

# NIACE Research and Development



## Key Findings



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## Community based pre-schools and capacity building in socially excluded communities

### Abstract

To explore the extent to which involvement in pre-schools in areas characterised by poverty and deprivation can help users to:

- ❖ Develop the confidence and motivation to engage in other voluntary and community activities, in particular those to do with supporting their children's welfare, education and development.
- ❖ Develop knowledge and skills which they are then able to transfer to other dimensions of their lives (e.g. in employment or undertaking education and training).
- ❖ Contribute to an overall strengthening and regeneration of their local communities.

#### Research methodology:

- ❖ Survey, using questionnaires
- ❖ Background research using data from DETR, index of local conditions, information from PSLA
- ❖ Fieldwork, including personal interviews

### Key Findings

The main conclusions of the project are:

- ❖ The study which involved about 200 parents and carers (survey respondents and interviewees) revealed that the pre-schools are far more than just nurseries or playgroups: they are a vital family and community resource providing parents and carers with social contacts, practical and emotional support, education, training and employment opportunities and valuable information, help and advice on parenting, education, health, social security and housing matters.
- ❖ The outcomes for adults using the pre-schools - many of them lone parents and people without qualifications - were found to be multiple and wide-ranging. Users had

developed new social networks and many were engaging in co-operative social and self-help activities - baby-sitting and shared school runs; joint organisation of outings and parties; exchanges of clothes, toys, books, equipment and, in one case, children's stories they had composed themselves. This kind of mutual help and sharing was particularly important for people in the most vulnerable situations – lone parents, victims of domestic violence, refugees and asylum seekers.

- ❖ As a result of helping with the running of the pre-schools, many parents had gained the confidence to become involved in the wider community. Many were supporting local primary schools by joining parent-teacher associations, volunteering or working as classroom assistants; some were playing an active part in other local groups and organisations such as Beavers and Brownies, After-School Clubs and local churches, and some had become involved in campaigns and funding bids for better local facilities, accommodation and public transport. In two of the sample pre-schools, parents had started football schemes for local children.
- ❖ In all of the groups, parents had been encouraged to participate in education and training and many had achieved qualifications such as NVQs, GCSEs and PSLA diplomas. A significant number had also found jobs, frequently in childcare. In virtually all cases, these outcomes were totally unexpected and unpremeditated, demonstrating that the pre-schools are providing important opportunities for parents who joined them primarily in order to benefit their children.  
*“They come thinking they're going to help the kids and end up helping themselves a lot more”* (group leader).
- ❖ The research overall showed that the pre-schools are helping to develop social capital and making a very significant contribution to local communities in areas of considerable social and economic disadvantage.

## Recommendations

- ❖ To conduct a follow up study in the same pre-schools.

## Output

- ❖ McGivney, V. (2000) *'The Contribution of Pre-Schools to the Community'*. Pre-School Learning Alliance.
- ❖ McGivney, V. (2004) *'The Impact of Pre-Schools on the Community'*. A follow up study. Pre-School Learning Alliance.

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