REPORT OF CONSULTATIONS WITH CHILDREN ON AFTER-SCHOOL CARE

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
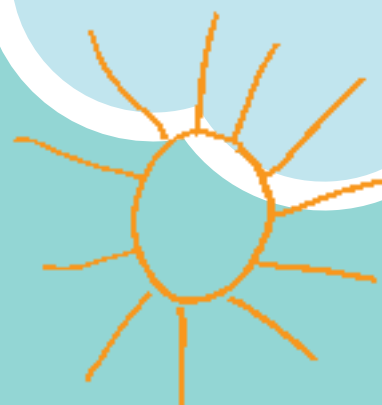
BACKGROUND

There has been an increasing focus on developing policy in the area of after-school care in Ireland in the past two years. In January 2015, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs announced the establishment of an Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) on Future Investment in Early Years and School-age Care and Education. The purpose of this group was to identify and assess policies and future options for increasing the quality, supply and affordability of early years and school age care and education services in Ireland. In order to inform the work of the IDG, an Open Policy Debate was held with a range of stakeholders and representatives from the early years and school-aged care and education sector and online consultations were also held with the general public. *Future Investment in Early Years and School-Age Care and Education* was published in 2015.

In light of the commitment in the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015–2020* to consult with children and young people on policies and issues that affect their lives, in March 2016, a proposal was sought from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) for the provision of services to develop a report of consultations with children (age 5–12 years) on after-school care. These consultations were to be conducted by the Citizens Participation Unit of the DCYA with the aim of identifying what children like and dislike about after-school care and to identify the places where children most like to be cared for after school. Consultations were held with 177 children and young people in total comprising 81 children aged 5–7 years and 96 children aged 8–12 years from primary schools in Dublin, Dundalk, Limerick, Meath, Monaghan, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow.

The research team from University College Cork:

→ Attended all of the consultations with children on after-school care in May and June 2016;

→ Removed, documented and analysed the data generated at each consultation;

→ Produced a report on the process and findings of the consultations.

This report provides an overview of the process and findings from these consultations with children. It analyses the data generated at the consultations and discusses the rationale, methodology and findings from consultations with children on after-school care.

CONSULTATION METHODS

Two consultation processes were held: one with children aged 5–7 years and one with children aged 8–12 years. Creative and age-appropriate methodologies were developed by the DCYA, whose Participation Support Team carried out the consultations. The six consultations (four with 5–7 year-olds and three with 8–12 year-olds) took place in May and June 2016 in Dublin (x2), Limerick, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow.

A variety of methods were used, as deemed appropriate to children's age and understanding. The methods employed are regularly used in consultations conducted with children by the DCYA and centred around group and individual activities (Fraser *et al*, 2007) with an emphasis on fun and mixed methods (Barker and Weller, 2003). The methods are strengths-based consultative approaches that allow children to identify and explore issues based on what they know and experience in their everyday lives and on what they would like to change or improve on those issues. The consultation with 5–7 year-olds comprised of **'Ice-breaker Games', 'Placemats', 'Timelines',** and an **'Evaluation'** (Appendix 1). The consultations with 8–12 year-olds consisted of **'Ice-breaker Games', 'Post-it Activity', 'Placemats', 'Timelines', 'Voting'** and an **'Evaluation'** (Appendix 2). The consultation exercises were all subject to standard ethical guidance and procedures for research with children.
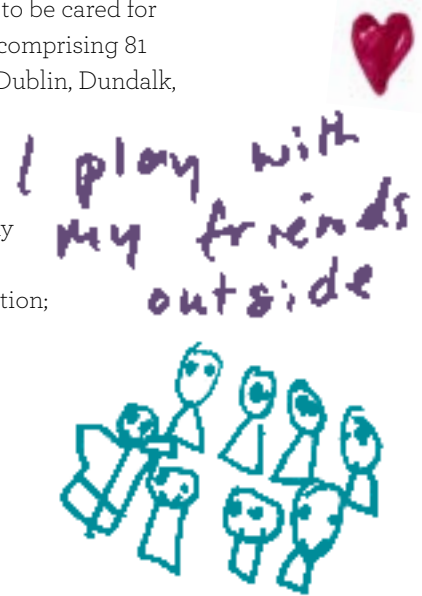
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Summary of findings children aged 5–7 years

Children's views on what they do or like to do after school

Children were asked what they normally do and what they especially like about their experiences after school. **'Play'** was by far the most important to this cohort of children in terms of what they do and what they like to do after school. In categorising the types of play children mentioned we find that playing outdoors was by far the most popular. Going on **'outings'** and **'activities'** also featured prominently in the responses from children in the 5–7 age cohort. **'Being with family members'** was extremely important in their responses and was included in their drawings of people within their homes; this included both their immediate family including parents, siblings, and their extended family, including aunts, grandparents and cousins. **'Eating and cooking food'** was an associated activity that children mentioned frequently, usually in the context of home. They also mentioned being able to **'relax'**, within their homes, at their childminders and, in some cases, in crèches that they attended after school. Relaxing was often associated with watching TV. This age cohort also referred to doing **'homework'**, with some children mentioning that it takes a long time, others that they like to do it straight after school to get it over with and others that they do their homework before going to bed. For a smaller number, being with family **'pets'**, generally dogs, was noted.

Children's views on things they don't like about their day after school

The children were asked "is there anything about your day after school that you don't like?" **'Homework'** was by far the thing they liked least about their after-school experience with a general complaint about having to do homework, homework being overly long or having to do homework at a specific time. **'Rules'** in relation to after-school clubs/crèche and childminders, but more frequently in relation to home, was the next most frequently mentioned issue. The third most significant dislike for children was **'other people'** (both staff and children) in after-school clubs/crèche and childminders and **'inappropriate and limited choice of toys and activities'** both in after-school clubs and crèche. This was closely followed by conflict with older **'siblings'** or annoyance with younger siblings. **'Going to bed'** was the most mentioned next dislike for the younger children. Other issues cited but in much smaller numbers included boredom, food and having to do chores.

Children's views on their ideal after-school activities

Children were asked to design their ideal or imagined after-school care. **'Play'** was by far the most frequently mentioned category. Playing outside, relational play and tech play feature most prominently. Significantly, approximately half of the references to play involved outside play. When structured/organised activities and outings are combined with play, these activities indicate a very significant proportion of young children's time in children's ideal after-school experience (44%). **'Eating and food'** was the second most referenced category in the 5–7 year age group. This was followed by the category of **'relaxation'** which included sedentary activities such as reading and watching TV as well as changing out of school uniform. **'Relatives'** were the next most mentioned during the exercise mainly with references to family members who featured as both playmates and carers. **'Home'** was a significant category within the data generated. It was mentioned as both the place the child goes to and the place in which children did things. **'Friends'**

were another important feature of children's after-school experience with almost all references to friends in the context of play. While **'homework'** was included, for the most part children placed it in their timeline without commenting on it to any extent. **'Rest and sleep'** was generally represented by the children as the last activity of their day. **'After-school/crèche'** is mentioned usually with regard to things they like to do in those settings such as playing. Finally, **'pets'** are mentioned in the context of playing with their dog or wishing to have a pet.

Summary of findings children aged 8–12 years

Children's views on different after–school settings

This older age group were asked to identify the settings they most commonly spent time in after-school and to talk about their experiences in these settings.

Home: The children's favourite feature about being at **'home'** after school was their ability to **'relax and feel comfortable'** in their own surroundings with their own possessions. Also important to them was being with their family and relations and spending time with them. Children were very positive about their opportunities to socialise with their friends while they were at home after school. In particular, they mentioned food cooked by the adults at home including mothers and childminders. The main issue that children identified that they did not like at home included being bored and not being able to socialise with their friends as well as conflict with siblings.

Relative's house: The main thing which children identified as liking about being with their **'relatives'** after school was their **'relationships'** with their relatives and the opportunity to spend time with their extended family including grandparents, aunts and cousins. They were also positive about the opportunities for indoor and outdoor play while at their relatives. Other positives about relative's houses included both preparing and eating nice food, children feeling relaxed and safe and playing with pets. The children identified boredom and lack of opportunities to play with friends while at their relative's house as a dislike. They also disliked some of the rules and structure and some children identified conflict with siblings and cousins as an issue.

Crèche or after-school settings: Children identified **'opportunities for indoor and outdoor play'** as the issues which they most liked about going to **'crèche or after-school settings'**. Playing with friends was also frequently identified as something they liked about these settings and food was identified a number of times as a 'like'. The children mentioned a larger number of issues which they disliked compared to the children participating in discussions on the other settings. The most frequently mentioned issue they disliked was the food in the settings, in particular the lack of choice about what they ate and the rules which surrounded food consumption in the setting. The second most frequently mentioned dislike was the rules and structure within the crèche/ after-school club. The children felt that they were not treated appropriately for their age and the children in the crèches did not like being in a setting they viewed as more suitable for smaller children. They were critical of the number of rules they had to follow and they perceived some of the settings as very strict. The children were also critical of the equipment and activities available to them, including broken toys and not being allowed to go outside to play. They also disliked the ways they were treated by some of the staff in these settings.

Childminders: The most frequently cited theme which the children liked about going to a **'childminders'** after school was the **'personal relationship'** which they had with their minder. The second issue which they identified as something they liked were opportunities to play and socialise with friends while in the care of their childminder. In relation to issues they did not like

at their childminders the most dominant issue was the **'structure and rules'** such as not being let do things which are allowed by parents or treating children in age inappropriate ways. Other dislikes included **'limited activities and play opportunities'** while with their childminder, not being able to socialise with friends while at their childminders and being made fun of by other children for having a childminder. These issues might indicate that this older age group (8–12 years) are starting to associate this type of care as something which is for younger children.

Friends' houses: There was only one location where friend's house was chosen as a placemat topic by the children participating in the consultations. This was in the first consultation held in Waterford, where a number of children identified their friend's house as a place they visited regularly after school. It emerged that there was some confusion about being in a place and being cared for in a place. In subsequent consultations, the facilitation team emphasised the distinction between places where children liked to go after school and places where they were cared for after school. As a result friend's houses was not was not included in placemat work or offered as a voting option in the subsequent consultations. Nevertheless, the things the children in the Waterford consultation most liked about being at their friend's house was the opportunities for indoor and outdoor play. They also frequently mentioned that they liked talking together, having secrets and having fun. They also enjoyed the food at their friends' houses. The issues which they identified as disliking at their friends' houses related mainly to the choice of toys and activities as well as the food available there. They also mentioned peer conflicts with their friend's siblings and sometimes with their friends themselves.

Children's views on their ideal after–school activities

Similar to the consultation with the young children, the older children were asked to describe their ideal after-school care experience.

Of all categories identified, play appears most frequently. It is clearly what children aged 8–12 years wish to spend much of their time doing in the afternoons when school has finished. Every child mentioned some form of play or activity that they would like to engage in but these can broadly be categorised into three key aspects or types of play – Relational Play, Tech Play and Outside Play. If we include in this organised activities such as gymnastics, art classes, karate, football training, then this represents 38% of all activity identified in children's ideal after-school experience. Food and eating was also a prominent category in the ideal after-school care scenario. It appeared in the context of having a snack straight after school or after completing homework, to having dinner in the evening with their families. Home was the third most frequently mentioned category. It often included descriptions of the journey home, children's ability to relax there, to change out of their clothes and have access to their own things. Friends was the fourth highest mentioned category. Children wrote about and drew activities with friends mostly in the context of play but also doing homework together. Lots of children wrote about spending afternoons at their friends' houses or just 'hanging out' with friends.

The number of children who mention homework is striking given that they were asked to document their ideal after-school experience. However, in the discussions children seemed resigned to the fact that homework was something which had to be done. It was referred to mostly in a negative light as boring and an inconvenience, with children indicating that they like to get homework out of the way. Rest/relaxation usually took the form of watching TV, playing music or reading a book. These were all referred to as forms of relaxation or 'chilling' in the afternoon. Sleep was referred to by some children as a nap in the afternoon, while most refer to it in the context of bedtime.

The opportunity to spend time after school with their relatives or extended family including grandmothers, aunts and cousins and the positive relationships with their relatives featured. After-school/crèche and homework clubs are rarely mentioned other than when children were reporting where they actually go as opposed to their ideal experience. Similarly, childminders are rarely mentioned, but when they are it is in a positive light. There was a recognition by the children of the trust placed in the childminder by their parents. Finally, some children referred to playing with or walking their pets.

Children's views on where they would like to be cared for

Overwhelmingly the 8–12 year-old children voted for home as the place they would most like to be cared for after school (59%). This was followed by friends' houses (17%), relatives (13%), an after-school club (6%), childminder (4%) and crèche (1%).

REPORT OUTLINE

This chapter provides a background to the report as well as a summary of the main themes that emerged from the consultations with children. Chapter 2 sets out the methods employed in the consultations with children and the ethical considerations involved. Chapters 3 and 4 present the findings of the consultation exercises with children. Chapter 3 provides the detailed findings from the individual sessions with children aged 5–7 years, while Chapter 4 provides the detailed findings for children aged 8–12 years. These chapters offer a tabulated breakdown of findings from the consultation sessions using the children's own words and drawings. Chapter 5 presents a review of the relevant national and international research literature on after-school care. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a discussion of the findings from the consultation exercises with both age cohorts of children, highlighting their views on after-school care in the context of the literature.

play in the garden

CHAPTER 2
METHODS

The consultations involved 177 children and young people in total. Eighty-one children aged 5–7 years (from primary schools in Wexford, Limerick, Wicklow and Dublin) and 96 children aged 8–12 years (from primary schools in Dublin, Dundalk, Meath, Monaghan, Waterford and Wicklow).

Selection: Children and young people were recruited by the DCYA through the Irish Primary Principal's Network (IPPN). School principals were contacted to recruit children in primary schools. Efforts were made to include a range of primary school types including Catholic schools, Educate Together, Gaelscoil, Co-educational, single sex, DEIS, urban and rural schools.

Data gathering: Two large consultations with 8–12 year-olds were conducted in city centre venues in Waterford and Dublin with children from a number of schools attending. Forty-four children attended the consultation in Dublin from schools in Dublin, Co Dublin, Meath, Dundalk, Monaghan and Wicklow. Forty children attended consultations in Waterford from various schools in Co Waterford. These were held mid-morning to facilitate those travelling from outside Dublin and Waterford and ended at 2.30pm to coincide with the length of their school day and also in acknowledgment of the fact that lengthy consultations are not suitable for children (Hennessy and Heary, 2005). Breakfast and lunch was provided. A further group of twelve 8–12 year-old children attended a consultation in a rural primary school in Wicklow.

The consultations with 5–7 year-olds were conducted in their schools to enable smaller group work in a more familiar environment and were shorter in duration. A team of facilitators and the UCC research team travelled to four schools in Wexford (21), Limerick (25), Dublin (22) and Wicklow (13). All consultations with this age group concluded before 1.00pm to facilitate the children's earlier finishing time.

Table 1: Consultation details

Location	5–7 year-olds	8–12 year-olds	Total no. of children
Dublin	22	44	66
Waterford	–	40	40
Wexford	21	–	21
Limerick	25	–	25
Wicklow	13	12	25
Total	81	96	177

The methods employed are regularly used in consultations conducted with children by the DCYA and centre around activities (Fraser *et al,* 2007) with an emphasis on fun and mixed methods (Barker and Weller, 2003). The methods are strengths-based consultative approaches that allow children to identify and explore issues based on what they know and experience in their everyday lives and on what they would like to change or improve on those issues. However, consultations conducted by the DCYA to date have focused on older children and young people aged eight years and older. In light of this, the team of facilitators received specialised training from Early Childhood Ireland in age-appropriate creative engagement with younger children. The consultations with 5–7 year-olds comprised of **'Ice-breaker Games', 'Placemats', 'Timelines', 'Voting'** and an **'Evaluation'** (Appendix 1). The consultations with 8–12 year-olds consisted of **'Ice-breaker Games', 'Post-it Activity', 'Placemats', 'Timelines', 'Voting'** and an **'Evaluation'** (Appendix 2).

Methods 5–7 year-olds: At the beginning of the consultations the facilitator introduced the adults in the room to the children and did some **'ice-breaker games'** including a ball game, 'Whispering to Shouting' a voice game, and 'Ship to Shore', a listening game.

After this, the children were divided into small groups. There were four facilitators for the consultations with the 5–7 year-olds (two facilitators working in pairs with approximately six children). The children then began to work in these small groups on the **'placemat exercise'.** They were asked where they go after-school and to draw and write what they do after school on specially designed large five foot square placemats. Some children chose to draw rather than write, while most did a combination of both. In observing the interactions, it was evident that the children mostly drew what they generally do, what they were doing that week, or perhaps, focused on a particular event, in cases where a particular event had recently taken place, or was scheduled to take place in the near future. Furthermore, it was also evident that children were influenced by and influenced the responses of other children in their group. At times, when one child included a particular drawing, then other children within their group also included a drawing of or wrote about a similar object.

