

Research report:

Voluntary management and involvement in out of school clubs

Karin Silver

MSc Social Research, University of Bath

June 2005

Summary

This study aimed to create a profile of voluntary management committees running out of school clubs in England. From the literature a hypothesis was constructed: that the majority of those involved in VMCs are working mothers who become involved because they need access to childcare. A postal survey was used to collect information from individual committee members, to test this hypothesis.

The hypothesis was not fully supported by the findings. Although parents, and particularly mothers, are certainly involved, volunteers who do not need childcare seem to be equally, if not more, involved. Even for those with children, childcare was not necessarily their main motivation for becoming and staying involved in voluntary management committees. A secondary hypothesis that volunteers tend to be 'time rich' white women, was also not supported by the findings: while VMC members are predominantly white women they are not, in this case, time rich.

This study also aimed to investigate some of the assumptions made about voluntary and parent managed groups, who are thought to be less financially successful (or sustainable) than clubs with different management structures. The review of the literature showed that VMC members are assumed to have weak business skills. Training courses and support services are offered by various bodies to address this, but these are not widely taken up.

The findings from this study, while preliminary, might go some way towards explaining this:

- Most committee members already consider themselves to be experienced managers
- Many members do not perceive training as being relevant, necessary or worthwhile
- Volunteer managers lack time in a real sense and have multiple commitments
- Management capacity may be more constrained by number of members, than by skill
- OOSCs are perceived predominantly as *clubs*, not businesses or social enterprises

The following sections outline the research process, give detailed findings and discuss some of the issues raised. The conclusion contains some recommendations for future research and policy on out of school clubs and voluntary management committees.