

Dundee Bairns
An impact evaluation of holiday and out-of-school activity
September 2021



About this report

This report presents the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit's (SPIRU)¹ appraisal of the work of Dundee Bairns². SPIRU has no vested interest in the work of Dundee Bairns; this is an independent appraisal. This report comprises a single page of headline findings, a four-page Executive Summary, and a full 39-page report including Annexes.

About SPIRU

SPIRU is an interdisciplinary research group based at Glasgow Caledonian University, which often works in partnership with other stakeholders to investigate and develop effective responses to poverty and inequality in Scotland and beyond. SPIRU is committed to advancing GCU's mission to promote the Common Good and to align its research to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. SPIRU contributes to these ambitions through applied research, policy analysis and engaging with policy makers, campaign groups and community stakeholders.

SPIRU has a particular interest in food insecurity issues: it has written several reports on school food.^{3,4,5} During 2020, it reviewed work in Scotland to tackle food insecurity during the coronavirus crisis, completing a nationwide review of local action,⁶ and undertaking case study analyses of local partnerships,⁷ and local organisations⁸.

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Table of contents

About this report	2
About SPIRU	2
Table of contents	2
Ten Takeaways.....	3
Executive Summary and Key Recommendations	4
1. Introduction to this Impact Evaluation.....	8
2. The Work of Dundee Bairns.....	10
3. Does Dundee Need a Dundee Bairns? The Socio-economic Context of the City.....	14
4. Deliverables: Claims to impact	16
5. What Makes the Difference?	25
6. Mission Match	30
7. Future Considerations	33
8. Conclusions	35
Annex 1: Our Approach to Evaluation	36
Endnotes	41

Ten Takeaways

- 1** Dundee Bairns gained charitable status in 2017, the year following a successful pilot in Menzieshill, Dundee.
- 2** The core function of Dundee Bairns is to tackle child food insecurity in Dundee during the long school holiday periods (Easter, Summer, October and now Christmas).
- 3** Dundee Bairns' work is targeted at the most disadvantaged parts of the city.
- 4** Dundee Bairns provides food to partner organisations who are engaging children and young people across the city. Its list of partners and funders is extensive.
- 5** Although primarily focused on tackling food insecurity, Dundee Bairns also administers a fund to provide opportunities for children to take part in musical, sporting, artistic or cultural activity that would otherwise be beyond their means on the grounds of cost. Dundee Bairns has also been involved in providing after-school food-and-leisure provision to families in several primary schools across Dundee.
- 6** Dundee Bairns reports that it has provided over 300,000 meals to the children of Dundee, and was an integral part of Dundee's Healthy Food Alliance during the Covid-19 lockdown, leading to the delivery of 60,000 lunches and 70,000 meals for families during the 18 weeks of lockdown in 2020.
- 7** The work of Dundee Bairns necessitates strong connections across many community organisations. It is a partnership model in which community operations are supportive of each other's work, and dependent on this partnership for its own success.
- 8** Although a collective endeavour, Dundee Bairns has strong leadership from a well-connected local figure who has been able and willing to utilise these connections to further the work of Dundee Bairns.
- 9** Dundee Bairns provides directly for children. However, this also benefits families/parents by reducing pressure on household budgets - allowing family income to 'stretch' further.
- 10** Dundee Bairns recognises that it alone cannot alleviate poverty in the city. However, it can reduce the impact of poverty, and strengthen the 'offer' of community organisations that are providing opportunities and services to young people across the city.

Executive Summary and Key Recommendations

About this evaluation

This is an independent appraisal by the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) of the work of Dundee Bairns. SPIRU was invited by the Scottish Government in the Spring of 2020 to undertake this evaluation. Initial plans to complete the work over the Summer of 2020 were interrupted with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. The evaluation draws on five sources: the wider academic/applied literature on out of school provision; documentary evidence provided by Dundee Bairns; interviews with staff; interviews with service users; and responses of Genna Millar (Project Coordinator) to the research team's ad-hoc queries. The sources consulted are listed in the Annex and are referenced throughout the report. This report was drafted in November 2020, revised in the first few months of 2021, and published by SPIRU in September 2021. Professor McKendrick managed the evaluation, in conjunction with Julie Brown, a SPIRU researcher. The conclusions reached are independent.

What we knew in advance

What are the key historical milestones of Dundee Bairns?

- **2016 - Inception and Formation.** Formed following a successful pilot in Menzieshill, Dundee.
- **2017 – Charitable Status Achieved.** Charitable status attained and Board of Trustees appointed in May 2017.
- **2019 and 2020 - Strategic Vision.** Three year strategic plans are developed and refreshed, aligning the work of Dundee Bairns to local and national priorities.

What did we know about the work of Dundee Bairns?

- **Tackling food insecurity. Helping others help Dundee's children.** The core function of Dundee Bairns is to tackle food insecurity in Dundee during school holiday periods.
- **Helping others help Dundee's children.** Dundee Bairns provides food to partner organisations to support their work, as they engage children and young people across the city. Its list of partners and funders is extensive.
- **Staffing.** Dundee Bairns is primarily a volunteer organisation, with its first (and only) staff member appointed in 2020. Eight Trustees and two patrons support its work.
- **Big numbers.** Dundee Bairns reports that it provided over 100,000 meals to the children of Dundee in the first two years.
- **Tough times, exceptional efforts.** Dundee Bairns was an integral part of Dundee's Healthy Food Alliance during the Covid-19 lockdown, leading to the delivery of 60,000 lunches and 70,000 meals for families during the 18 weeks of the first lockdown in 2020.
- **Beyond food.** Although primarily focused on tackling food insecurity, Dundee Bairns also administers a fund to provide opportunities for children to take part in musical, sporting, artistic or cultural activity that would otherwise be beyond their means on the grounds of cost.
- **Beyond school holidays.** Dundee Bairns has also been involved in providing after-school food-and-leisure provision to families in several primary schools across Dundee.

What community is served by Dundee Bairns?

- **Deprived Neighbourhoods in Dundee.** Dundee Bairns work is targeted at the most disadvantaged parts of the city.
- **Dundee's children.** Access to the food provided by Dundee Bairns is mostly determined by the intermediaries with which Dundee Bairns works.

What are the main goals of Dundee Bairns?

- **Core Purpose.** The core purpose of Dundee Bairns is to alleviate holiday hunger and ensure that no child in Dundee goes hungry, in order to help all children within Dundee thrive and realise their potential.

What did we find?

What difference does Dundee Bairns make?

- **Tackling food insecurity** – Dundee Bairns has delivered food to children and young people across deprived areas of Dundee during school holiday periods, since 2016. Since the summer of 2016 it is reported that Dundee Bairns has provided over 300,000 meals to children in deprived areas of Dundee. It has bridged the gaps that made many children in Dundee vulnerable to 'holiday hunger' - times when they have no access to free school meals. In the early stages of the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, Dundee Bairns delivered up to 940 meals every day between April and August 2020 to both children and families. It also made donations to local food larders.
- **Supporting partners to deliver.** Dundee Bairns provides food to partner projects who are providing activities, and do not have the necessary resources to provide food. It strengthens the offer of existing community groups serving children and young people in Dundee.
- **Relieving parental stress.** Providing access to food in holiday periods removes the seasonal pressure for low-income families of finding funds to meet an outlay that is covered during school term time (lunchtime food). Parents report that the benefits extend beyond the financial. Some reported that they were more likely to eat properly (knowing that their children were being fed) and that some of the everyday stresses of low-income living were removed.
- **Positive impact on volunteers.** Volunteers believe that their work with Dundee Bairns gives them a sense of purpose and fulfilment. Many reported being humbled by their ability to help others, contributing a little of themselves to make a significant difference to others.
- **Making a contribution to ameliorating a 'wicked problem'.** Dundee Bairns recognise that it alone cannot alleviate poverty in the city. However, it can reduce the impact of poverty, and strengthen the 'offer' of community organisations that are providing opportunities and services to young people across the city.
- **Pride in place** – Dundee Bairns identifies strongly with the city. Its city-wide focus presents a sense of a city that is working collectively for the common good.

What influences how Dundee Bairns makes a difference?

- **Context – poverty-induced demand.** There is a demand for the service that Dundee Bairns provides. The wider context of deprivation in the city implies that a service such as Dundee Bairns has the potential to be impactful.
- **Community connections.** The work of Dundee Bairns necessitates strong connections across many community organisations. It is a partnership model in which community operations are supportive of each other's work, and dependent on each other for their own success.
- **Responsive Provision** – Dundee Bairns had the ability to react swiftly and flexibly during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. Its extensive community connections enabled it draw in support, and shape what was required to maintain access to food for those who were most vulnerable in the community.
- **Community spirit.** The success of Dundee Bairns is dependent on 'giving'; strong commitment to work in partnership to address the challenges faced in Dundee is a pre-requisite for success.
- **Leadership.** Although a collective endeavour, Dundee Bairns has strong leadership from a well connected local figure who has been able and willing to utilise these connections to further the work of Dundee Bairns.
- **Staff qualities and quality of staff.** The way in which the service is provided is as important as what is provided. It is clear that staff (Trustees and volunteers) understand the challenges faced by the young people (and families) that they serve.
- **Funding and resourcing.** Success in accessing funding and other resources has been integral to Dundee Bairns being able to extend its offer to the children of Dundee.

What needs to happen now?

Mainstreaming of holiday food provision.

- Dundee Bairns has already committed to undertake a critical review of its services in 2022-23 and a review of governance arrangements in 2021-22. Intimations from several political parties in Scotland of their intention to extend entitlement to free school meals over holiday periods food presents both opportunity and challenge to the work of Dundee Bairns. It may be prudent to bring forward these reviews.

Finely grained review of impact

- Dundee Bairns is effective at communicating the overall scale of activity, and supplementing this with occasional testimony. The model under which it operates makes it challenging to gauge impact, given that direct access with beneficiaries is limited. To strengthen the case for Dundee Bairns, it may be useful to consider reviewing impact beyond aggregate reach.

