

*Needs Assessment  
Study for the  
Expansion of  
Afterschool Supports  
and Activities to  
Children aged 5-10*



**YPAR** | Young People at Risk  
Dublin North Inner City

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# Introduction and Background

# Introduction and Background

## 1.1 Research Study and Terms of Reference

Young People at Risk (YPAR) and its partners identified a significant shortage of afterschool places and provision to support the demands in Dublin’s North East Inner City area (NEIC). The gap identified relates to 5-10 year olds in comparison to those aged 10-18 who it is felt have a greater opportunity to access appropriate youth services provision in the area. The broad rationale for service expansion is supported by a range of policy sources including European policy which states, “children having equal access to good quality services is key to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty and disadvantage and is the hallmark of an effective child poverty approach.”<sup>1</sup>

The Department for Education and Skills acknowledges in its “Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools” (DEIS) Plan that education is key to breaking the poverty cycle and to tackle the results and repercussions of disadvantage. Afterschool clubs and activities are identified as a support to education, it ensures that primary school children aged 5-10 will get the most out of their educational experience and prepares them for their second level education and potentially even further.

YPAR note there is good collaboration between organisations in the area, however the organisations have identified barriers that prevent more effective and informed integration and collaboration between the various projects offering afterschool supports, making it difficult to address current gaps and deficiencies in this service.

This research study has been commissioned with the following aims:

1. Scope a profile of existing afterschool supports and activities for 5- 10 year olds
2. Mapping possible/available safe school and community-based premises that would facilitate additional afterschool activities
3. To engage with young people and parents of their current afterschool needs
4. Consult with statutory, voluntary and community services providers to identify ways to enhance afterschool supports and activities

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<sup>1</sup> Eurochild, ‘Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage’, March 2013, Page 4

5. Assess the cost benefit and sustainable cost of an enhanced afterschool service provision in the NEIC
6. Produce a report with costed recommendations on how best to enhance the current afterschool services provision in the NEIC
7. Identifying local, national and international best practices examples

The research takes into consideration the following:

1. The link with afterschool and breaking the cycle of poverty in NEIC
2. Early intervention
3. Focus on health and wellbeing
4. Reversing low levels of educational attainment

## 1.2 Introduction to YPAR

YPAR was established in 2004 as an interagency network within the NEIC within the following ethos:

*"To promote and develop a principled and integrated approach to working with young people that serves their needs and realises their dreams."*

The network works to meet the needs of children and young people at risk in the area through a collaborative and co-ordinated approach amongst statutory, voluntary and community projects and services. YPAR aims to improve all aspects of the young person's life, a young person at risk is defined as a child/young person aged 0 to 25 years experiencing significant personal, family, educational or social problems.

YPAR is an established integrated, interagency structure which enables the collaboration of frontline children's services to pool resources and deliver more efficient and effective services including:

- *Primary care, Prevention and Early Intervention* - by providing forums such as working groups and a Steering Committee, where issues, gaps in services can be discussed and solutions can be put forward for consideration by services involved
- *Supporting young people at risk in accessing services, education, training and employment* – by facilitating positive links and relationships between agencies who are then more familiar with appropriate services available for young people

- *Enhancing primary care, prevention and early intervention measures for young people and their families* - by providing and facilitating safe interagency forums of evaluation, review and feedback of current services
- *Ensuring anti-discriminatory and accessible policies and practices in services for young people at risk* - by seeking frontline feedback from service users and advocating on their behalf
- *Supporting children and youth at risk to develop the skills and capacities needed to become active members of the community* - by inviting young people to participate in working group, seminars, conference and offering youth leadership training
- *Monitoring and evaluating YPAR interventions in order to measure change, progress and to learn what works and what doesn't* - by holding yearly collaborative reviews and evaluations facilitated by independent agencies

YPAR Membership includes:

- Inner City Organisations Network
- Health Service Executive Northern Region
- Tusla
- Department of Education and Skills
- City of Dublin Youth Services Board
- City of Dublin Education and Training Board
- National Education Welfare Service
- An Garda Síochána
- Probation Service/Irish Youth Justice
- Dublin City Council

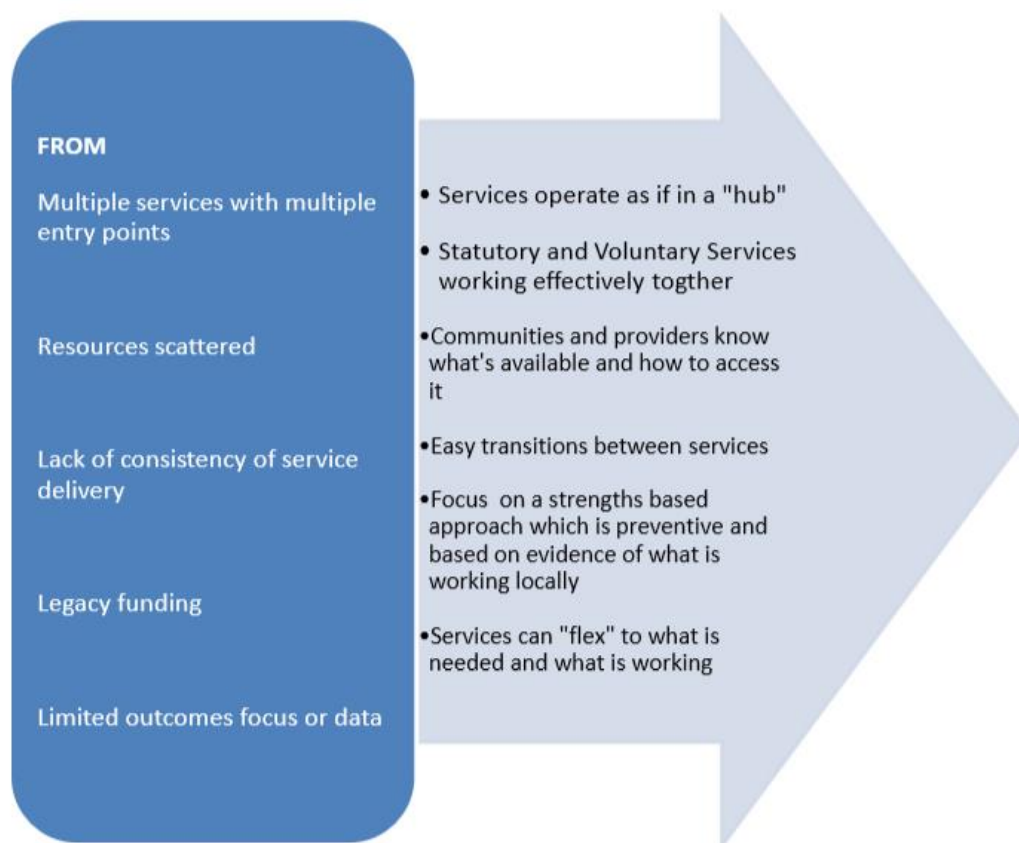
YPAR operates on the basis of age and theme related working groups which focus on the needs and gaps in service of the specific age. This research has been commissioned by YPAR to work directly with the 5-12 year old Working Group.

### 1.3 'Creating a Brighter Future' (2017)

The Mulvey Report 'Creating a Brighter Future' is an outline plan for the social and economic regeneration of the NEIC. The plan was in response to the community being deeply affected by organised and violent crime in recent years. The report notes that these issues have brought attention and plans for development, although these plans have not been fully

implemented to deliver positive impacts for the community and residents. As a result, many residents are suspicious of State/political plans for the area due to failures in the past. <sup>2</sup>

The Mulvey Report notes the community is rich in assets but is not realising its ‘full potential’<sup>3</sup>. In relation to children it places an emphasis on creating an integrated system of social services based on national strategies<sup>4</sup>, emphasising the need to support families and vulnerable communities.



*Diagram 1 – Mulvey Report Pg. 37 “Creating an Integrated System of Social Services”*

The report highlights the need to ensure appropriate and flexible extra-curricular and afterschool supports and activities. NEIC is also noted as having “significant levels of service but poorly co-ordinated and some gaps”. Both are relevant issues in demonstrating the need and context for the research.

The socio-economic challenges in the area are recognised along with the impact of these challenges upon the development of children and young people, “where addiction, drug

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<sup>2</sup> Kieran Mulvey, ‘Dublin North East Inner City, Creating a Brighter Future’, February 2017

<sup>3</sup> Kieran Mulvey, ‘Dublin North East Inner City, Creating a Brighter Future’, February 2017 Page 16

dealing, criminality, intimidation can interfere and put children at risk of not reaching their potential”.

It is acknowledged that there are a number of key areas of investment which support children and young people in the area including those linked to DEIS schools status (including the Education Welfare Service, Home School Community Liaison Scheme and School Completion Programme) and also investment in youth services which amounts to around €3 million per annum from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) plus Gardai, Probation and Dublin City Council youth / community investment.

After considering current provision and investment, the Mulvey report still notes “an emerging need in recreation services for children under 10”. There is may be some overlap with afterschool services such as homework clubs and childcare services and with structured activities provided in the arts and sports sectors.”

The commissioning of this research study aligns with findings and recommendations detailed within the Mulvey Report.

## 1.4 Defining Afterschool Provision

For the purposes of the research, afterschool provision is defined as:

*“School or community- based activity that takes place in the period immediately after school”*

It can be delivered by a variety of different organisations, including:

- Schools
- Community afterschool or childcare providers
- Community, youth and sports organisations
- Private businesses

The type of activity and level of provision available in the NEIC is explored further in section 5 of the report.

It is important to note that services referred to in the report as “community – based”, relate to specific structured afterschool services for children between the period after school until 5.30pm or 6pm. Children accessing these services, often do so 5 days per week (Monday to Friday) for up to 50 weeks per annum.



## 1.5 Age 5-10 Years Population

The researchers felt that the most accurate method of identifying the 5-10 year old population as context for the research was via the 2019/20 primary schools pupil intake. The list of schools and pupil numbers for the 2019/20 school year are detailed in the table below<sup>5</sup>:

School Name	No. of pupils	School Name	No. of pupils
O'Connell's Primary School	182	St Laurence O' Toole Primary School	163
St Vincent's Boys' School	107	St Laurence O' Toole CBS Primary School	65
St Vincent's Girls' National School	244	Gardiner Street Primary School	407
Central Model Senior School	276	Scoil Chaoimhin	60
Central Model Junior School	161	Rutland Street National School	162
<b>Total number of primary school pupils</b>			
1,827			

*\* list of schools reflected NEIC Programme Team records for the NEIC*

Although some pupils of primary school age fall outside the scope of the 5-10 year old target group for the research, the total figure of 1,827 children provides a good indicator of the number of children of this age living in the NEIC.

