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Choosing a model

There are many different models a school could use to offer its childcare provision. Which model suits your school best will depend on factors specific to your school (type and size, age of the children, location, facilities, transport, access to premises etc).

You may also prefer to use a certain model because of your previous experience, an existing contract with an external provider, or the availability and willingness of suitable staff to get involved in the childcare provision.

This section outlines three different models of provision for schools to consider.



Model 1: In-house

This model will be attractive to schools wishing to retain control of all aspects of their childcare provision (eg bookings, marketing, staffing, activities offered).

Examples of in-house provision

- Develop any current childcare provision you offer (eg breakfast clubs) to cover 8am to 6pm, 50 weeks a year. Use existing resources and staff, and base activities on staff members' interests, experience and expertise.
- Set up new in-house childcare provision using both existing staff (eg teaching assistants, early years staff) and newly recruited staff to run it (eg apprentices).

You could, for instance, run your childcare provision in-house by:

- setting up a social enterprise, where the profits of the provision are re-invested to sustain and develop the provision
- constituting your provision as a charity or community interest organisation (CIO), allowing you to apply for grants
- establishing a co-operative, where the childcare business is owned and controlled by those who use it (parents, carers, school etc).

Model 2: Blended

This model will be attractive to schools wishing to retain control of some aspects of their childcare provision, while also working in partnership with their local community.

Examples of blended provision

- Commission a new third-party provider to run just some of your provision (eg the accredited Duke of Edinburgh scheme).

- Work in partnership with other local schools to offer the provision (on one or more sites with a walking bus/mini-bus to transport children).
- Manage most of the provision in-house. Some activities are run off-site by an external agency (eg museum, sports centre).

There are different ways in which a school can run its provision, for instance:

- an external provider manages the holiday programme, and the school runs the breakfast and after-school clubs
- primary schools in a cluster offer their own before- and after-school clubs and retain the income; the secondary school provides the holiday childcare for all schools in the cluster and retains the income
- the school is a host for the local area's holiday scheme (open to all local children)
- breakfast is provided by the school, while an external organisation delivers activities at the breakfast club.

Model 3: External

This model will be attractive to schools that, for various reasons (eg lack of experience in running childcare provision, lack of time/staff to manage the provision), wish to hand over responsibility for running their childcare provision to another organisation.

Examples of external provision

- Retain the third-party provider that is already running the school's after-school clubs, but ask them to provide childcare from 8am to 6pm, 50 weeks a year.
- Commission a new third-party provider to manage all the childcare provision.
- Let school space to different third-party providers, who together provide a full programme of activities for pupils at cost.

A wide range of external providers can manage and deliver a school's childcare provision.

Depending on the school, this might involve some or all of the following activities:

- marketing the provision
- managing operations (caretaking etc)
- setting charges, managing bookings and payments
- providing staff and training
- implementing health and safety/safeguarding guidelines
- auditing parents'/carers' needs
- letting school premises to other organisations to raise school income (eg at weekends)
- monitoring the provision.

Researching the market

Before you choose a model and decide on the service you wish to offer, you will need to conduct thorough market research. This process will help you to:

- spot gaps and opportunities
- price your service competitively
- understand what parents want from a childcare provision.

If you can demonstrate you are meeting families' childcare needs, this will make it more likely that parents will place their children with you.

Fenstanton Primary School in Lambeth, London, chose to adopt a blended model of childcare provision.

It decided to run its own in-house before- and after-school clubs and commissioned a third-party to run its holiday provision at a neighbouring school: Kingswood Primary School. Fenstanton's chosen provider, Fit For Sport, provides staff for the holiday programmes and also deals with all the booking/payment procedures.

The school's own staff cover the functions relating to the term-time before- and after-school provision. Fenstanton also employs a lead play manager from Fit For Sport to help raise and maintain the quality of all its childcare provision.

Research process

- 1 Start by mapping existing local childcare (prices, providers, services, venues, facilities, age of children, advertising, reputation, advertising methods etc). The Learning Exchange has advice on how you can use FOI/FIS requests to help you benchmark costs and map provision. Contact your local authority's early years team, and also consult recent childcare sufficiency audits.
- 2 Consider who your competitors might be and what makes your service different from theirs (read their adverts, visit their websites; find out how many children they take, what ages, if they have waiting lists etc).
- 3 Use the local media, the internet and your contacts to help you find out about local developments and national policies that might affect your service (eg plans for a new housing development, forthcoming changes to funding for childcare settings, a new childcare provision being launched at a nearby school).
- 4 Perhaps most importantly, find out what your target families' childcare needs are, and what is important to them (eg times of sessions, cost, type of activities, booking and payment methods, location, facilities, transport available). The Learning Exchange offers further information about auditing childcare needs: www.learning-exchange.org.uk.
- 5 Don't be afraid to change direction! You may, for instance, start out by thinking you should run the provision in-house. However, as a result of your research, you may decide that an external model will help you to meet your childcare needs more effectively.

Further information

- Family Action was funded 2013-15 by the Department for Education (DfE) to support schools to develop wraparound and childcare provision. Find out more about the project, and download a wide range of free resources from: www.learning-exchange.org.uk
- Our Learning Exchange Facebook page gives links to events, suppliers, equipment, training and venues that might be of interest to school-based childcare providers: www.facebook.com/pages/Learning-Exchange/904749822892733?sk=timeline

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Last updated: 4.3.16

