

School leaders' perceptions of the impact of extended services on families and communities

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DOI:

[10.1177/1741143213494190](https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213494190)

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Document Version

Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Peterson, A & Durrant, I 2013, 'School leaders' perceptions of the impact of extended services on families and communities: The case of one local authority', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, vol. 41, no. 6, pp. 718-735. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213494190>

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School leaders' perceptions of the impact of extended services on families and communities: The case of one local authority

Abstract

The move in England towards extended services was a core part of the educational policy of successive Labour governments throughout the 2000s. Sitting alongside like-minded initiatives, school leaders were encouraged to envision, plan for and operate a range of activities and services aimed at deepening and extending schools' relationships with pupils, families, and their communities. Other research evidence has suggested that extended services have had a positive impact in a range of different ways, including pupil attendance and attainment, the engagement with and of families, and closer working with community stakeholders. Drawing on data drawn from interview and self-evaluation across a sample of schools within one local authority, we explore school leaders' perceptions of the impact of extended services on families and communities. With direct funding for extended services being removed, the research and analysis is timely given the need for school leaders to reflect and decide upon the value of maintaining the range of activities and services sitting within their extended services offer.

Key Words

extended services, school leaders, families, communities

Introduction

The principle that schools should play a prominent and significant role within their communities, including building deeper relationships with parents and families, represented a central element of the educational and social policies of successive Labour Governments in England between 1997-2010 (education policy in the other constituent nations of the United Kingdom is devolved to a regional parliament (Scotland) or assembly (Wales and Northern Ireland)). A raft of policy measures were introduced which linked in important ways to this aim, including Every Child Matters, Community Cohesion, statutory classes in Citizenship education, and – of interest here – the development of extended services. The move toward extended services, funded directly by central government and supported by local authorities, challenged school leaders to develop and implement a core offer of services around five specific outcomes: ‘wraparound childcare’, ‘a varied menu of activities’, ‘parenting support’, ‘swift referral to a range of specialist support services’, and ‘community-wide access’ (DfES, 2005: 8). These outcomes were intimately tied into the requirements and expectations of both the Every Child Matters agenda and the Children’s Plan, and built upon the powers afforded to governing bodies by the Education Act 2002 which enabled and encouraged schools to ‘provide facilities or services whose provision furthers any charitable purpose for the benefit of pupils at the school or their families, or people who live or work in the locality in which the school is situated’ (DfE, 2010a). This policy interest in England in the potential role of extended services mirrored that of a number of other nations, most notably the development of full-service schooling in the United States (see, for example, Dryfoos, 1994), New Community Schools in Scotland (see, for example, Sammons *et al*, 2003), and extended service schools in Australia (see, for example, Black *et al*, 2010).

According to official Government statistics (DfE, 2010a), by September 2010 more than 99% of schools in England ‘were offering access to a range of extended services’. The focus on extended services in terms of both provision and evaluation has drawn out important experiences and issues in relation to the impact on pupils, families and communities. Research highlights the development of significant tailored interventions aimed at building pupils’ learning, self-esteem, and motivation in order to enhance attendance and attainment levels (Cummings *et al*, 2007; Carpenter *et al*, 2010a). Additionally, meeting the needs of families and communities has been identified as one of the key policy drivers in the development of extended services (see, for example, Calfee, *et al*, 1998) and there has been some reporting of the nature and impact of this. According to a large-scale Department of Education evaluation report, a large proportion of schools offer ‘family-wide activities, support for parents and adult-learning opportunities’ as well as developing multifarious networks within their communities (Carpenter *et al*, 2010a: 2), with a number of schools identifying the serving of the wider community as central to their decision to develop extended services (Black *et al*, 2010).

This paper draws on qualitative interview data obtained from an evaluation of extended services in a large local authority in England to consider and explore school leaders’ perceptions of the impact of extended services specifically on families and communities. In obtaining and analysing the data, we were interested in two specific research questions: First, in what ways, and through what processes, have schools engaged with families and communities in the development of extended services? Second, what have been the benefits of, and barriers to, this engagement with families and communities? Following this introduction, and preceding the conclusion, the paper comprises four main sections. In the

first, the context of extended services is considered in relation to existing literature and research in the field. In the second, the research questions and methods are explained and considered in relation to our intentions and research ethics, as well as the limitations of the research design. In the third, we present the findings of our research, where appropriate setting this against the policy literature. In the fourth, we consider a number of implications which our research might raise for schools in the current policy context. Our focus on school leaders' perceptions is important given, as Black *et al* (2010: 10) the general trend across a number of nations for there to be 'no single blueprint for practice' for extended services and the fact that schools have been expected to 'decide what constitutes their local community, what the needs of that community are, whether interventions are best directed at the level of the young person, the family or the community and which interventions should be employed'.