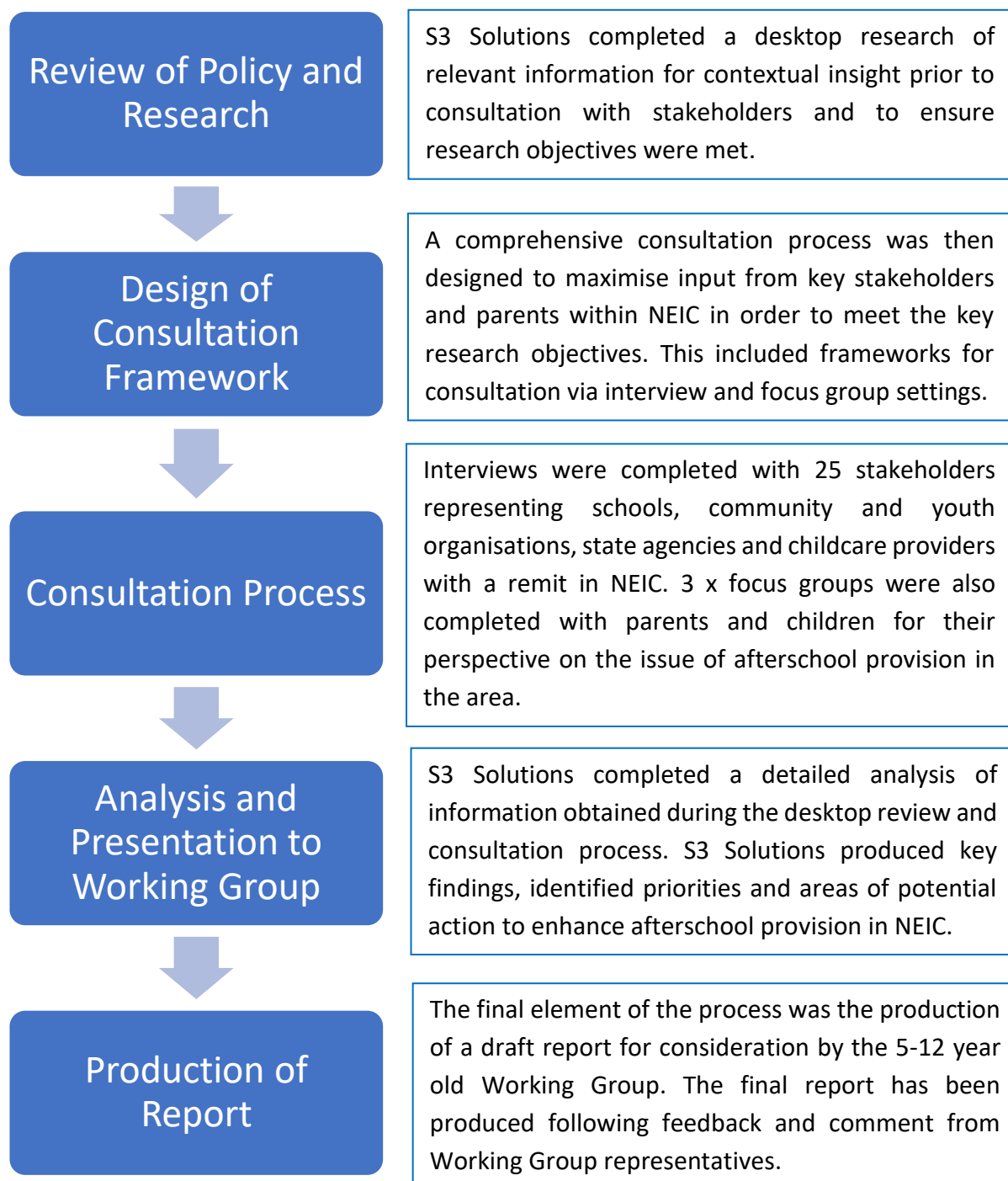
<sup>5</sup> <http://www.education.ie>

# Research Approach and Methodology

# Research Approach and Methodology

The following sets out the research methodology including approaches to data collection and analysis, as well as identifying some limitations, assumptions and challenges impacting on findings.

## 2.1 Research Approach



## 2.2 Data Analysis

The main method of data collection was stakeholder interviews and S3 Solutions worked with YPAR to identify a key list of stakeholders with reference to afterschool provision in the NEIC. Data collection continued until no new conceptual insights were generated and the researchers felt they had gathered repeated evidence for the thematic analysis, thus reaching theoretical saturation. Focus groups with parents and children aged 5-10 were completed to gather data to provide further insights on the issues identified during stakeholder interviews from the perspective of both (parents and children).

Thematic data from interviews and focus groups was triangulated and cross tabulated in order to identify emergent themes and issues and to explore the relationships between issues.

## 2.3 Limitations

Efforts were made to ensure the validity and reliability of findings through multiple method consultation (focus groups and interviews).

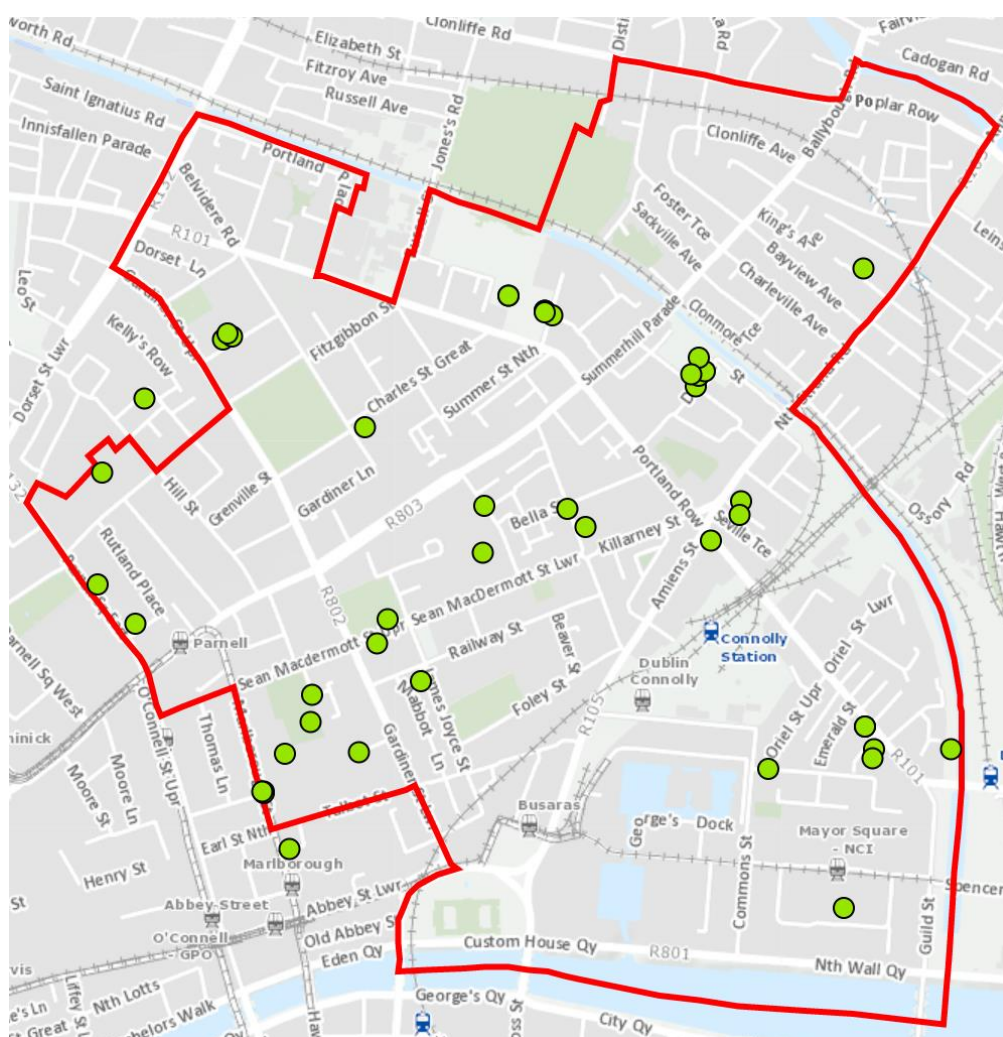
One area of limitation is in the extent of engagement from parents and children aged 5-10. Input from children was via a focus group (n = 10) and two focus groups were completed with parents (n = 14). The limitations reflect the resources available to researchers, given that input from a broad range of stakeholders from school and afterschool providers was an important aspect of the research to inform practical proposals that could be brought forward to enhance provision within the NEIC (key requirement as per the terms of reference for the assignment).

# NEIC Area Profile

# NEIC Area Profile

## 3.1 Location

The image below is a taken from the NEIC Programme online mapping tool. The red line identifies the perimeter of the NEIC and the streets / areas covered by the work of the NEIC Programme Initiative. The green markers represent the location of schools and other education providers within the area:



## 3.2 Statistical Overview of NEIC

A number of key overall statistics from the Central Statistics Office data for the 2016 Census along with the Pobal HP Deprivation Index has been presented as follows to help provide an overview of the area:

**20,012**  
**Population**

- Increase of 19% since 2006 (State figure 12%)
- 4.7% children aged under 4 (Stage figure 7%)
- 44% lone parent families (Stage figure 18%)
- 4% population have a disability (State figure 14%)

**7,002**  
**households**

- 28% local authority rented (Stage figure 7%)
- 39% of households have a car (State figure 81.9%)

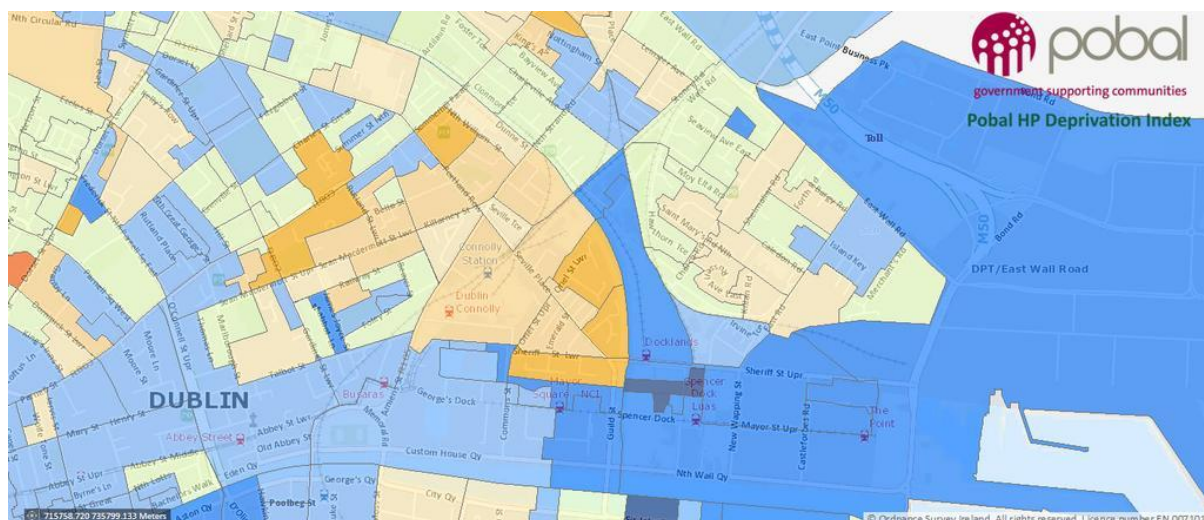
**High**  
**unemployment**

- 24% male unemployment (State figure 13.7%)
- 19% female unemployment (State figure 12%)

**Deprivation**  
**and**  
**Disadvantage**

- Over one third of NEIC Small Areas classified as disadvantaged or very disadvantaged

The graphic and key below provide a snapshot in terms ranking against Pobal HP Deprivation Index based upon the different Small Areas (SAs) within NEIC:



Relative Index Score	Standard Deviation	Label	Colour Scheme
over 30	> 3	extremely affluent	dark blue
20 to 30	2 to 3	very affluent	medium blue
10 to 20	1 to 2	affluent	Light blue
0 to 10	0 to 1	marginally above average	light green
0 to -10	0 to -1	marginally below average	light yellow
-10 to -20	-1 to -2	disadvantaged	medium yellow
-20 to -30	-2 to -3	very disadvantaged	orange
below -30	< -3	extremely disadvantaged	red

Over a third (26) of the SAs in the NEIC can be described as disadvantaged or very disadvantaged with a further 19 just marginally below average. This measures deprivation based on a range of measures including age dependency, education levels, household composition and employment status. As presented visually in the map above, there is significant level of variance across the NEIC in terms of the disadvantage experienced by local residents, ranging from extremely disadvantaged to extremely affluent.