Expansion of work beyond term-time and beyond core delivery periods of Easter, Summer and October

- Dundee Bairns Tea Club is an acknowledgement that the service it provides has the potential to make positive impact outwith its core operations in Easter, Summer and October. Similar stresses (and the need for the interventions of Dundee Bairns) may be evident during the many shorter school holidays and the longer Winter break (at present, some vouchers are distributed to meet demand at this time). Consideration should be given to how the model might operate outside its current core periods of provision.

Expansion of work to further enhance the lives of those in need

- Dundee Bairns should continue to be inspirational and ambitious. Dundee Bairns highlight the importance of continual inspiration, ambition and proactive enhancement going forward. If resources permit, they should aim to deliver their ambitious plans to tackle further inequalities in the area and as such *'help families combat the impact of poverty and to prevent children in poverty becoming adults with children in poverty'*.

1. Introduction to this Impact Evaluation

Introduction

The aim of this report is to appraise the work of the Dundee Bairns. The starting point for our inquiry is an understanding that Dundee Bairns has successfully delivered holiday/after school provision in the city. Our objective is to undertake a rapid appraisal to answer the following key questions:

- What is the nature of the service that the Dundee Bairns provides?
- To what extent does provision meet local need?
- What is the impact – and claims to impact – of Dundee Bairns?
- What are the drivers of Dundee Bairns' success?
- What lessons can be learned from the work of Dundee Bairns that might help improve provision elsewhere?

Dundee Bairns and Dundee

Dundee Bairns is a city-wide project which focusses on reducing food poverty and holiday hunger in the Dundee area. Operating as a charity, with a group of trustees, volunteers and one staff member, the project works in partnership with local activity providers to provide food during out of school periods to those in deprived areas of the city.

Scottish Government Interests

The work of Dundee Bairns is of interest to the Scottish Government, which has shown growing concern over food insecurity and in the nature of out of school provision/ childcare in recent years.

With regard to childcare/out of school provision:

- The 2017-18 Programme for Government committed to publish a framework for after-school and holiday childcare.⁹
 - In response to this commitment, the Scottish Government consulted the sector in 2019,¹⁰ and published a summary of report on this consultation in November 2020.¹¹
- The Child Poverty Delivery Plan, 2018-2022 had a specific action on after-school childcare and holiday provision.¹²
 - In response to the commitment in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan, the Scottish Government introduced a £3 million *Access to Childcare* fund in 2020 to support childcare provision and activities in local communities. Managed by Children in Scotland, fifteen organisations were funded in September 2020 (through to March 2022) for work that aims to explore how childcare can become more accessible and affordable to low-income families.¹³
- £20 million has been allocated to fund a range of activities for children, young people and families, in what is being described as a National Summer of Play in 2021.¹⁴
- In the 2021-22 Programme for Government,¹⁵ the Scottish Government committed to:
 - build a new system of wraparound childcare for school aged children. It committed to a five-year delivery plan, with details to be published before the end of 2021.
 - Expand free early learning and childcare to 1- and 2-year-olds – starting in this parliamentary term for children from low-income households

With regards to tackling food insecurity:

- Three questions on food insecurity were introduced to the Scottish Health Survey in 2017,¹⁶ which provide data for the new National Indicator on food insecurity that was introduced in 2018.¹⁷
- The Poverty and Inequality Commission has offered advice to the Scottish Government on tackling food insecurity during the school holidays.¹⁸
- The 2019-20 Programme for Government committed to increase investment from £0.5 to £2 million to accelerate action on food insecurity in the school holidays.¹⁹
- In May 2020, the Scottish Government published research mapping organisations responding to food insecurity in Scotland.²⁰

The Scottish Government is interested in projects, such as Dundee Bairns, where school holiday period provision comprises food and activity/childcare.

***Time to Prosper* Impact Evaluation**

This evaluation is a key part of a broader project, funded by the Scottish Government, that aims to understand how different models of holiday/after school provision can generate positive outcomes for children and young people.²¹

Dundee Bairns is of interest as it uses food to strengthen the work of other organisations who are providing activities to children and young people in a compact city.

Complementary evaluations of organisations operating under different models are being undertaken as part of this wider project:

- A small food-based charity that operated in rural Scotland²²
- A large activity-based charity operating across large parts of a Scottish city²³
- An established youth project operating in a deprived neighbourhood in a Scottish city.²⁴

Our Approach to Evaluation

The approach adopted is that in the style of an appreciative inquiry, in which the objective is to explore ‘the best of what is, in order to imagine what could be’.²⁵ Adopting a ‘this works’ starting point, this appraisal focuses on identifying the drivers of success, in order that others might glean useful learning. Notwithstanding our starting position, we maintain a critical stance throughout.

This is a rapid evaluation, undertaken over a ten-week period in the latter half of 2020, a year in which the operations of Dundee Bairns had to adapt to the conditions introduced to manage public health in response to Covid-19. Consequently, it was not possible to observe operations during a school holiday period, as was originally intended.

Our approach is described more fully in Annex 1.

Structure of this report

This report begins by describing Dundee Bairns and its work (Ch.02), before evidencing the need for its work in relation to tackling poverty and food insecurity, and providing support related to family employment (Ch. 03). The appraisal progresses through three sections:

- *Deliverables. Claims to Impact.* What does Dundee Bairns provide? (Ch. 04)
- *What Makes the Difference?* A review that aims to understand the deliverables in context (Ch. 05)
- *Mission Match.* Mapping the work of Dundee Bairns to local and national strategies that promote the ‘common good’ in Dundee and Scotland (Ch. 06). We conclude by reflecting what has worked and what others might learn from this work (Ch. 07).

2. The Work of Dundee Bairns

Introduction

In this section of the report, we describe the activities, priorities, people, development and funding of Dundee Bairns.

Mission

Dundee Bairns is a project with a city-wide focus on food inequality/insecurity. The welfare of children, young people and their families in the Dundee area is at the heart of its charitable work. Dundee Bairns aims to ensure that no child/young person in the city goes hungry. As such, the main aim is to alleviate holiday hunger and food poverty for low-income families in the Dundee area and to promote food security.

Origin

Originally formed in 2016 by David Dorward, former Chief Executive of Dundee City Council, Dundee Bairns became an official Scottish Registered Charity in May 2017. In his role as Chief Executive (retired 2014), David became aware that children who received free school meals during term time had no such provision during out of school hours. Child food poverty was a concern that was raised by Head Teachers. His interest peaked further, when hearing a Winston Churchill Fellow discuss holiday hunger (in 2016).

As part of a pilot project in 2016, Dundee Bairns collaborated with Dundee City Council, the Northwood Trust, Tay Cuisine and Cash for Kids, to provide funding and resources to support the preparation and delivery of hot meals for a fun and food programme during July/August 2016, delivering 19,300 meals. The success of this pilot led to the introduction of Dundee Bairns.

Scale of Provision

The core provision of the charity is food, with supplementary family support-based activities. The charity provides meals/food during out of school hours, apart from the Christmas period when vouchers are delivered to families.

To date the project has delivered over 300,000 meals.²⁶ Table 1 reports the number of holiday meals provided by Dundee Bairns since its inception in 2016. Between the summer of 2016 and summer of 2019, there was an increase of almost 7500 meals provided to children in Dundee.

Table 1: Provision of meals by School holiday period, 2016-2019

	Easter	Summer	October
2016	N/A	19,300	8,300
2017	7,200	19,637	7,084
2018	7,364	26,083	8,716
2019	9,298	26,765	6,779

Source: Dundee Bairns Strategic Plan 2020-23²⁷

Dundee Bairns also quickly mobilised its resources to fulfil a key role in delivering emergency food during the eighteen weeks of the first lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to returning to schools, Dundee Bairns delivered almost 60,000 lunches and a further 70,000 grocery packs²⁸.

Development

Table 2 summarises the key milestones in the growth of the charity.

Table 2: Key milestones in the development of Dundee Bairns

2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot project (test of change) – Menzieshill, Ward of Dundee – 400 hot meals delivered. • 12 months funding received from Radio Tay, Cash for Kids, Northwood Trust, Dundee City Council (matching funding of Northwood Trust). • Dundee Bairns commenced - Fun and Food Programme. • Summer 2016 - Fun and Food programme – large scale pilot -July/August – 19.300 meals provided to 76 sites during summer holidays. • Dundee Food Bank provided cereals, enabling breakfast provision. • October – 3,800 meals served to 25 projects for October holiday provision. • November - Rank Foundation funded intern full time. • December - Delivery of 42 vouchers to families in Lochee Ward for support during Christmas period.
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charitable status awarded (in May) – enabling ability to apply to other charities and funders for funding. • Board of Trustees established. • February - Fun and Food programme won evening Telegraph Community Spirit Award for health and well-being. • March - Further funding from Radio Tay Cash for Kids and Northwood Trust – all matched by Dundee City Council - enabling Food and Fun programme to be delivered in 2017. • April – 7200 cold meals to 33 projects. • April - Delivery of 2000 Easter Eggs throughout Dundee. • Summer - Funding enabled a Summer intern to be employed. • July/August – around 19,000 cold meals delivered to approximately 50 projects (including 4,000 breakfasts). • October- Six-month pilot programme – The Tea Club in 5 sites - hot evening meal to children and their families.
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tea Clubs continue until March • Provision of Christmas food vouchers and hampers
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributed to the development of the Scottish Government’s <i>Every Child, Every Chance</i>, the first national Child Poverty Delivery Plan for 2018-2022.²⁹ • Evaluation undertaken of Dundee Bairns Tea Club.³⁰ • Apex hotel hampers provided.
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic plan developed 2020-23. • Strategic aims identified consistent with Dundee City Council’s top priorities for children from 2017-2022. • Fundraising, donations and volunteering continue. • Covid-19 - Dundee Bairns responded proactively ensuring that during the lockdown period alone, 940 meals were distributed every day.³¹ Further donations were provided to community food larders. • October holiday provision – lower uptake due to coronavirus restrictions • Introduction of Cosy Bairns project, to provide new clothing and footwear to 2,000 children, identified as in need of support by Family Support workers (in school). At a cost of £80,000 this was delivered in January 2021.