Extended Schools and Families and Communities

Our research is set against a particular policy context and framework. Similarly to the previous Labour administrations, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government elected in the UK General Election of May 2010 have expounded the importance of schools' engagement with, and support of, families and communities within their locality. The White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* affirmed the Government's commitment to:

rely on schools to work together with voluntary, business and statutory agencies to create an environment where every child can learn, where they can experience new and challenging opportunities through extended services, and where school buildings and expertise are contributing to building strong families and communities. (DfE, 2010b: 29).

Despite this commitment, and in line with the intended policy of the previous Labour administration, the Coalition Government have changed the nature of the funding allocation to schools in respect of extended services. Since April 2011 funding allocated to extended school services has fallen within the overall schools revenue baseline. For school leaders this has meant a decision has needed to be taken as to whether, to use the Government's official language, 'they use this funding on extended services or on other work that they do to raise standards, narrow attainment gaps and improve outcomes'. The Government position continues:

As part of their wider strategies to raise standards for the most disadvantaged pupils, schools may in future wish to consider using some of their Pupil Premium funding on offering extended services where there is clear evidence that these can raise attainment or improve behaviour and attendance (DfE, 2010a; un-paginated).

With funding no longer allocated directly toward extended services the decision for school leaders is both difficult and complex. The allocation of scarce (or at least limited) resources carries with it an opportunity cost for school leaders and their schools. Moreover, questions of the financial self-sustainability (or at least subsidisation) of extended service provision are raised. Put simply, school leaders will now have to make a positive choice as to whether they allocate funds to extended services or not and, if they decide to do so, this will necessarily limit the financial resources available for alternative activities and interventions. As the quotation above highlights, this will involve decisions around the allocation of the Pupil

Premium, a flagship Coalition Government policy through which schools receive £900 for each pupil who either is in receipt of free school meals, is looked after, or who is a child from a service family. Although concerns have been raised regarding the initial allocation of Pupil Premium funding by individual schools (OfSTED, 2012a) from September 2012 schools will have to report on both its use and impact. It is also worth noting that OfSTED, the schools' inspectorate in England, will continue to monitor extended services within Section Five inspections (OfSTED, 2012b).

In such a context, there is a growing body of evidence which, albeit tentatively, points to the beneficial impacts of extended services. Typically (and understandably) these studies have in the first instance focused on pupils in terms of the impact of extended services on levels of attendance, attainment, motivation, and self-esteem. Accompanying the beneficial effects on pupils, and of particular focus here, has been an interest in the extent to which, and ways in which, the provision of extended services has impacted positively on families and communities.

Before considering the existing research literature base, however, it is worth considering to what extended services refers. The term "extended services" can refer to a range of activities or processes (Dyson, Millward and Todd, 2002), and may not necessarily be understood in singular terms (Black, *et al*, 2010). At a policy level, the definitions of extended services reflect a rather general and wide approach. In setting out their commitment to an extended services schools agenda, the Labour Government expected that through extended services schools would 'provide a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of children, their families and the wider community' (DfES, 2005: 7). Similarly the current Conservative-Liberal Coalition Government have adopted this general

perspective when stating that ‘‘extended services’ is an umbrella term that refers to schools’ extra-curricular activities or wider services provided before and after the school day to their local community’ (DfE, 2010a). Whilst it is these general positions which have informed the research reported here (in the sense that we were interested primarily in both extra-curricular and wider services provided for families and communities), it should be highlighted that at the heart of extended services is the development of pupils’ learning. Thus, according to Cummings, Todd and Dyson (2004: 19), an extended school ‘maximises the curricular learning of its pupils by promoting their overall development and by ensuring that the family and community contexts within which they live are as supportive of learning as possible’.

Existing research highlights the extent to which schools have sought to develop initiatives aimed specifically at families and communities, as well as the extent to which these have inter-related with impacts on children and young people themselves (Cummings *et al*, 2007; MacBeath *et al*, 2007; Sanders, 2008). Positive interventions in relation to families typically reported across the literature include parenting courses, family learning classes, and structured support in response to particular needs. An important distinction made in the literature is that between (i) the provision of support and (ii) the enabling and empowerment of parents and families to make use of that support (Cummings *et al*, 2006). The literature also reminds us that, owing to their complexity, it is unlikely that the problems, issues and tensions faced by parents and families will be overcome on a ‘‘once-for-all’’ basis as a result of extended services provision.

In relation to communities, recent research literature suggests that whilst some schools felt that positive impacts on the community were an important part of extended services, only a minority explicitly identified this within their aims (Cummings *et al*, 2007). In general terms,

and as with other areas involved in measuring the impact of extended services, a number of studies point to the complexity and difficulty in the possibility of identifying positive developments within the community (e.g. falling crime rates, increases in youth employment, training and skills levels) (see, for example, Cummings *et al*, 2007). Easier to provide are specific, qualitative examples of specific initiatives and projects (and the impact of these) in which schools are involved.