Children then completed a **'timeline exercise'**. This began with the facilitator asking the children at their table to fill in the boy/girl and age fields on the timelines. The timeline was a rectangular mat with a number of clouds depicted against a blue background. The clouds identified stages of the day from the time school finishes until 6.00pm in the evening. Children were asked to design their ideal after-school experience: '[Draw/write] all the things you like to do after school. In the first cloud put what you like to do first.' The lifeline method has been used in research with children aimed at gathering information on the child's life history, in particular important transitions and events in the child's life. It enables the incorporation of some of the advantages of a qualitative longitudinal study in a research setting where it is not possible to follow children's lives for a longer period of time (Pirskanen *et al,* 2015). The children were told that they could write or draw. Most children choose to write although many also included pictures with the text. Children were told the importance of being realistic in choosing what to put down and reminded to include activities that have to be done such as eating and homework.

The 5–7 year-olds were asked 'is there anything about your day after school that you don't like?' The children were then given coloured cards to draw/write what they don't like and instructed to pop these into a ballot box on the table.

This was concluded with an **'evaluation'** of the consultation. Facilitators asked their group what they liked about the consultation, whether they liked the individual sessions (games, placemat, timeline), whether they did not like something or found anything difficult, and if they enjoyed the overall experience.

Methods 8–12 year-olds: As with the younger age cohort, consultations with this age group began with some general warm-up games.

This was followed by a **'Post-it exercise'** where children were asked to write down the places they go after school, one place per Post-it. When the children finished writing the facilitators asked for a volunteer from each table to stick the notes to the wall and organise them into categories. The facilitators worked on the Post-its with the volunteers at the wall. They identified patterns and themes and sorted the Post-its into different categories – home, relatives, after-school, crèche, childminder and friend's houses were the categories which emerged.

After this, the children were divided into small groups. There were five facilitators for the large consultations with 8–12 year-olds (one facilitator for approximately eight children).

The children were asked to choose a place/setting that they would most like to talk about/have something to say about. The children went to the relevant table dedicated to that setting e.g. home, relatives, childminder, after-school club/crèche, friends house where one facilitator (or in the case of 5–7 year-olds two facilitators) began to work with them in small groups on the **'placemat exercise'**. The children were asked to draw/write what they do after school on large five foot square placemats. The facilitators asked the children to think about what they like and don't like about their category and to write it down on the appropriate side of the placemat. Most children began by writing and then later added drawings to the placemat. The same patterns were evident as with the younger age group, in the children mostly drew what they generally do or what they were doing that week and that children influenced each other in their responses. Once this was completed, there was a group discussion and sticky dot voting on three things they 'do not like' and three things they 'do like' about the specific setting.

Children then completed a **'timeline exercise'** in the same way as the 5–7 year-olds described earlier. The first run through of this method was conducted as a group exercise and utilised a large timeline sheet. Following this session, however, it was decided that individual versions of this template would be used for the remaining consultations to allow each child to design their own 'ideal' after-school experience.

The children were asked to **'vote'**. The 8–12 year-olds voted for 'where would you like to be cared for?' from a list identified by themselves. The five categories chosen were displayed on a screen at the voting station. The children were given cards and asked to vote for the place they would 'most like to be cared for'. They were told that the vote is anonymous therefore they don't have to vote for the same category as their friends.

Finally, children completed an **'evaluation sheet'** which asked them what worked and what did not work in terms of the consultation exercise. Children were asked to rate the whole event and its organisation including the food and venue, and each individual session including the games, Post-it Session, Placemats, Timeline and Voting. There were open questions asking children the best thing about the day, what they would change, and any further comments.

Drawing was an important tool in consultations with both age groups but especially so with the 5–7 year-olds. It is recognised as a valuable tool in research with children, enabling a participatory research approach with them (Horgan, 2016) and democratically involving them as 'producers of knowledge' (Elden, 2012). Its value relates to the fact that it is common in children's lives and that it is often successful in mediating conversations with participants (Wall *et al,* 2012). The DCYA facilitators used the visual information produced by children to elicit further data from children during the consultations.

Data analysis: Recording and analysis of the data involved transcribing all of the text from the placemats and noting all drawings along with any text related to drawings as written by the children themselves or the adult facilitators. The difficulty in analysing imaginative data is well recognised in research (Bland, 2012) and so accompanying data, comprising recordings of what children are saying and facilitator's explanatory notes, is critical. This was then coded thematically. However, we are mindful that this is a consultation, and so the focus is on presentation of the children's views in a raw form before any further analysis is done. We are presenting and organising children's views in a way that is accessible to the reader rather than engaging systematic data analysis for this report.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The project methodology was guided by the national *Guidance for Developing Ethical Research Projects Involving Children* (DCYA, 2012). Following initial contact by phone, an Information Sheet, Letter of Invitation, Parental Consent Form and Child Assent Form were sent to all prospective participants before the event, with a stamped envelope for return of consent and assent forms. The Information Sheet outlined the aims of the study and the uses to which the data would be put in child/young person friendly language (Appendix 3). A closing date for receipt of signed consent and assent forms was included in the letter. Potential participants were informed that they could inform the DCYA that they wished to withdraw at any time before the final report was completed.

A strict policy of confidentiality and anonymity was adhered to throughout the consultation process. Because much of the consultation involved group-based data gathering, all those taking part undertook to preserve the confidentiality of others. Data collected from participants is identified in the Findings and Discussion of this report by location, age cohort (eg. 5–7 year-olds and 8–12 year-olds) and, in the case of the Timelines, by sex and age.

There was a strategy for addressing any sensitive issues arising for children and young people during the consultations. If participants experienced any difficulties or problems, there were a number of contact points for help through the DCYA. Furthermore, child protection issues were fully addressed both prior to, during and after the consultation process. The assent forms completed by children and young people included the following tick box: 'I understand that all information gathered will be kept private unless I am in danger'. All facilitators were briefed as to the need to be aware of any child protection concerns which may present during the discussions with the children. At the end of each consultation, there was a debriefing with all facilitators once the children had left at which there was some discussion as to any child protection concerns. In all cases, there were none. All of the DCYA facilitators are skilled and experienced in participatory work with children and are Garda vetted.

CHAPTER 3
FINDINGS 5-7 YEAR-OLDS

WHERE CHILDREN GO AFTER SCHOOL

Children in this age cohort largely went home after school. They might not go home every day, and generally going home throughout the school week was combined with going to crèche, a childminder, and to an organised activity some days.

Table 2: Where I go after school

No.	Place
43	Home
14	Relatives house
13	Childminder
12	Crèche
6	After-school
88	Total

There were 81 children in this age cohort, some were double counted as they were cared for by a childminder or au pair in their own home or went to a crèche or relatives on some days after school.

PLACEMATS 5–7 YEAR-OLDS: 'WHAT CHILDREN DO AFTER SCHOOL'

Children's responses indicated that play was important to this cohort of children. Play included playing indoors, outdoors, with friends, with technology as well as more static play. It was mentioned in 230 responses that children in this age bracket gave as to 'what they do/what they like to do after school'. In categorising the types of play children mentioned we find that playing outdoors was most popular (119).

Going on outings and to activities also featured prominently in the responses from children in the 5–7 age cohort (50), when asked 'what they do/would like to do after school'. As can be seen from Table 3 on the next page, it can be divided into organized activities, including swimming, gymnastics, football and so on, which represent just over half of responses in this category and a range of outings with adults, generally family members. The latter includes going to the cinema, going to the park, feeding the ducks, going to the farm and the beach as well as more imaginary wishes, for instance, to go to the moon.

For this cohort of children, being with family members was also notable in their responses (44) and was included in their drawings of the people within their homes: their siblings, mothers, fathers, aunts, grannies, and cousins. Eating and cooking food was an associated activity that children mentioned forty times in the placemat exercise. It was an activity in which they were engaged at home with their family members and one that was also mentioned in the context of the crèches which they attended. Pictures included those depicting them at home eating and drinking.

The 5–7 year-olds also mentioned being able to relax (17), within their homes, in crèches that they attended after school, and at their childminders. Relaxing was associated with watching TV and playing games in general, as well as waiting for dinner to be ready. For a smaller number, being with their pets was noted (9), generally dogs, although cats were also mentioned.

This cohort were also engaged in doing homework, which was included in 15 of their responses. This was notably far less of an issue for the 5–7 year-olds than the older children in the consultations. Some children mentioned that homework takes a long time, others that they like to do it early in the afternoon and others that they do it before going to bed.

Table 3: Placemat: What I do/like to do after school?

Theme	Statement	Count
Playing outside	→ Playing camogie with my BFF → Play hide and seek and tag, play with the twins → Making sand castles in a sand pit → Playing with my friends on my estate → Water fight → Cycling when the weather is nice/love to go cycling with Dad → Playing soccer and golf in the evenings → Like climbing trees in the field behind the house. → Grandad, walks, play, spy → Swings, see-saw, drawings of see-saw → Going on my Go-Kart by the ducks → Watering flowers/I love to get my bucket and pick flowers → Go home or go to Nanny's, play outside, find snails in the garden → Play with my sister and brother outside – hop on one leg, run, hide and seek → Like outside – running, hide and seek, jumping jacks, like my bike, games → Jump on the trampoline in my minders → I have a hiding base at [childminder's] (picture of two houses, shed, sun, girl)	119
Being with my family	→ Go home with my Mum → Drawing of a little house entitled cousins → Drawing of five figures outside the house (Grandad, Daddy, Mammy, me, Granny) → I go to my Mammy's some days and to my Daddy's other days and sometimes to my auntys → I get minded by my aunty and we wait in a hotel while my sister is in Guides → Drawing of a house with a rocket attached/drawing of a bookcase and a TV → Drawing of a table and chairs – me and my sister having coffee with my Mam	44

continued

Theme	Statement	Count
Eating and cooking	→ They do nice dinners; chicken korma on Wednesdays (at crèche) → Waffles and nuggets – nice food (at childminders) → Food is good … favourite food is pizza (at crèche) → Cooking pancakes with my Mum (picture of pancakes) → I like them minding me (grandparents), they give us ice cream → My minder sometimes gives us toast in the morning → Sometimes we get dinner outside (childminders house) → When it's sunny we get ice pops → Nan makes pizza for my dinner … sometimes I order from Domino's → Eat apples and oranges when I come home → I eat potatoes, chicken nuggets and chips … eat pizza on Fridays at childminders → Baking cookies and cupcakes	40
Playing inside	→ At crèche – painting, colouring, (2) → If it's raining, we play Lego or PlayStation (crèche) → Playing with my teddy → Home/playing soccer and Lego → Inside – jigsaws, blocks → Drawing of house with friends playing pirates → I like playing with my doll house → Drawing of house with garden, bunk beds, my shelf, my fairy door	36
Playing generally	→ We can play in the garden and play the fishing game (childminders) → Drawing of house with friends playing pirates → I play tigers and dinosaurs inside and outside in the garden → Drawing of doll house and child outside with dog	29
Going to activities	→ Drawing of a musical instrument – Tuesday music → Drawing of a Tutu – Thursday ballet → I do football on Tuesday → I like gymnastics – go on Mondays → Taekwando – Monday and Thursday → Swimming (Thursday) → Going to classes – ballet, speech and drama, swimming → Drawing of a swimming pool with a child and adult swimming → I hope to join Ladybirds/Brownies → I like to play harp → Go horse riding on Thursdays (picture of saddled horse and person)	27

Theme	Statement	Count
Playing with friends/ siblings	→ I play with my neighbours sometimes; they are nine-years-old → Play with my cousins if they're there → Sometimes I play with my sisters, especially my little sister who is four → Go with friends that live nearby → Playing with games at Mom and Dad's with friends → Playing with my brothers	25
Going on outings	→ Go to the shop with my Mum → Go to the farm → Drawing of the moon → Going to the park → Like going to shops on my bike with my Dad → Drawing of cinema – *Kung Fu Panda*/sweets; watch movies with popcorn → After school we go to the beach/we build a sandcastle at the beach → I go to the playground after school with my Mammy, my cousins and my sister → Go to the library and bring back books → She [aunt] brings me to the playground – drawing 'zip wire that you like going on in playground' → Buying Pokemon cards (drawing of shop 'buying *Pokemon* cards')	23
Playing with technology	→ Sometimes I play with my brother – *Minecraft* → Play games – console/play Xbox – drawing of PlayStation – *Call of Duty* → Playing *Star Wars* → Drawing of tablet – YouTube – I watch YouTube videos/games → Playing Xbox (with Dad)/ playing Lego Minecraft/going outside	21
Relaxation and freedom	→ Watch some TV and having jellies → Lie down and relax (at childminder's) → I watch TV in my minders → First I change my clothes → Have a bath	20
Doing homework	→ Do homework (takes a long time) (after-school) → Do homework before bed → Doing homework/exercise → Drawing of book – homework	15
Pets	→ Like playing with cousin's dog → Walking my dog, Cocker	9
Chores	→ Every day – tidy up → We tidy up for dinner (at crèche)	2

TIMELINES 5–7 YEAR-OLDS: 'WHAT CHILDREN WOULD LIKE TO DO AFTER SCHOOL'

While, for the most part, the younger children seemed to understand the nature and purpose of the timelines activity, to identify their **ideal** after-school experience, their imaginative and playful nature was evident in several of the responses: **'oranges falling from the sky'** [girl, 5, Wexford], **'flying past Saturn'** [boy, 6, Limerick], **'colouring my ear with a red marker'** [boy, 7, Limerick].

The children were invited to draw or write on their timelines. As can be seen from the examples below the resulting timelines included a combination of drawings and pictures, some children choosing to only draw, while most children used a combination of both drawings and text. The adult facilitators made notes next to pictures and any text that was difficult to read using words the children used to describe their work.

Taking the combined results from Limerick, Dublin, Waterford, and Wicklow, play appears most frequently in the timelines of the 5–7 year-olds (212 or 39% of categories) and when combined with activities increases to 44% of all activity in children's ideal after-school experience. Every child mentioned some form of play or activity that they would like to engage in but by far the most popular was outdoor play. This was followed by eating/food (14%), relaxation (9%), relatives (8%), home (6%), homework, friends, (both 5%) and rest/sleep (4%). Finally, after-school/crèche only featured in about 1% of the exercise, mentioned approximately the same number of times as pets.

Table 4: 'Timelines' 5–7 year-olds

Categories	Cloud 1	Cloud 2	Cloud 3	Cloud 4	Cloud 5	Total
Play	31	46	55	50	30	**212**
Eating/food	11	19	15	14	18	**77**
Relaxation	11	10	10	12	8	**51**
Relatives	8	10	9	8	8	**43**
Home	13	7	10	1	3	**34**
Homework	14	7	5	2	1	**29**
Friends	4	9	5	5	6	**29**
Activities/outings	6	3	8	4	6	**27**
Rest/sleep	1	0	0	1	19	**21**
After-school/crèche	3	1	3	1	0	**8**
Self-care/hygiene	1	2	0	2	2	**7**
Pets	0	1	1	1	4	**7**

Total = 81 children/545 counts

Figure 1: 'Timelines' categories 5–7 year-olds
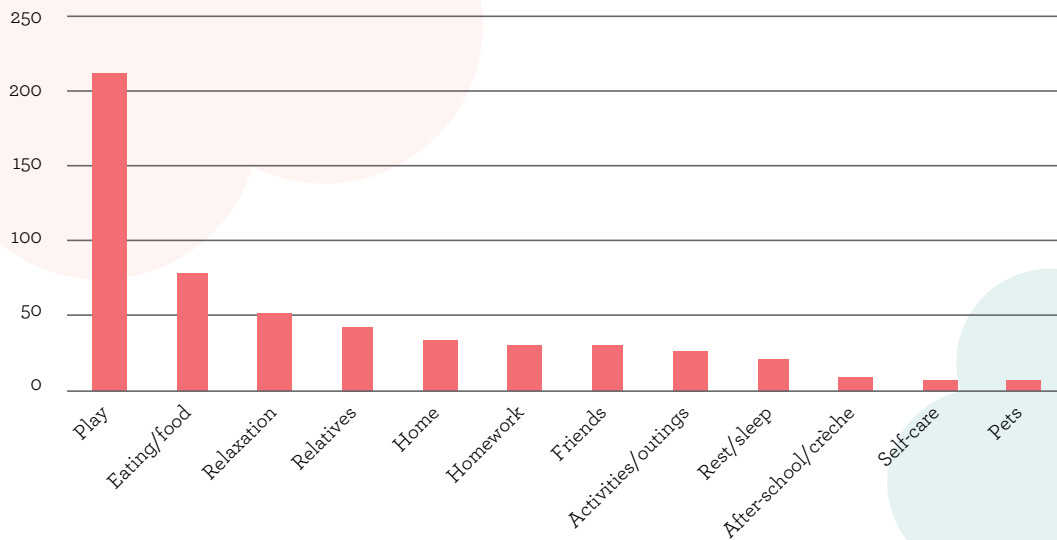
Play, activities and outings (239)

Playing with others, playing outside and tech play feature most prominently. Combining this with activities such as gymnastics or football and outings such as going to the park or playground we see that this represents 239 or 44% of all cloud activity.