Finance

The charitable funds secured by Dundee Bairns (for example, from Radio Tay Cash for Kids and Northwood Trust) is matched by Dundee City Council (hereafter DCC). Further private and public donations, sponsorships and fund-raising initiatives provide additional income. Annual charitable accounts identified from 2018 are shown in the table below. Prior to becoming a charity in 2017 all finances were through DCC, as such the figures reported are since Dundee Bairns received charitable status.

Table 3: Income and Expenditure, 2018- 2020

Year	Income	Expenditure
2018	£67,465	£37,607
2019	£125,429	£91,802
2020	£119,356	£108,390

Source: OSC³²

Funders

Dundee Bairns operates with funding support 'in kind' (for example, through donated food) and grant awards. Among the funders are the following:

- Northwood Trust (DC Thomson)
- Radio Tay 'Cash for Kids'
- Rank Foundation
- Hillcrest Housing Association
- Creich Charitable Trust
- Siobhan Trust
- Co-op Local Community Fund
- BT employees
- Big Lottery
- Scottish Government Food Poverty Fund
- ASDA Community Fund
- Dundee Stars Ice Hockey team
- Rotary Club of Dundee
- Nine Incorporated Trades of Dundee

People

The charity relies on key partners, patrons, fundraising, donations and volunteers. A board of trustees, Dundee City Council, Volunteers, Funders, Community projects and the Dundee Foodbank all help support the project. The following groups are noted as 'who makes it work':

Key Partners

The Key partners helps Dundee Bairns to build an infrastructure, raise their profile and to further enhance service delivery:

- Dundee City Council
- Tayside Contracts Tay Cuisine
- Dundee Foodbank
- Dundee Volunteer and Voluntary Action
- Rank Foundation
- Community Projects
- Family support workers
- Faith in the Community
- Fareshare
- Leisure and Culture
- Abertay University

Patrons

The following people are noted as patrons of the charity:

- Lord Provost of Dundee City Council
- Jamie Scott, The Newport Restaurant

Staff

Genna Miller was employed in April 2020 as a result of a grant from the Rank Foundation.

Trustees

Sharing responsibility for overseeing the management and running of the charity are the Board of Trustees:

- David K. Dorward, Chair
- Jacquie Roberts, Vice Chair
- Marjory Stewart, Treasurer
- Sarah Winter, Secretary
- Graeme Findlay
- John Fyffe
- Ewan Gurr
- Andrew Lorimer

Conclusion

Dundee Bairns has grown significantly over the last four years from a small-scale pilot in one area of Dundee in one holiday period, to providing access to food city-wide for children, young people and their families 52 weeks of the year. Furthermore, it reacted quickly and nimby during the pandemic in 2020 to ensure food was available to those most in need during those unprecedented times.

3. Does Dundee Need a Dundee Bairns? The Socio-economic Context of the City

Introduction

In this section of the report, we review the wider context within which Dundee Bairns operates in order to ascertain whether there is a need for its service. We review the prevalence of poverty and food insecurity in Dundee, and profile working families.

The City of Dundee

Situated in the east coast of Scotland, Dundee is the smallest of Scotland's traditional cities, with a population of around 150,000: it is a densely populated area and compact city, second only to Glasgow in terms of population density and the smallest (by area) local authority in Scotland.³³

Poverty in Dundee

According to the latest Scottish Government reports (for pre-Covid-19), it is estimated that over one million people are living in poverty in Scotland at the current time, equivalent to 24% of children, 19% of working aged adults and 14% of pensioners.³⁴

There is no direct equivalent of these national data that would allow poverty in Dundee to be compared to the national average. On the other hand, recent improvements to the ways in which estimates of child poverty for local authorities are calculated, give greater confidence and improved understanding of its distribution across Scotland.³⁵

End Child Poverty's estimate of child poverty for children aged under 16 suggests that child poverty in Dundee is among the highest in Scotland (26.8% for the city as a whole).³⁶ Our analysis of HMRC's 'Children in Low Income

Families Measure'³⁷ suggest that more intense pockets of poverty can be found across the city, with 'local' poverty in excess of 40% in parts of Hilltown, Kirkton, Docks/Wellgate, Stobswell, The Glens, City Centre and Logie/Blackness.³⁸

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation provides a more broadly based summary of wellbeing, ranking small areas across Scotland in terms of levels of deprivation, and classifying them according to whether they are among Scotland's Most Deprived areas.³⁹ Overall, approaching two-fifths of datazones in Dundee are among Scotland's 20% Most Deprived areas (37.2%), with one part of Linlathen and Midcraigie ranked among the ten most deprived datazones in Scotland.⁴⁰

Dundee Bairns report that more than two-fifths of Dundee's children (43.8%) live in one of the Scottish Index for Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 20% most deprived areas in Scotland.⁴¹

Food Security in Dundee

In July 2018, food insecurity was added to the list of National Indicators that work toward achieving the eleven National Outcomes that are part of Scotland's National Performance Framework.⁴² The Scottish Government is committed to measure whether Scotland is making progress in tackling food insecurity and – together other stakeholders – to take action to make this happen.⁴³

Almost one in ten adults in Scotland (9%), report that, at some time over the last year (pre Covid period), they were worried about running out of food, because of a lack of money or other resources.⁴⁴ Furthermore, it was self-reported that the same lack of money or resources, also led to 6% of adults

eating less than they should, and 3% of adults running out of food. As for child poverty, there are no directly equivalent data for local areas.

One way in which we can approximate child food insecurity is to consider the number of pupils who are registered for free school meals. Although an imperfect indicator,⁴⁵ it might be reasoned that registration for free school meals beyond the years of universal entitlement (currently P1-P3 across Scotland, and P1-P4 in Glasgow) provides some indication of families need for support to feed school-aged children.

Again using pre-Covid data, to avoid any distortions, beyond the years of universal entitlement to free school food, one in five children in upper primary school (19.5% of P4-P7)⁴⁶ and one in seven secondary school pupils (15.6%) in Scotland are registered for free school meals.⁴⁷ In Dundee, the respective proportions are 28.2% for upper primary and 24% for secondary school. Dundee has the third highest level of free school meals registrations among local authorities in Scotland.

In 2020 (pre-Covid data), almost one-half of all pupils beyond P3 were registered for free school meals in Rowantree Primary School (49.1%), with more than one-third of all P4-P7 pupils registered in fourteen more schools across the city. More than one third of all pupils in Craigie High School and St Paul's RC Academy were registered for free school meals, with four more secondary schools having more than one in five pupils registered for free school meals.⁴⁸

The use of foodbanks has increased significantly between 2013-2017, with the number of users rising from 5,241 in 2013 to 8,596 in 2017. The number of children being fed by foodbanks in this period doubled.⁴⁹

Working Families in Dundee

Two thirds of children living in poverty in Scotland are living in households with at least one adult in employment; the risk rate of this in-work poverty for families with children seems to have stabilised (68%), having risen markedly in the five years between 2009-12 and 2014-2017.⁵⁰

Just over 24,000 of Dundee's citizens are aged under 16, with almost an additional 3,000 aged 16 or 17; approaching one in five of the city's residents are children (17.9%).⁵¹ More than one third of Dundee's 16,000 family households are headed by a single parent (35.3%).⁵²

Local labour market indicators for Dundee,⁵³ estimate that almost three quarters of working aged adults in Dundee are in employment (72.7%). Dundee has a jobs density of 0.84 (the number of jobs for each adult of working age). Dundee residents typically earn £543 (median wage for full-time workers), among the lowest in Scotland.

Conclusion

With a sizeable child population, and many families at risk of poverty and food insecurity, the service provided by Dundee Bairns could make a positive contribution to children, family and community life across the city.

4. Deliverables: Claims to impact

Introduction

In this section we describe the claims to positive impact that were made, by and on behalf of, Dundee Bairns.

Earlier Impact Evaluations

Some of the work of Dundee Bairns has already been evaluated: a pilot project of the Bairns Tea Club was evaluated by researchers from Abertay University in 2017-18.⁵⁴ The pilot project was judged to be a success, with several recommendations made for future work.

This ten-week pilot project involved five primary schools, situated in one part of the city. The aims of project were twofold: (i) to support the collective effort to close the attainment gap⁵⁵ and (ii) to provide hot food to children living in poverty in the pilot area. The project sought to engage families and offered activities, in addition to providing food.

Prior to the research being undertaken, only anecdotal information had been captured about Dundee's Fun and Food Project. Some Abertay University students were involved as volunteers for the Fun and Food project. Abertay University researchers developed a mixed evaluation strategy to evidence the impact of the pilot project.⁵⁶ The area was described as having 'diverse attainment challenges'. The evaluation made reference to a control group (all P6 children) and Tea Club participants (school staff, pupils, and parents). Mechanisms for measurement included numeracy and literacy assessment, health and well-being assessments and feedback from children, teachers and parents.

Although a valuable exercise, the evaluation was focused on one particular pilot project, in

Dundee Bairns formative period. This pilot served a small cohort of people, in one neighbourhood, during a particular time period and for a shorter time scale (i.e., ten weeks up to 31st March 2018). It should also be noted that regular attendance at the Tea Club at that time was relatively low (the researchers reported that the number of regular attendees (children) was around 26 participants).

Abertay University made the following observations on the impact on participants:

- Significant improvements in attainment
- Significant improvements in numeracy
- Pupils' enjoyed family time, good food, learning and activities.
- Parents believed they had developed a positive relationship with the school, understanding how their child learns in school, and gaining confidence in helping with homework.
- Parents reported spending more time with their children.
- Meals were considered an important part of the activity.
- Teachers noted that pupil behaviour improved, with some evidence of improvements in numeracy and literacy, self-confidence and social inclusion.