Previous research has focused on a number of such benefits; over a three quarters of the respondents in the extended services study believed they had established better support for families, and ‘two thirds believed they have enhanced community learning opportunities’ (Cummings *et al* 2007: 57). In addition, schools reported cases where they had enhanced parental skills, dealt with issues of family breakdown and thus contributed to family stability and functioning. We must add an important caveat though. As indicated previously, in the existing literature ‘there seems to be no convincing evidence that they [extended schools] can transform whole communities, much less that they can disturb established hierarchies of advantage and disadvantage’ (Dyson, 2011: 184). This, however, points less at a criticism of extended schools and more at a need to be realistic as to the scope of their potential impacts.

As suggested previously the decision whether to allocate funding in order to develop extended school activities schools and, if so, which type of activities should be provided is one of importance for school leaders. As such, it connects in important ways both to the relationships between schools and communities and the nature and vision of school leadership. This is made clear by Black *et al* (2010: 7) when they suggest that approaches which seek to integrate meaningful connections with families and communities ‘require greater resources and facilities and a higher level of leadership and support’. Accompanying

the policy trajectory toward extended schools pointed to earlier, the last two decades has witnessed increasing attention being paid within the research literature to the connections between schools (and school leaders) and their communities (see, for example, Arthur, 2000; Lewis, 2008; Riley, 2009). This corpus of work has typically identified the importance and potential reciprocal benefits of greater connections between schools and their local communities (including, of course, families). Alongside and often inter-related to this, has been recognition of notions of trust and mutuality as features of effective school leadership style, extending not only to those within the school but also to stakeholders beyond the school gates. As Black *et al* (2010: 20) summarise in their overview of the research literature:

The consensus... is that a collaborative approach to leadership yields the greatest benefits. This may require the creation of new forms of distributed leadership and governance that redistribute authority and accountability between service partners and foster shared decision making and ownership amongst key stakeholders.

In his elucidation of five core values as a school leader, Wasserberg (1999: 155; emphasis added) presents one as recognising that ‘the school exists to serve its pupils *and the local community*’. Indeed, according to Riley (2009: 52) three layers of school leadership exist: ‘of, and with, the school community’, ‘of, and with, the local community’, and ‘of, and with, the broader community’. Central to expanding the scope and interest of school leadership in this way is a commitment to, and demonstration of, collegiality in leadership style (Bush, 1995; Bush and Glover, 2003). In this way, the interests of different stakeholder groups within schools’ varied communities can be explored, heard and accounted for in a distributed model of decision-making.

Research Focus and Methods

In October 2011 we were commissioned by a large local authority in England to undertake an independent evaluation of the impact of extended services in their schools. Initially, the research we were asked to conduct was general in nature – simply assessing the impact of extended services within schools within the local authority. The areas we chose to focus on were drawn from a literature review of previous studies concentrating on the impacts of extended services. In particular, we focused on the impact on three specific areas: pupil attendance and attainment, pupil motivation and self-esteem, and families and communities. In addition, to ensure that we were able to capture any additional elements of impact, we included a focus on unexpected and/or additional impacts of extended services. It was agreed with the local authority that the impact evaluation would involve the collection of data from a selective sample of four individual schools and a cluster comprising 48 schools. The LA is a large and socio-economically diverse authority comprising 577 state schools (449 primary, 100 secondary and 28 schools for pupils with special learning needs). Whilst many areas of the authority are socio-economically advantaged, certain areas exhibit high levels of deprivation. As a whole, the local authority has 13.5% of pupils on the Free School Meals register compared to a national figure of 16.9%. 1.1% of pupils have statements of special educational needs. Table One contains demographic details relating to the schools which comprised our sample, along with district-level data relating to the specific district the schools are located within.

INSERT TABLE ONE HERE

The schools volunteered to take part in the study, but were selected to provide a range of the different types of school and organisational arrangements for extended services in the constituent area. The sample schools comprised primary and secondary schools, mainstream and special schools, single-sex and co-educational schools, rural and urban schools, selective and non-selective schools, and faith and non-faith schools. In addition, all schools had all achieved Quality in Extended Services (QES) recognition at either Established or Advanced level (a scheme operated by the University through which school provision is monitored, evaluated, and developed in a supportive process involving both the individual school and the University) and therefore had undertaken and completed an extended services self-assessment form, including the production of an impact measure case study. Participation in the research was voluntary and each school was contacted prior to data collection to ensure that they understood the research strategy and how any data could be used. It was made explicit to schools that responses would remain anonymous, and that they could withdraw their involvement at any stage of the research process. The schools involved and the project funder were informed that the research results would be used for academic purposes, including publication. In addition, the project proposal and research methods were approved by our institutional research ethics committee.

The wider impact evaluation research from which this paper is drawn consisted of two stages. Stage one comprised a desk-based survey of the literature on extended services and a review of the Quality in Extended Services self-evaluation and case study written by each individual school and the cluster of schools in the sample. Stage two involved the collection of the quantitative data each school had compiled individually to demonstrate the impact of extended services and qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews with school leaders in each of the sample schools and with school leaders and two local authority

extended services co-ordinators in the multi-school cluster. This particular part of the research, on which we report here, focused on two research questions: First, in what ways, and through what processes, have schools engaged with families and communities in the development of extended services? Second, what have been the benefits of, and barriers to, this engagement with families and communities?

