



Local Authority Holiday Provision



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1. Introduction

Children going hungry in the school holidays is not a new issue and concerns have been raised from the early 20th Century. In 1914 Fred Jowett MP proposed a Bill in Parliament with the aim of enabling meals to be provided for underfed children during school holidays.

In the present day, it is reported that up to 3 million children in the UK are thought to be at risk of not having the food that they require in the school holidays, due to economically disadvantaged households, with school-aged children, experiencing food insecurity. Over the past few years, there have been various research studies conducted highlighting the issues that families face during the school holidays and the wider impacts.

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Hunger published a report in 2017 and this resulted in Frank Field MP putting forward a Private Members Bill in September 2017, 'School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill 2017-19'. The Bill would have required local authorities in England to facilitate the delivery of programmes that provide free meals and activities for children during school holidays and for connected purposes. The Bill was withdrawn at the second reading stage as a result of commitments on provision secured from the Government.

These commitments were in effect announced on 28 March 2018, with the Government pledging £2million for research into ways of supporting disadvantaged families through "healthy meals and enriching activities" during the school holidays through the Holiday Activities and Food Research Fund.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the issues being experienced by families in poverty and has been brought into the public spotlight by the campaign led by Marcus Rashford.

APSE has conducted research in the holiday provision that local authorities are providing across the UK and the lead that councils are taking to tackle the issue of food insecurity in their communities.

This briefing provides an overview of the research, outlines the key findings and provides case study examples.

2. Government support for holiday provision across the UK

2.1. England

On 27 July 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) provided details of pilot schemes. The schemes would provide free meals as well as activities such as football and cooking classes. The pilots operated across the country including in the North East, Birmingham and London.

In December 2018, the Government announced that the pilots would be followed by a £9million programme of holiday clubs for the summer break in 2019.

Alongside wider support for families during the coronavirus pandemic, the Government announced in November 2020 that the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) would be expanded from the pilot phase to cover the whole of England, during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021.

The DfE made £220 million available to local authorities to coordinate free holiday provision, which included healthy food and enriching activities. It was stated that the programme would be made available to children in every local authority in England.

2.2. Scotland

On 4 September 2018, Scotland's First Minister announced as part of the Programme for Government 2018-19 that they would be stepping up their work to eradicate food insecurity in the school holidays and were investing a further £2 million.

In February 2021 the Scottish Government took the decision to extend free school meals to eligible children throughout the summer, October and Christmas holidays, and also the Easter Holidays.

As part of the Scottish Governments response to the issues brought about by COVID-19 the 'Get into Summer' programme was announced in June 2021. Councils were allocated £15 million to strengthen and build on existing summer provision. The aim of the programme was to specifically target those under the

age of 25 years from low-income households, who may otherwise struggle to access such experiences.

2.3. Wales

In 2016, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) piloted the Food and Fun School Holidays programme – School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) nationally in 10 schools, working with 5 local authorities and 3 local health boards.

The Welsh Government part funded the programme in 2017 to 38 clubs in 12 local authorities and all 7 local health boards. Continued Welsh Government funding enabled the programme to grow to 77 schemes in 21 local authorities offering nearly 4,000 places to pupils in 2019.

The Welsh Government committed to fund SHEP in 2021 with £4.85m allocated in the draft budget. The WLGA continued to coordinate the roll-out of the programme by working closely with local authorities and partner agencies.

In 2019, the Holiday Hunger Playworks Pilot provided food provision in areas with the highest level of deprivation, including Rhondda Cynon Taff, Wrexham, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil.

In February 2020 the Welsh government confirmed that Holiday Hunger Playworks would return and announced additional funding for the 2020 provision. Funding was offered to all local authorities in Wales.

2.4. Northern Ireland

Holiday provision in Northern Ireland is delivered through partnerships such as the Children in Northern Ireland Holiday Hunger project that works with a variety of partners including Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to provide holiday provision clubs.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the Northern Irish Government provide a direct payment to families of children eligible for Free School Meals through the 'Free School Meals Payment Scheme. This funding came to an end in April 2022.

3. APSE Local Authority Holiday Survey

APSE conducted an online survey in August and September 2021, which was circulated to local authorities throughout the UK and 54 responses were received.