### 3.3 Social and Economic Context

NEIC has been identified as an area of significant deprivation with socio – economic problems and challenges for many years. Prior the establishment of the NEIC Taskforce and Programme, it was designated as a "RAPID" (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) area of Dublin City. RAPID areas were developed in 2002 as a means for identifying and targeting support to groups which are tackling social exclusion and to improve the quality of life for residents in disadvantaged urban areas and provincial towns across the state.

The Mulvey Report and subsequent reports from the NEIC Programme Team have outlined further information in terms of the level of the socio – economic issues in the area:

- There are SAs in the NEIC containing 80% lone parent households, where up to half of the population have attained primary education only and less than 5% with third level education. This contrasts starkly with some other SAs with very low levels of lone parent households and where third level attainment is over double the state average. This creates a certain distinct imbalance in overall population profile in the geographical community.
- The area is also bordered by very evident areas of strong affluent business, enterprises and residential developments. This differentiation of population in profiles will be further accentuated with planned developments in the Dockland SDZ
- Male unemployment levels in some areas are double and triple the national average, including high dependency on the State for housing at over 90% in some cases.
- The NEIC is also home to clusters of a growing non-Irish population from other EU countries and non-EU countries some of whom are the victims of economic, social and human rights issues. Census data also highlights significantly higher rates of non-Irish nationals living in the NEIC compared to the national average of 12% ranging from 18% to as high as 52% across the five core electoral districts in the area.
- Homelessness and the provision of emergency accommodation are also major issues in the area. In the summer 2019, it was estimated that 1,488 homeless beds were located in the NEIC area.

### 3.4 Summary

This section has provided an overview of the area in terms of its location, demographics and socio – economic statistics.

# Policy and Research Context

# Policy and Research Context

As evidenced by statistical analysis, NEIC is an area of high socio-economic deprivation and disadvantage. There are further issues that are specific to the area which impact negatively on children and families that are considered in this section of the report.

## 4.1 Issues affecting 5-10-year olds living in NEIC:

### *4.1.1 Deprivation and Poverty*

Deprivation and poverty are key issues affecting children living in NEIC and the effects of poverty are seen across all areas of local children's lives. Statistics for the area presented in section 3 of the report provide a snapshot of the area and how it compares with the State overall.

### *4.1.2 Health and Wellbeing: risks of poor mental and physical health and wellbeing*

Children living in poverty are more likely to suffer from poor physical health as well as mental health issues in childhood and continuing into adulthood. High deprivation and high proportion of lone parent households can lead to families having to prioritise struggles of daily life rather, than focus on health and wellbeing.<sup>6</sup>

### *4.1.3 Shortfall in Educational Achievement*

Education is a factor when designating an area as disadvantaged and consequently within the NEIC there is a lack of educational attainment amongst residents. Some areas of the NEIC have high levels of residents which have a primary only education and less than 5% with third level education. In the NEIC area, less than a quarter of school leavers are reported to progress to third level education, and even this figure is likely to be significantly inflated by the inclusion of certain areas in the calculations.

There are ten primary schools that are located in or serve the NEIC area with DEIS programme status. The DEIS programme was established by the Department for Education and Skills in 2017 to help tackle educational underachievement in areas of deprivation in comparison to pupils in more affluent areas. That all ten primary schools are identified as "DEIS" schools provides an indication of the level of need in the area relating to educational attainment and progress.

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<sup>6</sup> Eurochild, 'Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage', March 2013

#### *4.1.4 Substance Misuse*

The NEIC is affected by high levels of substance misuse amongst residents, this has a direct effect on children living in the area. A needs analysis study<sup>7</sup> commissioned in 2019 by the North Inner City Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, detailed a number of key points to be considered in the context of this research:

- Within families, difficulties arise around the parent/child relationship, with many children of two parent families becoming the ‘surrogate partner’ for the parent who has a substance misuse issue. In single parent families often, children become the ‘care-giver’ for the family, especially where there are younger siblings. Substance abuse can lead to abuse and neglect due to diminished parenting capacity.
- Children impacted by or exposed to substance misuse are more likely to go on to develop problem substance use issues themselves. The study (2019) notes substance misuse affects every aspect of life in the NEIC, from childcare provision, to school and beyond and well as having intergenerational implications. Children at primary school level are exposed to drugs, leading them to be normalised to substance misuse and associated violence and repercussions.<sup>8</sup>

The research included contributions from service providers, statutory and community stakeholders, drug and alcohol support service users and family members. Across all contributions, there was “a deep felt concern” of the impact of drugs, substance misuse and linked issues such as involvement in gangs for children from primary school age upwards. Contributors to the research noted various scenarios faced by primary school age children ranging from being groomed to help distribute guns and weapons for gangs to using drugs and in particular noting the correlation between involvement in low level activity by children which escalates to a much deeper involvement in drug dealing, criminality and drug taking in their teenage years.

This information provides context for the NEIC area but also highlights the opportunity and need to positively influence the lives of children before the age of 10.

#### *4.1.5 Homelessness*

Dublin has been experiencing significant problems with homelessness for a number of years. Figures released by the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DRHE) following a Freedom of Information request from the Irish Times, indicate that the DRHE spent over €170 million in

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<sup>8</sup> Kathyan Kelly ‘Substance Misuse Issues in Dublin’s North East Inner City, A Community-based Needs Analysis’, June 2019

2019 on temporary and emergency accommodation. DRHE figures for 2016<sup>9</sup>, detail a spend of just less than €73 million on temporary and emergency accommodation. Contributing factors include increased rent, the lack of social and affordable housing, changes in the Rent Supplement System (RAS, replaced by the Housing Assistance Payment HAP), overall reduction in budgets for social housing (from €1.7bn in 2008 to €597m in 2014) and legislation introduced in 2013 which banned the rental of bed-sits.<sup>10</sup>

*Figures for homelessness published in the summer of 2019, outlined that 694 children in NEIC are staying in homeless accommodation, with 234 of these children staying in temporary emergency accommodation.*

#### 4.1.6 Ethnic Minority Communities

NEIC has experienced an increase in its ethnic minority population in the past 10-15 years. In some areas of the NEIC, 52% of the population is non-Irish (11.6% was the state average in 2016 as per CSO figures). This has an impact on areas already under pressure such as housing, schools and services. One primary school in the area has between 50-60% of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, introducing different languages to the classroom and without support this creates additional stress on schools and teachers. A significant increase in the ethnic minority population over a short period of time leads to a considerable social change in an any area, particularly in relation to the need for additional supports (especially for young children as the migrant population is normally more youthful). This is considered within the context of children and families living in the area already experiencing shortfalls in services such as afterschool clubs.

#### 4.1.7 Shortfall of Services for 5-10 year olds

The YPAR 5-12 Working Group involves representatives from primary schools, afterschool projects, Tusla children services, community-based youth projects and parents. Feedback and input from these groups suggests that there is a significant shortage of afterschool places to support the demands for afterschool places in the NEIC. Stakeholders and representatives of the Working Group have identified a specific gap in afterschool supports and services for 5-10 year-olds in comparison to 10-18 year-olds who can access youth services provision provided through the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/info/funding>

<sup>10</sup> Kathyan Kelly 'Substance Misuse Issues in Dublin's North East Inner City, A Community-based Needs Analysis', June 2019

## 4.2 Policy and strategies aimed to address issues affecting Children

A number of policy documents and research publications have been considered in the context of the research. An overview has been provided under the following themes:

- Early intervention and breaking the poverty cycle
- Collaboration and working together to improve outcomes
- Hidden harm and children at risk
- Education
- Benefits and Barriers of Afterschool Clubs

### 4.2.1 Policy of early intervention and Breaking the Poverty Cycle

#### **“Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures”, The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020**

The Mulvey report stressed the “important role of education from early years through mainstream schools cannot be overstated in terms of providing stable and secure environments for learning, social development and fostering life ambitions.”<sup>11</sup> This approach for early intervention is outlined in national policy ‘Better Outcomes Brighter Futures’ in this framework it is noted- “What happens early in life affects health and wellbeing in later life”.<sup>12</sup> It is noted the root of many problems and health issues experienced later in life are the result of adverse childhood and teenage experiences”. To reverse these trends, a greater focus on investing in the early years and in earlier intervention and prevention across the life cycle is required”. It is also highlighted the importance of this in areas of disadvantage- “additional support for ‘vulnerable’ groups, including those living in poverty.”

The framework recognises that investment in the early years, and in prevention and early intervention, will pay additional dividends for all children and young people, and is especially important in breaking intergenerational cycles. The desired outcomes to achieve this are that children and young people:

1. are active and healthy, with positive physical and mental well-being
2. are achieving their full potential in all areas of learning and development
3. are safe and protected from harm
4. have economic security and opportunity
5. are connected, respected and contributing to their world

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<sup>11</sup> Kieran Mulvey, ‘Dublin North East Inner City, Creating a Brighter Future’, February 2017, Page 37

<sup>12</sup> Department of Children and Youth Affairs, “‘Better Outcomes, Brighter Future”, The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020’, March 2014, Page 19

The national strategy also emphasises quality and evidence in young people's services, which is captured in one of the 5 'transitional' goals of the strategy noting that: "Government investment in children will be more outcomes driven and informed by national and international evidence on the effectiveness of expenditure on child related services, with the aim of improving child outcomes and reducing inequalities." Furthermore, a key priority of the framework is to "work together to protect young people at risk".

Early intervention is linked to breaking poverty and intergenerational cycles and leads to equality of opportunity for young people. One of the most effective ways to do this is to ensure that they get the most out of their educational experience at primary level to support their second level education. To assist this there is a need to break down barriers that inhibit or disable young people's capability of sustaining their participation in the education system by providing appropriate and flexible extra-curricular and afterschool supports and activities.

### **Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage<sup>13</sup>**

This European policy highlights the importance of investing in children in order to break intergenerational poverty. To ensure this the importance that "children have equal access to good quality services is key to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty and disadvantage and is the hallmark of an effective child poverty approach". The policy notes that poor quality services are destined to have the opposite effect "reducing life chances and potentially incurring long-lasting detrimental effects on children's development". The policy references the Annual Growth Survey 2013 which calls on Member States to ensure 'broad access to affordable and high-quality services such as social and health services, childcare...as part of their efforts to promote social inclusion and to tackle poverty'.<sup>14</sup>

In order to break the cycle of disadvantage and ensure investment in children, focus is placed on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). This is seen as a social investment to address inequality, ensuring affordability and adaptable provision which is complementary to the role of the family as they contribute to the social and personal development of the child to give the child a good start in life. Services provided are to be of high quality, inclusive and affordable and importantly must reach those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The policy references that some Member States have not met these commitments from previous policies due to financial pressure and that this may undermine the quality of services; the policy states it is more than ever crucial to support this call for quality services for children. Development of a European quality framework for ECEC was planned and Member States were encouraged to use this opportunity to develop and reform their early

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<sup>13</sup> Eurochild, 'Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage', March 2013

<sup>14</sup> European Commission, 'Annual Growth Survey 2013: Charting the course to recovery', November 2012

years' systems. The policy also notes the importance in the need "for services to be available to all children, independently of the parents' labour market situation".<sup>15</sup> The guidance notes children's right to participate "is recognised as paramount to promote social inclusion". Two actions are suggested to achieve this:

- Support the participation of all children in play, recreation, sport and cultural activities:
- Put in place mechanisms that promote children's participation in decision making that affect their lives.<sup>16</sup>

In relation to the action to support the participation of all children in play, recreation, sport and cultural activities, a key element noted of importance is to "increase the provision of non-formal and informal learning opportunities through more investment in afterschool care, recreational sport and cultural activities. It is important to address financial, cultural and physical barriers that prevent children from participating in such activities". Measures proposed include creating environments for participatory activities by engaging schools, communities and families. "Education systems need to be made more inclusive to break the cycle of disadvantage, promoting high quality education that ensures equal opportunities for all children and that fosters the social, emotional, and physical development of the child."