The school leaders typically consisted of the extended services co-ordinator alongside the Headteacher and/or the school business manager, although it is worth noting that there is great variability as to how each individual school organises, manages and leads its extended services provision. Owing to the differing availabilities of respondents, some interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis, and others with both Headteacher and extended services co-ordinator present. The interview with leading representatives from the Cluster was held as a group interview.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and then analysed thematically in relation to our key foci, including impacts on families and communities. The themes derived from existing research within the field and in relation to the stated objectives of extended services policies. In this paper we draw on two specific elements of the research process – the semi-structured interviews and the school self-evaluation and case study documents – in order to explore school leaders' perceptions of the impact of extended services on families and communities.

Owing to the decisions made in regard to the research methods, there are several limitations of our research design which it is necessary to note. First, in seeking to explore senior leaders' perceptions, our research is concerned with, and is dependent on, self-reporting. Though we have no reason to doubt the sincerity of the views expressed and claims made, we

are not in a position to verify these. Second, we are cognisant that the sample size prohibits the extent to which we can generalise our findings. Nevertheless, the perceptions of school leaders reported here do provide insights which will be of interest to others and which can be triangulated with existing literature in the field. Third, it should be noted that the schools in our sample have worked to make extended services a central part of what they do (evidenced in part by their being at either established or advanced level in the recognition scheme), and as such might be considered as being an unrepresentative sample of all schools in the county, let alone nationally. Whilst this is recognised, we would suggest that for this very reason the schools in the sample provide a rich source of data and we are particularly interested in the ways in which schools which can be considered as successfully developing as extended services engaged with families and communities as part of this process. A fourth caveat which is important to note is that because we opted to speak only to school leaders, we do not have any corroborating or contrasting responses and perceptions from families or members of the communities themselves. Other research evidence does however, point to the positive experiences reported by parents whom have engaged in schools' extended services (Carpenter *et al*, 2010a).

Findings

The data we obtained from the semi-structured interviews and the review of self-evaluation and case studies provided a number of insights into school leaders' perceptions of impacts on families and communities. For analytical purposes we have divided our presentation of the findings into the following subsections: families and communities as shapers of services, breaking down barriers and building networks, and schools as facilitators of family and community-led services. However, before discussing these elements, it is worthwhile

pointing to an immediate and significant finding of our research. It was discussed earlier that a common issue with measuring the specific impact of extended services (and similarly to a number of educational interventions) is the difficulty in isolating interventions which form part of extended services as direct causal factors relating to a given factor (such as increased attendance or attainment). There are two important points to note in relation to this, however. First, the respondents in our interviews reported the positive impact of extended services over a period of time, a change since the introduction of extended services provision, and a specific impact on particular stakeholders (individuals, small groups, large groups etc). Second, the complexity is something which we are aware of in relation to our findings. Interestingly, however, it became clear from our interviews that school leaders were also very aware of these difficulties and, indeed, had thought about this quite clearly. As one Headteacher of a rural primary school we spoke to reflected:

Is it purely down to [extended services]? I don't know, I wouldn't like to say.

I think it's a combination. We now have more parents attending parents evening because they come in to school to do fun things that have been going on. They are taking part, school is not a scary place anymore, so we have the backing of those parents. They're committed to the learning of the children. Their aspirations are increased, so the aspirations of the children are increased. It is sort of a snowball effect.

Such sentiments, at least in part, lessen the force of the claim that the impact of extended services may have been attributable solely to other factors influencing those involved. Moreover, it is important to remember, of course, that the move toward extended services in

schools was never intended to be a stand-alone panacea, rather it was a holistic integrated approach aimed at tackling inequality, improving economic wellbeing, and placing the school at the centre of both supporting the child and the wider community. Indeed, as a summary of evaluation evidence for Headteachers published by the Department for Education makes clear, school leaders need to be:

realistic about the sorts of outcomes that extended services can and cannot achieve. Extended services are no substitute for school improvement measures focused on raising overall levels of pupil attainment and school performance. However, the evidence suggests that they can sit alongside such measures as part of an overall package aimed at enabling all pupils and their families and communities to do well (Carpenter, *et al.* 2011).

This was certainly recognised by the school leaders with whom we spoke, and in itself marks an important finding of our study.