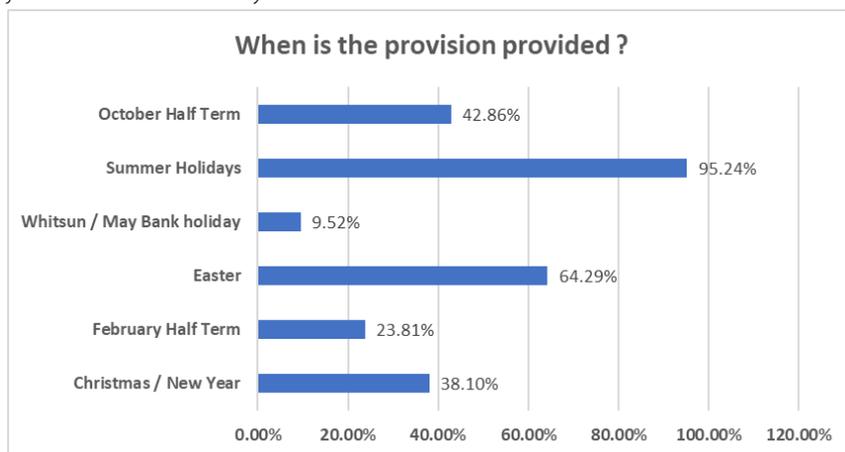
A series of questions were asked to explore all aspects of local authority holiday provision, including the type of provision being offered, the barriers to providing the provision, and the perceived benefits to the community.

Results

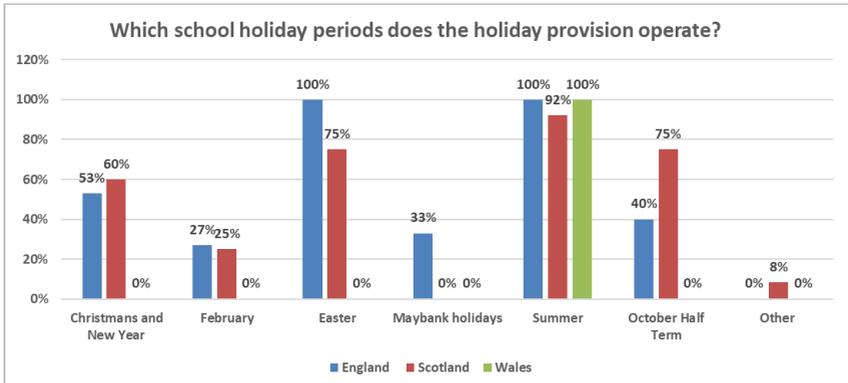
Respondents were UK-wide with 38.46% from Scotland, 36.54% from England and 23.08% from Wales. Therefore, the survey allows a snapshot to be gained of what is in place across the UK.

3.1. Which school holiday periods does the holiday provision operate?

The graph below outlines when the provision operates and it emphasises that local authorities have provision in place across all the school holidays and not just the summer holidays.



Further analysis of the data allows a comparison of the UK countries as to what holiday periods they operate their programmes. The graph overleaf sets a breakdown of the responses.



The majority of the UK Countries provide provision during the summer holidays and a large proportion of the English and Scottish authorities make provision available during the Easter break. It is notable from the survey responses that Welsh authorities only provide holiday provision during the summer. This directly correlates with the criteria of the funding provided by the Welsh Government.

3.2. Has your authority provided holiday provision prior to 2021?

The survey explored if local authorities have been providing holiday provision for longer than the last 12 months, just under half of respondents (40.38%) stated that holiday provision has been made available for the last one to four years, 32.69% advise that they had been running holiday provision for more than four years but less than seven. A further 17.31% report that they had only provided it for the last 12 months, 5.77% have provided it for more than seven years but less than 10 years, and a small minority of respondents (5.77%) have been providing it for more than a decade.

3.3. How many days a week does the provision operate?

The days that the provision operates varies and it was stated in the comments that the number of days is dependent on the individual provision. However, the majority of respondents, 58.49% report that they have provision operating five days a week, with just over a third, 32.08% stating it was provided four days

a week. A further 13.21% operate three days a week, 3.77% on two days and 1.89% one day a week. With 20.75% reporting that they provide provision over a different period and the most common comment was that the provision was available for 12 days out of a three-week period.

