant, loan or subsidy for the OSC service overall or other financial assistance for the OSC service.

Tax credits

Tax credits linked to childcare provide financial support to parents or carers through the tax system. This can be done, for example, by deducting some or all of the costs of childcare from the parents' income before tax is calculated.

Childcare subsidy

Childcare subsidy is financial support that is provided to parents and carers to make childcare more affordable. Such subsidy can take the form of direct payments to the parent or carer, direct payments to the OSC service for individual children, or vouchers – provided to the parent – which can be exchanged for childcare. Childcare subsidies may be provided by the government and its agencies, training providers, employers in the private or public sector, and others.

Good practice; innovative practice

Good practice is an initiative for which evidence exists of a positive impact having been made. Innovative practice is an initiative which is new, imaginative or innovative but as yet, provides no, or only limited, evidence of positive outcomes. (For innovative practices, it is anticipated that the impact over time will be positive.)

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The issue of childcare has received much EU policy attention in recent years. It is seen as an important factor in economic growth and increasing employment levels and an essential element in achieving a good work–life balance. This report deals with an area which has not been highlighted so far: out-of-school care for children of schoolgoing age (between the ages of five and 12 years) in disadvantaged areas. The provision of such care can facilitate women in entering and remaining in the workforce and make a substantial contribution to children’s welfare. In disadvantaged areas, out-of-school care can contribute to tackling poverty and problem behaviour. Based on a study carried out in six EU Member States, this report assesses the impact of the different approaches implemented in each Member State. It highlights, over and above the economic advantages, the benefits for children in terms of social development, educational achievement, social integration, greater self-esteem and improved health outcomes.

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