It was concluded that projects such as the Dundee Bairns Tea Club can impact positively on pupil attainment, perceptions of health and happiness. They recommended that such a project was worthy of future investment.

In addition to this formal evaluation, anecdotal 'evidence' is also supportive of the work of Dundee Bairns. Although informal, ad-hoc, and difficult to present in a systematic manner, such informal feedback has been provided by community workers, community trusts, church representatives, participants and Community Learning and Development workers. This is available on Dundee Bairns'

social media platforms (Facebook and Whatsapp) and in small grant reports. Indicative of the testimony provided are the following comment from families in the Mid Craigie/ Linlathen and Douglas areas of Dundee:

It means the difference between not having to heat or eat.

... if wasn't for youse (sic), I dunno when we would be eating.

... it means a lot. It helps me out so much with having five children they are eating so much right now with being on lockdown. It helps me out massively. We all really appreciate the work you guys do for us and everyone else.

Food Provision

The main aim of Dundee Bairns is to alleviate food insecurity and holiday hunger for children and young people in the Dundee area. This is achieved by providing food during every school holiday period to all children living in deprived areas across the city of Dundee.

What is/was provided?

Dundee Bairns is described by one interviewee as a 'unique project', the only one in Dundee which feeds children in this manner. Food is typically provided in the form of cold packed lunch that is prepared by staff at Tay Cuisine (Tayside Contracts). However, food vouchers are provided during specific periods (such as Christmas) when it is more difficult to manage supply directly.

.... there might be 50 lunches to one project, 30 lunches to another project and so on, and the lunch consisted usually of a sandwich or a wrap, a piece of fruit, a bottle of water, a little treat of some kind. ... (Volunteer)

As this volunteer goes on to reflect, those delivering the food also inadvertently gain insight into the lives of the children they serve.

... it was great because we saw kids taking part in sports activities, craft activities, baking activities. We went to the nursery where the little ones clapped when we came ... and it was really interesting just to see what was going on in all the projects. (Volunteer)

Delivery mechanism

Dundee Bairns provides food to local community projects who identify a need/requirement. In this way, food provision is added to pre-existing activity provision. Dundee Bairns relies on the community projects to be in "*operation to be a resource for us to give out food*".

The majority of activity-based community projects do not have the resources to provide food/meals. Community projects are invited to indicate their food requirements during holiday periods, and they can ask for however much they believe will be required. As a result Dundee Bairns, "*know that that's the amount of children that are going to be fed in that area*".

During a typical school holiday period, volunteers work one or two days per week to collect food supplies and deliver them to a variety of projects around Dundee. Breakfasts tend to be distributed once per week, normally on a Monday, as the food is dry and can be kept fresh for the week. Each weekday, lunch is delivered to the projects. Volunteers work on a rota basis to make these deliveries.

Initially, Dundee City Council provided vans and drivers to deliver the food. More recently, food is delivered by volunteers using own cars, with two people working per car/van.

What impact is claimed?

For some children and young people in the Dundee area, the food provided by Dundee Bairns, through community projects may well be *“the only meal that they get in a day”*. This is understood to impact positively on these children’s health and development.

If you don’t eat enough at lunch, it makes you tired and messes with your brain. You can’t reach your full potential if you’ve not been fed!

Dundee Bairns currently have limited resources/opportunities to capture data on the impact of provision directly from the children/young people/families involved. However, from time to time, they receive informal feedback from the projects they support:

You don’t always hear first-hand how this impacts on children and their families – but every now and then you will be provided with a note from a teacher or something (word of mouth) stating how vital it has been for a child to receive food. Some were nearly suffering from malnutrition.

Providing food alongside a community activity also helps reduce the stigma that might otherwise be attached in the receipt of this food.

... there’s a purpose to what they’re doing as well so that getting their lunch is normal. They’re getting their lunch as they would at school.

One Volunteer noted that those children/young people in receipt of the provision do not *“appear to feel patronised and that’s good”*.

What impact does it have on Volunteers?

Volunteers report that they sacrifice a little of themselves to make a larger positive impact for others. One noted:

... we feel that we’re contributing to something that’s worthwhile, and it’s a small amount of time we give up for something that’s really essential ...

In some instances, the volunteers themselves are ‘shocked’ at the level of need in their city, and that *“These things should not be happening in a country like ours which is wealthy”*.

Ambition and impact

Whilst acknowledging the success of the project, Dundee Bairns’ founder notes that for this initiative to have been truly successful, it would no longer be required. However, there continues to be a need for Dundee Bairns; a need that has now been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Indeed, the experience of Dundee Bairns in response to the crisis has strengthened the resolve of those involved to be aspirational and ambitious in their thinking for the future of Dundee Bairns.

The 2020-2023 Strategic Report indicates the evolving nature of Dundee Bairns and states the *“long term ambition is to consolidate its out-of-hours delivery of healthy food and then move on to support projects in areas of deprivation that enhance learning experiences and family involvement, to work towards all children achieving their potential”*.⁵⁷

Activity Provision

The core function of Dundee Bairns is food provision, working in partnership with activity providers. However, it has been involved in supporting activity provision in ways that extend beyond heightening the attraction of activity provision with a supplementary food offer.

Dundee Bairns has been involved in the provision of short holiday breaks for children. The Dundee Bairns fact sheet notes that outward bound holidays have been provided for 60 children.⁵⁸ Furthermore, after school homework clubs were piloted in 2018-19, running five nights per week. During this time a two-course hot evening meal was provided to participants (parents/carers and children). Families were able to attend these homework clubs along with the children. The necessity of this wider provision was recognised during interviews:

Kids need treats also, such as activities, clothing, pens, pencils, paper, etcetera.

... children can be bereft in other areas – such as school trips/outward bounds.

A Fun and Food Programme has been operating from the Boomerang Community Centre in Dundee. This project draws on the service of Dundee Bairns. A report authored by the project, highlighted the positive contribution of Dundee Bairns to their work.⁵⁹

.... We had some smiling faces whilst doing the activities, and the children waited excitedly for their lunch that was supplied by the Dundee Bairns Project. This healthy packed lunch included sandwiches, fresh fruit, crisps, juice and a plain biscuit.

The activities that are supported by Dundee Bairns have the potential to make a significant difference to struggling families, their children and young people, as participants acknowledge:

My child gets free school meals, and I was worried about the school holidays as I did not have enough money to both feed and take my child out on an outing during the holidays.

The four days that she attended Boomerang was a godsend to me. My daughter was very excited and even counted the sleeps until she attended again.

Dundee Bairns recognises the need to provide more than 'just' food security for children and young people. In their strategic plan they aim to:

... more fully support families through community and neighbourhood initiatives, to help families combat the impact of poverty and to prevent children in poverty becoming adults with children in poverty.⁶⁰

Interviewees confirmed the importance of this type of provision:

... children benefited from the fun and food programme

... it's got to be more than just food. It's the family, you've got to help the families.

It was also suggested that there is the potential to consider *the "use of leisure facilities which already exist in Dundee City Council , i.e. school gyms etc....to provide leisure and activities, out with school days"*. Whilst asserting that tackling food insecurity will be the priority, Dundee Bairns recognises:

... there are other needs among Dundee's children, for clothes, warmth and stimulating opportunity. Since COVID-19, there is growing concern amongst our partners for the children who have fallen behind their peers when it comes to educational achievement.

COVID-19 Adaptations in 2020

2020 was an exceptional year for Dundee Bairns, as with much of the city and the wider world beyond. Although challenging in many ways, it also highlighted the strength of community spirit and the ability of organisations such as Dundee Bairns to adapt provision quickly, to meet the immediate needs of a struggling community. Dundee Bairns themselves note in their strategic report that they:

... responded to the unprecedented crisis for children during the COVID-19 lockdown by delivering up to 940 meals a day from April to the end of July 2020 ... to children and families.

What changed?

Normal everyday life changed for many in 2020, particularly during the first lockdown period between March and July. Many community projects stopped operating in Dundee, schools closed, and as result, the provision of school meals in school ceased. At the same time, many shops and businesses closed and access to food became more problematic and uncertain. One interviewee noted that previous provision by Dundee Bairns was *"blown out of the water"* at the start of lockdown. However, community hubs were established. The hubs operated from a variety of community areas, such as community centres, schools, housing offices, with the support of community workers.

Heightened need

Families highlighted the struggles that they were facing. At the start of lockdown, family one described how they were at "rock-bottom" and did not know how they were going to manage. People were unsure when they were going to be paid/receive financial income, while others were unable to leave the house and buy provisions. The following are indicative of feelings at the start of lockdown:

... didn't have a lot like right to start with. Like you didn't know how far your money had to stretch ... Because I didn't know if I was going to be paid one month to the next. ... Right at the start of like lockdown we were struggling. (Family one)

Lockdown ad a big impact upon the family, [we were] proper skint. ... at the start, we didn't know what we were going to be having for every meal. (family two)

Stepping up provision through community connections

With their main aim being to alleviate food poverty in the Dundee area, Dundee Bairns reacted quickly by working closely with contacts in the community hubs and other networks in the area, including Faith in the Community and the Healthy Food Alliance, to secure and extend food provision.

A stream of donations were received, including one from the family of a Dundee Bairns intern who donated £25,000 from their Family Trust at this time because they *"love the work that you do I know you're going to need this"*.

There was a rapid and flexible response to need:

... [we] join[ed] a network of people [and] responded quite quickly to what was needed during the Covid lockdown.

The fact that we are there and can be quite creative and agile in our response is very important.

... we are the glue sometimes that puts some of the other organisations together.

There was no cost to the families for the provision of food during lockdown. Dundee Bairns is a well-funded project supported by the local community. Through Dundee Bairns, there is a sense of the community of Dundee 'helping itself'.