Families and Communities as Shapers of Services

The schools across our sample reported a wide range of activities, services and interventions that fell within their extended services remit and which were directly aimed at families and/or the wider community. Previous research literature highlights a particular tension regarding the undemocratic and hierarchical nature which can characterise the planning and nature of extended services. In his analysis, Dyson (2011: 185) suggests that ‘in the various government-sponsored and other initiatives colleagues and I have examined, the decision-makers have almost exclusively been professionals whose view of local people, though

supportive and well-meaning, has overwhelmingly focused on deficiencies and deficits of local cultures, parenting practices, and attitudes towards education'. By contrast, we found that the schools in our sample worked in various ways to try to establish mechanisms and processes through which parents and members of the community could play a part in shaping the activities and services provided. Indeed, it was consistently reported that the precise nature of extended services needed to be flexible according to the changing and emerging needs of pupils, parents, families and communities. In line with other research evidence (see, for example, Cummings *et al*, 2007; Carpenter *et al*, 2010b), some schools reported their use of parent surveys which asked for information regarding the sorts of activities which would be beneficial for both pupils and families. Some of the schools established parent forums to collate and discuss pupil, parent and community needs. For example, one faith primary school situated in an urban setting had, from the outset of its work on developing as extended services, established a monthly representative parent's forum with the purpose of helping to guide services and activities.

Across our data-set, schools also reported their use of a range of methods and strategies to ascertain and explore the needs of the community. An illustration of this came from one of the primary schools in our sample who spoke of their involvement in regular working businesses lunches as an important element in discovering the needs of a range of organisations in the community. Indeed, through seeking to find out more in this way the school were able to benefit from representatives visiting the school in order to work with pupils:

We have working lunches every term... to meet local businesses or just get ideas. We started up a...scheme [where] we have people coming in to talk

about their professions in schools now, teaching the children... We [for example] have... a scientist... a hairdresser... a golf professional... coming in. That runs every single week.

In addition, a primary school for pupils with learning difficulties spent a good deal of time talking to the local community about their particular needs for facilities and how the school could meet such needs. This included attending Parish council meetings and talks with a range of community groups such as the Women's Institute and local churches. Interestingly, the senior management team reported the need to be reflexive in relation to the impact of their extended services provision on the community in an unexpected way. Feedback provided by the school's community governor drew to the school's attention that the increased use of their facilities by community groups was having an adverse effect on other local community facilities.

It is worth noting that seeking to discover the needs of families and communities was particularly important for schools across our sample in the early stages of developing their extended services, and in part enabled schools to overcome initial barriers associated with gaps in knowledge regarding what sorts of activities they could provide which would be both needed and welcomed by stakeholders. This was most keenly expressed in relation to communities. Whilst the schools in our sample initially felt more confident with their communications with, and understanding of families, this was less the case with community groups and organisations. As such, the schools reported that the use of surveys and forums enabled them to establish contacts and to start to build networks as well as providing for the on-going reflective development of services.

Breaking down barriers and building networks

A further notable and significant finding of our research was the reporting of a breaking down of barriers resulting from the activities central to extended services. It was reported that through extended service schools had been able to engage parents in a wide range of activities. Such activities included courses in ICT, courses in literacy, courses in numeracy, language classes, sessions focusing on supporting pupils' learning and/or homework, and sessions focusing on transitions between schools. Such courses were evaluated by individual schools, with each able to point to a number of qualitative examples within which participating parents had praised the educational and social benefits of their involvement. Additionally, the schools pointed to individual examples of parents whose involvement in extended service activities had aided communication and co-operation with the school regarding their children. Importantly, schools also reported that, as a result of the provision of this myriad of activities aimed directly at parents, a greater number of parents, and with increased frequency, were engaging in a range of school-based activities. In regard to this, school leaders typically pointed to increased levels of willingness from parents to participate in out of school visits, in-school educational support (such as reading with pupils), and extra-curricular activities. The following statement from a Headteacher at one of the primary schools illustrates this trend in our sample:

Only last week we asked parents if they would like to get involved. We just had ten signed up that we are doing CRB checks for to help with class trips, school clubs – anything where they can work closely with children... we find that parents are more wanting to come into the school than we found previously.

It should be made clear that whilst significant and positive, the breaking down of barriers in this way was not claimed to be fully universal across the entire parent/family bodies of the schools in our sample. The school leaders with whom we spoke were cognisant that more work needed to be done to ensure that extended services were both accessible to and accessed by even more parents. In our interviews school leaders typically cited practical and logistical barriers (such as lack of parental time, parental work commitments and other familial commitments) as challenges to overcome in achieving greater parental involvement in activities.

Nevertheless, the benefits that extended services had produced in terms of enhanced school-parent relationships was felt strongly. One of the schools for pupils with learning difficulties in our sample felt a particular advantage of this increased in parental engagement with the school given that pupils were generally transported to school rather than dropped off and collected by parents. The activities and services provided for parents, or in which they became involved, increased the physical presence of parents on the school site providing greater familiarity and awareness for both the parents and the school.

A further benefit of higher levels of parental involvement perceived by the school leaders we spoke to was the extent to which it has led to parents' increased understanding of educational practice and support. Notably, these tended to focus on either support for learning in the home (e.g. reading, homework) or support targeting particular transitions. With regard to the latter, many schools with whom we spoke ran courses for parents relating to the transition from primary to secondary school. The following example for a secondary school leader was typical:

We offer “Stepping up to secondary school” for new parents who maybe...

its their first child going up to secondary school so its... how to support

their child in the transition to secondary school.