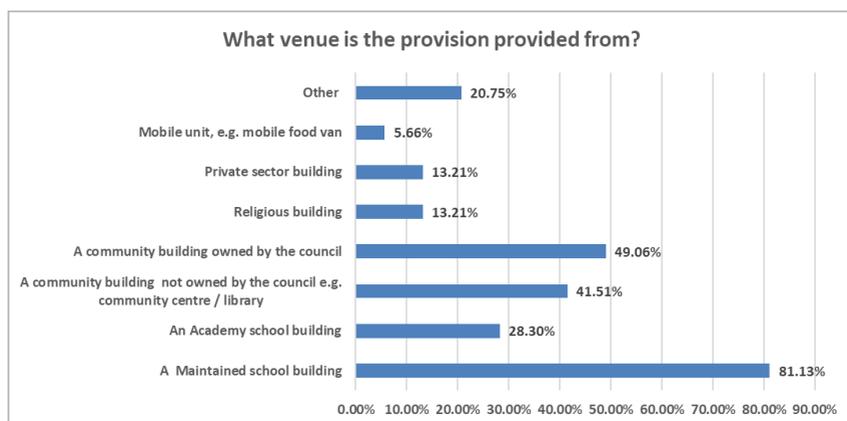
3.4. What hours is the provision available for?

As with the days that the provision is provided, the hours that it is available for also varies to meet the local need. Over half of respondents (56.60%) state that the provision is available for the full day, 11.32% provide morning sessions only and 5.66% afternoons only. There were 39.62% of respondents advising that they have other arrangements in place for the hours that the provision is available, the most commonly reported of these is in 2 hourly blocks or just for lunchtime, for example from 12pm to 2pm.

3.5. What venue is the provision provided from?

To gain an understanding of the venues utilised for holiday provision, the survey asked respondents to choose from a range of options.

The graph below provides an overview of the types of venues used. It is clear from the responses that the venues being used are situated at the heart of the local community with the majority of respondents, 81.13% reporting that it was run from a maintained school building.

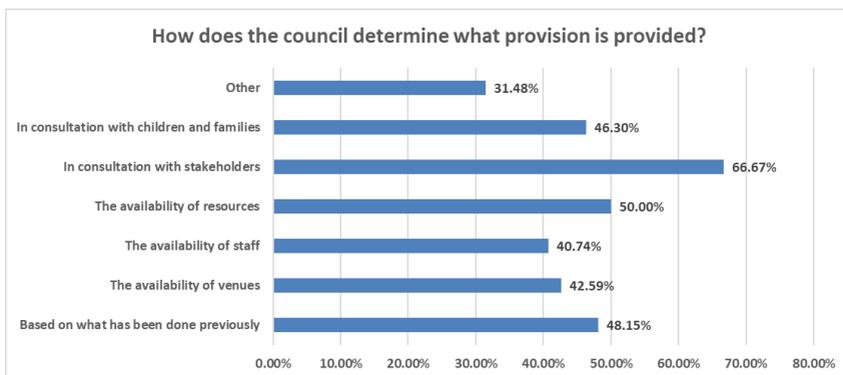


It was reported in the comments that the following venues were also used:-

- Leisure centres
- Parks and open spaces
- Council offices

3.6. How does the council determine what provision is provided?

When considering what provision is provided the responses from the survey highlight that local authorities take into account a range of factors. The graph below provides an overview of the responses received. In addition to the answer choices provided, the majority of respondents that selected 'other' advised that they determined the provision based on the criteria set out for the funding, this is particularly true of local authorities in Wales that deliver the SHEP programme.



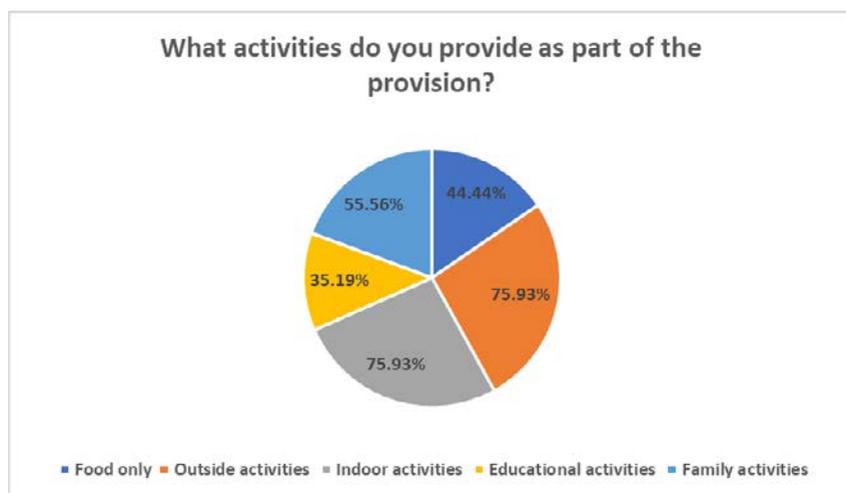
3.7. Do you provide food and drink as part of the holiday provision?