Dundee Bairns modus operandi is to fill gaps in provision, particularly during school holiday periods. During lockdown these gaps widened, without regular school meal provision. Operating in conjunction with the newly developed community hubs which became a vehicle for distributing food during the first lockdown period, Dundee Bairns (with the support of others in the community) provided packed lunches to whole families. They made significant donations to Food Larders and supported the delivery of essential food packages to families who most needed it. They also provided grants to local organisations, such as St Luke's Café Church foodbank, who used the funding to buy food and deliver 980 meals. They were able to provide basic essential resources to many families in need at this very difficult time.

Amending the delivery mechanism

Dundee Bairns notes that they quickly altered their system to enable them to extend provision. At the time of writing the report, Dundee Bairns advised that 58,643 individual lunches were delivered during the 18-week lockdown period. In total, an estimated 74,000 meals (individual household deliveries and through provision of food to larders) were provided during this period.

Under normal circumstances (prior to lockdown 2020) volunteers roles would include going *"to the warehouse, pick up breakfasts, which was cereals, juice drinks and things, plastic bowls, and deliver these round a variety of Dundee projects"*. However, many of the community projects had to cease to operate during this period. Therefore, volunteers went to Community Hubs, collected the packed lunches and/or food supplies and delivered them personally (using their own cars) direct to the recipients' doorsteps. Not only were they providing much needed food to the local families, in many cases they were providing a form of social interaction and support to many vulnerable people.

The increase in activity required more volunteer input, both in the form of Tay Cuisine staff who prepared the packed lunches and community volunteers who delivered the food from community hubs.

Impact on COVID-19 Provisions in 2020

Feeding Dundee, relieving stress

As previously noted, whole families in need were provided with food on a daily basis, in the form of packed lunches and/or essential grocery provisions. Packed lunches included sandwiches, drink, and fruit or sweet treat each day. Essential groceries included staple provisions such as bread, cereals and pasta. Families expressed their gratitude and explained what the impact of this provision.

It was just, less stress for me...

For one family, the provision of food meant that they could spread their budgets in slightly different direction. ... For example, one mother noted that she had a 'wee bit extra money' to pay for more electricity.

...the electricity and everything like that, it was just a massive thing ... so just knowing that they'd have their lunches and stuff was like a massive help

... it means so much at a time like this as it frees up some pennies to get the kids some treats as being stuck at home is hard on the kids and adults

Without the food supplies and the daily lunches for the kids, I would be struggling as the kids (and myself) are eating more being stuck in the house

... at the start we didn't know what we were going to be having for every meal. But then we knew that every day that lunch was going to be on our doorstep.

... the variety of food we receive is amazing.

So knowing that we were getting that, [this meant that] that's one meal you don't have to budget for

... that is amazing ... if you're an adult you get a sandwich. That sandwich might be your last sandwich.

Food provisions also helped overcome problems that resulted from being unable to access shops, or when it was found that shops had limited supplies.

You couldn't get bread sometimes, so you couldn't make a sandwich... But then there were sandwiches provided so that helped as well then, so that was good.

But knowing that Dundee Bairns are providing your lunch. And even if you didn't want the fruit that day, you had it and then you could keep it and maybe you could have it as a snack later on or something.

Both families interviewed acknowledged that, as mothers, when times are difficult and food is in short supply, they would normally do without. The provision of the food for whole families meant that everyone was able to eat each day. This provided a boost by not having to worry about providing food each day.

I probably wouldn't have had so that everyone else could. I think that's just me I would rather not have or have less so that everybody else in the house could have.

Further anecdotal feedback captured by the projects highlight the gratitude that was reported to Dundee Bairns. Only a selection of much of the feedback is currently captured here:

... if wasn't for youse, I dunno when we would be eating.

Getting food deliveries means a lot to my family during this pandemic. We have struggled financially with money due to cuts & changes. ... [your provision] makes sure we are looking after ourselves at this time.

This lockdown has affected lots of different people and families. Getting food parcels and sandwiches delivered is a Godsend.

Most of the discussion in the interview related to lockdown experiences. One family noted that they coped better financially during the lockdown as a result of support from Dundee Bairns and not paying work travel and food costs.

Survived better during lockdown [as we] didn't have all additional expenses and helped as DB provided some of the food.

Feeding Dundee and promoting social interaction through daily contact

The daily delivery of food also meant a much-needed daily point of contact (and in many cases a huge boost) for families, some of whom were very isolated. Children were reported to collect the food from the doorstep and chat to the volunteers. The importance of this social contact was readily apparent.

... actually the chat, with the community helper on the doorstep was the thing that the family were looking forward to....

.. She was wanting to go and get the wee bags and bring them in and stuff. Because, she was locked in, she wasn't getting out at all ... she got to go to the door and be like "I'm outside".

... seeing the delivery person dropping food off for us brings a smile to our faces and eases the stress of all this.

... one wee boy took away a sandwich for his pal next door. Who wouldn't have eaten otherwise because they were shielding and they couldn't get out? So his Dundee Bairns meal was what he was really looking forward to, like but that was, his wee link with his pal who, who, was giving and getting his lunch every day.

Feeding Dundee, opening channels for wider support

The provision of food through the community hubs became a means for community workers to develop relationships with vulnerable families in the area.

... we've never had a relationship with these people before and thank you because your lunches have given us a way to, to kind of break that barrier and get through the door and speak to the family [which means that we can] signpost them on for other things too.

Feeding Dundee, impact on the providers/volunteers

Dundee Bairns rely on the goodwill of funders, trustees, other community projects, networks and volunteers. The benefits that accrue from Dundee Bairns were not limited to those receiving food; anecdotal evidence and research interview discussions demonstrated that those involved in the delivery also benefited:

This doesn't just give us food; it gives us hope. (local church)

One of the recipient families have been so positively impacted by the work of Dundee Bairns that they themselves became volunteers after the lockdown period. This in turn has had a positive impact on their wellbeing:

... so to give it back, it goes full circle.

Some long-standing volunteers reported how their contributions increased during the lockdown:

... have been involved for over three years, but of course with the pandemic and the lockdown it was involved more heavily and was very, very much needed in this city.

If you didn't have volunteers, I don't think it could happen

The volunteer group expanded during the period of lockdown. Some people who were out of work and were furloughed offered their time to the Bairns. This included both volunteers who had grown up in areas of deprivation and people from more affluent areas.

Volunteers reported that helping during crisis periods had also "*given us a sense of purpose*".

Feeding Dundee, highlighting challenges ahead

Although much positivity was shared around the work of Dundee Bairns during the Covid-19 crisis, there were also concerns expressed for the scale of the challenge that lies ahead:

The thing about Covid is that it's put a mirror up to society as it is. So (inequalities) have just gotten much, much worse.

I am most concerned about the kids who are falling behind, lack of stimulation in education and activities. [Not] Going out to clubs ... I really worry this is going to be a lost generation of kids.

It quickly became apparent that whilst the primary concern of Dundee Bairns was to tackle food insecurity, there were deeper concerns for the well-being of the city's children. These concerns for general well-being were heightened as a result of the impact of Covid-19 and its long-term consequences for some Dundee inhabitants.

Feeding Dundee, raising food awareness

Parents reported that their children were more inclined to try a wider range of food. The interviewee from family one noted:

... she was also willing to try different stuff which, she's quite fussy.

... she was like hmm I'll try that and then she liked it. And she'd be like Mum I want that tomorrow.

In addition to raising awareness of different foods, the delivery of food itself became (for some children), not only the highlight of the day in some cases, but also an opportunity to be creative and adopt it as a fun element of being confined at home. For example, one family noted that their youngest child looked forward to the delivery and described it as *"having a picnic [at home]"*.

Conclusion

During a very challenging period the people of Dundee have shown resilience and community spirit, coming together to support the most vulnerable. At the heart of this endeavour was Dundee Bairns. It rapidly altered its provision to meet the needs of the community, supported by other organisations and a band of volunteers.

5. What Makes the Difference?

Introduction

In this section, we review the drivers that underpin the success of Dundee Bairns.

Context

Although the fourth most populous city in Scotland,⁶¹ there was a sense that Dundee is a place in which effective social policy interventions can be developed:

Dundee is quite a wee place though, which [is] lucky in that respect. ... it is one of those places, where everybody knows somebody.

... although it's a city, it's a kind of more confined space so it's manageable to do it [provide the service that Dundee Bairns offers]

Although not sufficient in itself to assure success, the context of the city is one that is conducive to large-scale city-wide interventions.

Community Spirit

Scale alone does not determine that an intervention will be well received. Equally significant in terms of creating pre-conditions for success was the community spirit that was reported to prevail. This was apparent in all aspects of the Dundee Bairns work:

... everyone knows about Dundee Bairns.

... seeing the commitment of the volunteers. And the commitment of local people, including local children, to raise money for us.

And the commitment of local people, including local children, to raise money for us.

Local knowledge

Having people involved who have detailed knowledge of the area and its inhabitants is vital. This is particularly effective when allied to the experience of professionals who are willing to give their time to such projects and share their knowledge of governance, legal requirements and organisational abilities.

Leadership

David Dorward founded the charity. He became more aware of holiday hunger, whilst attending a Rank Foundation Conference and hearing Lindsay Graham who spoke at this event. Lindsay is an expert in holiday hunger and initially became a trustee of Dundee Bairns. Her research has been influential in shaping the work of Dundee Bairns.⁶² Now a member of Scotland's Poverty and Inequality Commission, Lindsay has stood down as a Trustee, but remains interested in their endeavours.

David Dorward is described by others as being a *'weel kent person'*. In addition to being well known in the area and having significant experience in local government and someone who has *'links all over the place'*, he provides the leadership and drive that underpins the work of Dundee Bairns. Equally happy to 'roll up his sleeves' and get on with helping out, David also works 'behind the scenes' and liaises with funders. Much reference was made to the advantage of having such a 'personality' leading Dundee Bairns.

David Dorward acknowledges that his experience and personal and professional connections within the Dundee area have made a significant impact on the ability not only to establish something like Dundee Bairns, but to develop its work through time.