European policy links the provision of good quality services as a social investment which is key to breaking intergenerational poverty and disadvantage. It notes investment in afterschool care is as an action for member states to take due to its role in supporting the participation of children in play, recreation, sport and culture, this must be done considering financial, cultural and physical barriers. The expansion of afterschool supports and activities in the NEIC directly support this policy and aims to break disadvantage and intergenerational cycle of poverty in the area. The policy also targets children and advocates early intervention.

### **National Childcare Scheme**

The National Childcare Scheme (NCS)<sup>17</sup> is a statutory entitlement to financial support for childcare for children up to the age of 15, via income assessed subsidies. Its aim is to 'improve children's outcomes, support lifelong learning, make work pay, reduce child poverty and tangibly reduce the cost of quality childcare for thousands of families across Ireland'. The scheme states that "it will help parents meet the cost of quality early learning and care and school age childcare and it will support more working parents than under previous schemes".

As well as being family income assessed, the scheme assesses entitlement via the following:

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<sup>15</sup> Eurochild, 'Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage', March 2013, page 4

<sup>16</sup> Eurochild, 'Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage', March 2013, page 7

<sup>17</sup> Government of Ireland Early Learning & Care, 'National Childcare Scheme', <https://ncs.gov.ie/en/>



- If the individual (and their partner, if applicable) are working, studying or training, the maximum number of subsidised hours available per week is 40.
- If the individual (and their partner, if applicable) are not working, studying or training, the maximum number of subsidised hours available per week is 15.

The assessment criteria could result in less funding for low-income families living in areas of disadvantage, where services are particularly important for children and their development. The Minister for Children acknowledged this reality by ensuring that families on subsidies before the new NCS commences, will retain their level of subsidy and remain on their existing childcare programme until August 2021. This offers the potential for a scenario whereby children coming into the system for the first time (post November 2019) will be bound by the NCS and may have less access to early years care and education than their siblings, despite having the same circumstances. The results for school-age children could mean the allocation of 15 hours is covered by school, so during term time they will not be entitled to any subsidised outside-school care that could provide food and homework support.

If the NCS leads to these scenarios/ results, it may undermine the early intervention approach which national policy has stressed as an important principle, particularly for disadvantaged children. Despite the hope that encouraging parents to work may break the cycle of poverty, this approach may not be ‘child focused’ and may fail to consider children’s needs regardless of their parents’ circumstance.

#### *4.2.2 Hidden Harm and Children at Risk*

The experience of children living with, and affected by, parental substance use has become widely known as ‘Hidden Harm’. The term Hidden Harm encapsulates two key features for children, 1. that these children are often not known to services, and 2. that they suffer harm in a number of ways; through physical and emotional neglect, including exposure to harm and poor parenting. Children of parents who misuse substances are also classified as ‘children at risk’, they are more likely to be at a higher risk of physical, psychological and emotional harm, compared to children whose parents do not misuse drugs or alcohol.<sup>18</sup>

Not all parents who use substances experience difficulties with parenting capacity. Equally not all children exposed to parental substance misuse are affected adversely either in the short or longer term. However, it is evidenced that children living with parental problem

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<sup>18</sup>National Social Inclusion Office, ‘National Hidden Harm Project’

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/homelessness-and-addiction/national-hidden-harm-project/>;

substance use are more likely to experience mental health problems, academic under-achievement, have poor social skills and be more prone to developing substance misuse problems themselves later in life. The National Drugs Strategy aims to address substance misuse via education and prevention, it places an emphasis on school-based interventions, aligned to the SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) Programme.<sup>19</sup>

The extent to which the NEIC is affected by substance misuse has been highlighted previously. The expansion and further availability of afterschool clubs and activities would allow children who are affected by these harms and risks to have a place to go where they are safe and supported, where the educational element may help to lessen their exposure and also minimise the detrimental effects of substance misuse.

It can be argued that the need for and potential positive impact of these services is greater in areas such as NEIC given its context and level of deprivation.

#### *4.2.3 Education*

The educational achievement of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds remains below that of better-off pupils. The DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Programme was a response to this achievement gap in areas of disadvantage. DEIS Primary Schools receive a range of additional resources including staffing, funding, access to literacy and numeracy programmes, and assistance with activities such as school planning. The Department of Education and Skills in their note to schools regarding the impact of DEIS ‘the DEIS Programme is having a positive effect on tackling educational disadvantage.’<sup>20</sup>

The ethos of the DEIS action plan is:

- every child and young person deserve an equal chance to access, participate in and benefit from education
- each person should have the opportunity to reach her/his full educational potential for personal, social and economic reasons and
- education is a critical factor in promoting social inclusion and economic development

The aim of the action plan is to ensure that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are prioritised and effectively addressed. As noted in section 3.1.3, all ten primary schools located in or serving the NEIC area are designated as “DEIS Primary Schools”.

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<sup>19</sup> Department of Health, ‘Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery A Health Led Response 2017-2025’, 2017, page 24

<sup>20</sup> Department of Education and Skills, ‘Lessons from Research on the Impact of DEIS, an information note for schools’, December 2011, page 1

The concentration of primary schools serving the NEIC within the DEIS programme is an indicator in terms of the level of educational disadvantage in the area. Education is promoted as a key to breaking the poverty cycle and to tackle the results and repercussions of disadvantage. Afterschool clubs and activities are identified as a support to education, it ensures that primary school children aged 5-10 will get the most out of their educational experience and prepares them for their second level education and potentially even further. The expansion of afterschool activity will support the DEIS programme and its action plan ensuring less educational disadvantage in NEIC.

Funding/Expenditure awarded to DEIS Schools is dependent on a scale of deprivation. The DEIS Grant should be utilised to attain the targets set in the school's DEIS Action Plan across the DEIS themes. In this regard, financial resources should be targeted at the individual pupils who are considered most at risk and at addressing educational disadvantage through a focused response.

#### *4.2.4 Benefits of Afterschool Activities and Clubs Focusing on Disadvantaged Children*

It has been highlighted that afterschool activities and clubs can have a positive effect on children living in areas of disadvantage, these include:

- Address poverty by allowing an early intervention in the life cycle of a child providing a greater chance to break the intergenerational poverty than can occur.
- Encourage organisations to work together and in collaboration
- Address hidden harm and reach children at risk
- Support educational achievement of 5-10 year and address the achievement gap

NEIC has pockets where residents have primary education only and few with third level education, this can lead to a lack of parental engagement in their child's schooling and contribute to underachievement. A range of improvements can be made in children's lives by their participation in afterschool activities and clubs they are less likely to suffer emotional stress and their social and academic skills are enhanced.<sup>21</sup> "For children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, who have lower take up of formal out-of-school activities, school-based clubs appear to offer an affordable and inclusive means of supporting academic attainment."

Disadvantaged learners are less likely than their more advantaged peers to become involved in a broad range of cultural, sporting and other learning experiences. Encouraging participation in a range of out-of-school hours learning activities is particularly important to

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<sup>21</sup> Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (USA) Letter Archive, 'Afterschool Programs Make a Difference' August 2008, [http://www.sedl.org/pubs/sedl-letter/v20n02/afterschool\\_findings.html](http://www.sedl.org/pubs/sedl-letter/v20n02/afterschool_findings.html)

disadvantaged children.”<sup>22</sup> An overview of benefits and barriers for afterschool activities and clubs are set out below:

Benefits	Barriers /Solutions to Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boost academic performance via greater levels of attention in class, more engaged in school</li> <li>• Less likely to have an inclination for violent or problem behaviour</li> <li>• Greater social skills and confidence</li> <li>• Teamwork and shared goals</li> <li>• Support to working parents</li> <li>• Relaxation and less stress</li> <li>• Promoting healthy hobbies away from screens</li> <li>• Healthy habits to practice skills and pursue their passions</li> <li>• Less likely to suffer with weight issues</li> <li>• Leadership skills</li> <li>• Good time management</li> <li>• Opportunities it has to succeed</li> <li>• New Experiences</li> <li>• Valuing School</li> <li>• Improved Self Esteem</li> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• Physical Health and development</li> <li>• Socialising and friendships</li> <li>• Happiness and enjoyment</li> <li>• Direct link to the curriculum</li> <li>• Relaxation</li> <li>• Helps develop relationships with adults/peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost, subsidies and fee waiver for disadvantaged children</li> <li>• Ease of access</li> <li>• Provision- ‘pay as you go’ rather than sign up for a full term</li> <li>• High level of commitment can sometimes lead to high levels of cost</li> <li>• Familiarity and Trust</li> <li>• Choice and Variety</li> <li>• Relationship with afterschool club staff</li> <li>• Availability</li> <li>• Parent attitude to school and afterschool activities</li> <li>• Value of the club and the opportunities it has to succeed</li> </ul>

<sup>22</sup>Callanan M, Laing K, Chanfreau J, Paylor J, Skipp A, Tanner E, Todd L, ‘The value of after school clubs for disadvantaged children’ Briefing paper, Newcastle University Social Research, 2016

## 4.3 Summary

This section of the research highlights the rationale for additional investment in afterschool provision, the policy context for doing so and the potential impact for children. It has also considered this information from the perspective of NEIC and the issues it experiences. There is a clear rationale on this basis to invest in additional provision in the area, offering long term benefits for children, families and the wider community.

# Research Findings

# Research Findings

This section of the report details information gathered through the research process following interviews with stakeholders along with focus groups with parents and children. The stakeholder input reflects interviews completed with 25 representatives from school, community, youth and state agencies and is presented within the following sub-sections:

- 5.1 Current provision
- 5.2 Benefits for children accessing provision
- 5.3 Need and demand for services
- 5.4 Potential solutions and factors to consider for expansion

A full list of consultees has been provided as Appendix 1. Key information obtained from focus groups with parents and children is detailed in section 5.5.

## 5.1 Current Provision

This section profiles existing afterschool supports and activities in the NEIC under a number of themed headings.

### *5.1.1 Location*

Afterschool supports are delivered in community-based settings and in primary schools throughout NEIC. In the community, afterschool supports are primarily provided by youth projects and family resource centres as part of integrated wrap around supports for children through pre-school and afterschool. The community provision also includes the high support Tusla Neighbourhood Youth Project (NYP) 1 which provides intensive 1-1 supports for children and young people aged 5-12 with high support needs. In the primary schools, provision is mainly classroom based though in some cases the assembly hall has been used to cater for a spike in demand.

### *5.1.2 Profile of Users*

In the community settings, the age range tended to be in the 6-9 age profile as many of those aged 5 may still be accessing a pre-school place while those aged 10 will often transition to a more formal youth work- based environment. In the primary school settings, afterschool supports were prevalent from first class onwards and were frequently grouped together by year (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>). However, due to resource issues, not all of these groups will have an afterschool provision each term. The need for, type and format of delivery is reviewed on a term by term basis in most schools in the context of available resources.