The majority of references to play were in relation to **'outside play'**. References are both explicit **'playing outside in the sun'** [girl, 6, Wexford] and implicit **'playing hurling off the wall'** [boy, 6, Limerick]. Many of the references to outside play involved active play such as football, riding bikes or flickers and bouncing on trampolines while many other references were more open and relational such as: **'I play with my friends outside'** [girl, 5, Limerick]. While the majority of references to the outdoors were in relation to play, activities such as: **'gardening'** [girl, 6, Wexford], **'picking flowers'** [girl, 6, Limerick] and **'splashing in the puddles'** [girl, 5, Dublin] also featured. Most of the references to unstructured play were in relation to outside **'wing [game in the garden using our imagination]'** [boy, 7, Wexford] with many children simply identifying outside as a place to go to play **'go outside to play'** [boy, 7, Limerick]. However, indoor play was more likely to be focused on toys or technology, **'playing Lego'** [boy, 5, Wexford] or **'I play waterguns'** [girl, 6, Limerick]. Tech play was mentioned on a number of occasions: **'PlayStation 4'** [boy, 8, Wexford]; **'iPad (play games/watch things/Minecraft/YouTube)'** [boy, 7, Wexford]. Boys were far more likely to mention technology than girls. Of the 21 references to play involving technology, girls made only five. Imaginary play **'play princess game'** [girl, 7, Wexford] and music **'play drums'** [boy, 6, Dublin] were also important.

Other types of play mentioned included relational play with family and friends including **'playing mini *Star Wars* with my brother'** [boy, 5, Limerick], **'playing with friends, having fun'** [boy, 5, Dublin], **'play football or tennis with my Dad or sometimes my brother'** [girl, 7, Dublin] and **'play princess game with Dad'** [girl, 7, Wexford].

Activities and Outings featured less often in the 5–7 year-old category (27) than in the older 8–12 year-old category. Types of activities mentioned by this age group included gymnastics, GAA, swimming and outings such as: 'going for a coffee with Mam' [girl, 6, Wexford], 'go to McDonald's with my Mum and brother' [girl, 7, Wexford], 'go to the zoo' [boy, 5, Dublin].

Eating and food (77)

Eating/food was the second most referenced category in the 5–7 year age group. Referred to on 77 occasions, this category features more prominently with the younger children than in the older 8-12 groups. Children discussed snacks after school, treats: 'go to the café for hot chocolate' [girl, 6, Limerick]; 'eat lots of treats … chocolate and jellies' [girl, 8, Dublin]; 'have a snack/ lollipop' [girl, 5, Wexford] or what they liked for dinner 'then have my dinner and I like pizza" [boy, 8, Dublin].

Relaxation (51)

The category of relaxation included sedentary activities such as reading and watching TV: 'watch *Scooby Doo* on TV' [boy, 5, Wexford], 'reading a book' [girl, 6, Limerick], 'watch some TV, sometimes *My Little Pony, Hello Kitty*" [girl, 7, Dublin], 'lying down' [boy, 7, Wicklow].

Within this category changing clothes was mentioned frequently (16). Getting changed after school (presumably out of a uniform), putting on specific clothing for an activity and getting changed for bed were all mentioned in this category: 'getting into my ordinary clothes' [girl, 6, Limerick]; 'then get dressed and wear my Madrid kit' [boy, 8, Dublin]; 'this is me getting changed … I'm wearing my football jersey 'cause I have football tonight' [girl, 7, Dublin]; 'change clothes' [girl, 6, Wicklow].

Relatives (43)

The category of relatives contained 43 references to family members who featured as both playmates and carers: 'play outside with my Dad and friend' [boy, 5, Limerick]; 'home at 9pm… my Granddad tucks me in' [girl, 7, Limerick]; 'play football or tennis with my Dad or sometimes my brother' [girl, 7, Dublin]; 'go home with my Mammy and Daddy' [boy, 5, Wexford]; 'doing my homework with my aunty' [boy, 5, Wicklow].

Home (34)

Home was mentioned as in terms of the journey there after school: 'go home with my Mammy and daddy' [boy, 5, Wexford], as a place the children go to 'I like going home after school' [girl, 6, Limerick], and the place in which children did things that they liked: 'back in my house … play princess game with Dad' [girl, 7, Wexford]; 'feed fish at home' [boy, 6, Limerick]; 'then I'd come home and play hurling' [boy, 7, Wicklow].

Friends (29)

While friends was the third highest category in the older age group of 8–12 year-olds, it was referred to significantly less often in the younger age group of 5-7 (29). Almost all references to friends were in the context of play: 'at my friend's house we play on the trampoline ... then home' [boy, 7, Limerick]; 'I go out to play with my friend Emma' [girl, 6, Limerick]; 'playing Bulldog with my friends' [boy, 7, Dublin]; 'I play with my friends outside' [girl, 5, Limerick]; 'play with my friend (name)' [boy, 5, Wicklow].

Homework (29)

While homework was mentioned 29 times in total, for the most part children included it in their timeline without commenting on it to any extent: 'I do my homework' [girl, 5, Limerick] and 'do my homework' [girl, 8, Dublin]. However, negative associations were indicated in several references: 'get homework over with' [girl, 7, Wicklow]; 'doing my homework ... get it out of the way" [girl, 7, Wicklow] and 'homework is boring' [boy, 7, Wexford].

Rest/sleep (21)

Rest/sleep was mentioned 21 times in total. The vast majority of references where in cloud five of the timelines and often in a way that indicates some children may have perceived the last cloud as representing the last activity of the day: 'then have dinner then go to bed' [boy, 6, Limerick]; 'time to put on my PJs' [girl, 7, Dublin]; 'at night time to go to sleep' [girl, no age identified, Dublin] and 'then I'd go to bed ... the end.' [boy, 7, Wicklow].

After-school/crèche (8)

The children referred to being at after-school, 'normally I go to crèche ... I like crèche' [girl, 7, Wexford] and 'home/crèche on some days' [boy, 7, Limerick]. In some cases they discussed doing things there 'playing with Lego in crèche' [boy, 5, Dublin].

Self-care/hygiene (7)

Self-care was referred to in the context of daily routines 'brushing teeth' [boy, 7, Wexford]: 'we go home and take a bath' [girl, 7, Wexford] and 'I take a shower and go to bed' [girl, 6, Limerick].

Pets (7)

Children mentioned pets seven times during this activity including references to playing with their pet: 'playing catch with my three dogs' [girl, 5, Wicklow]; 'play with puppy' [girl, 6, Limerick]; 'playing outside with my dogs' [boy, 7, Wexford] and a drawing of a horse with saddle [girl, 6, Wicklow] or wishing to have a pet 'I would like to have a cat' [girl, 5, Dublin].

BALLOT BOX VOTING 5–7 YEAR-OLDS: 'THINGS I DON'T LIKE ABOUT AFTER-SCHOOL CARE'

The children were asked 'is there anything about your day after school that you don't like?'

Table 5: Ballot box votes 5–7 year-olds

Categories	Wexford	Limerick	Dublin	Wicklow	Total votes
Homework	7	9	11	4	**31**
Rules (home)		5	6	1	**12**
Other people in after-school/ childminders (staff and children)	4	2	4	1	**11**
Inappropriate/limited toys and activities	2	4	3	2	**11**
Siblings	6	3	1		**10**
Going to bed/sleep	5	1	2	1	**9**
Boredom	1	3		2	**6**
Food		3	2		**5**
Falling over/getting hurt		5			**5**
Rules after-school club/ crèche/childminder	1		1	2	**4**
Chores				4	**4**
Other	1	2	1	2	**6**
Total number of children					**81***

* Some children voted for more than one thing they did not like

Homework was the thing they liked least about their after-school experience (31 votes) with a general complaint about having to do homework, homework being overly long or having to do homework at a specific time: **'I don't like homework (especially Comprehension)'** [Dublin], **'I don't like doing my homework, especially long homework'** [Limerick], and **'My teacher in crèche forces me to do my homework'** [Wexford]. Rules (both at home and in after-school clubs and crèche) was next highest voting category in things that children 'do not like' about after-school.

Rules was voted for by 16 of the children. This was in relation to after-school clubs/crèche and childminders (4): **'If we want a drink we have to wait ... after-school club'** [Wexford], **'I don't like doing what my childminder says'** [Wicklow], but far more frequently in relation to home (12), **'I don't like getting grounded'** [Limerick] and **'being asked to come inside'** [Dublin].

Siblings featured ten times in the vote. Children generally referred to conflict with older siblings or annoyance with younger siblings: **'My sister rushes me most of the time'** [Wexford], **'My little sister and brother annoying me'** [Wexford], **'I don't like when my brother hurts me'** [Limerick], **'I don't like when my brother takes over and I don't get to choose the games'** [Wexford], **'My sister when she comes home from senior school, she is so annoying'** [Dublin].

Other people (both staff and children) in after-school clubs/crèche and childminders received 11 votes also: 'I don't like when my minder gets cross with me (not often)' [Wexford], 'I don't like much staff in crèche' [Wexford], 'I don't like people annoying me in my crèche (little children shout so loudly)' [Wexford], 'crèche … when people annoy me and don't listen to me and let me play … it happens every day' [Limerick], and 'I don't like when my granny shouts at me' [Dublin].

Inappropriate and limited choice of toys and activities both **in after-school clubs and crèche received** 11 votes, 'I don't like the little trampoline and we have to go on it.' [Wexford]; 'don't like playing with girl's stuff at childminder such as dolls' [Limerick]; 'I don't like it when I have to play with baby toys' [Dublin].

Going to bed was voted for by nine children, 'I don't like going to sleep because it is boring' [Dublin].

Boredom received six votes. Here children referred to a variety of things, 'I don't like going home because I get bored' [Gorey], 'being stuck at home when it is raining' [Limerick] or 'staying in crèche for five hours' [Dublin]. 'I am bored with playing Pokemon' [Wicklow] or 'driving to Dublin two times a week (to crèche where Mam works)' [Wicklow]

Food, including not being allowed to eat when they would like to was voted by five children: 'I don't like when I am not allowed food' [Limerick] and not liking the type of food being served to them in their after-school care settings 'I don't like my childminders dinner' [Dublin]; 'I don't like dinner in my crèche' [Dublin].

Chores featured four times in the voting and usually related to things like 'cleaning the playroom' [Wicklow] or 'I don't like doing my jobs' [Wicklow].

Figure 2: Voting on 'Things I don't like' about after-school care 5–7 year-olds

Legend:

- Homework — 27%
- Rules — 11%
- Other people in after-school/crèche/childminders — 10%
- Innappropriate/limited toys — 10%
- Siblings — 9%
- Sleep — 8%
- Boredom — 5%
- Food — 4%
- Falling/getting hurt — 4%
- Rules (After-school/childminder) — 3%
- Chores — 4%
- Other — 5%
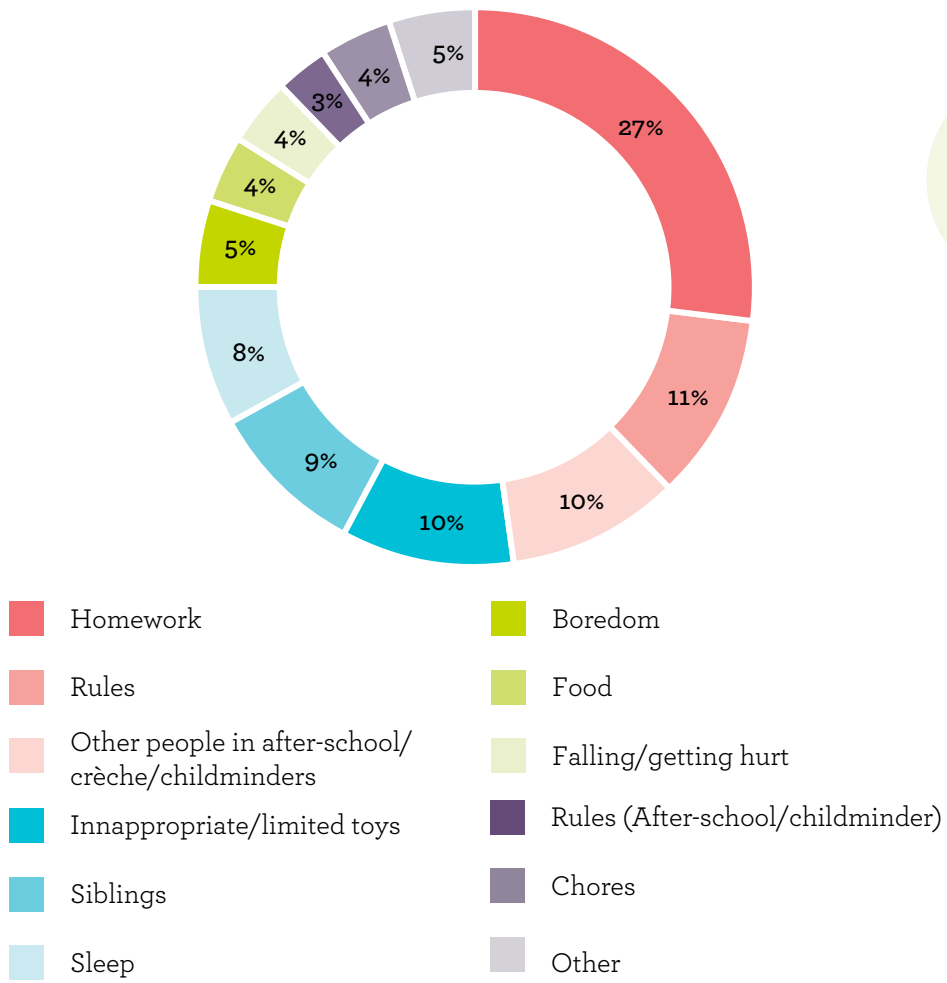
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS 8–12 YEAR-OLDS

POST-IT EXERCISE 8–12 YEAR-OLDS: 'PLACES CHILDREN LIKE TO GO AFTER SCHOOL'

Children were asked to write down the places they go after school, one place per Post-it. They identified patterns and sorted the Post-its into different categories. **Home, Relatives, Friends, After-school, Crèche, Childminder** were the categories which emerged. There was some difference between the two sites as follows:

Dublin	Home, Relatives, After-school, Crèche, Childminder.
Waterford	Home, Relatives, Friends, After-school/Crèche, Childminder.
Wicklow	Home, Relative, Childminder

The key difference was that the children in Waterford identified **'Friends'** as a place they go to after school finishes, where they receive care. They felt that after-school club and crèche could be treated together as there were lots of similarities. In Dublin, the children clearly differentiated between after-school clubs and crèche, and had these as two separate categories. There were a smaller number of children involved in the Wicklow consultation and after-school clubs and crèche did not feature in their experiences of after-school.

PLACEMATS 8–12 YEAR-OLDS: 'CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF AFTER-SCHOOL SETTINGS'

Large five foot square placemats were used to elicit children's views and experiences of their after-school care setting. They were asked to choose a category/place they would most like to talk about/have something to say about. The children went to the relevant table dedicated to that category e.g., **Home, Childminder, After-school club**, where one facilitator (or in the case of 5–7 year-olds two facilitators) began to work with them in small groups on the placemat exercise. The facilitators asked the children to think about what they like and don't like about their category and to write it down on the appropriate side of the placemat. Some children chose to draw rather than write while most did a combination. This was followed by a group discussion and sticky dot voting on three things they 'do not like' and three things they 'do like' about this category.

Children's views on being at home after school

The children's most commonly referred to positive aspect of being at home after school was their ability to relax and feel comfortable in their own surroundings, with their own possessions. They mentioned their bedrooms as places they play with their toys. The fact that indoor play was often 'individual' play was very significant, as some children felt that they needed that alone time after a day with their peers. They also felt they were not 'rushed' to go to other activities when they were at home Also important to them was being with their family and relations and spending time with them. Children were very positive about their opportunities to socialise with their friends while they were at home after school. Other positive things they mentioned included the food at home and in particular their mothers cooking, playing with their pets and getting help with their homework. The main issue that children identified that they did not like at home included being bored and not being able to socialise with their friends as well as conflict with siblings.