Quality of staff and staff qualities

Trustees

Trustees are also actively involved in the work of Dundee Bairns, sharing responsibility for overseeing the work of the charity.

In addition to many being volunteers themselves, they bring a wealth of knowledge, skills and expertise to the project. They come with significant previous work experience, leadership skills and can provide guidance on good governance, working with families in the area, legal knowledge and exceptional communication skills. This includes for example, ensuring volunteer drivers have the appropriate protecting vulnerable group checks undertaken. In this respect, one interviewee noted they *'bring some kind of discipline to volunteers'*.

Trustees give great consideration to how best to help the situation in Dundee. As one interviewee noted:

... have really, really thought about how to target children specifically

Staff

Although relatively new in post, the work of Genna Millar (Project Coordinator) was mentioned by several of those benefiting from Dundee Bairns. Her knowledge, communication and organisational skills have contributed to the success of Dundee Bairns during a challenging period:

...Tremendous organisation, ... Genna is wonderful [She has done her job superbly. She also has knowledge of the charities.

All that communication is really important. So, good organisation skills are vital.

... one of the best things this year has been the appointment of Genna. Because she is so committed to the philosophy of the organisation and she works fantastically well and hard, even though her appointment started immediately after lockdown. She is so committed, and organised.

Volunteers

In addition to the founder, Trustees and staff members, Dundee Bairns has a community of committed volunteers. Prior to the pandemic in 2020, Dundee Bairns had a bank of approximately 15 volunteers who could be called upon for assistance. During the first period of lockdown this expanded to around 30 volunteers. All interviewees acknowledged that an organisation such as Dundee Bairns could not operate without volunteers. Aligning with the community spirit noted, one interviewee suggested that *'It's a wonderful mix of people in the volunteering'*, while another noted, *'If you didn't have volunteers, I don't think it could happen'*.

Volunteers come from all walks of life. They include locals who have spent their entire life in the area, new families, retired and furloughed residents, people who are in receipt of donations from the charity and people who are fortunate to live a more affluent lifestyle in less deprived areas of the community.

Volunteers are more than just the conveyors of food parcels; they were a friendly face during difficult times, they enhanced social interactions, supported vulnerable families, and offered additional services such as pharmacy drop offs. Further, one volunteer noted that they had been made welcome when volunteering with Dundee Bairns:

... atmosphere and culture created, and it's not been hierarchical. We've all been in it together and I think that has been very good.

Volunteers are happy to be identified as being 'Dundee Bairns', and to wear the branded

clothing logo that is recognisable across the city. They conveyed a sense of fun and pride in the work that they do.

For some, the opportunity to support projects such as Dundee Bairns, enables them to enhance their own personal networks by generating opportunities to meet new people.

Co-ordination and connections

The work of Dundee Bairns is a logistical challenge, demanding co-ordination and effective organisation. Even before the challenges associated with the pandemic delivering food to the people/projects for whom it was required was a challenge.

Organisation includes coordinating the food supply, delivery to projects, volunteers, social media presence, communication with all of the connections/networks involved, and adopting a proactive approach with funders.

It is evident that Dundee Bairns success is also dependent on having strong connections with key organisations in the community. This includes funders, fundraisers, food providers, volunteers who deliver the food, organisers, Trustees, and the partner projects who work tirelessly to support the community of Dundee.

Dundee Bairns is keen to emphasise that it is not a standalone project: *Which I think is probably the right thing to do because they are the people who know the children and the families.* It works to deliver food to community projects which have already established activity provision but lack funding for food provision. School Family Support and Development workers help to identify children that would benefit in participating.

Projects are invited to apply to Dundee Bairns for the food they need during the holiday periods. They can ask for however much food is required and for which days. Among the organisations supported in October 2020 alone are the following:

- Menzieshill Food Hub
- Boomerang
- St Mary's Community Centre
- Lochee Family fun
- Rock Solid
- Chalmers Ardler
- The Attic
- Taught by Mohammed
- Coldside Church/Revival Church

As part of Dundee City's response to lockdown, each week on a Monday, Dundee Bairns representatives joined a weekly food insecurity network meeting hosted by Faith in the Community and involving other local organisations. These discussions identified local requirements, including but not limited to food (referrals, needs include electrical goods, carrier bags for food distribution, voluntary food deliveries). This network collaboration continues and seeing positive results in the area as *'everyone knows who to go to for help and groups are definitely more linked and working together'*. It is anticipated that due to such success, the working relationship will continue and grow beyond Covid-19.

Community connections are a strength of the project, but also highlight a vulnerability in the original model. By October 2020, many community projects had still not opened. Therefore, whilst Dundee Bairns had the means to provide much needed food provision for children in the community, (normally distributed through 70 projects), this was vastly reduced to working with eight in October 2020. Although still able to provide around 900 lunches per day, this was far fewer than previous years.

As was evident in the lockdown period earlier in the year, Dundee Bairns explored other means of distributing food to the community. Collaborating with the wider food insecurity network, they identified that top up groceries for families would be beneficial. With the support of volunteers helping to pack bags with a week's basic food supplies, these were made available to families at the start of each week, through several community hubs. This

further strengthened the joint working relationship with the hubs. Dundee Bairns supported around 112 families across several of the hubs using this method.

As a result of successful fundraising work and donations, funds are not depleted at present. Dundee Bairns allows local organisations and local food larders to apply for small grants of £500 to support food delivery work. The grants enable these groups to purchase the products that they know their clients need most (including small bags of flour, fresh fruit and vegetables and bread).

Notwithstanding the successes that result from Dundee Bairns' connections, it is important to acknowledge some frustrations that persist. For example, Dundee Bairns invited 37 schools in the Dundee area to express an interest in working with Dundee Bairns to tackle food insecurity in children. Only three schools in the area took advantage of this offer, despite head teachers being aware of food poverty among children in Dundee and the adverse impact that it has on learning. It might reasonably be argued that tackling child food poverty in the times around school would make an important contribution to national and local efforts to 'closing the attainment gap' (for which Dundee received £18,803 from the Scottish Government in 2020/21).⁶³

Funding and Resourcing

Provision of Food

One other vital connection for Dundee Bairns is its relationship with Tayside Contracts (Tay Cuisine). Tayside Contracts are the main food providers for the Dundee Bairns project. They prepare the daily food for delivery to projects at cost price.

Collaboration with Tayside Contracts was strengthened during the lockdown, with employees voluntarily assisting with the preparation of packed lunch bags.⁶⁴ The extent of the support and hard work by Tay

Cuisine staff is emphasised by one interviewee:

... they worked their normal shift in the kitchens, then stayed on to do the lunches for the next day, and I was very humbled I think it's really important that the generosity actually of people here in doing these things is noted.

Network of Funders and Supporters

As previously noted, funding resources (at present) places Dundee Bairns in a position where it can finance other organisations in the city - a *'great position, where we can say right, how can we help you and it's a nice thing to be able to do'*.

Since 2016 Dundee Bairns has generated significant funding which has enabled it to provide food and resources to those in deprived communities in Dundee. This funding is critical to operations. Among the key funders are the following.

Dundee City Council (DCC) has supported Dundee Bairns since its inception. DCC currently match the funding raised by Dundee Bairns. In the early stages of the project, it also provided the use of vans and drivers. DCC along with neighbouring councils own the food provider Tay Contracts.

The Northwood Trust operates to support and enhance local communities in Dundee, particularly areas of deprivation, poverty and inequality. In addition to providing significant funding to Dundee Bairns, they have also enabled and approved the use of the DC Thomson, 'Bairns' logo for promotional purposes. This has enabled the development of a strong brand which is memorable and meaningful to the citizens of Dundee. Such branding enabled the volunteers to be provided with clothing with a fun, recognisable logo, which made them visible and which they wear with pride.

The Rank Foundation⁶⁵ aims to enhance the lives of people and their communities by showing they care for the disadvantaged and marginalised people in local communities. Dundee Bairns have benefitted from the support of this organisation. This has included the funding of several internships (from 2016). Most significantly, Rank Foundation funding has financed Dundee Bairns' first member of staff (Genna Millar) for a three-year period from April 2020. The impact of having a full-time member of staff has been acknowledged by many. Funding for this role is perceived to be the key to the future success of Dundee Bairns.

Cash for Kids Tayside supports disadvantaged children and young people in the Dundee area. They have continually supported Dundee Bairns with large amounts of funding to since its inception in 2016.

An array of other small (but no less significant) **local funders** also bolster the funds of Dundee Bairns. This has included cash donations that have popped into Trustees' letter boxes, the contents of petty cash tins being donated, local charity raffles, Kilt Walk 2020 donations, Christmas card competitions, and children raising funds themselves through cycling, baking and making tee-shirts.

Conclusion

Dundee Bairns has delivered much to tackle food insecurity among children and young people in the Dundee area who live in deprived areas in the last few years. During the unprecedented period of 2020 when grappling with COVID-19, Dundee Bairns adapted in a flexible and agile manner to meet the needs '*as they arise*'.⁶⁶ They themselves, their supporters and users of the project acknowledge this would not have been possible without community spirit and the network of connections throughout Dundee.

6. Mission Match

Introduction

In this section we explain how the work of Dundee Bairns contributes to wider agendas at local, national and global levels of analysis.

Tackling Child Poverty and Food Insecurity in Scotland

The *Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017* committed Scotland to eradicate child poverty by 2030⁶⁷ with the *Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-2022*⁶⁸ outlining the initial means through which this is to be achieved. Within this Plan is a 'driver diagram' which described three realms of anti-poverty actions. The work of Dundee Bairns can be described in terms of each realm:

- *Increase income from employment.* It might be hypothesised that the strengthening of support for organisations that offer activity for children and young people during holiday periods in Dundee is relevant to this goal. Children's participation in holiday clubs might avoid the need to make arrangements for additional childcare, enabling their parents to participate (or participate more fully) in the labour market, thereby increasing their income from employment.
- *Reduce cost of living.* Following a similar logic, it might be hypothesised that Dundee Bairns underpins the provision of accessible and affordable (i.e. no-cost) activity that either removes or reduces expenditure for families (who might otherwise be spending on children's leisure).
- *Income from social security or benefits in kind.* The provision of food by Dundee Bairns is a benefit in kind that removes a direct cost from household budgets.