Teachers and staff in community services reported high levels of ethnic diversity in those children accessing services. One community setting indicated that 80% of the children were from an ethnic background other than “White Irish” with as many as thirty different ethnic groups represented in the primary schools. In relation to gender, there is no significant divergence evident with some locations reporting a slightly higher participation rate among girls.

Both school and community-based provision are being increasingly impacted by the escalating homeless problem in Dublin rendering the provision of safe and secure afterschool provision more essential. Many children come from single parent homes or where a parent is frequently absent as a result of being in prison/custody or participating in a substance misuse treatment and rehabilitation programme.

Some children will present with special needs such as diagnosed/undiagnosed learning difficulties, behavioural issues and challenges with numeracy and literacy. As all of the primary schools in the areas have DEIS status, additional classroom supports, and resources will be in place to cater for such needs. Where possible, the schools do try to extend these resources to include afterschool supports for Special Education Needs (SEN). However, this will be dependent on the SEN staff giving up their time. Engagement via the consultation process indicates that the number of diagnosed and undiagnosed with SEN is rising. This is explored further in Section 4.3 and 4.4.

Schools profile children based on “targeted” criteria provided for DEIS schools. Targeted children fit under the following criteria:

- Children with a family history of crime, drug or alcohol abuse
- Children with parents in prison
- Children with a history of early school leaving in the family

Importantly in terms of the context of the area, these criteria do not include those children that are living in emergency accommodation or children that do not use English as their first language. With the increasing focus on “targeted” criteria and focussing resourcing to children under these criteria, this creates additional pressures for schools to meet the needs of all children. There was a common view amongst both principals and Home School Community Liaison Officers (HSCLs) consulted, that the vast majority if not all children in each of their schools could be profiled as “targeted” due to the complex needs and issues they face in their own development, home and family life.



### 5.1.3 Activities

The range of activities offered differs between the community and school due to the limited timeframe that schools are operating within. Provision in both settings will begin at 1.30/2pm to facilitate the child's school finishing time. Children are either collected at their school by the community provider or left off at the location by their parents.

The collection of children from school by the community provider can be a strong enabler for parents in accessing and sustaining employment, training or education. Both settings provide food for the children and in most cases the community setting will also provide a meal before the child goes home. Offering this model of service has an increasing number of operational and financial issues for providers including rising insurance costs and ensuring appropriate staff: child ratios are maintained.

#### 5.1.3.1 Primary Schools

The duration of the activities in the primary school is 1-2 hours maximum and begins with homework supervision and support and will include a fun-based/drama or exercise related activity with some time for socialising with the other children. Where the provision in the school is for a two-hour duration, there is additional scope for an emotional support or life skills intervention. There are considerable resource pressures for the schools in the provision of afterschool supports with budgets reduced and the dependence on teachers to volunteer their time outside of school hours.

From engagement with HSCLs, it has been identified that the type and level of provision provided within schools varies in terms of activities and schedule (depending on available budget and resources). It is also important to note that most activities are provided on a school year / class basis, with one activity per year / class per week depending on uptake. An example weekly timetable from one local primary school is detailed below:

Activity	Day	Class
Literacy Games	Tuesday	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Maths Higher Level	Tuesday	6 <sup>th</sup>
Guitar Beginner	Tuesday	4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup>
Soccer	Tuesday	5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> alternate
GAA	Thursday	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup>
P.E.	Thursday	4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup>
Fun fitness	Thursday	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Chess	Friday	4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , and 6 <sup>th</sup>

*\*please note the timetable reflected a programme developed when additional short term funding resources were secured. Numbers are limited based on teacher: child ratios.*

#### *5.1.3.2 Community*

Many of the community providers offer structured afterschool activities 5 days per week. With often a 4- hour daily intervention, there is greater scope for the community providers to cater for the social, emotional and behavioural needs of the children. Such programmes may include:

- Learning and Development - Introduced to a range of new experiences, opportunities, Afterschool Educational Support – in partnership with volunteers.
- Health and Wellbeing – Sport and Play, Healthy Eating and Nutrition, Mental/Emotional Wellbeing.
- Social and Life Skills.
- Sense of identity; Community involvement and Belonging.
- Creativity and Imagination.
- Support and Advocacy.
- Outreach / new communities.
- Family support.

#### *5.1.3.3 Holiday and Summer Programmes*

HSCLs work closely with the local community providers to ensure that children receiving school-based supports have access to some form of holiday and summer activity programme. This is challenging due to lack of resources and some children will not be able to access an activity (which is a further wellbeing risk factor for children living in the NEIC area).

To optimise resources, community providers structure intensive programmes of recreational activity in the summer- time. These can include camping, visits to outdoor pursuit centres and sports related summer camps. This ensures continuity with the child, sustains and builds on their personal, social and emotional outcomes from term time and provides adequate space for family time. Providers have noted however that these services are becoming increasingly more difficult to offer as a result of rising insurance costs, which could be a threat to services in the near future if this issue isn't addressed.

#### *5.1.4 Referral Policies*

The external funding environment has transitioned from universal access to afterschool support in disadvantaged areas to more targeted need. Primary schools are faced with the challenges of selecting children within each class group for afterschool provision rather than offering it to whole class groups. Schools are concerned that this will lead to stigmatisation of those accessing afterschool provision.

Thus far, schools have been able to mitigate against this through offering flexible term- based activities to ensure that all those in need get some afterschool support. Given that the schools are based in an area of high social and economic disadvantage, intrinsic need presents for all children and teachers are concerned about having to further assess need based on indicators such as Tusla intervention.

Referrals for the community afterschool services are more targeted and will generally reflect the following:

- Children will all be from the local area where the service is based
- Focus will be on those with higher levels of risk and need
- Referrals will be accepted and in cases prioritised from agencies (Tusla, Family Support, HSCLs)
- Referral from parents will be considered

#### *5.1.5 Capacity shortfalls and waiting lists*

Many of the community providers who have structured programmes in place have limited capacity for taking on new referrals or being flexible with existing places due to the external funding environment. This has led to a situation in some services where a child receives supports from pre-school through to age 10-12 which enables positive progression and a pathway to youth services but does restrict capacity to take on new referrals. Some community providers do hold formal waiting lists while others feel that it is not worth recording as they do not have the capacity to take on new referrals and if a vacancy does arise, their local knowledge will ensure it is filled quickly.

Much of the shortage of capacity can be attributed to a lack of physical infrastructure, almost all community provision is located in old buildings with limited scope for expansion and in danger of not being “fit for purpose” in the near future. Some providers have identified new sites which would double their capacity and feel confident that if realised they would fill all of the places.

Community- based services have benefitted from the paid 30 hour per week community posts funded by NEIC emanating from a Mulvey report recommendation. This has enabled some flexibility for providers in placing staff across afterschool and youth work functions as no formal qualifications are currently needed to work in such settings. Community providers are reliant on these funded posts in order to survive which is a significant resource and financial pressure in relation to long term sustainability.

From the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2019, all school age service providers are required to register their service with Tusla<sup>23</sup>. Registration includes a process of compliance and the development of robust policies and procedures for all afterschool providers. Based upon consultation undertaken, providers indicated support for the introduction of a “National Quality Standards Framework” for Afterschool Provision which would standardise funding, streamline planning and reporting procedures. However, they are concerned that regulation will be a protracted and resource intensive process with inadequate resources available for quality assurance and staff training and development.

#### *5.1.6 Special Educational Needs (SEN)*

No specific SEN afterschool provision for children aged 5-10 was identified for the NEIC, the review of provision and consultation with stakeholders and parents did not identify any specific provision. A number of providers acknowledged that staff members had a level of SEN training or qualifications but that did not indicate that the provision offered was appropriate or sufficiently tailored for children with SEN.

## 5.2 Benefits for Children Accessing Services

Through the consultation process, stakeholders were asked to offer their perspective in terms of the value of afterschool provision for local children and benefits experienced as a result (based on their experience working with children in NEIC). Some of the key information received included:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Early intervention with children – building relationships, identifying needs and providing support on this basis from a young age.</li><li>• Creates opportunities for children to play, socialise, work together and develop relationships.</li><li>• Afterschool provision as a central element in supporting social development and education / literacy development.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suitable afterschool provision is an “enabler” and support for parents and families.</li><li>• Provides diversity in a child’s education.</li><li>• Provides another opportunity for support for those children struggling with school or the school learning environment.</li><li>• Creating a safe environment for children that may experience complex issues in their home and family lives. Afterschool activities can offer children</li></ul>
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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/school-age-services/>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides opportunities for children to access activities they would otherwise not have the opportunity to access due to circumstances or living environment.</li> </ul>	<p>a “release” from these issues on a regular basis.</p>
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Those consulted were also asked to provide characteristics of what they would define as “good” afterschool provision for children aged 5-10 years old in the NEIC area. The most popular responses received were as follows:

- Interesting to children (activities linked to their needs and interests) and age appropriate in nature
- Have variety within activities and the schedule of provision
- Take place in a safe environment and provide food (where possible)
- Appropriate for those with special educational needs and suitable disability access
- Includes provision which is stimulating for the children participating, with a balance of activities across:
  - Education and learning activities / support
  - Play and being active
  - Personal and social development
  - Fun

## 5.3 Need and Demand for Services

Based upon the input and feedback received from all stakeholders interviewed from the education, community and statutory sectors, a number of overarching points have been identified in relation to the need and demand for afterschool services:

- There is a clear endorsement of the need for additional services and investment in afterschool services within NEIC:
  - There is a recognition that the lack of access to appropriate afterschool provision is one of the key issues impacting on the quality of life experienced and development of 5-10 year olds in the area

- There is a high level of concern of the scale of the issue and its potential to have longer term problems and negative impacts for children in terms of their educational, personal and social development, family relationships and place within society / local community in the future
- There was broad recognition by all those involved in the consultation process that the current level of provision is far outweighed by the demand for services:
  - All community-based providers consulted note significant demand for services with waiting lists for current provision and services
  - Schools, HSCLs and community / youth organisations note the difficulty in accessing provision and places for children in need of afterschool support / services. In reality community-based providers only have the resources and capacity to offer services to a small percentage of the overall 5-10 year old population within the NEIC area

Further information gathered from stakeholders in relation to both the need for additional afterschool provision and also the demand for services is details as follows. The table below identifies key themes in the feedback received:

Need (Impact of the Issue)	Demand (Factors influencing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial and time pressure on working parents or limiting ability to access training / employment opportunities</li> <li>• Child safety and welfare issues and children going home alone</li> <li>• Children spending time in “at risk” environments</li> <li>• Profile of the area (ethnic minorities, deprivation, diversity, transient population, homeless population and high levels of addiction / drug use and associated criminal activity)</li> <li>• Little or no provision available for those children with special educational needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited places versus total 5-10 population</li> <li>• Pressure on school budgets</li> <li>• Lack of suitable facilities and resource pressures for community providers</li> <li>• Need for greater flexibility in service provision models and clarity in terms of criteria for acceptance</li> <li>• Government policy (current and planned changed in policy)</li> </ul>

*Need (Impact of the Issue)*

*Financial and time pressure on working parents or limiting ability to access training / employment opportunities*

Many families in the area are single parents working or both parents working. Access to afterschool provision is extremely important for these families given that it can often determine the hours of work that parents can commit to or increase pressure on parents to ensure that their children are in a safe and supervised environment until they return from work. The majority of the families in the area have low incomes and therefore cannot afford to miss opportunities for paid employment (or reduce their hours based on not being able to put in place suitable afterschool provision or care for their child) and are not able to afford provision that is based upon a fee (e.g. afterschool service, sports, arts, drama or similar provision that have an associated fee). These families are relying on securing any employment opportunity to ensure they can meet the costs of living and day to day life.