Other issues included the weather impeding their access to outdoor play, arguments and conflict with siblings and having to do their homework. Another issue which a small number of children mentioned as a dislike was their experiences of being bullied by other children near their home or experiencing peer conflict with their friends. Finally, a small number of the children did not like some of the rules and structure their parents has established for them at home.

Table 6: What do you like about being at home?

Category	8–12 years Dublin and Waterford	Count
Relaxation and freedom at home	→ I like to chillax/relax → You can do what you want → I like watching my TV after school because I am so tired → I like walking in the wood at home → I like reading in my bedroom → I like that you are in your own surroundings that you are used to → I like to go in my room because I want to play → I like being in my own house (picture of a house) → I like that you don't have to be rushed to go to a sport after school and you can just go home → I like that you are not rushed to get ready for after-school activities → Sleeping in my own bed → Relaxing on the couch/bed → To get changed into your own clothes	36
Indoor playing with my toys/possessions	→ I like that I can sometimes play with my things → I love going home and playing Xbox → I like when I get to play on my PS4 → I like playing games at home → I like that I can play with all my stuff at home → I like my room at home → All your stuff is at home	26
Playing with friends and relations	→ I like going home because all my friends live in my estate → I like skateboarding with my friends → I love walking home with friends → I like to go to my friend's house and dance with her → I like playing with my sisters	20
Being with my family	→ I like being with my siblings and parent → Seeing my Mam → I like going home to talk to my Mum because I trust her… I like being able to talk to my Mum, Dad and brother → I like my brother at home and in my granny's → I can talk with my Mum about private stuff	16

Category	8–12 years Dublin and Waterford	Count
Food	→ I like my Mum's desserts → I like when my Mum makes me food → I like the food my grandparents make… I like the dinners that my parents make at home → Dinner ready when you go home → Get food on my own	16
Outdoor playing	→ Play on the lawn → Playing outside on the swing	12
Pets	→ I like going home because I saw my dog and cat → I like going home and feeding the horses → I like my fish at home	11
Help with homework	→ I like that your parents can help you with your homework → I can do my homework straight	6

Table 7: What do you not like about being at home?

Category	8-12 years Dublin and Waterford	Count
Conflict with siblings	→ I don't like when my sister upsets me → I don't like when my brother laughs at me → I don't like watching my sister's shows	15
Boredom/ no friends to play with	→ Bored on my own but I like everything else about home → I do not like when my friends aren't there → I don't like when your friends are at their activities and you have no one to play with → I do not like getting separated from my friends	14
Homework	→ I don't like doing my homework → As soon as I'm finished my homework I go out for hours	13
Weather/can't go outside	→ When it's raining and you don't have anything to do → I don't like bees → I don't like going inside → I don't like not being able to horse ride straight away → I live in the country and I can't really go outside	10
Bullying by other children or peer conflict	→ I don't like when I go outside and my friends walk away from me or ignore me → I don't like my friend when she laughs at me … she bullies me → I don't like going home because there are bullies where I live	7
Rules and structure	→ I don't like watching my Dad's [TV] shows sometimes → Going somewhere with your parents, going somewhere you don't like → I don't like that I have to not go on my iPhone straight away → When I can't get a sum right at home my family always gives out → I don't like going to bed	6
Tasks/ responsibilities	→ I don't like feeding my six rabbits at home → Doing jobs inside → Doing dishes	3

Children's views on going to their relatives houses after school

One of the main things which children identified as liking was their relationships with their relatives and the opportunity to spend time with their extended family including grandparents, aunts and cousins. They were also positive about the opportunities for indoor and outdoor play while at their relatives. Other positives about relative's houses included both preparing and eating nice food, children feeling relaxed and safe and playing with pets.

In relation to dislike, these were mainly the same dislikes that children identified in the home placement. The children identified boredom and lack of opportunities to play with friends while at their relative's house as a dislike. They also disliked some of the rules and structure and some children identified conflict with siblings and cousins as an issue that they disliked while at their relative's houses. They also disliked having to do their homework and spending too long at their relative's house.

Table 8: What do you like about going to your relatives?

Category	8–12 years Waterford and Dublin	Count
Relationships	→ I like the company/cousins → I get to be with family → I like to see my Nanny and Grandpa → Granny and Grandad time is precious → I get to see my aunty that's younger than me → You will be able to see your aunty → You get to spend time with close relatives → They take good care of you → I go to the church after school to pray for my Nanny who's dead → Your friends can come visit → I like going to the town with my aunty	16
Indoor play	→ Playing games with my cousins or baking with my cousins → Playing with cousins → In the winter we get into out pjs and chill in her room or chill in the sitting room with the fire → I like helping my Nana with crossword questions → Computer (helping her) → Our family go on holidays together in the summer → Going to sleep → I like listening to music with her → Playing on computer	15
Food	→ My baking with my Nannys → My aunty's dinner… yum! → When she [Granny] cooks/bakes with me	13
Outdoor play	→ Having a family water fight and snowball fights → Playing in her pool in the summer → Going on skates or play hurling → Water fight in summer → Going for walks or going to the park → I like going to my Granny's because we go on lots of walks	12

Category	8–12 years Waterford and Dublin	Count
Relaxing/ feel safe	→ You don't need to learn any new rules → Everything is familiar to me → If you're unwell you can relax → Watching TV with my Nana → Sleepovers!	10
Animals/pets	→ I like petting our donkeys → Training my cousins puppy → I like going to my aunt's to play with her two dogs	9
Homework support	→ Homework with my aunt → Doing homework with my cousins	3

Table 9: What do you not like about going to your relatives?

Category	8–12 years Waterford and Dublin	Count
Boredom	→ There's nothing to do if my cousins are not there → Being stuck inside → There is no opportunities to try new things → No brothers or sisters so lonely and sometimes get tired of same people → I do not like to go to my aunty because I do not have any friends → In my Nanny's house there's no movies	25
Lack of freedom/rules	→ You may have less privacy → When you are with relatives you have to be on your best behaviour but when you're at home you can slouch a bit → Unwanted auntys or uncles might visit	11
Bullying/ conflict with cousin and siblings	→ Fighting with my cousins when they are annoying → My brother hits me → I do not like to go to my aunty's because I get made fun of by a girl on the street → My sister is annoying → My brothers' always fight with me	11
Homework	→ Doing my homework	5
Length of time spent there	→ Staying there too long → Too often → Sleeping over in my Nanny's house	4
Pets	→ My Nanny's guard dog	4
Food	→ Dinner	1

Children's views on going to a crèche or after-school setting

Children identified opportunities for indoor and outdoor play as the issues which they most liked about going to crèche or after-school settings. Opportunities for indoor play in particular was the most frequently liked issue, including playing games, electronics play and playing with toys. Playing with friends was also frequently identified as something they liked about these settings and food was identified a number of times as 'a like'. Help with homework was identified as a positive factor. Some of the children mentioned staff whom they liked working in these settings.

In relation to things that they did not like about crèche and after-school the children mentioned a larger number of issues which they disliked compared to the children participating in the other placement discussion. The most frequently mentioned issue they disliked was the food in the settings and in particular the lack of choice about what they ate and the rules which surrounded food consumption in the setting. The second most frequently mentioned issue which they disliked was the rules and structure within the settings. The children felt that they were not treated appropriately for their age and the children in the crèche settings did not like being in a setting they viewed as more suitable for smaller children. They were critical of the number of rules they had to follow and they perceived that some of the settings were very strict. The children also disliked the ways they were treated by some of the staff in these settings. They were critical of staff who they perceived as being 'bossy' or 'not nice' and who they felt did not listen to them. Children were also critical of the activities and equipment available to them including broken toys or not being allowed to go outside to play. Similar to other placements a small number of children reported that they did not like bullying or peer conflict which they experienced in the settings. They also disliked having to do their homework because they did not get appropriate help or the setting was too loud.

Table 10: What do you like about crèche and after-school?

Category	8–12 years Waterford and Dublin	Count
Indoor play	→ I like DVD time/movies → Playing with the toys/equipment we get to bring out to → Playing pool, board games, colouring, reading, PlayStation, movies → I love that there's a library with lots of books for everyone…Ya! → Electronics day → Games → Play games → I like that there is a camp in the summer holidays → Going on iPads and computers and you can cook → Blasting out music	30
Outdoor play	→ I love the ship out the back … there's a slide and all → I love that we get to go out on the green → I like playing on scooters and bikes → I like that we get to do planting → Going out to the garden → Playing in the playground → Soccer and football → Going to the park → I like that we get to play football → Boxing, football, rounders, basketball	18
Playing with friends	→ Having fun with friends → I have lots of friends → We get to see our friends → It's a chance to meet up with people with similar interests	14

Category	8–12 years Waterford and Dublin	Count
Food	→ I like the way we get a snack → I like making food (pizzas and rice crispies) → I like that on Friday's its treat day → It was my sisters birthday, so we got to have popcorn after fruit time on Wednesday → I like the food → Baking pizza	14
Homework	→ I like doing best for homework (you get a jelly if you're the best at doing homework) → I like that we get to do our homework before we go home → You finish your homework … because when you get home you don't have to worry	8
Staff	→ All the teachers and workers are nice → The workers are nice → I like the nice teachers → I like helping them	7
Pets	→ I love that there's a guinea pig and a rabbit … they're all so fluffy → I love that the worker brings her dog Millie	2
Collected from school	→ I like that they pick me up from school and I don't have to walk there like other after-schools	1

Table 11: What do you not like about going to crèche/after-school?

Category	8–12 years Waterford and Dublin	Count
Food	→ I don't like that they tell you to eat fruit first → They make you eat your food in a certain way → I don't like they choose your food → I don't like the food they give me … they give me the same food everyday … toast and apple → I don't like no pizza, burger or chips → The Monday food #brutal (picture of food) → The hot chocolate's never hot	24
Structure/rules	→ They usually pick the films → Sometimes if you get in trouble you have to sit on the couch until your parents come → I don't like when they treat you like you're much younger → I don't [like] when they tell us where to sit → Minders don't let you go to the toilet sometimes → The minders boss you around even when you're not in the crèche → If you're too cold outside they won't let you back in → I hate when you get shouted at → The teachers are very strict → We are not allowed to mess that much → I don't like doing homework and always putting up your hand up	22

continued

Category	8–12 years Waterford and Dublin	Count
Activities	→ You have to stay in the place for the whole day → I don't like watching films/I don't like no TV → I hate when we do art/we don't get to finish our games → I hate when we do computers → Sometimes it drags on and on and you want to go home → The end of year show → Don't like having to be outside when the weather is bad	19
Staff	→ Not very many nice teachers → They are very bossy → Sometimes they are horrible to the children and nice to their parents → Sometimes when they accidentally bump a chair into you they don't care, if they are busy → Sometimes they don't care → The minders (drawing of an angry face shouting) → Minders don't believe you when you tell them things	18
Space/ equipment	→ Broken toys → The way you find toenails or something gross (facilitator wrote 'on the toys') → Flies and bees come through the windows and sting you → The markers that ran out → The fence is way too small for playing football → Games are broken/toys (picture of a doll missing limbs) → The smell of the prefab → The place is too small for a lot of children	14
Age issues	→ I don't like when the toddlers annoy me → I don't like watching movies for 5–7 [year-olds] which always happens → Little kids fight over the smallest of things → Young kids/the kids are way too loud (young) → I dislike all the little kids being nosey (looking in your bag/pencil case)	7
Homework	→ Sometimes they send you home with the wrong answer in your homework → They care more about the end of the year dance than homework → When I'm doing my homework the kids are too loud I don't like the homework after school (they don't tell you if your answers are right or wrong) → I don't like homework	6
Bullying and peer conflict	→ I don't like getting bullied → Kids would hurt you and the minders wouldn't care → Mean kids → The way they hit each other just because they want to (little children)	5

Children's views on going to a childminder after school

The most frequently cited theme which the children liked about going to a childminders after school was the personal relationship which they had with this person. They mentioned issues such as 'trust' and feeling 'safe' there and some of them liked that their parents and the childminder had a positive relationship. The second issue which they identified as something they liked was opportunities to play and socialise with friends while in the care of their childminder. Children also mentioned opportunities for outdoor play and excursions with their childminder as a positive aspect of being there. A number of them mentioned the food as their childminders as something they liked and a small number mentioned help with homework as a positive aspect of being with a childminder.

In relation to issues they did not like at their childminders the most dominant issue was the structure and rules, such as not letting you do things which are allowed by your parents or treating children in age inappropriate ways. Other issues which they did not like included: limited activities and play opportunities while with their childminder; not being able to socialise with friends while at their childminders and being made fun of by other children for having a childminder. These issues might indicate that this age group are starting to associate this type of care as something which is for younger children. Other issues they did not like included the choice of food.

Table 11: What do you like about going to your childminders?

Category	8–12 years Waterford/Dublin	Count
Personal relationship	→ I like that they take their time to mind you → I like that they always make sure you are safe → I like that your parents trust them to mind you → My parents and the childminder get along great → I like that they will do nice things with you → They can make you laugh/they take good care of you → I like when we chat → I really like my childminder → Super kind → Get treated safe → Good with children → Its only down the road from my house	17
Friends	→ You can meet your new friends that also go to the childminders → You have someone to play with → My friend plays hide and seek with me, etc., but I like that → She lets me go with my friends → Play with my friends	10
Outdoor play	→ I like when we go to the fun places → I like when we go shopping → I love to walk my little sister home → I play on my trampoline → Swing-set → She has a trampoline to play on → She brings me and my sister and her dog for a walk and I get to walk the dog	9

continued

Category	8–12 years Waterford/Dublin	Count
Food/treat foods	→ I like the food my childminder makes → They give you sweets → My minder gives me sweets after school → Yummy lunch	6
Structure/rules	→ I like that there's less children than my other childminder	3
Homework	→ She helps me with my homework → They help if you are stuck with something	2

Table 12: What do you not like about going to childminders?

Category	8–12 years Waterford/Dublin	Count
Structure/rules	→ The child might not like their rules → They treat you like a baby → At first you won't be used to where they live and you might feel uncomfortable → They might not let you do things your parents let you do → You might feel awkward if you got a new childminder → They have to follow you everywhere → Too much people are there → She treats me like a baby → We barely get to go to her house … we are not really allowed go upstairs → That I stay there too long	15
Activities	→ I don't like that they only thing I can do is play laptop and my friend has some toys that she does not let me play with → I sometimes have to tidy the playroom → We have to watch the same cartoons	7
Friends	→ They might not like that their childminder doesn't let them bring their friends to play at your house → Your friend mightn't be allowed in while they are there → You can't stay in your friend's house for a while → I'm not allowed to call for my friends	5
Bullying/ peer conflict	→ Your friends make fun of you for having a childminder → You might be made fun of → The girl who bullies me lives in the same estate (she isn't that mean anymore)	4
Food	→ They might not like what they are being feed	4
Homework	→ I'm happy when I walk in but then I have homework	4

only serve two tipes of food where I go

bagle *fruit*

Children's views on going to a friend's house

In the Waterford session children identified friend's house in the ballot box voting as a place they regularly visited or stayed after school. The things they most liked about being at their friend's house was the opportunities for indoor and outdoor play including climbing trees and playing on the play station or X-box together. They also frequently mentioned that they liked talking together, having secrets and having fun. They also enjoyed the food at their friends' houses.

The issues which they identified as disliking at their friends' houses were mainly about the choice of toys and activities as well as the food available there. They also mentioned peer conflicts with their friend's siblings and sometime with their friends themselves.

Table 13: **What do you like about going to your friend's house?**

Category	8–12 years Waterford	Count
Indoor play	→ Spy games → Play station/Xbox/Wi-Fi → Nerf gun fights → Hide and seek → To watch TV → Dress-up/doing hair → Playing with the kittens → Board games/toys → Playing dares	18
Talking/have fun together	→ Talk about a lot of boys → Having a laugh → Having nice memories → Gossiping → Talking about girl things → I like the way you can tell your friend anything → Telling secrets to each other → Not as boring as your house	13
Outdoor play	→ Climbing trees → Playing outdoors/going outside with all the boys → Play football → Tennis → Going into town with the lads → Walking down shops	12
Food	→ Awesome cooking → Watching TV with snacks and pizza → To bake cookies → Love her Mams' cooking	5
Homework	→ Helping each other on homework	1

Table 14: What do you not like about going to your friend's house?