Similarly to the building of more effective relationships with parents, school leaders identified a key impact of extended services as being the breaking down of barriers between the school and the local community. In general terms, this impact was felt in two ways. First, through an increase in the self-esteem of pupils deriving from their belief in the value of the activities being undertaking with the local community and, second, in relation to an increase in invitations to events, higher levels of donations to the school, and a notable increase in requests for involvement in collaborative projects. With regard to the latter, school leaders reported a range of projects within which pupils had become involved, with many of them suggesting that whilst they were initially apprehensive about the potential barriers to greater connections with community groups (e.g. a lack of knowledge, the potential for lack of response, the pressures on time and resources) these concerns failed to materialise. The projects cited included pupils working to maintain a local community garden area, litter picking and leaf clearing, pupils working with a local leisure centre to tailor and market courses aimed at young people and a whole range of inter-generational activities. Remembering again that we are dealing here with perceptions rather than tangible and easily measurable phenomena, involvement in community action activities such as these was seen to have impact on pupils’ intra- and inter-personal skills.

Again in a general sense, school leaders across the sample perceived an impact of extended services as being a general opening up of the school site to members of the community. In this sense, and in line with a key aim of the extended services agenda, schools became more open (in both physical and social terms) to their communities. As a primary school reported in its self-evaluation ‘recent developments [in extended services] have increased our knowledge of the community and also raised our profile to local residents and businesses. We are now seen as active within our local community’. Similarly, senior leaders at one of the participant special schools saw the impact of extended services in this area as deriving from the opening up of their facilities (such as a hydro-pool and space for childcare services) to community groups, resulting in widened networks, positive relationships and additional income for the school. Additionally, one school reported in their self-evaluation the importance of establishing a range of forums for ‘discussion, sharing information, best practice, sharing needs and offers as support e.g. Parent Forum, Enterprise Exchange, Enterprise Learning Partnership’. The same school, in both the interview and the self-evaluation pointed to an example of a partnership formed with a national energy company which grew out of extended services. Initially involving participation in a Careers Awareness Day, the school were invited to undertake a range of other activities with the company, including piloting a specialist work experience programme for the region. For the school leaders, this relationship was fundamentally facilitated by their extended schools practices. A remark from a senior leader at a school for pupils with learning difficulties exemplifies the removal of barriers in a particularly pertinent way:

When we had the opening of the new school building we had the community come and they said ‘we had no idea how your students were, how they interact... how they want to be a part of everything that goes on... They [members of the

community] were very supportive from that moment.

Furthermore, the opening up of services to the community generated additional income for schools which could be reallocated to extended services activities. Again, the senior leader from the school for pupils with learning difficulties illustrated this point well:

We have also noticed that they [community groups] support us more financially... not that we have gone out to ask, but there is definitely more awareness... lots of small groups in the community do think of us from time to time... [Previously] we were the school behind the hedge.

This latter point, which is concerned with the financial viability of schools' extended service provision is significant **in providing evidence of schools attracting additional income to fund services (see also Cummings *et al*, 2011). Furthermore, it is prescient given the current policy context identified earlier and potentially counters possible financial barriers to the maintenance of extended services post-2012.**

All schools within our study reported, in highly positive terms, the development of networks as a significant and influential impact of their development as extended services. Through their engagement in extended services schools reported the beneficial effects of working with external partners in the provision of activities and services, including local Children's Centres, local businesses, local charities, and the emergency services. The following example provided by the business manager of an urban co-educational secondary school provides a good illustration of such a network. Linking to their Business and Enterprise specialist status, the school established a Business and Schools Forum and collaborated with the local job

centre with regard to developing pupils' CV writing skills. Partly through the Business and Schools Forum, the school established a number of "business challenges" for pupils. An example of this was given as follows:

[Local town] leisure centre wanted to come up with a health and fitness programme for the teenage years, and they had their ideas of what they thought young people would want... The students as part of the business challenge had to... brand it... check their ideas were right. They actually found that... what they thought the students wanted was not necessarily right. The students came up with the brand EXCEL which is now being put in place.

Senior leaders enjoyed the opportunity of working with a range of organisations, often including networks with other schools, in a way which involved important continuing professional development impacts for those involved. Indeed, schools (including the formal network cluster within our sample and the individual schools) talked in expansive terms about the greater collaboration and shared forms of capital between schools that extended services enabled. This included co-operative continuing professional development training events for staff, shared facilities and services, and collaboration between schools on shared matters of concern. One of the primary schools in our sample reported a regular after-school club provision involving a network of schools which:

...came about through discussion with a cluster of head teachers around [this]

area. Ten head teachers, only one secondary school in that, they could not provide

any after school... club or anything of that description. They could do the breakfast end, but they could not do the afternoon – their schools were too small, they did not have the facilities... But they were desperate, there were families that were desperate, so I said ‘well we have got the space here... we will have it at [the school]. Five of the heads agreed that they would go in with us for this [part of the] extended schools provision.