In many cases, a determining factor as to whether parents (particularly single parents) can commit to training and employability programmes available in the area is whether they can secure suitable afterschool provision for their child to complete the programme and which is also financially viable for them.

*Child safety and welfare issues and children going home alone*

The issue noted previously in terms of the importance of afterschool provision to support working parents and the impact of limited provision, has led to another growing area of concern in terms of children going home alone without supervision. As per the nature of NEIC, the children affected would (in most cases) be going home to sub-standard accommodation which may include single room accommodation in a broader accommodation complex with no outside play areas or social space. This is a clear child welfare issue and consultees stressed the importance of play for the 5-10 year group and its importance in the long term development of each individual child.

*Children spending time in “at risk” environments*

This relates to children between the ages of 5-10 in the area spending time in homeless shelters / hostels and emergency accommodation, parks and streets. The area also has significant problems in relation to crime and open drug taking / dealing which put children at further risk and exposure to behaviours that could negatively influence their development, attitudes and their own future behaviour. There is a concern that children are being exposed regularly to these types of behaviours which can then “normalise” it. This can then feed a continuous cycle of intergenerational issues relating to drug taking, addiction and involvement

in criminal activity. The importance of early intervention, reinforcement of positive behaviours and development of positive role models was even more important in an area such as NEIC given the scale and complexity of socio- economic needs in the area.

Consultees noted that members of the Roma community and those families that were in nightly accommodation (accommodation is secured on a night to night basis and therefore varies) were particularly affected by this issue. The afterschool period is when the issue is at its height, with families waiting for accommodation to be confirmed and therefore if children have not got afterschool provision to attend they will have nowhere to go in many cases other than “hanging around the streets and parks”.

One of the HSCL’s consulted in the process highlighted the nature and scale of the issue by stating:

*“In one of the primary schools that I work within, over 10% of the children are in emergency accommodation. These children don’t have access to a garden or living room and are sharing a small room(s) with their family. If they don’t have access to regular afterschool provision, what is the impact on that child’s development?”*

*Profile of the area (new communities, deprivation, diversity, transient population, homeless population and high levels of addiction / drug use and associated criminal activity)*

As has been noted, the scale of these issues, the profile and diversity of the area adds to the level need and impact that insufficient afterschool provision has on children and families. NEIC is unlike any other in the state in relation to these issues and their impact upon the area and communities. Schools and HSCLs highlight that based on these issues, most if not all of the children attending their schools could be deemed “targeted”.

*A primary school noted that out of its total student population of 270, 72 children were “targeted” (45 children) and in emergency accommodation (27 children).*

Consultees reinforced the point that the impact of the lack of suitable afterschool provision for a significant number of children in the area is magnified within NEIC. Some of the knock on impacts of these issues on families include grandparents being more heavily involved in raising children in a significant number of cases due to parents struggling with drug and alcohol use or addiction or being in prison for offences relating to these issues. This places greater pressure on families and the environment that children are exposed to and deem “normal”.

*Little or no provision available for those children with special educational needs*



This was noted by a number of stakeholders and it was against a growing number of children with diagnosed and undiagnosed needs. The following information received during the consultation process provides an insight into the scale of the issue:

*A primary school was noted as having 54 out of 130 of their 5-10 year olds diagnosed with special educational needs, representing almost 42% of this age cohort. 34 children have Asperger's and 20 have been diagnosed with additional needs. There is no specific or tailored afterschool provision for these children in their local area.*

It was noted that these children may require one to one support or support based on small staff: child ratios to meet their needs. This is a resource implication for service delivery.

#### *Demand (Factors influencing)*

- *Limited places versus total 5-10 population* – this has resulted in high demand and considerable waiting lists. It is estimated that there are less than 100 afterschool places with community providers in the area against 1,827 children of primary school age. It is recognised that this type of provision does not suit every child or family and there is school based provision (although much limited in terms of duration and frequency) but this still provides a very clear picture in relation to the scale of the issue and demand for additional provision.
- *Pressure on school budgets* – this continues to limit provision. Restrictions in terms of “targeted” provision / children and limited teaching resources to support afterschool provision. Many schools have relied on the School Completion budget as a mechanism to fund their afterschool provision, however recent changes in how this budget can be applied have had significant impact in terms of the provision schools can offer. Those children deemed in the “targeted” criteria are to be priority and provision to be offered for these children only as opposed to ensuring that they are catered for within a broader group of children.
- *Lack of suitable facilities and resource pressures for community providers* – this limits the type and volume of service that can be offered. There are also broader concerns around the condition of some facilities to meet regulatory requirements in the short, medium and long term. From consultation with providers and key stakeholders within the area, it is clear also that there are very few (if any) opportunities for development of new facilities due to a lack of suitable sites or buildings. The researcher consulted with a member of the NEIC Programme team and it was noted that there had been a comprehensive review of available sites and buildings in the area and scope for significant development was limited for new or additional facilities.

*Crosscare is offering a new afterschool service (Ballybough Afterschool Service) for 6-9 year olds in the Ballybough area beginning in early 2020. A key barrier to developing the service was securing a suitable venue. Securing the venue was a 2 year process for the organisation.*

- *Need for greater flexibility in service provision models and clarity in terms of criteria* – there was an acceptance that community-based provision could be more flexible in nature in terms of how places are allocated and retained. It was noted that children that secure a place normally keep it throughout their primary school years for 5 days per week. Given there are limited places, this means that the number of children benefiting is low versus the total 5-10 population of the area.

From the perspective of community providers, they are operating in very difficult financial circumstances and many struggle financially and with uncertainty from year to year. This means that from an organisational perspective and to ensure survival, they must have a set number of children accessing the service everyday based on clear guidelines and payment terms.

There was also a lack of awareness of the criteria applied when allocating places and how this is applied by different community providers. It was suggested that greater transparency or understanding of the criteria applied could allow schools, HSCLs, community and youth organisations to ensure that referrals made to these services reflect those that experience the highest level of need.

- *Government policy* – the National Childcare Scheme and Schools completion policy are two examples of new policies / policy changes that impact upon afterschool provision. Policy changes within both could put further pressure (or already have) on the ability of community providers and schools to offer afterschool services for the 5-10 age group.

## 5.4 Potential Solutions and Factors to Consider for Expansion

This research has been focussed on exploring the issues associated with afterschool provision in the area with a view to developing a proposal for further expansion and development of services. Consultees were therefore asked to provide ideas around potential solutions or new developments and also factors that should be considered when developing a proposal to expand services.

### *Potential Solutions*

When identifying solutions, consultees noted that the area has a number of resources that could be maximised further to improve and expand afterschool provision. These included:

- *School facilities* – school facilities are viewed as a major resource to help address the issue if suitable access arrangements can be secured. The area is limited in terms of community, youth and outdoor play areas so schools are key facilities to support service expansion. It was noted that factors such as insurance, school governance and access agreements must be addressed in order to expand school based provision, however those consulted as principals or HSCLs working within schools indicated a willingness to work through these issues and accommodate additional provision where possible.
- *Community spirit* – this was noted as a strength of the area that was not being maximised across many facets of current community and youth provision. Providing pathways for local people get involved, access training / support and contribute to enhancing afterschool provision is key to this. A community development approach is required to maximise this sense of community spirit in NEIC.
- *Building the capacity of parents* – it was noted that there are various small meetings of parents and parent groups within most if not all primary schools in the area. Often HSCLs co-ordinate weekly and / or monthly activities for parents to come together, socialise and also feedback on issues relating to their child's education. It has been suggested that providing capacity building support and training to these parents could lead to more parent led initiatives to offer afterschool provision. The example of a parent led model in Ballybough was referenced by a significant number of providers and there was a recognition of the significant impact that it had.
- *Special educational needs qualified individuals within the community* – it was established through the consultation that over 20 people from the local community had completed qualifications in relation to special educational needs in the past 18 months. It was not established if any of these individuals continued be involved in community life or if they are applying their learning regularly in a community setting but these individuals were noted as a potential resource. For example, could they be identified, re-engaging and given opportunities to feed into expanded provision or supported to develop a special educational need focussed service.
- *The relationships and networks already in place across the school, community and youth sector in the area* – it was acknowledged that there is good working practice, partnership working and collaboration taking place daily between individuals and organisations. However, this can often be person or organisation reliant. The potential to standardise information sharing and referral methods through an agreed collective approach was identified as a potential resource for service expansion.

Consultees identified the following as potential solutions to help address the issue of afterschool provision in NEIC:

- Improved communication and information sharing across key providers and stakeholders –a central information point, website or app could support this process
- Central list of facilitators and activities that all local organisations could access to design and co-ordinate afterschool provision
- Standardise the following for afterschool provision in the area:
  - Referral processes
  - Funding
  - Evaluation, planning and reporting procedures
- Secure resources for more schools-based provision – building on activities already provided and maximising schools as a resource
- Working with and resourcing community-based providers to allow the development of more flexibility in services which could lead to greater numbers of children accessing services on a regular basis.

## 5.5 Consultation with Parents and Children

Researchers completed focus groups with parents and children as part of the consultation process:

- Parents – 2 x focus groups with a total of 14 participants
- Children 1 x focus group with a total of 10 participants (aged under 10)

### *Parental Feedback*

A series of key points were highlighted by parents within the focus groups:

- *Need and demand for additional afterschool services and activities* – parents recognised the value of afterschool services and activities for children in the area. It was clear that the lack of suitable provision for their children was a very significant concern for them. Parents talked about their concerns for their children’s safety living in the area with some of the issues in terms of drugs and criminality and the lack of available safe space for children to play unsupervised. They know how important it is that their children have opportunities to interact, play and socialise with other children as part of their normal

daily / weekly routine. Parents talked about the impact of poor accommodation for a lot of families in the area (temporary accommodation or permanent accommodation that is unsuitable) and why access to good quality afterschool activities is even more important. Without suitable provision, children are spending an increasing amount of time indoors, using computers / technology excessively because their parents are worried about their safety if they are to go outside unsupervised.

Parents are worried about keeping their children away from drugs and the influence of drugs in the area. They worry that they will not be able to afford the latest clothes or technology etc. and that their children see another way to get these items by looking at older youths involved in drugs. This reinforced their view on the need for activities for children at an early age to “keep them out of trouble”. It is interesting that these are concerns of parents of children under the age of 10 and shows how important parents view these early years in ensuring that their children can stay clear of these issues later in life.

*“Afraid to let them beyond your sight”*

*“My son is 7 and I wouldn’t let him out the door” (because of concern for this safety).*

- *Lack of provision locally and the difficulty securing places* – all parents noted how difficult it has been for them to try (some successful and some unsuccessful) to secure places in afterschool services for their children. Experiences included approaching a number of different providers, placing names on waiting lists, speaking to key staff within providers to seek updates on available places. Parents indicated that they and other people they know have stopped trying to secure places because they have been told “no” so many times. There was a real sense of frustration regarding the lack of available provision and also at the process for securing places. Parents felt it is difficult to identify the consistent criteria that providers use to allocate places and felt that this should be made clearer and more transparent in the future.