Category	8–12 years Waterford	Count
Choice of toys and activities	→ I don't like his toys → Play station → Not having the toys you would like to play with sometimes → Bad TV shows → Wi-Fi not working/bad connection → Not having the Wi-Fi code	10
Food	→ Not nice cooking → When there's no food → I do not like her cooking	8
Peer conflict with friends and siblings	→ Bad siblings → I hate her brother → We hit each other and kick each other they hit me	7
Leaving for home	→ Having to go home	3

TIMELINES 8–12 YEAR-OLDS: WHAT CHILDREN WOULD LIKE TO DO AFTER SCHOOL

Children were asked to design their ideal after-school experience. The timeline was a rectangular mat with a number of clouds depicted against a blue background.

If we take the timeline as stretching from 2.30pm–6.00pm, then each cloud represents approx. 40 to 45 minutes.

Figure 3: 'Timeline' of 8–12 year-olds

CLOUD 1	CLOUD 2	CLOUD 3	CLOUD 4	CLOUD 5
2.30pm–3.10pm	3.10pm–3.50pm	3.50pm–4.30pm	4.30pm–5.10pm	5.10pm–5.50pm

We cannot be sure that all of the children treated it in this way, in fact some of the older children referred to going to bed in the last cloud which might indicate that they interpreted this as being much later in the evening than 6pm. Nonetheless, it appeared that most children treated the timeline as ending around dinnertime in the evening.

Taking the combined results from Waterford, Dublin and Wicklow, play appears most frequently in the 'Timelines' (164 or 28% of categories) and when combined with activities increases to 38% of all activity in children's ideal after-school experience. It is clearly what children aged 8–12 years wish to spend much of their time doing in the afternoons when school has finished. Every child mentioned some form of play or activity that they would like to engage in. This was followed by eating/food, home, friends, and homework which all received similar treatment from children – appearing in roughly the same numbers (each representing between 10 and 13% of all activity in the 'Timelines'). Relaxing represents approximately 6% and sleep 4% of the categories. After-school/crèche and childminders together only featured in about 4% of the exercise. Finally, approximately 3% of cloud activity referred to relatives.

Table 15: 'Timelines' 8–12 year-olds

	Cloud 1	Cloud 2	Cloud 3	Cloud 4	Cloud 5	Total
Play	16	36	44	42	26	**164**
Eat	14	16	18	13	13	**74**
Home	26	8	9	7	17	**67**
Friends	9	13	22	11	8	**63**
Activities/outings	12	10	14	21	1	**58**
Homework	24	18	11	2	1	**56**
Relax	1	5	7	9	13	**35**
Sleep			2	1	20	**23**
Relatives	5	1	7	1	6	**20**
After-school	8	5	1	1	1	**16**
Pets		1	1	4	2	**8**
Childminder	3		1		3	**7**
Self-care/hygiene					1	**1**

Total = 96 children/592 counts

Figure 4: 'Timelines' categories 8–12 year-olds
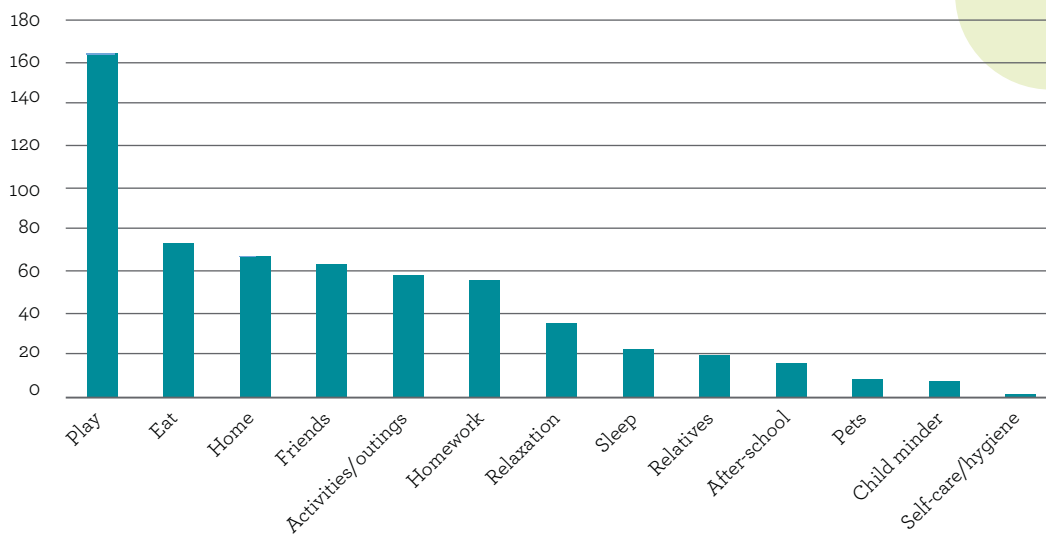
The following images provide a flavour of the 'Timelines' completed by children and emphasise the importance of home, play and friends in their 'ideal' experience of after-school.

In general, the 'Timelines' activity from the Waterford, Dublin and Wicklow consultations yielded very similar findings with regard to the importance of play.

Play was by far the most frequently mentioned category in the 'Timelines' exercise (164) and if we include **activities** such as gymnastics, art classes, Karate, football training and outings such as library visits, trips to the park or shopping (58) then this increases to 222 or 38% of all cloud activity. All types of play are represented dramatic, creative, object, physical and static (King and Howard, 2014). Three key aspects or types of play emerged as important in this age group. Relational play, tech play and outside play. These were also frequently mentioned in the placemat activity.

Relational play: Relational play was frequently cited including play with friends, siblings and parents. **'Play with friends'** [girl, 11, Dublin], **'play football in my garden with my Dad** [boy, 9, Dublin] and **'play on my PS4 with my brother'** [boy, 11, Dublin], **'play with brothers'** [girl, 12, Wicklow].

Tech play: Inside play very often involved Xbox, DVD, playing on a phone or tablet. **'I play my PlayStation 3'** [boy, 10, Dublin], **'play on my tablet … I play *Clash of the Clans, Clash Royale* and *Minecraft* with my friends'** [boy, 11, Dublin], **'Watch a movie … in between play on iPad and other things'** [girl, 10, Dublin], **'play on my own or on my phone'** [girl, 10, Dublin], **'play on my iPod for three straight hours'** [girl, 8, Wicklow]. However, board games and art also featured: **'doing art at my 'hows''** [Waterford] or **'play a board game with my family'** [girl, 11, Dublin].

Outside play: A significant number of the total references to 'play' refers to play outside. Usually children refer to outside on a trampoline, playing football or riding their bicycle. **'Go outside and play** [girl, 10], **'play outside – football with my friends'** [boy, 11, Dublin], **'go outside and play a game'** [girl, 9], **'go outside and play for a while'** [boy, 10, Dublin], **'riding my bicycle'** [girl, 9, Dublin], **'playing on the trampoline'** [girl, 8, Dublin], **'running'** [boy, 10, Dublin], **'play outside on my own'** [boy, 10, Wicklow]. In some cases a child pet is mentioned **'play with my dog'** [Waterford] and **'play with Bella my dog'** [girl, 9, Wicklow]. In another a child writes and draws about rollerblading: **'after school I would like to roller skate on my roller blades and use my Heelies too. (Heelies are shoes with wheels build into them)'** [Waterford], **'My secret play house'** [Waterford]. Organised 'activities/outings' appear 58 times with hurling and football featuring regularly (sometimes as a scheduled activity but far more often as informal play with friends). **'Playing camogie with my school mates in an after-school camogie club'** [Waterford]. One child referred to their wish to access a centre to pursue activities after-school, **'I would like to go to an after-school activity place like bowling, obstacle course, mini-golf and swimming'** [Waterford]. Outings that were mentioned included shopping: **'go shopping** [girl, 11 Wicklow], **'go to Dundrum'** [girl, 11, Wicklow], eating: **'go to McDonald's** [girl, 11, Wicklow] and going to the park: **'go to the skate-park on my scooter'** [girl, 8, Wicklow].
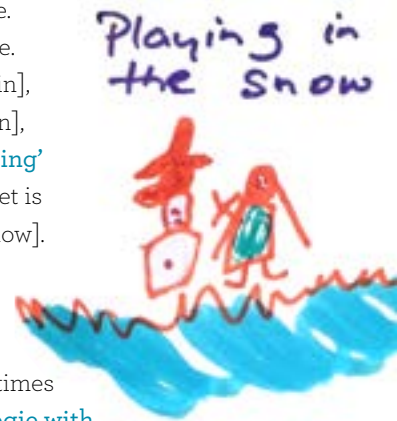
Food and eating was the second most mentioned category (74) appearing right throughout the afternoon in the 'Timelines' activity whether in the context of having a snack straight after school **'I like eating first'** [girl, 8, Dublin] or after completing homework, **'have a sandwich'** [Waterford] **'Have a snack and get changed'** [girl, 11, Dublin] to having dinner in the evening with their families, **'… then later on I would go in and have my dinner'** [Waterford], **'watch TV with family and tea'** [girl, 12, Wicklow], **'have my dinner … eat dessert after dinner'** [Boy, 9, Dublin]. Going out to eat was also mentioned: **'go to McDonald's'** [girl, 11, Wicklow]. Specific foods mentioned include pancakes, ice-cream, steak and chips, pizza and sweets.

Home was the third most frequently mentioned category (67). It was often placed in the first cloud with descriptions of the journey home: **'walk home'** [boy, 10, Dublin] or simply **'go home'** [girl, 8, Dublin]. In some cases, children provided some detail as to who they would like to go home with emphasising the relational aspect of the journey **'my Dad picks me up'** [Waterford] or **'I'll walk home with (names of friends)'** [Waterford], **'go home with my Mam'** [boy, 9, Dublin]. Many referred to home in terms of their ability to relax there **'put on my favourite clothes'** [boy, 10], **'get out of my uniform'** [girl, 12] and have access to their own things. Home was often discussed in the context of choice: **'I would like to go home because I miss home sometimes … I would like to come home then get my homework finished and piano practice and then lastly play a board game'** [Waterford]. One child who wrote about visiting their cousins also wrote: **'I**

also like going home because everybody treats me good in my house' [Waterford], 'I like to go home because u can do what u want and u can play with your friends' [Waterford]. Two children in Wicklow made reference to the farm on which they lived: 'to go up to the farm' [girl, 9, Wicklow] and 'go on the farm' [boy, 10, Wicklow].

Friends was the fourth highest mentioned category in the 'Timelines' activity (63). Children wrote about and drew activities with friends mostly in the context of play: 'play with my friends' [girl, 11, Dublin], 'my new tree house with my friends' [Waterford], 'bring my dog for a walk with my friend' [girl, 12, Dublin], but also doing homework together: 'me and my friend (name) do our homework' [Waterford], as well as doing organised activities with friends: 'going to adventure centre with my friends' [Waterford]. Lots of children wrote about spending afternoons at their friends' houses: 'we do our homework then we play in her back garden and then at five we have tea and then we watch TV at six with her Mum' [Waterford]. Finally, just spending time with friends: 'call for my friends' [girl, 9, Dublin], 'hang with my friends [boy, 10, Dublin], 'go see do (name) and (name) want to come up' (picture of three figures), [girl, 8, Wicklow].

Homework What is striking is the number of children who mention homework in the 'Timelines' (56). They generally wish to get homework done straight away (putting it in the early Clouds: 1-3). Homework was referred to mostly in a negative light with children indicating that they like to get homework out of the way: 'after school I would like to do my homework and get something to eat so I'm free to go outside' [Waterford], or 'I could go home and have a little break before doing my homework' [Waterford] were typical responses. There was much discussion in the groups about how this was boring and something which had to be done. This reinforces what they had represented in the earlier placemat exercise. Some of children mentioned doing their homework at after-school clubs. The children in Wicklow aged 8–12 did not mention homework.

Rest/relaxation was mentioned 35 times and usually took the form of 'watch TV' [girl, 10, Dublin], or 'read a book at the end of the day' [Waterford] or 'play some music' [girl, 11, Dublin]. These were all referred to as forms of relaxation or 'chilling' in the afternoon, and 'take a bath' [girl, 8, Dublin] or 'get out of school uniform' [boy, 10, Wicklow].

Sleep accounted for 23 mentions in total, which some children refer to 'a nap' [boy, 12, Dublin] or 'chill out' [girl, 11, Dublin] or 'sit down (sigh)' [boy, 10, Dublin]. While most refer to sleep or bedtime 'sleep – zzz' [boy, 9, Dublin], 'and go to sleep' [girl, 10, Wicklow]. Of the 23 references 20 were made within the last cloud.

Relatives The opportunity to spend time after school with their extended family including Grandmothers, Aunts and cousins and the positive relationships with their relatives is recorded on 20 occasions by children in the 'Timelines': 'I like to go to my Nanie' [Waterford] or 'go to my cousin's house on a sunny day with my cousins and do our homework outside' [Waterford], 'go help my Dad' (picture of a wall being built) [girl, 9, Wicklow], 'sleepover in my cousins house for a week' [girl, 11, Wicklow].

After-school/crèche and homework clubs are mentioned in only 16 of the clouds. In some cases these children were reporting where they actually go as opposed to their ideal experience. As in this child who reports: '2.40pm: I go to X Club … 3.00pm: do my homework in X club … 3.35pm: do an activity in X club' [boy, 10, Dublin]. Another child wrote: 'I would like every crèche to have equally nice teachers and not just nice to small kids … have suitable toys for everyone' [Waterford]. The 8–12 age-group in Wicklow did not mention after-school clubs or crèches within the timelines.

Pets were mentioned eight times within the timelines. In Wicklow all references were made in relation to play: 'play with my pets' [boy, 8, Wicklow], 'play with Bella my dog' [girl, 11, Wicklow].

Childminders are rarely mentioned (7) in the 'Timelines' exercise but when they are it is in a positive light. There was a recognition of the trust placed in the childminder by their parents, **'because my Mum and Dad like her'** [Waterford]. Some children drew happy images of themselves at their childminders house.

BALLOT BOX VOTING 8–12 YEAR-OLDS: WHERE CHILDREN WOULD LIKE TO BE CARED FOR AFTER SCHOOL

Children voted for 'where would you like to be cared for?' from a list identified by themselves.

Overwhelmingly the children voted for home as the place they would most like to be cared for after school in the afternoon. This was followed by friends' houses (although this was only chosen as an after-school setting/category to vote on in one of the consultations), relatives, an after-school club, childminder and crèche.

Table 16: Ballot of 8–12 year-olds

Categories	Waterford	Wicklow	Dublin	Total votes	%
Home	15	9	33	57	**59**
Friends	16			16	**17**
Relatives	5	3	4	12	**13**
After-school	2		4	6	**6**
Childminder	2		2	4	**4**
Crèche			1	1	1
Totals	40	12	44	96	100

Total = 96 children, aged 8–12 years

Figure 5: Pie chart results of ballot of 8–12 years

Home · Friends · Relatives · After-school · Childminder · Crèche
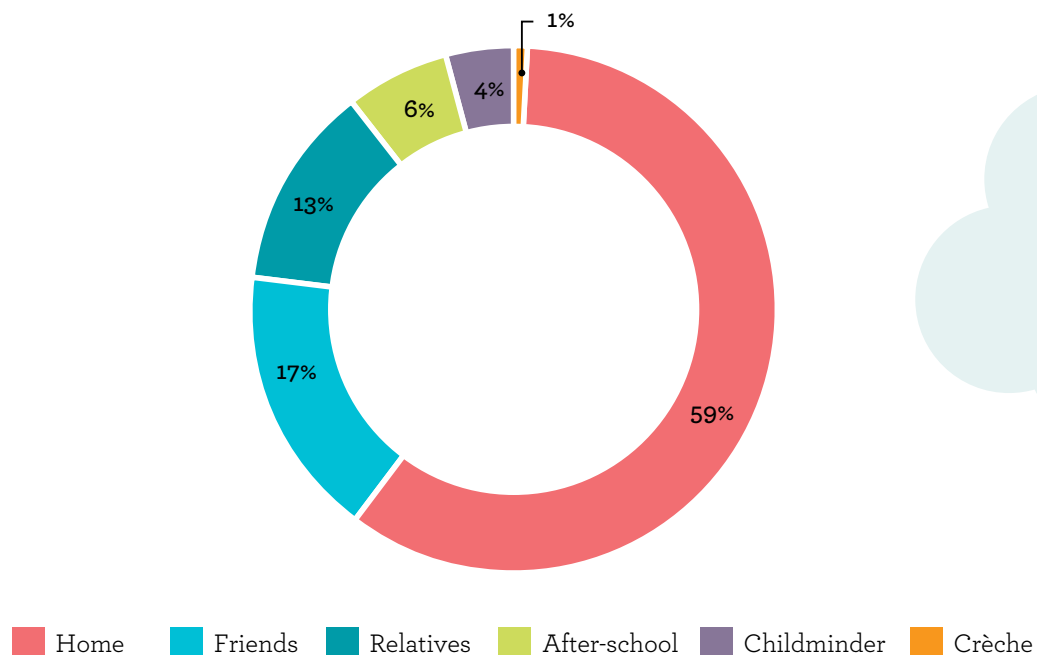
CHAPTER 5
LITERATURE REVIEW ON AFTERSCHOOL CARE

INTRODUCTION

Research within the field of after-school care, policy and practice is scattered and scarce (Hjalmarsson, 2011). While Karlsson *et al,* (2016), point out that research on parent's concerns regarding perceptions and experiences of after-school care is limited, even less is available with regard to children's experiences. There have been some consultation exercises in England with children aged 8–14 years attending out-of-school provision (King and Howard, 2014). Strandell (2013) argues that if the focus was on childhood lived in the here and now, after-school time is important.