This element of the school’s extended services offer was positively recognised and reported in the school’s most recent OfSTED report. Moreover it provides a useful example of the extent to which schools within our sample worked with other schools in order to overcome barriers to provision.

The establishment of inter-school networks also provided valuable opportunities for schools to come together for specific events involving pupils. One of the special schools in our research, for example, pointed to their work through which pupils worked together with those in another school and, in so doing, taught sign language. This was reported as having a positive impact both on the school’s image and on pupils’ self-esteem.

Schools as facilitators of family and community-led services

A number of the school leaders we spoke to pointed to the changing nature of the school’s role in relation to providing activities and services for families and communities. This change was one which required the school to move from being the provider of services to becoming

an enabler or facilitator of services as well. The business development manager at a co-educational non-selective secondary school situated in a semi-urban context explained the change in the following way, again drawing on the analogy of a “snowball effect”:

It is like a snowball effect... To begin with when you first start you go out there looking for things you can do. When you're established you don't have to do that anymore – people come to you and ask. It then comes to a point when you have to start to turn things away sometimes or you have to be selective over things that will provide most impact and benefit with the resources and time that you have available.

The school leaders we spoke with were generally cognisant regarding the fact that the nature of the schools' role in the provision of extended services was one which needed to be flexible and dynamic. We have already alluded to the varied ways in which the schools in our study have sought to gain the insights of families and communities. This reflexivity in extended services provision is an important aspect of the work of the schools in this area. The following statement describing the operation of family learning classes from a Deputy Headteacher and extended services co-ordinator of a single-sex selective school, about the impact of family learning services, illustrates this reflexivity in action:

We had parents come along on a Saturday. In some cases we would have a whole family come along... I remember on one occasion we had the Dad who went to Japanese, Mum went to French, the oldest boy went to Science, the middle boy went to Yu-Gi-Oh! [Japanese card game], and the baby went to the crèche. The father ... said... that it was a fantastic morning of their week. The

fact that they did not all do the same thing, which was my original idea of family learning, [was not the important factor]...He [the father] said... the fact that they got in the car and they drove home, they talked about what they had done on that morning [was of great importance]... We had several families like that.

A further instance of the change in the role of the school from provider of services to enabler of services involved parents taking responsibility for running clubs and activities within schools. A number of senior leaders within our sample reported that parents were often proactive in wishing to set up an activity or support group. The Head of Education at one of the special schools within our sample described a parent who wished to establish a group for teenagers with autism:

I said to her that we have a platform for this already. We've got the facilities... you can do it here. We have people around us who can facilitate that. I think before people were very isolated and were reliant on any voluntary groups or outside agencies to set up pretty hit and miss things, whereas now actually having a cohesive group, management board who can discuss these things and said that will work and put the stuff behind it to make it work is key. In terms of partnership working across all areas throughout the district that has been the big success, and it empowers people.

Discussion

Our conversations with school leaders raise a number of factors relating to the impact of extended services on families and communities which warrant further discussion. In this

section we focus on three of these factors as being of particular note given the changing funding context for extended services provision considered in the introduction. Inter-related, the three factors highlight significant elements of schools' work in relation to extended services which are likely to be (i) important in school leaders' decision-making regarding the allocation of funding in this area and/or (ii) will possibly be undermined and diminished by any decisions to reduce or limit provision in relation to extended schools.

The first factor which we would like to draw out relates to the developmental process of the development of extended services across our sample. Quite simply, there was an overwhelming sense that the benefits for, and impacts on, families and communities were exponential in nature – building and snowballing into ever-widening circles and networks. This points to the multifaceted, complex and dynamic nature of the different and varied activities which schools have developed within the extended schools initiative. In this sense, for the schools in our sample, extended services has acted as a catalyst for developing numerous and detailed links with families and communities, extending those links already in place and opening up new avenues of networks and collaboration. For the school leaders in our sample of schools, the framework provided by the initiative provided a mechanism for forging and sustaining meaningful partnerships and enabled them to overcome a number of barriers (both potential and real) in order to achieve this end.

The second, and very much related factor, we would like to highlight as of particular importance relates to the development of such partnership working. It was notable that across our findings there was a clear and pertinent sense that engagement with extended services had led to a degree of mutuality and reciprocity in the networks and relationships which developed. Many of the potential barriers to greater involvement and relationships with

community groups and organisations which the school leaders had anticipated either did not materialise or were overcome through openness, flexibility and discursive practice. This finding accords with the findings of Carpenter *et al* (2010a: 5) which suggest that:

Cluster working tends to have a positive effect in both making schools more likely to form or improve links with the community, with neighbouring schools, and with other agencies and providers of community services, and in reducing the burden of delivering extended services on individual schools.