As was noted in the Introduction (section 1), through its *2021-22 Programme for Government*,⁶⁹ the Scottish Government has committed to strengthen the role of childcare in tackling child poverty in the years ahead.

More generally, food provision is an action to tackle food insecurity, which as noted earlier, is one of the National Goals that Scotland is committed to monitor and take action to address, as part of the National Performance Framework.

The strongest impact of Dundee Bairns on tackling child poverty may be less direct, i.e., by bolstering support for families, and underpinning the work of partners who engage children and young people, providing focus, interest and direction that encourages personal development, and provides an alternative to pathways that lead to less positive destinations.

Others might simply assert the value of what Dundee Bairns provides is that it enhances the quality of life as lived, in the here and now.

Therefore, the work of Dundee Bairns could be considered to have a longer-term impact on tackling child poverty, or value for softening the impact of child poverty, at the current time. However, these observations are not inconsistent with the recognition that the work of Dundee Bairns delivers what is required in the national action plan to tackle child poverty and national aspirations to promote food security at the current time.

Dundee's Local Child Poverty Action Plan/Report

At the time of writing, local authorities and their local NHS Board are preparing their third Local Child Poverty Action Report to report on progress in tackling child poverty locally in 2021 and to outline the specific actions to be taken in the year ahead.

Among the specific actions outlined in the first LCPAR for Dundee were the following:⁷⁰

- Establish Holiday programmes to ensure targeted families have access to free food and activities during the school holidays.
- Implement 365 community-based schools/campus model of education and support
- Secure funding to develop a long-term co-ordinated project around food insecurity, working with local communities, faith communities and partner agencies.

The second LCPAR reported 40% progress on the holiday programme, 25% progress on the 365 community-based model of education and support, and 80% progress toward securing funding for a long-term co-ordinated project around food insecurity.⁷¹

The work of Dundee Bairns is also pertinent to the work of the Dundee Fairness Commission, which reported in 2018, and relaunched in 2020.⁷² In the relaunch report, findings are shared from its Food and Fuel Working Group.⁷³

Scotland's National Performance Framework

Each Scottish Government (and the Scottish Executive before that) has outlined its vision for Scotland. A National Performance Framework⁷⁴ was introduced in 2007 and re-launched in 2018. It defines the national purpose in terms of five goals, underpinned by three values. Providing focus to the framework are 11 National Outcomes and 81

National Indicators (a revision of the 16 Outcomes and 63 Indicators that provided focus from 2007-2018).

The work of Dundee Bairns is closely aligned to one of these National Outcomes:

- tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally

Furthermore, it might be argued that the way in which Dundee Bairns operates also contributes to several others:

- grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential
- live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- are healthy and active

Conceived thus, the work of Dundee Bairns can be understood as contributing to a range of Outcomes that are valued in Scotland in that they work toward the shared vision of what Scotland could be.

At a more focused level, the work of Dundee Bairns might also be hypothesised to make a more direct positive contribution on an improving 'performance' for a number of the National Indicators:

- Child wellbeing and happiness⁷⁵
- Children and positive relationships⁷⁶
- Child material deprivation⁷⁷
- Confidence in children and young people⁷⁸
- Resilience of children and young people⁷⁹
- Engagement in extra-curricular activities⁸⁰
- Economic participation⁸¹
- Relative poverty after housing costs⁸²
- Cost of living⁸³
- Food insecurity⁸⁴

Clearly, the work of Dundee Bairns would be of an insufficient scale to shift overall national performance. However, these are conceived as 'indicators', and there is merit in explaining how the work of Dundee Bairns contributes to these wider national agendas.

The Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, all member states of the United Nations adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, at the heart of which are 17 Sustainable Development Goals,⁸⁵ which are a call to action in all countries. It could be argued that these are more pertinent in nations such as Scotland, in comparison to the Millennium Development Goals, which they replaced. Scotland is fully committed to working toward achieving these goals.⁸⁶

The 17 Global Goals are monitored through a framework of 231 unique global indicators (some of which are shared across Goals). As for the National Performance Framework in Scotland, there is merit in positioning the work of Dundee Bairns against the SDGs to clarify how its work contributes to this wider global agenda: The SDGs that are pertinent are as follows:

- End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Conclusion

The work of Dundee Bairns contributes in many ways to a range of wider agendas at the local, national and global scales.

7. Future Considerations

Introduction

Dundee Bairns acknowledges that ultimate success would be redundancy, i.e. that there was no longer a need for the service it provides. However, in the interim, there continues to be strong demand for the service it currently provides; demand which has intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this section, we reflect on gaps in provision, ways in which the service might develop, and future research priorities.

Targeting the Under-served

Whilst the reach of Dundee Bairns is already significant, having continually been extended since its inception, there remains parts of the city and groups within the city that are under-served. This includes:

- The very young
- Looked after children, who have left care
- Drug users
- Young people who are disengaging from existing services – *‘The hard to teach ones are also the hard to reach’*.

Extending the Offer Beyond Food

In addition to those potentially ‘missing’ groups, Dundee Bairns acknowledges that it is not just staple foodstuffs that children need in order to thrive. Children should have access to ‘treats’ that add quality to life, such as out of school activities and access to resources.

Dundee Bairns Strategic Report for 2020-2023, acknowledges the evolution of Dundee Bairns and states that the *“... long term ambition is to consolidate its out-of-hours delivery of healthy food and then move on to support projects in areas of deprivation that*

enhance learning experiences and family involvement, to work towards all children achieving their potential”.⁸⁷ This goal resonates with the aspirations expressed in interviews:

... we know that ... these kids particularly now, [are] probably not getting the stimulation that would help them ... enhance their learning. I mean they have obviously got to eat, but then they need some extra stimulation ... we [must] provide projects [that] provide food AND stimulation.

In recognition that children and young people require more than ‘just’ food to thrive, Jacquie Roberts, one of Dundee Bairns Trustees, has donated money she received in 1989 as a Trust Fund to Dundee Bairns. The Fabiola Trust will be used to give grants to children/young people who otherwise would have no or very limited opportunities for music, art and dance. Dundee Bairns is engaging School Development Officers to discuss how this fund can be most impactful.

Unlocking Resources

In order to optimise its impact, Dundee Bairns could make greater use of existing resources that are currently under-utilised. For example, the reach of its work across the city could be extended were it able to have greater access to school kitchens and leisure facilities out of school hours.

Future Research

In order to address some of the gaps identified, there would be merit in further research in order to strengthen the evidence base. This could include the following:

- Robust profiling of service users to profile the populations who are less likely or less able to benefit from the service it provides. It is accepted that this is not a straightforward task, as recipients are reached through partner organisations.
- Focused work with those who do not engage and who are eligible for free school meals in the Dundee area, to identify what barriers need to be overcome to ensure that Dundee Bairns can attend to their needs.
- Explore how Dundee Bairns can extend its work to have a greater overall impact on families. It has been suggested by one interviewee that this work might involve a *“ ... bit more than just feed the kids ... family support, helping parents be good parents, helping parents cook well.”*
- Explore the practicalities and costs involved in utilising the community resources already available, under the ownership and management of Dundee City Council. For example, the cost of opening up (already existing) leisure/sporting facilities during out of school hours and utilising kitchens out of school hours.
- Consideration to be given to how Dundee Bairns might be involved in future work to ascertain the longer-term generational impact of COVID-19 on children and young people.
- Consideration to whether recent Scottish Government commitments to extend breakfast provision in schools, and to strengthen support for out of school childcare, align with the work of Dundee Bairns and provide opportunities for development and expansion of its work.

8. Conclusions

Introduction

In this section, we reach conclusions on each of the five research questions.

What is the nature of the service that the Dundee Bairns provides?

Dundee Bairns tackles child food poverty in the city by providing food to other organisations providing opportunities for activity to children in the most deprived neighbourhoods. It operates primarily (but not exclusively) in the Summer, Easter and October holiday periods.

To what extent does provision meet local need?

As with much of urban Scotland, and in each of its largest cities, there is a need to tackle 'holiday hunger' in Dundee.

What is the impact – and claims to impact – of Dundee Bairns?

Dundee Bairns has delivered a substantial number of meals to children in Dundee, with qualitative testimony confirming the positive impact that this has on family life and family budgets.

It tackles food insecurity, supports other community partners to deliver an effective service, relieves stress for families, raises awareness of the challenges that present in Dundee, and provides a channel for community support. It makes an important contribution to tackling the wider (and wicked) problem of poverty in Dundee.

What are the drivers of the Dundee Bairns' success?

Demand for the service provided implies that it has the potential to be impactful. However, demand does not pre-determine success. The success of Dundee Bairns reflects the specific actions and approaches of those involved (leadership, organisations skills, personal skills) and community orientation (community spirit, community connections and community provision).

Conclusion: What lessons can be learned from the work of the Dundee Bairns that might help improve provision elsewhere?

Dundee Bairns is an innovative model that demonstrates that strong community partnerships can have a significant impact across the expanse of a whole city. The success of such a model is dependent on strong community connections, ready access to sufficient provisions and leadership. It may be more difficult to meet the conditions necessary for success in larger areas, or ones in which a sense of shared purpose and local orientation is weaker.

Annex 1: Our Approach to Evaluation

Introduction

In this section, we describe and appraise the approach taken in this impact evaluation.

Why Dundee Bairns?

As noted in the introduction, this evaluation is a key part of a broader project, funded by the Scottish Government, that aimed to understand how different models of holiday/after school provision generated positive outcomes for children and young people.

The Scottish Government suggested that Dundee Bairns was included as one of the case studies, as it was a young organisation that had quickly developed an interesting model of working in partnership to support other organisations across the city.