Below is a brief discussion of the literature on after-school care for school-aged children which looks at the growth of after-school care as a phenomenon, provides some data on Irish policy and provision in this area, gives a brief overview of children's views on after-school care, both that provided at home and in other settings, concluding with a short discussion on the literature on children's play in after-school settings.

AFTER-SCHOOL CARE IN IRELAND

Parental concerns about the gap between school hours and parents work hours is well documented (Barnett *et al,* 2010). Moloney (2009) notes that in common with similar patterns throughout Europe and the United States, growth in school age childcare programmes continues to increase in Ireland in response to parental demands for safe, supervised environments for children during their out of school time.

Types of after-school care provision in Ireland

There is limited information or research available on access and use of after-school care in Ireland. In 2009 the CSO published findings on the Childcare module and in this 60% of households disagreed with the statement 'I have access to high quality, affordable childcare in my community'. Overall 30% of households reported using non-parental childcare for primary school children. The main types of non-parental childcare used by primary school children were Relatives (12%), childminder/au pair/Nanny (7%) crèche/Montessori/play group/after-school facility (3%). The report found that the percentages of each type of childcare used have remained relatively static since 2003.

The most popular form of after-school childcare reported by parents in a recent DCYA consultation was 'other after-school service' with around a third of respondents stating that their school-going child was cared for by services such as a crèche or community centre. The second most common form of after-school childcare reported by respondents was a grandparent with almost a quarter of parents selecting this option. A small number of parents selected 'other' for their after-school childcare arrangements. These forms of care included a combination of care such as formal after-school care and an au pair, and a 'specialised one to one special needs childminder'. (DCYA, 2015b: 34).

There is evidence of an increasing number of private childcare services and crèches providing extended services for after-school childcare and a small number of primary schools are also providing after-school care (Department of Justice, 2005). In addition to private provision there has been an expansion of breakfast and homework clubs by organisations such as the School Completion Programmes and youth services which are predominately linked to DEIS schools. The *Growing Up in Ireland Study* (2009a) which focused on the nine year-old cohort reported
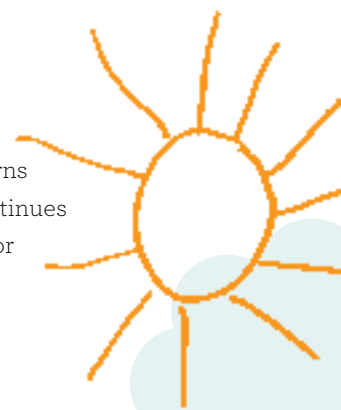
that the use of home work clubs was related to socio-economic class. Children from lower socio-economic status backgrounds, those in single parent families and those who mothers had the lowest level of educational attainment were more likely to use homework clubs, but there were no significant gender differences.

In many cases after-school provision for disadvantaged children takes the form of homework clubs for disadvantaged children (GUI, 2009a) or parents access after-school privately through an early year's setting which offers after-school provision.

Costs of after–school care

The costs of after-school childcare have been reported as being very high for parents as there are no tax reliefs or tax credits and very limited subsidisation. The CSO (2009) reported that the average hourly cost of childcare for primary school children was €6 per hour compared to €4.90 per hour for preschool children and the average weekly cost for childcare for primary school children was under €144. A recent survey by *The Irish Independent*[1] newspaper found that after-school childcare in private crèches in Ireland can cost up to €10,000 per year per child for after-school care five days a week.

> *What has become a major policy issue for women in Ireland is the limited, and frequently extremely costly options of childcare services that are available, their lack of flexibility and the extremely poor level of public support for out–of–school childcare services.*
> (Barry, 2011, p12).

In 2012 the government introduced the After-school Child Care Scheme (ASCC)[2] to provide subsidised after-school-places in community and private childcare facilities to support low-income parents to return to work. There has been some criticism of the scheme over the low take up of places and the scheme has been modified in 2015 to reduce the weekly fees required of parents and to include free pick-up of children from primary school[3].

Provision and regulation

There is currently no national strategy for the after-school care sector. While the preschool sector is subject to regulation under the Preschool Regulations 2006, there are currently no statutory guidelines which apply to the provision of after-school childcare in Ireland and the sector is currently self-regulated (Moloney, 2009), with a number of non-binding guidelines offered by local childcare committees and child care associations. The Department of Justice in 2005 created guidelines for the development of school age childcare in Ireland and in this document they define school age childcare as;

> *Childcare for school going children provided outside of normal school hours where the same children attend the childcare facility on a regular basis and access to the service is clearly defined by agreement with parents and guardians.* (Department of Justice, 2005, p.10).

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[1]   http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/after-school-care-costing-up-to-10k-a-year-31563452.html

[2]   http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/After-school-Child-Care-Scheme---SW-135.aspx

[3]   http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/subsidised-after-school-care-places-not-taken-up-1.1954020

In recognition of this lack of regulation, recently there have been calls for The Department of Education and Science to commission a working group to review Developing School-age Childcare, published by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in 2005, as a matter of priority, with a view to redrafting and publishing a set of standards, principles and guidelines for the after-school sector' (PLÉ, 2016: 14).

The current national framework for children and young people *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* (2014) highlights the value of after-school clubs, specifically the role they can have in supporting educational attainment and tackling disadvantage.

In 2015, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs announced the establishment of an Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) on Future Investment in Early Years and School-Age Care and Education. The purpose of this group was to identify and assess policies and future options for increasing the quality, supply and affordability of early years and school age care and education services in Ireland. In order to inform the work of the IDG, an Open Policy Debate was held with a range of stakeholders and representatives from the early years and school-aged care and education sector. Online consultations were also held with the general public.

Issues of investment and ensuring quality services emerged from the public consultation. Direct investment into school age care and education was identified as both an immediate and long-term priority for improvement. Some respondents suggested subsidies be provided to low-income families whereas others proposed universal subsidised after-school care similar to the ECCE Programme. The need to improve the quality of school age services over the immediate and longer term was raised by a number of respondents. Access to training, continued professional development, and general support for practitioners was linked to quality and viewed as necessary by many. This consultation also highlighted the need to develop best practice in after-school provision from international examples: Key issues included that the outdoor environment is far more accessible, with children spending hours outside each day and that after-school services are broad ranging and accommodate the different interests of children (DCYA, 2015b).

Consultations with parents highlighted that the most popular form of after-school childcare was services such as a crèche or community centre followed by a grandparent (together comprising over nearly 60% of the respondents). The remainder were using a combination of care such as formal after-school care and an au pair, or a childminder. Affordability was the most important reason for choosing forms of after-school care, followed by the quality of care provided. The locality of the service was also identified as being important. The majority of parents of children attending after-school services were either very satisfied or satisfied with their childcare arrangements. Reasons for parents being dissatisfied with their arrangements included it not being their first choice but it was all they can afford, parents preferring to be at home, and providing care being a strain on grandparents. Availability of a grandparent was also the most common reason parents did not have regular after-school childcare arrangements. This was followed by affordability and the belief that parental care is best for the child at this age. Participating parents were asked to suggest one priority action for future Government investment in early years and school-aged care and education. Increased options for after-school services were suggested by respondents, with some indicating that options are currently quite limited. Wraparound services were suggested by both sets of respondents (stakeholders and parents). These were mentioned in relation to improved access and reduced transportation by many parents, with the suggestion that early years' services be provided on school grounds. Similarly, establishing links between early years and school age care and education were suggested by a number of providers, in order to ease transitions for children and improve the quality of both services.
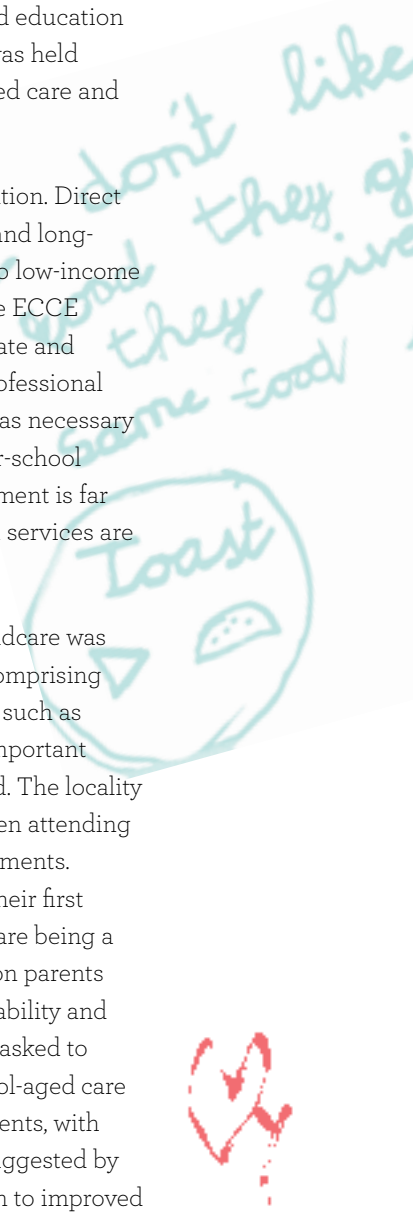
Both the interdepartmental group report and a *Programme for Partnership Government* (2016) contain proposals to introducing a new system to support and expand quality after-school care for school-aged children.

> *'Utilise our primary school buildings for after–school care provision for school age children to offer more options and flexibility to parents. We will link additional capitation to the provision of buildings for after–school care, where demand exists. Community groups and private providers will be invited to tender to use school facilities (outside school hours).'* (p.78)

In envisioning the multi-use of existing educational facilities, this proposal, while perhaps addressing issues related to locality and costs, does not address the limitations of such a direction that have been identified in the literature.

INTERNATIONAL MODELS OF AFTER–SCHOOL CARE

A model of provision designed to facilitate working parents and offering care before school opens, after school hours and during school holidays works well in other jurisdictions such as the Scandinavian countries. Here, after-school can take the form of engagement in extra-curricular activities offered in schools or local community centres. In other countries, where aftercare is more established, settings range from public primary schools, sport clubs arranged by voluntary sport organisations, and play parks as outlined by Strandell (2013). Likewise, in New Zealand, such programmes known as OSCAR (Out of School Care and Recreation) are located in or near schools (Walter, 2007).

Smith and Barker (2000) regard the expansion of the network of after-school centres as the most significant reform influencing children's lives outside the formal school system in Britain. However, in many cases after-school reform in European countries has created no centralised after-school system or new institutional structures. After-school activities have been absorbed into already existing local institutions, which have modelled the activity in accordance with their own goals and interests (Strandell, 2013). Policy seems to have been informed by the public debate on school children's after-school time. It was prompted by increased participation of women in the workforce around this time, alongside a continuing assumption that women were responsible for child care. The first generation of research was concerned with 'latchkey kids', with studies reporting deficits, although many of these were situated in low income communities (Marshall *et al*, 1997). Research on after-school programmes emphasised the benefits of such programmes targeted at low income children along with risk associated with children being at home without the supervision of adults (Strandell, 2013). A clear shift from regarding after-school care as time free from school towards integrating it into the school system, took place in the 1990s in Sweden and, somewhat later, in Finland (Strandell, 2013).

The current debate on after-school care is situated in the context of modern childhood where children are cared for in different sites – the home, school, community, extended family, private settings and so on. Concerns revolve around the intersection of risk and protection where there is a necessity to ensure that children are protected while at the same time having the freedom to grow and develop, which can involve risk (James and James, 2004).

Increasingly, research points to the implications of policy on after-school care driven by economic pressures. This emphasises the negative consequences for the valuing of children in the minimising of costs and the spatial resolutions made. Strandell (2013) states that, in the context of Finland, no after-school centres have been located in spaces planned exclusively for after-school activities and for spending leisure time. Rather, after-school centres are located in buildings planned and equipped for other purposes. The problem is most acute in schools where facilities allow the children little activity space and favour quiet activities and sitting still. The author questions whether the way the reform has been put into practice and the activity has been absorbed into already existing institutions and established practices, reflects the marginal position after-school care and activities have in the education system and in educational policies.

CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON AFTER-SCHOOL CARE

While the literature on children's views and experiences of after-school care is limited, what does exist sheds light on children's own experiences and opinions of a childcare context to which policy makers in several countries are now turning their interest. This literature now includes studies on how children spend their time after school, and how they experience the different forms of after-school care, both formal and informal. Some studies look at sibling relationships and children's care status (Berman *et al*, 1992) and others focus on loneliness and dissatisfaction that children experience (Demircan and Demir, 2014). Other studies highlight the interaction of after school care with the development of peer relationships, independence and opportunities presented for reflection and relaxation. Generally, the literature provides a picture of what children value in after-school provision. They appear to prioritise play, having some freedom, choice in activities, being with their friends, having private spaces and the availability of supportive and at times non-intrusive adults.

VALUE OF AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMES FOR CHILDREN

The benefits of participation in after-school clubs have been highlighted in a range of studies. There is much literature and research on the value of after-school programmes as early intervention (Miller, 2003; Strandell, 2012; Barnardos, 2014) showing that pupils who regularly participate in high quality learning opportunities beyond the traditional school day can show improvement in behaviour, attitude and/or achievement. A US study, reported on the after-school activities of 216 low-income children across four types of after-school – formal after-school programs, mother care, informal adult supervision and self-care – using a time-use interview over a five month period (Posner and Lowe Vandell, 1994). The interviewers asked about children's activities from the time school was dismissed until 6.00pm–6.30pm in the evening. Attending a formal after-school program was associated with better academic achievement and social adjustment in comparison to other types of after-school care. Children's activities and experiences also varied in different after-school settings. Children in formal programs spent more time in academic activities and enrichment lessons and less time watching TV and playing outside unsupervised than other children. They also spent more time doing activities with peers and adults and less time with siblings than other children did. The time that children spent in these activities was correlated with their academic and conduct grades, peer relations, and emotional adjustment.

Literature on the impact of participation in after-school clubs is relatively limited in the Irish context, although teachers involved in studies in Dublin and Maynooth (cited by Hennessy and Donnelly, 2005) have reported benefits to pupils who participate in them. They noted that

although participants did no better in school than their non-participating counterparts, the fact that they were equivalent may in itself be an achievement. In addition, both children and families who participated in the study reported other benefits of participation in after-school clubs, including support and opportunities for improving social and other skills. Moloney (2009) highlights that research indicates that quality school age programmes provide safe, challenging and fun environments for children during non-school hours. Children are said to derive many benefits from attending school age settings such as opportunities to socialise and enjoy time with friends, relax, play, develop new skills and interests, participate in physical activity, participate in both structured and non-structured activities, do homework, improve interpersonal and social skills, build on what they have learned during the school day, learn about themselves and their worlds, and improve academic achievement (p.15).

AFTER–SCHOOL AT HOME, PUBLIC DEBATE AND CHILDREN'S VIEWS

How home is viewed and its suitability as an after school setting intersects with changing societal views of children's use of home after school. Strandell (2013) cautions against policy development in childcare that priorities protection over hearing children's voices and suggests that children's voices are often overlooked or dismissed. While home has traditionally been considered a safe place for children, more recently it is being re-conceptualised as a lonely and unsafe place. In this context, Forsberg and Strandell (2007) discuss children's experiences of after-school care in Finland. They draw on their study of the experiences and accounts of thirty-one eight year-olds living in urban areas of Finland where they found that these children commonly spent their after-school time in and around their homes largely without adult presence. They found that children spent their time inside and outside of their homes, having previously negotiated outside spaces with parents and guardians and they suggest that the children made use of the spaces available to them to maximise their independence and autonomy. The social relationships which the children themselves defined as most important during their after-school hours in the home sphere were relationships with friends:

> *'Friends were, in fact, the children's most important social network, and after–school hours may be described as a space with friends in the overall chronological structure of children's weekdays'* (p. 401).