As reported above, a key component in this has been schools' work to communicate with community stakeholders in a reflective and reflexive way. In part linked to families, but seen more clearly in relation to communities, our findings accord with the perception that 'successful providers shaped the provision gradually to reflect their community's needs and wants in collaboration with other agencies' (OfSTED, 2009: 3). Moreover, although none of the senior leaders with whom we spoke explicitly referred to models of leadership there are clear and pertinent connections between the sort of mutuality and co-constructing of services of which we found evidence and the collegial and distributed approaches to the leadership and management of extended services deemed crucial to effective extended service provision within the literature considered earlier. This said, however, we are mindful of contrasting literature which questions the extent and depth of schools' engagement with families and communities. According to Lumby (2012: 583), for example:

Leaders' engagement with the culture of local families and communities remains arguably, in most cases, superficial. Community representatives are invited to participate as governors, join the parent teacher association, or

to give presentations at school / college meetings or events. Parents are rhetorically feted as important partners, although research evidence suggests that they are generally held at arm's length (Walker and MacLure, 2005) and some are seen more as 'intractable problems' (Moles, 1993: 21).

The need and importance of up-to-date data which includes the perspectives of parents, families and communities is prescient, and represents a notable gap in the current literature in the field of extended services in England.

The third factor, which perhaps should be seen as underpinning the other two, is the highly positive regard in which the school leaders with whom we spoke held the extended services initiative. Indeed, whilst cognisant of the barriers and the challenges faced in developing activities, at no point did participants speak about extended services in anything but positive tones. In a sense, this reflects the findings presented by OfSTED (2009: 3) which suggest that 'strongly committed leaders and managers were key factors in successful provision', but seems to contradict larger evaluation studies which found that 'despite all of the positive views of schools, over six in ten schools agreed that offering extended services places a significant burden on schools' (Carpenter, *et al*, 2010a: 5). It is worth reflecting, of course, that the research study reported here was funded as an impact evaluation by the local authority and that (as suggested previously) the sample was self-selective, as these may have affected the tone of the responses provided. Whilst we cannot rule these out completely, various factors (the independent commissioning of the research team, the anonymising of the interview data) suggest that the impact of the funding source for the research and the nature of the sample were unlikely to have a substantial influence on the responses given. This

recognition noted, the positive regard of the school leaders for the initiative is not insignificant, particularly given the funding changes to extended services.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the limitations of our research design (i.e. the small, self-nominating sample and the lack of corroborating evidence from families and communities themselves), our findings suggest that for the school leaders in our sample extended services had impacted positively and symbiotically on the nature and depth of their relationships with their families and communities. Seen as a core part of their wider activities, the extended service initiative has provided a mechanism (and crucially targeted funding) for schools to specifically allocate resources to support families and communities in a variety of ways. In this sense, and as Carpenter *et al* (2011a: 5) have also argued ‘the evidence suggests that they [extended services] can sit alongside... (other) measures as part of an overall package aimed at enabling all pupils and their families and communities to do well’. Crucially, this process involved a reflexive process with communications through various forums enabling the schools to develop their practices and services in light of input and feedback gained. Time (and further research) will tell the extent to which school leaders are (i) in a position to and (ii) consciously opt to continue to allocate their scarce resources (in terms of finance, terms and physical space) to activities provided through extended services. In this environment, measures of the impact of extended services on *pupil* attendance and attainment – particularly those drawn from quantitative data – are likely to provide an important decision-making tool for school leaders in allocating the resources available. While this is the case, the research presented here reminds us that, at least for the school leaders in our sample, the qualitative impact of extended services on families and communities have been varied, dynamic and

significant. This recognition resonates given the current economic and policy environment in which school leaders work.

Funding

The research on which this work draws was funded by a local authority.

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Table One: School and District Demographics

School	Age Range (years of age)	Number of Pupils on Role (n) ^a	Percentage of Children on Free School Meals ^a	Percentage of Children with Statements for Special Educational Needs ^a	Average proportion of households in poverty in district ^b	National Rank (1 = most deprived out of 236 district and local authorities) ^b	Estimated number of households in poverty in district (n) ^b
Cluster (48 schools)	2-19	Approx 17,000	N/A*	N/A*	20.9%	118	9,600
Mainstream Secondary School	11-19	1048	9% (116)	13% (81)	16.2%	251	9,900
Mainstream Primary School	4-11	211	7.6% (16)	20.4% (43)	18.7%	192	7,000
Special School	2-19	258	20.9% (54)	100% (258)	18.7%	192	7,000
Mainstream Primary School	4-11	410	41.5% (170)	33% (135)	21.6%	99	9,500

*Figures not available owing to large number of schools within the cluster

^aFigures obtained from most recent OfSTED report

^bFigures obtained from local authority statistical report on wider Office of National Statistic data

(<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/instanceSelection.do?JSAllowed=true&Function=&%24ph=61&CurrentPageId=61&step=2&datasetFamilyId=2291&instanceSelection=126616&Next.x=11&Next.y=16>).