Some recurring comments within the focus groups in relation to provision included “nothing for this age group”, “kids are bored stupid”, “no football teams in the area and very few summer projects”. Parents talked about how they felt that the limited nature of provision made it “exclusive” and that unless you could afford to pay for provision or meet a certain criteria, that your children would not be able to access and benefit from afterschool activities.

- *Special Educational Needs* – a number of parents of children with SEN participated in the focus groups. They highlighted the lack of any specific SEN afterschool provision in the area. They have found it very difficult to secure places for their children with current afterschool providers, with long waiting lists a common complaint. Parents are also

concerned regarding the type and quality of provision available for their children and feel that additional SEN specific services should be developed for children in the area (as they are needed, and demand is growing) with appropriately qualified staff.

*One parent shared their experience in a focus group of securing afterschool provision for her son who has Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). She noted the difference that securing the place has made on both her and her son's life and the benefits experienced as a result included significant improvements in behaviour.*

- *Improving provision in the future* – parents were asked to talk about the type of provision they felt would be important to include if services / activities were to be expanded. The majority opinion was that they would like their children to be able to avail of a range of activities such as sports, drama, music (not exhaustive) on a regular basis. They felt experiencing different activities that encouraged play, fun and incorporated some learning activities was more important than provision that supervised children to complete their homework. Another important point was more flexibility in provision and the allocation of places, that children and parents did not have to commit to attending every day. Whilst daily provision works for many children and parents, greater flexibility is important to allow parents to manage different circumstances.

Parents living in the NEIC want the best opportunities for their children, that was clear across the focus group discussions and they recognise how important it is that children get access to fun, interactive and learning activities. Their frustrations and concerns reflect a sense of struggle to access provision for their children and there is the potential for this to “pit parents against each other” in competition for services. This would be a worrying dynamic to develop in an area of such diversity and has the potential to have further knock on impacts in terms of community relations within the area.

### *Children Feedback*

The discussion with children attempted to their thoughts and views on afterschool activities and their experiences participating in them within their school or with local community providers.

Most of the children were currently attending afterschool activities or had previously. They talked about how they enjoyed the opportunity to take part in different activities. When asked the type of activities that they have enjoyed or would like to try in the future, some examples included:

- Sport – boxing, volleyball, football
- Art
- Drama
- Music
- Computer classes / gaming
- Reading classes
- Cooking

The children chatted about their experiences, some noted how they attending a specific afterschool activity regularly and enjoyed it, whilst others discussed how they enjoyed trying different afterschool activities / clubs but did not want to commit to attending all the time. Two participants experienced losing places with afterschool providers when they did not want to attend for a day / number of days or were unable to and as a result lost their place. The flexibility to try different activities and be able to change or miss some days, was highlighted in the discussion.

## 5.6 Summary

This section of the research has provided an overview of the type, location and nature of afterschool provision offered within the area. It also offers a comprehensive view of the issues being faced by various stakeholders in attempting to meet the needs of local children, their views on potential solutions and resources that could be used to expand services.

This information has informed the development of proposals outlined in Section 6.

# Analysis and Proposed Action



# Analysis and Proposed Action

## 6.1 Introduction

Based upon a review of the policy context, research relating to NEIC and afterschool provision, models of good practice and the consultation process undertaken with local stakeholders, a proposal for action has been developed by the researcher in consultation with the YPAR 5-12 Working Group.

The proposal has been designed to deliver universal access to afterschool provision for children aged 5-10 in the NEIC area, along with further targeted initiatives to ensure those most in need can access community– based services and that these services can have greater flexibility to respond to need, to enhance the capacity of local parents and residents to contribute to afterschool provision and to develop collaborative multi- agency structures to look at the broader outcomes, quality and evaluation of provision. An initiative to look at the facility needs of the NEIC in relation to afterschool provision for 5-10 year olds has also been included in the proposal.

As an immediate target, proposals have been developed that could ensure that the following minimum **universal access** to afterschool provision could be achieved for all children aged 5-10 in the short term:

*All children within the NEIC area **can access a minimum of 4 hours afterschool provision per week**, based on activities aligned to their needs and provided in appropriate settings.*

## 6.2 Proposal and Key Areas of Action

The proposal is for a six-strand approach to addressing the issue, with short, medium and long term actions identified. The detail, rationale and potential cost associated with each strand is detailed as follows:

1. Expansion of schools-based provision to create universal access
2. Resource additional places for community afterschool provision to be managed on a central basis
3. Develop a central point for information sharing, led by an organisation and to include online resources
4. Community development approach to build the capacity of parents and local people to enhance afterschool provision

5. Create a common overarching evaluation framework, common reporting template to share information and agreed training standards / accreditation for staff
6. Establish a multi-agency group to look at facility issues linked to afterschool provision within NEIC

## ***1. Expansion of schools-based provision to create universal access***

### *Details*

This element of the proposal is based on building on current activities offered within schools and utilising school facilities. It is recognised that all schools have the potential to expand their afterschool provision if additional resources for teachers / external facilitators were made available.

It is recognised that school size varies as does the available facilities and access to facilities. Therefore, the proposal is that a central fund is created for NEIC that could be managed by an organisation such as YPAR. Schools could provide costed annual activity plans for afterschool provision that can be approved by an established working group. Eligible costs would include any resources required to deliver the activity plans developed by schools such as additional teacher time, external facilitators or coaches and items of equipment.

### *Rationale*

- Potential to maximise schools as resources for expansion of afterschool provision
- Continues to support partnership working and buy in to a multi-agency and collective approach to afterschool provision
- Can make a significant impact in terms of access for a large number of children as they all are currently attending school
- Empowers schools to develop and expand their own activities and provision and the variety for children

### *Cost*

A budget cost of €1,024,000 has been attributed to this strand of the approach. This is the central element of the proposal given the opportunity that schools-based provision offers to reaches all children in the NEIC. Costs have been developed using the following:

- Basis of 4 hours provision for each child per week
- €40 per hour cost for the delivery of activities (reflective of current school budgeting for afterschool provision)
- Budget for full school year of delivery

## ***2. Resource additional places for community afterschool provision to be managed on a central basis***

### *Details*

This element of the proposal is to secure resources for the equivalent of 10 full time places based on the community model i.e. children collected from the school and provision offered until 5.30pm each day.

The key element of this strand of the proposal is that the funding for the places is held centrally by an organisation such as YPAR, with the opportunity for local organisations to refer into a central process to secure support for children with a high level of need that do not have access to afterschool provision. Based on criteria agreed by members of the 5-12 Working Group collectively, children are then offered access to an afterschool service with one of the local community-based providers.

Importantly, children can be offered anything from 1 day per week up to 5 days per week of provision in line with their needs and family circumstances. This offers a flexible approach, service aligned to the needs of the child and family but also offers financial certainty for the community provider (the places allocated will be funded every day but there may be different children accessing the service each day).

Whilst the request for 10 places will not address the overall issue relating to afterschool provision, it will offer an opportunity to pilot this model of working with a view to working with community providers and funders to look at ways of incorporating greater flexibility and catering for more children in the longer term.

### *Rationale*

- Children most in need can access afterschool provision aligned to their needs
- Flexibility in the allocation of places – more children can benefit from the service
- Financial security for the community provider
- Model for further expansion and the basis for engagement with providers and funders

### *Cost*

A budget cost of €100,000 has been attributed to this element of the proposal, reflective of the cost of providing the service by local community providers. It is anticipated that the 10 places will be allocated to providers based on need, with at least 2 places secured with any individual provider. The funding can ensure that a minimum of 10 and up to 50 children can access their type of afterschool service for between 1 and 5 days per week.

### **3. Develop a central point for information sharing, led by an organisation and to include online resources**

#### *Details*

This strand of the proposal is based upon establishing a dedicated central resource to act as the “guide” for available services, waiting lists, criteria and funding opportunities available for afterschool provision. This would incorporate the following:

- An organisation being resourced to provide the information sharing function and co-ordinate between different agencies and providers. The organisation would be a central point of contact, support and advice
- Creation of an online platform that schools, community / youth stakeholders and afterschool providers could access, with the following information displayed on a “live” basis:
  - Details of services available and key contacts
  - Waiting lists
  - Provider criteria for place
  - Funding opportunities

Through the consultation process, the potential for this support was noted regularly. It was also noted how there are individuals working in the youth, community and education sector locally that are key reference points and have significant knowledge on services, contacts and opportunities. However, if these individuals are to leave the sector this knowledge and experience will likely be lost to the area. The proposal puts a more formal structure around information sharing and recognises the value of a central source of information.

#### *Case Study – Family Support Hub Model (NI)*

The approach offered could be modelled on the Family Support Hub Model developed and rolled out by the Health and Social Care Trusts in NI.

Family Support Hubs offer families support services at the earliest opportunity, helping to prevent the need for referral to statutory social work services. Hubs are made up of statutory, community and voluntary organisations which provide support services to families. The hubs use their knowledge of local service providers to signpost families with specific needs to the appropriate services based on the knowledge that it can be difficult for stakeholders in the community, voluntary, youth and education sectors and also parents to navigate available services in areas of high deprivation / disadvantage.

Each Hub has a designated lead agency / partner and it is their role to be the central information resource for referrals, information on available services in their geographical

area and also to capture information using a common / agreed approach. Lead agencies are resourced specifically to perform these functions.

There are 10 Family Support Hubs located across the Belfast city area. In the 2017/18 and 2018/19 financial years, these Hubs worked collaboratively on over 5000 referrals demonstrating the effectiveness of this type of approach if appropriately resourced and implemented.

If implemented in NEIC, it could be a model to be expanded across other complex issues.

#### *Rationale*

- Reflects feedback from stakeholders consulted through the research
- Builds on information sharing and partnership working already taking place
- Recognises the value of information sharing and central resources
- Modelled on good practice in other areas and has the potential to be expanded to address other complex issues facing children and families

#### *Cost*

A budget cost of €20,000 has been attributed to this strand of the approach. This is reflective of the Family Support Hub model on a scale comparable to the NEIC. This is the cost of providing the service for 12 months.

### **4. Community development approach to build the capacity of parents and local people to enhance afterschool provision**

#### *Details*

This strand of the proposal has been designed on the basis of a community development approach being employed to co-ordinate parent groups, offer support in terms of training parents or other interested community members (we are aware a lot of people have been trained in the area and are a potential resource) and help to establish their own afterschool groups / services.

Resources are required for a Co- Ordinator position and programme costs for items such as accredited and non-accredited training (could include areas such as Special Educational Needs or governance / management training if establishing a group), organisation set up costs etc.

#### *Rationale*

This approach has been included on the basis of:

- Previous good practice in the area (Ballybough parent led initiative)

- Recognition that parents are a significant resource and that there is a “live catchment” for engagement via ongoing meetings co-ordinated by local HSCLs
- Potential to maximise all resources in the area – for example, local individuals have been trained in relation to Special Educational Needs but there were no pathways created for putting this expertise into practice
- Whilst establishing potential groups of parents to be trained / offered support and provision of support is resource intensive, in the longer term these groups could operate independently and be predominantly volunteer led in nature. Therefore, there is the potential for a long term impact on the issue of afterschool provision
- Local people are empowered, and that sense of community spirit is reinforced within NEIC
- Parents more likely to be actively engaged in their child’s education

#### *Cost*

A budget cost of €60,000 has been attributed to this strand of the approach. This is reflective of the cost of employing a Co-ordinator to lead this work, contribution to line management / running costs and a programme cost budget (for training, group set up costs, activities etc). This is the cost of providing the service for 12 months.