For most of the children in the study, home is an ideal place for spending their after-school time, regardless if they do it on their own, together with peers, siblings, parents, or occasionally grandparents or other people. For children, 'good' after-school hours consisted of ordinary everyday activities, the company of friends and some influence on what to do and how to use the space. At home you could be your own boss and in control of your own use of space and time (Forsberg and Strandell, 2007).

In another study on after-school experiences at home, Berman *et al,* (1992) were interested in how children spend their time after-school and whether the care status affects the latitude they had for participating in different activities as well as children's self-esteem. Data was collected on children's after-school experience in a large group of ethnically diverse children in four different after-school care arrangements. The findings indicate that children's freedom was more circumscribed for those at home alone or in older sibling care. Children in self-care were not allowed play outside or visit their friend's homes as often as children in adult in-home care or older sibling care. Fewer children in older sibling care were allowed to visit a neighbour's house than children in adult-in-home care. The authors found no difference in self-esteem for children in self-care or adult care whether that be in-home or out-of-home. An unexpected finding

was that children in older sibling care reported lower self- esteem, regardless of age. Negative sibling relationships and the risk of aggression and abuse have been reported in other research. For example, Demircan and Demir (2014) examined the loneliness and social dissatisfaction of elementary school students in relation to type of after-school care. The Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Scale, and an information form that included age and the students' after-school care arrangements, was completed by 358 students. Results indicated that children who were in self- or sibling-care had greater loneliness and social dissatisfaction compared to their peers under formal centre care.

CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF OTHER AFTER–SCHOOL SETTINGS

Research on other forms of after-school care includes Strandell (2013) who analyses children's experiences of after-school in schools, sports clubs run by voluntary organisations, and play parks in Finland. Since 2004, local municipalities there offer care to seven and eight year-old school children in first and second grade in primary school. The findings reveal that the leaders of after-school activities in schools understand the activities as a continuation of school and its educational goals, with the children regarded primarily as pupils. There was an emphasis on organised activities and students were under surveillance all of the time. The children themselves complained about the crowded space, the strict order and the many restrictions. In contrast, leaders of after-school centres integrated into play parks regarded the play parks as the very opposite of everything that is school-like. Rather they regarded the space as an open place, where children do not have to be supervised all the time. In the play park settings children were encouraged to choose their own activities and make use of the facilities the play park can offer. The leaders regarded their own role as one of guiding the children to become more independent and self-governed (2013, p. 276). The sport club placed a high value on the physically and mentally strong child. The activities were clearly informed by contemporary health policies and the strategies for preventing obesity. While the leaders struggled with whether they should plan activities aimed at developing the children's competences for the future, or if they should just let the children 'be free' and do whatever they like to do. The children, on the other hand, were largely uncritical towards the coaching style of guiding them. Because of the sporty and healthy lifestyle promoted by the club, they regarded it as superior to other after-school centres or to staying at home (2013, p. 277). However, the sport club in the study was located in the sports organisation's facilities and children less interested in sports had difficulties in finding something to do. This alerts us to the spatial challenges brought about by the after-school reform where single-use buildings are used for multi-purpose activities. The reforms, and how such challenges are addressed and children's views are taken on board, are indicative of how children are valued.

In other research, Gesell *et al,* (2013) conducted analysis in the US to evaluate the difference in the amount of physical activity children aged 5–13 years of age engaged in when enrolled in a physical activity-enhanced after-school program based in a community recreation centre, versus a standard school-based after-school program. A low-cost, alternative after-school program featuring adult-led physical activities in a community recreation centre was associated with increased physical activity compared to standard-of-care school-based after-school program.

PLAY AND AFTER–SCHOOL CARE

One of the key expectations of the after-school experience for children is play (PLÉ, 2015) and after-school provision must be underpinned by Article 31 of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, which sets out the child's right to play. The play policy developed by the Irish government (NCO, 2004) states that 'Play is freely chosen, personally directed intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child' (NCO, 2004, p.6). Free choice

is clearly mentioned in this 'play is what children do when no-one else is telling them what to do' (NCO, 2004, p.11). Choice within play has also been highlighted as important by 8–14 year-olds in England (Henshall and Lacey, 2007; Kapasi and Gleave, 2009). A lack of time for children to spend in authentic free play has been highlighted in relation in a range of contexts including out-of-school clubs, the playground and the home (Smith and Barker, 2001).

Interestingly, King and Howard (2014) found that the out-of-school club offered a higher level of choice in play than either the home or school playground environment. The authors looked at children's play in out-of-school clubs in Wales, with children aged 6–11 years self-reporting on play in three contexts: home, school playground and out-of-school club. The out-of-school clubs in the study were set up to provide a play environment for children while their parents were working, studying etc. They looked at the types of play engaged in, the social aspects of play and choices made within play and considered the presence of five types of play – dramatic, creative, object, physical and static play. Children described the widest range of activities at the out-of-school club and children were more likely to play with a friend there than at home. King and Howard (2014) found that children's choice in their play was clearly influenced by the activity that was chosen, the space that was available and the supervising adults' perception of play. The authors looked at aspects of professional practice which may differ from the school playground where choice of play was perceived by children as much more limited, and suggest that club settings were staffed by play workers, trained to be sensitive in supporting children's play process and facilitating choice in play (Howard, 2010).
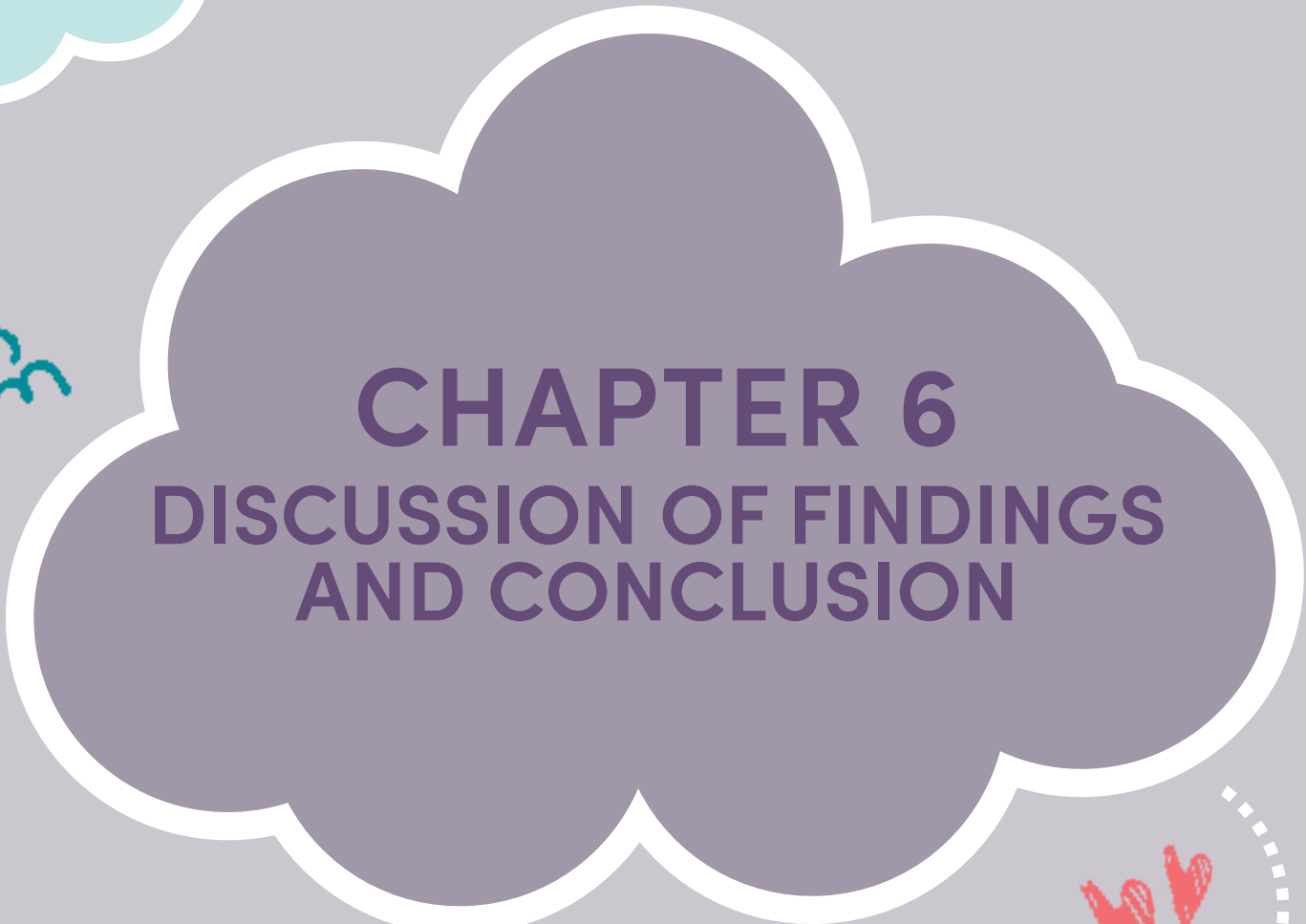
CONCLUSION

The interest in after-school care arose from the changing context of childhood and childcare with a move away from home based care to sharing of care across different sites from the 1970s onwards. Earlier studies assumed and focused on negative effects of out of home care more generally but highlighted positive effects of targeted after-school care for those children from lower socio-economic groups. The discourse of risk and protection permeates the literature with protection often being fore-fronted by researchers, organisations and parents. Experiences of children, on the other hand, tend to illustrate that they value freedom, choice, and privacy. Flexibility and the support of non-intrusive adult figures also emerge as important to children in their after-school care and there are important spatial aspects that influence the type and scope of activities in which children engage.

While after-school care is unregulated in the Irish context, there is a wide variety of provision ranging from after-school activities arranged by primary schools, to provision for disadvantaged children in the form of homework clubs (GUI, 2009a) or parent's may access after-school privately through early years settings which offer after-school provision. Also, after-school can take the form of engagement in extra-curricular activities offered in schools or local community centres.

More recently, there has been a move towards developing policy and provision in after-school care. The emphasis appears to be on utilising school buildings to be staffed by a range of professionals from community groups and private providers. Children's experiences of after-school care intersect complexly with the view of staff on play and education and the spaces used for after-school care seem to have a key influence on the scope and type of activities available to children. Practice settings staffed by trained and experienced play workers appear to offer more flexibility and support children's experiences more than those with a traditional educational focus. Informal settings where adults are present but in the background and where children have room to negotiate their activities and spatial boundaries also seem to fulfil their needs well.

CHAPTER 6
## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

As detailed earlier, the methods used to elicit children's opinions on after-school care included timelines, voting and placemats. These different methods of data collection were devised to enable children to express their opinions and preferences through drawing and/or writing. The DCYA Citizen Participation Support Team worked with the children. Data gathered by all methods offer a glimpse into children's views and perspectives and reflect children's ages and stages of development. In reviewing the material it was found that while children voted on aspects of after-school care, the more detailed and expansive exploration of their experiences emerged from their drawings and writing during the placemat and timeline exercises.

The top five themes that emerged from the timeline exercises are detailed in the table below, and reflect what children like to do and where they like to do it.

Table 17: Top five themes in order of importance in 'Timelines' exercises with children

	5–7 year-olds	8–12 year-olds
1	Play	Play
2	Eating and food	Eating and food
3	Relaxation	Home
4	Relatives	Friends
5	Home	Homework

For both cohorts of children play (including outings and structured activities) emerged as the priority. It represented 44% of activity recorded for 5–7 year-olds and 38% for 8–12 year-olds. Outdoor play was extremely important in both cohorts, but especially so for the younger age group. Participation of five year-olds in physical play, such as climbing trees/frames, playing with a ball, chasing, riding a bicycle and roller-skating is also well documented in research (GUI, 2013). Other aspects of their play involved toys, imaginary play and tech play. This is highlighted in recent research which found that five year-olds in Ireland engaged in make-believe games, enjoyed music, dance or movement, painting or drawing, and played with an electronic device frequently, the majority doing so every day (Smyth, 2016). For the older children in this consultation, relational play, general play, indoor and outdoor play were all important. Children emphasised the importance to them of a wide variety of play and of having choice within their everyday play. This is also in line with international research that highlights the importance of choice within play in children's lives (Henshall and Lacey, 2007; Kapasi and Gleave, 2009). As discussed earlier, research highlights the lack of time children have to spend in authentic free play in relation in a range of contexts including out-of-school clubs, the playground and the home (Smith and Barker, 2001). Some research (King and Howard, 2014) finds that the out-of-school club offers a higher level of choice in play than either the home or school playground environment, given the presence of trained and experienced play workers to facilitate this in the former settings. However, this higher level of choice was also limited, at times, because of the original orientation of the buildings/settings in which the out-of-school club took place (Strandell, 2013). In this consultation, children were critical of the activities and equipment available to them in some after-school settings including broken toys or not being allowed to go outside to play. Outings to the park or library and involvement in structured activities were included in this category. Not surprisingly the latter was more of a feature of the after-school experience for the older cohort of children aged 8–12 years. This is confirmed by recent research on children participation in arts and cultural participation (Smyth, 2016) which indicates that nine year-old children's engagement in more structured activities, such as taking part in organised classes and clubs, become more important.
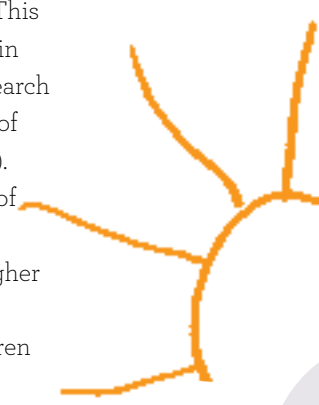
Eating and food was the next most frequently mentioned theme in the 'Timelines' for both age cohorts. This reflects the importance of food and food practices in adult–child intergenerational relationships, as also found elsewhere (Ralph 2013). Children in the consultations commented on enjoying eating snacks and treats after school when they were hungry, and also frequently mentioned eating dinner. They had clear preferences in terms of whose cooking they liked – often mentioning a mother's dinner or granny's baking or expressed a liking for a childminder's cooking. A previous review of international literature on healthy eating reported that children and young people predominantly associated healthy eating with the home environment (Stevenson *et al,* 2007). In these consultations the most frequently mentioned issue the children disliked in formal after-school settings was the food. In particular they disliked a lack of choice about what they ate and the rules that surrounded food consumption in a setting. What they specifically didn't like was not having a choice in what they ate and a lack of variety in food, as well as having to eat food in a predetermined order.

The younger children spent a lot of time at home and with immediate and extended family members who featured as both playmates and carers. GUI data also confirms that most nine year-olds in Ireland have regular contact with their extended family in after-school care (GUI, 2009b). The children in this consultation also mentioned wanting to relax after school: they were often tired after the school day. Relaxing was often associated with changing out of their school uniform, having a snack, 'chilling out' or postponing homework until later. Some children mentioned their bedrooms as places they played with their toys. In this regard, Karsten (2005) also highlights children's references to their bedrooms as places that offer an escape from parental control and the adult gaze.

The older children liked being at home or in relative's houses to relax and feel comfortable. This is in keeping with CSO (2009) data indicating that most primary school children are cared for after school by parents or relatives. The older children also spoke about the being able to 'chill out' and not feel hurried in these spaces. Increasing levels of stress in children's lives is documented in the literature (Taylor and Orlick, 2004) and their identification of spaces and places where they can de-stress is, therefore, important in considering the development of the after-school care environment.

The children wanted opportunities to socialise with their friends whether they were at home, in a relative's or childminder's house or at a formal after-school setting. The importance of being with friends is also supported by research indicating the importance afforded by children to peer relations, friendships and play (Dunn, 2004; Jans, 2004, cited in Kernan, 2010). What children in this consultation did not like was being in settings that they felt they had outgrown. Examples they gave included seats that were too small for them, inappropriate toys and equipment, being with children who were younger than them and being unable to play with them.

Homework emerged strongly in the older children's timelines and reflects the reality of children's educational experiences and the practice of homework in the Irish education system. Some children wanted to do homework immediately after school, while others preferred to postpone until later in the day. Ninety-seven percent of nine year-olds in the GUI study were given homework four nights per week. Furthermore, it was found that parents tended to report that children spent longer on their homework than their teachers expected (GUI, 2009a). A further issue that arose in this consultation was that some children in private after-school settings would have liked the staff to check their homework on completion, but the children indicated that this was not an option available to them.

The 8–12 year-old cohort voted on where they would like to be cared for from a list of settings identified by them. Overwhelmingly the children voted for home as the place they would most like to be cared for after school (59%). This was followed by friends' houses (17%), relatives (13%), an after-school club (6%), childminder (4%) and crèche (1%). Their voting here is reflective of what we know about where children in Ireland go after school and who, primarily, cares for them during this time (CSO 2009).