Focus

As noted in the introduction, our objective was to undertake a rapid appraisal to answer the following key questions:

- What is the nature of the service that the Dundee Bairns provides?
- To what extent does provision meet local need?
- What is the impact – and claims to impact – of Dundee Bairns?
- What are the drivers of the Dundee Bairns' success?
- What lessons can be learned from the work of the Dundee Bairns that might help improve provision elsewhere?

Appreciative Inquiry

As noted in the introduction, we have adopted an approach that in the style of an appreciative inquiry, in which the objective is to explore 'the best of what is, in order to imagine what could be'.⁸⁸ We do not claim to have undertaken work that adheres to all aspects of Appreciate Inquiry; rather, we assert that the broad objectives of such work framed our approach. Adopting a 'this works' starting point, the appraisal focused on identifying the drivers of success, in order that others might glean useful learning. Notwithstanding our starting position, we maintain a critical stance throughout.

Activities

As noted in the introduction, our approach comprised four elements.

- A review of earlier appraisals
- An analysis of documentary evidence from Dundee Bairns
- Interviews with four stakeholders, at different levels in the organisation
- Interviews with two families.

Each is discussed in more detail in this Annex.

Timeframe

Prior to the start of the fieldwork, John McKendrick met several times with the Scottish Government to agree project objectives, and contacted Dundee Bairns, who agreed to facilitate the evaluation.

The fieldwork started in 2020 on September 29th and concluded on December 7th, covering a ten-week period. During this period, Scotland tightened restrictions on mobility and interaction, in order to protect public health from Covid-19.

People

The research was completed by Julie Brown, under the guidance of John McKendrick.

Julie Brown was employed 0.5 FTE for this ten-week period, although she was also responsible for undertaking a mapping of local provision of holiday activity/food provision in a case study beyond Dundee during this period. In effect, Julie committed 12.5 days to this impact evaluation.

John McKendrick managed and designed the overall project. John also reviewed all interview transcripts and supported Julie, who is lead author of this report.

Although jointly responsible for this report, John and Julie worked as part of a broader research team of five, which met weekly from September 29th through December 7th to discuss common interests and emerging issues across the four impact evaluations that comprised the broader project.

Research Ethics

The Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University approved the fieldwork. At each stage of the research design and administration, steps were taken to ensure that the research adhered to recommended practice for document analysis and key informant interviews. Specific steps taken included:

- Providing interviewees with information about the purpose of the research and the research requirements, to ensure that participation was based on informed consent.
- Only collecting personal details (names and contact details) for the purpose of arranging for the receipt of a voucher (for a store of their own choosing), as a token of appreciation for their participation.
- Asking for permission to record interviews and explaining the reasons for recording

- Storing research data securely, for example, password-protecting interview transcripts.
- Removing personal details (names and contact details) from data files and storing in line with General Data Protection Requirements.
- Ensuring that no service users are identified by name in the published report arising from the research.
- Offering interviewees the opportunity to receive copies of the final report.

Working with Dundee Bairns to Facilitate the Research

Initial video meetings were held with the project founder and project coordinator to agree research objectives and actions. Dundee Bairns was keen to support the evaluation, acknowledging that this would be a valuable exercise for the organisation, in addition to meeting the needs of the *Time to Prosper* project.

Progress updates were communicated each week, mostly by email or telephone.

A workplan was devised by SPIRU and approved by Dundee Bairns. Dundee Bairns sent project documents to SPIRU for analysis, and identified key Dundee Bairns stakeholders for interview (founder, staff member, trustee, and volunteer). SPIRU's ask of Dundee Bairns was minimised so as not to overwhelm the project.

Generic project interview schedules were altered to meet the needs of Dundee Bairns, i.e. the interview templates were altered to focus specifically on food insecurity. Similarly, the generic interview schedules for families/young persons were tweaked to ensure that they were sensitive to the needs of families requiring such services.

Dundee Bairns was also asked to facilitate access to interview service users. Where appropriate persons were identified, Julie then made contact. Candidate interviewees were sent information sheets prior to the interviews. Interviews were recorded after verbal consent given from all participants. Four video interviews and two telephone interviews were undertaken.

Activity 1: Appraising Previous Evaluations of Dundee Bairns

Appraisal of the one previous evaluation of Dundee Bairns was undertaken - the Abertay University evaluation of the 'Tea Club' pilot project.⁸⁹ This evaluation focussed on one specific project, for specific users and for a set ten-week period. Since this report, Dundee Bairns has grown significantly.

Since this evaluation, Dundee Bairns has collected useful monitoring data and assembled insight into its impact – for example, the internal report on its Boomerang Project (October 2020).⁹⁰

Activity 2: Evidencing Outputs and Outcomes from Dundee Bairns' Documentation

All documentation which was publicly available on the Dundee Bairns website was reviewed (Dundee Bairns factsheet, Tea club presentation, European Social Fund Document and their Strategic Plan 2020-23).

Dundee Bairns also provided access to documents that were not available on the website (for example, anecdotal feedback and news articles).

SPIRU also sourced Dundee Bairns annual reports to the OCSR.

Activity 3: Learning from Staff

Four interviews were conducted.

- Project coordinator, who started working for Dundee Bairns in April 2020 and who has significant experience of charity work and volunteering, in addition to living her whole life in Dundee. (interview one)
- Founder who has been involved with the project since its inception in 2016 and has significant local experience on a personal basis and senior executive level (interview two)
- Volunteer who has been involved with the project since moving to the Dundee area three years ago. This volunteer has a background in education. (interview three)
- Trustee, who has been involved with the project since its inception. The Trustee has a background in family support and experience of Executive Leadership. (interview four)

The interviews covered the following themes:

- Description of the work of Dundee Bairns
- Description of their work with Dundee Bairns
- Best things about their work with Dundee Bairns
- Most challenging aspect of their work with Dundee Bairns
- Who is reached and not reached?
- Who benefits most?
- What would make Dundee Bairns work better
- Advice to others who might adopt the Dundee Bairns way of working
- If Dundee Bairns did not exist, what would be the impact

The interviews lasted between 33 minutes and 59 minutes and were undertaken in either video or telephone call format.

Stakeholders were engaging in the interviews. The information provided was valuable in enabling us to better understand the work of Dundee Bairns and contributions to it.

Activity 4: Learning from Users

The Dundee Bairns Project Coordinator supported the research team in accessing all six interview participants.

Initially, Dundee Bairns stakeholders thought it may be difficult to find families to interview and talk about their experiences. However, they did acknowledge the £25 thank you voucher being offered would be greatly received by those who did participate.

The Project Coordinator for Dundee Bairns reached out to some of the other projects associated with the initiative and asked for their help in accessing families. These projects raised awareness of the research on their social media channels and a number of participants came forward.

Two telephone interviews were undertaken by the users of Dundee Bairns (one for 22 minutes, the other for 29 minutes). This was the preferred method of interview for the participants. The users provide insight into the need for organisations such as Dundee Bairns. Both families received provisions during the Covid-19 lockdown period. They had less knowledge of how the activities of other projects associated with Dundee Bairns operated.

Both interviewees had lived in Dundee for the whole of their life. Both had three children. The first household (Family 1) was a single parent with three children who did not undertake paid or voluntary work. The second household (Family 2) was a cohabitating couple, with two of their children resident. The mother is a volunteer at the local school and worked part-time prior to Covid; the partner does not work. The mother had not worked since the start of lockdown in 2020 and was furloughed at the time of the interview.

Both families reported a monthly cycle of 'financial struggle' having to borrow at some point in the month, as money runs out prior to the next income being received. This is paid

back, and then the cycle repeats. As one mother remarked, they "*struggle every month ... some weeks are unreal*".

Family 1 had little knowledge of Dundee Bairns prior to Covid. The Rock-Solid project in Dundee introduced them to the work of Dundee Bairns through a Facebook post that raised awareness of lockdown support. The interview focused on their lockdown experiences with Dundee Bairns. Family 1 did not mention accessing foodbanks or food larders and was not forthcoming about other formal sources of support. On the other hand, the mother referred to drawing regularly on informal financial support from her wider family throughout the month.

Family 2 had much knowledge of the work of Dundee Bairns, with awareness raised through provision that was available through their local church, describing Dundee Bairns as:

... brilliant during ... Easter holidays and Summer ... it's really good

The interviews covered the following themes:

- Introduction to self
- Children's family circumstances
- Experiences of work
- Experience of financial stress
- Management of out of school care
- Initial awareness of Dundee Bairns
- Benefits of engaging with Dundee Bairns
- Costs involved in Dundee Bairns
- Parental activity when children are at Dundee Bairns
- If Dundee Bairns did not exist, what would be the impact on family

Brent (2009) argued that describing deprived neighbourhoods (and projects serving these areas) solely on secondary evidence from official documents, maps, bar charts and statistics fails to adequately tell the stories of people's lives and experiences and instead reduces them to diagrams and infographics.⁹¹ By engaging residents who use Dundee Bairns, we sought to avoid this.

Reflections

This research was undertaken, and findings delivered, during a relatively short time frame. As such, some limitations should be acknowledged.

Our analysis would have been enriched if we had engaged more families in the research who had significant experience of Dundee Bairns, both those using their services prior to the initial period of lockdown, and those who were introduced to its work during lockdown. The interviews captured the impact of the work of Dundee Bairns; however, due to the significance of the pandemic it was to be expected that experiences in 2020 was the main topic of discussion for many of the interviewees.

Due to the pandemic, the researcher was unable to undertake fieldwork observation. This did not prevent interviews being conducted with key informants, but may have shaped the dynamic of these interviews; stakeholders with Dundee Bairns elected for video interviews, whereas the two families preferred telephone interviews. It was therefore impossible to observe families in more 'natural' surroundings, and not possible to reflect on facial expressions and body language (e.g., to identify if they felt uncomfortable during the interview) during these interviews.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the limitations of a rapid impact assessment, the research delivered to brief, enabling us to address each of the research objectives.

Endnotes

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