### **5. Create a common overarching evaluation framework, common reporting template to share information and agreed training standards / accreditation for staff**

#### *Details*

This strand of the proposal places an emphasis on creating a common framework of outcomes and standards that all afterschool providers (schools, community- based, youth work) in the area can work towards. It can provide a sense of direction and purpose as a collective, offer comfort to funders that there is a joined-up approach to the issue within NEIC and most importantly improve the quality of afterschool provision for children. Based on consultation with all key stakeholders, standardised approaches would be agreed for the following:

- Outcomes and indicators
- Evaluation framework and approach
- Reporting template
- Key standards and accreditations to be in place (for organisations and individual staff / practitioners/ volunteers)

This approach would also allow for a comprehensive analysis of the impact of afterschool provision in the area and the elements included in this proposal over a medium to long term period.

#### *Rationale*

- Enhances the collective approach to the issue of afterschool provision and supports partnership working
- Clarity for all stakeholders and funders in terms of outcomes, provision and standards of service in the area
- The model could be expanded to other areas of work / issues in the NEIC area that involve multiple organisations, providers and funders
- Alignment with the NEIC Programme overall monitoring and evaluation framework to enhance reporting and impact measurement

#### *Cost*

A budget of €15,000 has been allocated for this strand of the proposal and is reflective of commissions for similar pieces of work within the NEIC. This would be a one off as opposed to annual cost requirement.

### ***6. Establish a multi-agency group to look at facility issues linked to afterschool provision within NEIC***

#### *Details*

A multi-agency group is established with representation from NEIC Programme, Dublin City Council, Department of Education and other state agencies. Those named are important as they have knowledge relating to sites, facilities and potential development or have a remit relating to the provision of facilities in the area.

The group would be focussed on exploring all possibilities available in terms of future development of facilities or creating access to facilities already located in the catchment but are unavailable for us due to practical issues. It is recognised that facility development and access have specific processes associated with them and therefore require long term approaches / solutions.

#### *Rationale*

- Create a group with all the key stakeholders with influence / remit for this issue
- Explore all possibilities based on the knowledge and experience of agencies represented
- Develop a plan which has a medium to long term focus and potential for delivering solutions (reflects available opportunities and challenges to be mitigated against)

### *Cost*

There is no financial request associated with this strand of the proposal. Staff time and resources is required from each of the different agencies and organisations that will participate in the group. These resources relate to attendance at meetings and information sharing.

## 6.3 Summary

A six-strand approach has been put forward to address the issue of afterschool provision and to enhance access to provision for children aged 5-10 in NEIC:

<b>Strand</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Proposed Costs</b>
1	Expansion of schools-based provision (based on every child in NEIC receiving access to at least 4 hours provision per week)	€1,024,000
2	Resource additional places for community afterschool provision to be managed on a central basis	€100,000
3	Develop a central point for information sharing	€20,000
4	Community Development Approach	€60,000
5	Common framework for outcomes, evaluation, reporting and standards	€15,000
6	Establishment of multi-agency group to explore facility issues linked to afterschool provision	€0

**Total Year 1 Cost and NEIC Programme Request – €1,219,00**



# Summary and Recommendations

# Summary and Recommendations

## 7.1 Summary

The study has sought to assess current afterschool provision in the NEIC area on the basis of the following:

- Broader socio – economic context of the area
- Current policy and relevant research relating to afterschool provision
- Current provision in the area
- The views of key stakeholders, parents and children

The NEIC is an area experiencing significant socio – economic issues which are complex, wide ranging and multi– generational in nature. The creation of the NEIC Taskforce and subsequent programme initiative clearly highlights this point. The study has clearly identified the lack of suitable and adequate afterschool provision as a significant issue impacting upon children and families in the area.

The establishment of the Taskforce and the NEIC Programme following on from the Mulvey Report has meant that the area has experienced significant investment over the past number of years for various projects and activities. Investment in the area to address some of the complex issues it experiences is clearly very important but it is also extremely important that any new projects / initiatives reflect the needs of the area, from the perspective of residents and key stakeholders working in the community daily.

The study has clearly identified that there is a major gap in provision for children aged 5-10 in the area and in particular during the afterschool period. This is reflected across all levels of input and feedback. Once this is accepted, any proposed solutions or proposals to address the issue should reflect the scale of the issue, potential benefit to the community and include elements which reflect best practice and the ideas of parents, teachers, practitioners and community stakeholders.

Therefore, it is important to note the following when considering the investment sought across the six-strand approach proposed:

- The proposal would create **universal** minimum access to afterschool provision for all children aged 5-10 in the NEIC area whilst also offering specific supports for those most in need and with specific circumstances.

- The proposal includes strands which will address the issue in the short, medium and long term. This includes ensuring that there is an immediate minimum level of provision for children whilst also building capacity in the area to enhance and expand provision based on good practice, partnership working and common outcomes.
- Investing in this proposal can deliver long term benefits for the area, for children and families living within it and for schools, community organisations and statutory agencies working to improve the quality of life for people living in the NEIC. Early intervention and investment now is more cost effective and will offer greater societal benefit. Research tells us this, but we can also listen to the parents of children living in the area. They have told us how important intervention is now and that if investment in additional provision is not delivered, unfortunately the young children of the present are susceptible to criminality and the drugs economy which has done such harm to the area.

The proposal is ambitious and seeks significant investment from the NEIC Programme, but it aligns clearly with the ethos of the programme and what it sets out to achieve for the area. It is about investment in needs led, inclusive and multi-agency working to deliver long term benefits for children and families in the NEIC.

The 2020-2022 Strategic Plan for the area entitled ‘The Social and Economic Regeneration of Dublin’s North East Inner City’ contains a series of key goals and objectives. The proposal will support the delivery of Objective 17:

*Objective 17 – Enhance early years and afterschool services through improving quality and uptake of service provision*

It will also complement and support the achievement of the following objectives within the plan:

- *Objective 9* – Improve family wellbeing with a focus on parenting through development of parenting champions and an increase in courses and supports.
- *Objective 14* - Integrate and align delivery of services across government departments, community services, agencies and institutions through implementation of an integrated services delivery framework; information sharing between community support agencies; and the City Connects.

- *Objective 15* - Adapt and implement City Connects model in the NEIC area and help connect the services required to ensure the engagement, progression and well-being needs of children are met, including the nomination of a city connects co-ordinator.
- *Objective 16* - Enhance community leadership through the building of leadership within the community involving the new / next generation.

### *Programme for Government 2020*

The Programme for Government, “Our Shared Future”, was published in June 2020. Within the “A New Social Contract” section of the document, the Government details its commitment to ensuring a national, social contract between citizens and the State. The document states:

*“The ambition of this Government is to provide each citizen with accessible and affordable health care, housing, education, childcare and disability services, as well as a living wage, upskilling, and a dignified retirement. It will provide greater security for individuals and communities and will be founded on the principle of equality and ensuring that every citizen can achieve their full potential”.*

Under the sub heading “Early Years Education and Affordable Childcare Provision”, the Government outlines its intention to:

*“Increase the range of afterschool services in schools or community hubs, to offer a range of education and family-focused measures”.*

This very clearly aligns with the proposal detailed for afterschool provision in the NEIC.

### *City Connects – How the Proposal can Complement this Work*

The proposal will complement the planned implementation of the City Connects programme in the NEIC. It is our understanding that City Connects will work in each of the ten primary schools located in the NEIC, with Co-ordinators working within schools to undertake specific assessments with each child of primary school age. Once assessed, specific supports will be identified for children on the basis of need but it is our understanding that the City Connects programme will not offer these supports but liaise with and signpost to local community, youth and statutory agency services (we recognise that this may develop post pilot). The City Connects model and assessments can ensure that services are targeted at and reaching those children most in need.

On this basis, the proposal will be a strong complementary initiative to the City Connects programme given that it will ensure all children have universal access to a minimum of 4 hours afterschool provision per week whilst also:

- Resourcing more targeted and intensive afterschool services with a flexible model in place aligned to need
- Establishing central structures and resources to co-ordinate the provision of afterschool services in the NEIC, enhancing access to services for all children but especially those most in need
- Building the capacity of the local community to develop new community led initiatives to expand the type and quality of provision in the long term
- Co-ordinating multi-agency approaches to define clear collective outcomes and quality indicators for all afterschool providers in the NEIC to work towards

The proposal and the structures identified within it to deliver, will provide opportunities for collaboration and engagement with the City Connects team based on their knowledge of the needs of children and the extended provision that will be offered as a result of investment in the proposed six strands. It is envisaged that the City Connects Programme Manager and co-ordinators would be represented on the proposed multi-agency structures within the proposal. The focus on maximising school resources and facilities as a method to expand afterschool provision for children aged 5-10 in the NEIC will support collaboration and partnership working also given that the City Connects programme focusses on the primary school setting.

### *Covid 19*

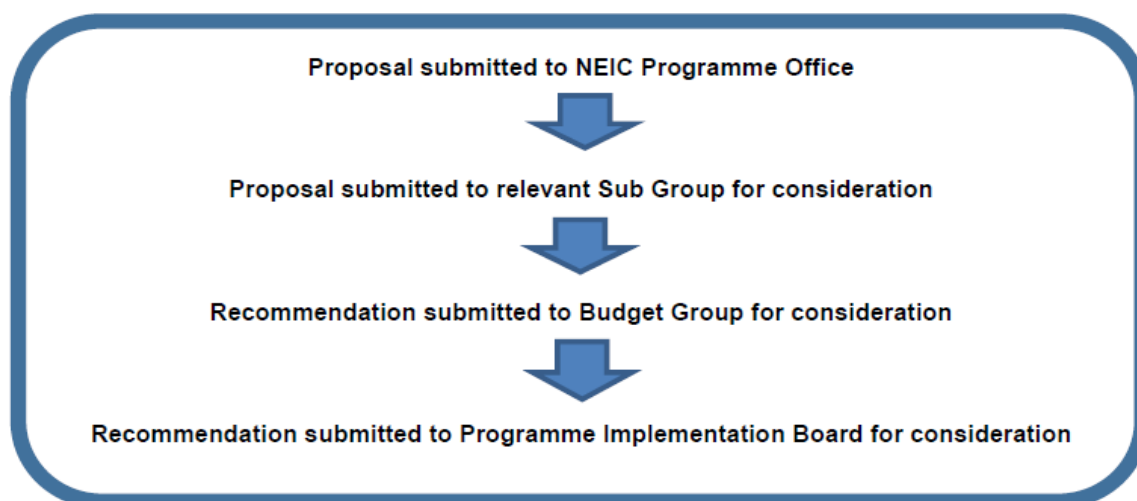
Covid 19 and the social distancing guidelines associated with the health response to manage the spread of the virus, has had a major impact upon Irish society and the lives of people living within the State. People living in disadvantaged communities, will likely to be most heavily impacted directly from the virus or as a result of knock on impacts associated with economic hardship, isolation, mental health and wellbeing.

The Government outlined its plan to re-open schools from the end of August 2020, with guidance in relation to social distancing and how it is to be implemented within the school environment. The proposal can be taken forward on this basis and align with the guidelines detailed by the Department of Education and Skills.

## 7.2 Recommendations

The NEIC Programme Implementation Board has an agreed process for consideration of funding proposals and new project ideas, outlined in the graphic below:

The process that has been agreed by the NEIC Programme Implementation Board for decisions on funding proposals received is as follows:



The process outlined above is not prolonged. Proposals can be approved for funding within 6 to 8 weeks.

It is recommended that the proposal is taken forward by YPAR and members of the 5-12 year old Working Group and submitted to the NEIC Programme for support and investment.