What these views offer us is an insight into what children value in the places that are available to them for after-school care, the activities they are familiar with and those they prefer. It also alerts us to the degree to which children value being consulted about the nature of those activities and how important having a choice is to them. Children of both age cohorts valued having spaces to relax, to play with their friends and where they could have some privacy and flexibility. Policy development that addresses these priorities, in the context of the reality of the different sites of care for children and personnel available to carry out this care, could be viewed as policy development that includes the voices of children.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:
AFTER-SCHOOL CARE CONSULTATIONS

Methodology 5–7 year-olds

AIM: To identify what children like and dislike about after-school care. To identify the place(s) that children most like to be cared for after-school.

AGE RANGE: 5–7 year-olds (junior infants to second class)

SIZE OF GROUP: 12 children, four facilitators

AGENDA

10.00 Intro and games

10.10 Split children into groups of six (+ two facilitators)

Questions for initial chat:
→ *Where do you go after-school?*
→ *Where do you most like to be?*
(answers recorded by a co-facilitator)

Placemat:

All children can draw their ideas on the placemat. Facilitators to write down beside drawings what the drawings are of.
→ Draw or design (with stickers and cut out paper) the place you like to be after school
→ Who do you like to be with?
→ What do you like to do?

10.40 Individual templates [A3 size]

Draw or design (with stickers and cut out paper) all the things you would like to do from the time you get out of school, up to tea time or *Scooby Doo* time.

→ After the children have filled in their own template with their ideas, the facilitator begins a discussion where each child gets to share their ideas. The co-facilitator takes notes.
→ During exercise – facilitators discreetly ask children 'What do you not like?' – they write this up on a page for the children – the children get to 'bin' the things they don't like.

11.15 Evaluation – a simple evaluation template given to each child to complete (Suzanne to design)
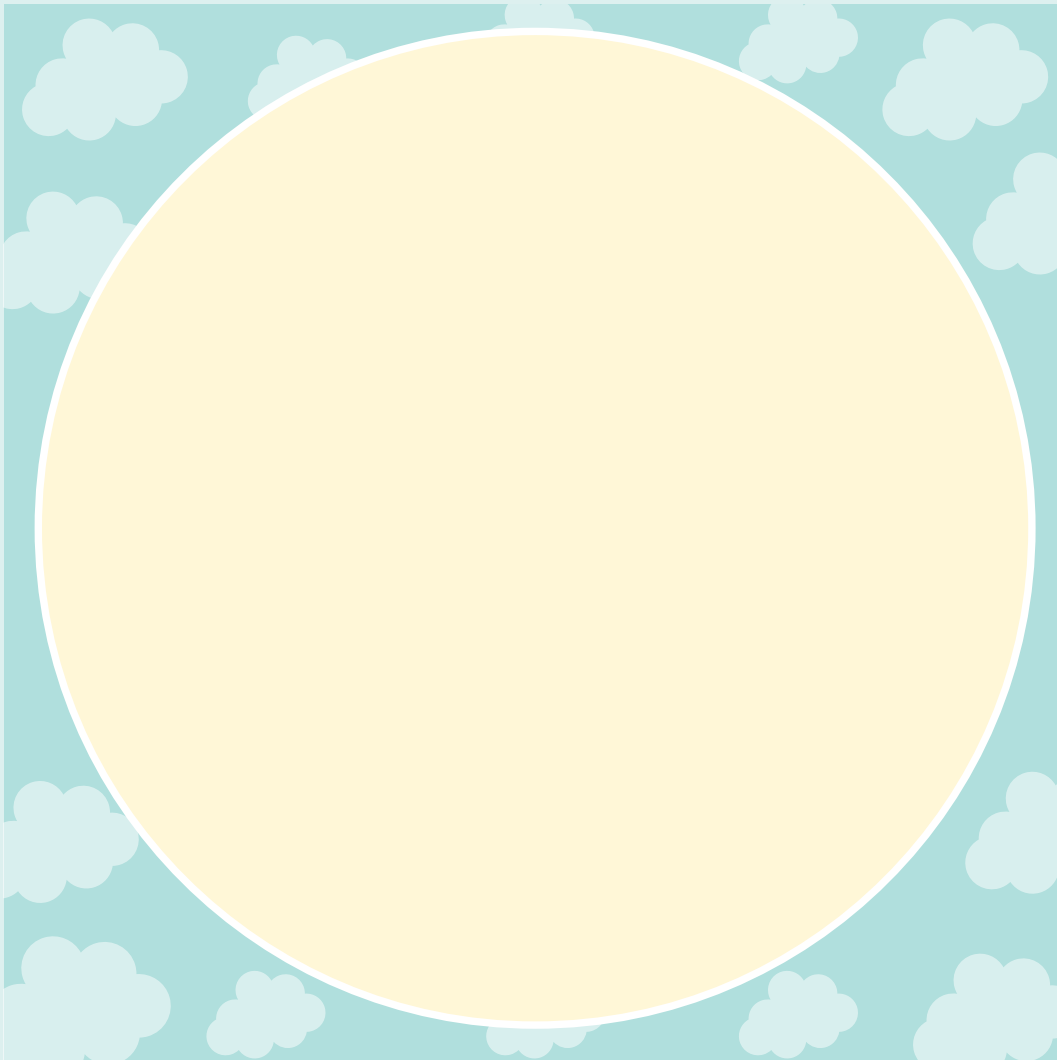
11.30 Close

Figure 6: Sample placemat

Figure 7: Sample lifeline

APPENDIX 2:
AFTER-SCHOOL CARE CONSULTATIONS

Methodology 8–12 year-olds

AIM: To identify what children like and dislike about after-school care. To identify the place that children most like to be cared for after school.

AGE: 8–12 year-olds

SIZE OF GROUP: 40 children, five facilitators, five co-facilitators

AGENDA

10.30 Arrival, registration

11.30 Introduction and games

11.45 **Open Space – each child gets max four Post-its each**
- → Question: 'Where do children go after school?'
- → Once filled out each child places their Post-it's on the wall.
- → Five or six children volunteers help to sort the Post-it's into categories (+ facilitators + co-facilitators).
- → Meanwhile others are having a discussion.
- → Coordination team to write categories up on PPT for afternoon vote.

12:05 **Working on categories**
- → Large group divided into smaller groups of approx. Eight working at round tables.
- → All working on graphically designed placemats (see p. 3 for rough mock-up).
- → Each group works on a category identified in earlier activity.

(Note: it is important that the children choose which category they would like to discuss in more detail)

Questions on placemat (*see graphic on next page*):
- → What do you like?
- → What do you not like?

Prioritisation

Group vote on the most important 'likes' and 'dislikes' (Three sticky dots per person per section).

12.45   **LUNCH**

13.30   **Design your own after-school**

→ Each child is given index cards [A6] that they can draw/ write on. Each child is asked to design their own after-school experience. Each child is asked to design their own after-school experience starting with the end of school. The child should identify where they are, what is going on, who is with them, etc.

→ Once they've completed their index cards, the group moves on to their lifeline template and all children in group can choose which of their cards they feel are the most important to place on the lifeline (they can choose as many as they want to stick down). They place their cards (using blu-tack) on the lifeline.

→ They can move the cards around until the group is happy with the order of it.

14.00   **Full room VOTE**

Returning to the original categories identified (by now this list will be on PPT), children are asked 'are there any other places children go after school that you would like to add to this list?'

The key question they are asked: 'Out of this list where would you like to be cared for?'

Each group visits the voting station and get to vote (by private ballot) on the list of categories.

14.20   **Announce results of vote to full group**
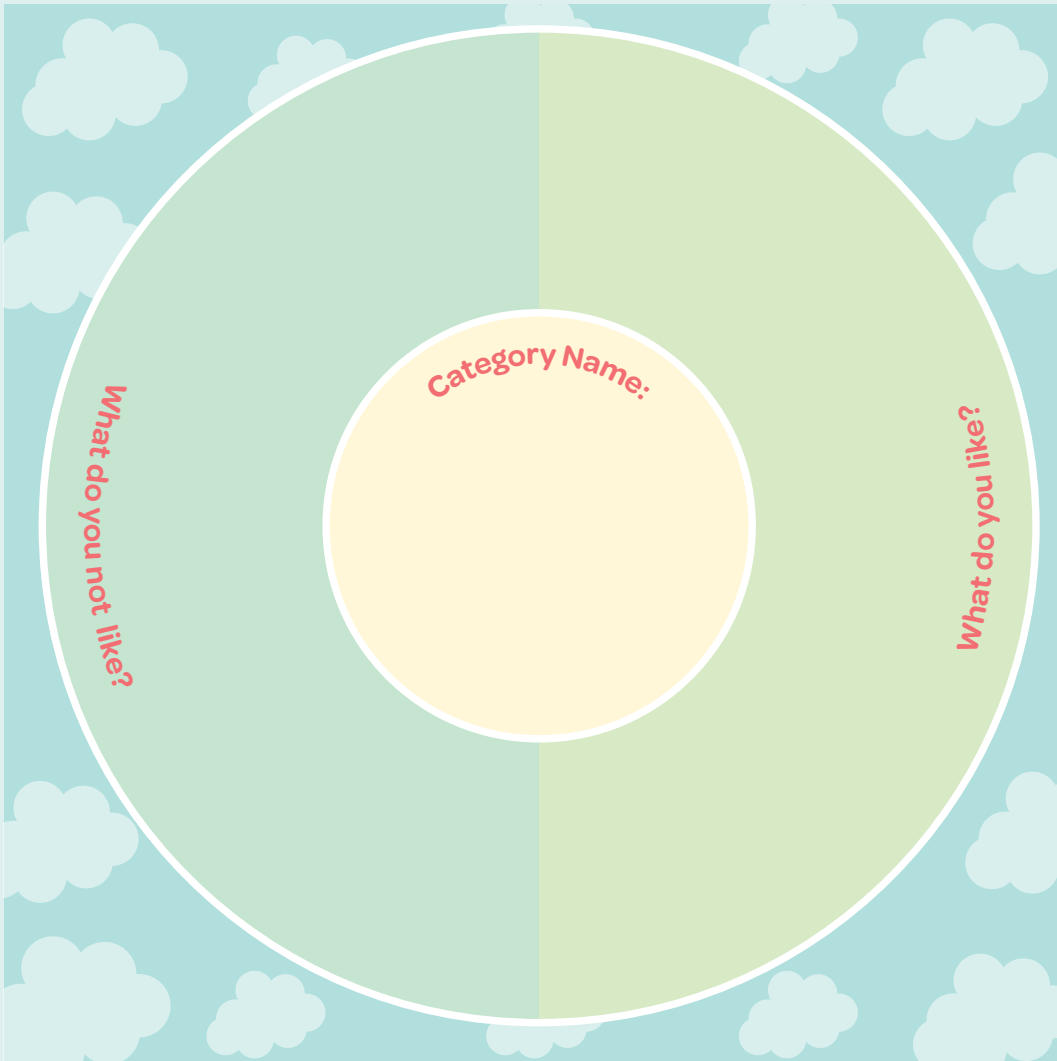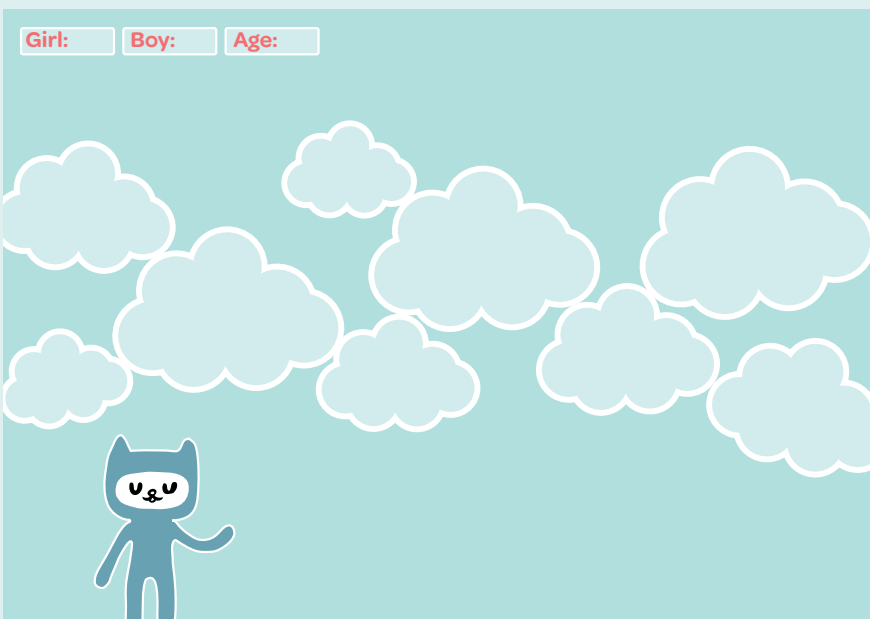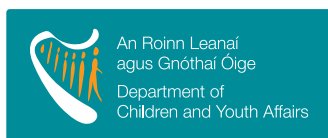Evaluation and close of consultation

Figure 8: Sample Placemat

Category Name:

What do you not like?

What do you like?

Figure 9: Design your own after school

Girl: Boy: Age:

APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORMS

An Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Consent form for Children Participating in a Consultation on After-school Care for Children

AGE GROUP: 5–7 year-olds   **CONSULTATION DATE:** XXX 2016

ABOUT THE CONSULTATION: This consultation will ask children what they like and dislike about after-school care, and to talk about the places where children most like to be cared for after school.

There will be X children participating in this event. The children will be taking part in games and activities where they will be asked to give their views on after-school care.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE VIEWS OF PARTICIPANTS? A report of the views of the children will be submitted to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to inform the development of standards and policy on after-school care.

DETAILS OF CHILD

Name of child:

Address of child:

Date of birth of child: **Age:**   **Girl**   **Boy**   *(tick as appropriate)*

Other relevant information *(please mention any medical conditions, special needs or dietary requirements):*

DETAILS OF PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARE WORKER

Name of parent/guardian/care worker:
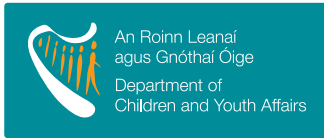
Please read and tick the following:

☐ I give permission for the child named above to attend the consultation in the school.

☐ I understand that the proceedings may be photographed or filmed for publicity or promotional purposes. I agree that photographs and/or video recordings of my child taken at this consultation may appear in the media or in other publications, including; printed publications or materials, posters, brochures, electronic publications or related websites.

☐ I have read and understand the information on this sheet about the consultation.

☐ I have explained the contents of this document and the Assent Form to the above named participant.

☐ I understand that there will be two researchers from University College Cork at the consultation. They will be writing a report of the consultation but they will not use my child's name in the report.

Signed: **Date:**
(parent/guardian/care worker)

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

An Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Consent form for Children Participating in a Consultation on After-school Care for Children

AGE GROUP: 8-12 year-olds   **CONSULTATION DATE:** XXX 2016

ABOUT THE CONSULTATION: This consultation will ask children what they like and dislike about after-school care, and to talk about the places where children most like to be cared for after school.

There will be X children participating in this event. The children will be taking part in games and activities where they will be asked to give their views on after-school care.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE VIEWS OF PARTICIPANTS? A report of the views of the children will be submitted to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to inform the development of standards and policy on after school care.

DETAILS OF CHILD

Name of child:

Address of child:

Date of birth of child: **Age:**   **Girl**   **Boy**   *(tick as appropriate)*

Other relevant information *(please mention any medical conditions, special needs or dietary requirements):*

DETAILS OF PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARE WORKER

Name of parent/guardian/care worker:

Please read and tick the following:

☐ I give permission for the child named above to attend the consultation in the school.

☐ I understand that the proceedings may be photographed or filmed for publicity or promotional purposes. I agree that photographs and/or video recordings of my child taken at this consultation may appear in the media or in other publications, including; printed publications or materials, posters, brochures, electronic publications or related websites.

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☐ I understand that there will be two researchers from University College Cork at the consultation. They will be writing a report of the consultation but they will not use my child's name in the report.

Signed: **Date:**
(parent/guardian/care worker)

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Helping each oth...
on homework

Awesome
Cooking

Playing
with the kittens
xx

Putting on
Makeup
xx

Gossiping
xx

Going
town wiv

Dress
up xx

Walking down
shop. xx

Love her
mans
cooking xx

Playing
knock a dolly
xx

Going
outside with all
the boys xx

Doing
hair xx

Homework
xx

Watching
TV with
snacks +
Pizza.

Playi...
on mu...
...h...

playing
with my
brother