One of the purposes of the holiday provision is to help alleviate children going hungry during the school holidays, therefore the survey sought to gain an understanding of what food was been provided at the sessions. The majority of respondents 66.04% reported that a hot lunchtime meal was provided, just under half, 45.25% reported that a cold lunchtime meal was provided and 32.08% advised that breakfast was provided.

It is clear from the comments received in response to this question that when food was served and the type of food that was provided was dependent on how the provision was organised and what is feasible in the venue.

3.8. What activities do you provide as part of the provision?

Holiday provision is broader than just providing a child with food, therefore the survey sought to gain an understanding of the activities that formed part of the sessions. The graph below provides an overview of the responses received.



A large proportion of the respondents, 75.93% report that indoor and outdoor activities are provided, 35.19% include educational activities as part of the provision and over half of respondents confirmed that family activities were provided. This highlights that the holiday provision not only supports the child but also is a source of support for the family.

3.9. Is there wider support provided as part of the provision?

In addition to family activities, it has been reported that local authorities and other holiday provision providers make wider support available for those attending the sessions. Therefore, APSE was keen to gain an understanding of the type of wider support that was offered.

There are 30.43% of respondents stating that there is access to a health professional, 21.74% report that users of the provision have access to benefit advisors, 17.39% confirm that there is access to a social worker and 15.22% advise that there is access to housing professionals.

Over half of the respondents, 67.39% reported that there were other arrangements in place and the majority of those who commented advised that families were signposted to other services.

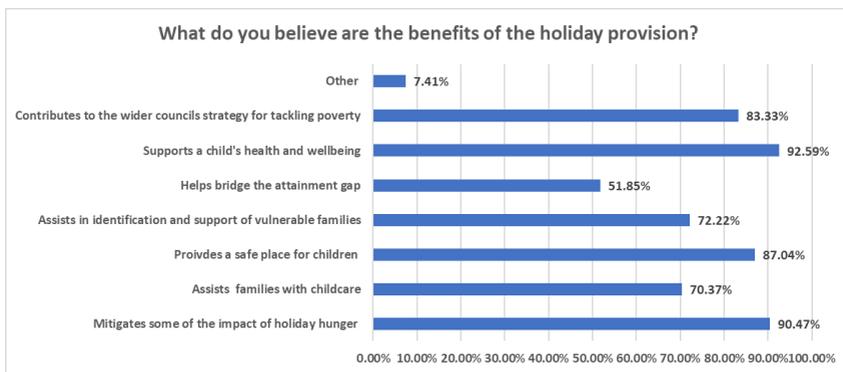
3.10. What age group is the provision for?

The responses to this question in the survey clearly show that the majority of holiday provision is made available for primary school-aged children with 81.48% of respondents reporting that the provision was in place for 5 to 11-year-olds. 59.26% of respondents advised that the provision is made available to 11-13-year – olds, and just under half of respondents 48.15% have holiday provision available to secondary school-aged children 13 years old and older.

A minority of respondents also advise that there is provision for under 5-year – olds. In the comments associated with this question, it was advised that if a sibling does not meet the age criteria they would not be turned away and it was also stated that some of the provision was accessible for the whole family.

3.11. What do you believe the benefits of providing a holiday provision are?

To gain an understanding of what benefits the respondents felt were to providing the provision, the survey asked the question. The graph below provides an overview of the responses received.



The responses received to this question highlight that there is a definite belief that providing holiday provision has benefits over and above children going hungry in the school holidays. The vast majority of respondents, 92.59% state that they believe that the provision supports a child's health and wellbeing, 90.47% think that it mitigates some of the impacts of holiday food insecurity and 87.04% confirmed that the provision was a safe place for children.

There were various comments received to the question that advised that the benefits also included:-

- Helps develop young people through volunteering and leadership.
- Promotes community assets.
- Builds a relationship between the community and the local authority.
- Encourages the uptake of school meals.

3.12. Who is the provision targeted at?

Throughout the survey, there is a common theme emerging that there is a range of approaches to the provision and this is highlighted in the responses to the question regarding who the provision is targeted at. The majority of respondents, 85.19% report that it is targeted at families eligible for Free School Meals, 64.19% advise that children living in areas of deprivation are targeted and 35.19% confirm that the provision is open to all children who want to attend and meet the age criteria.

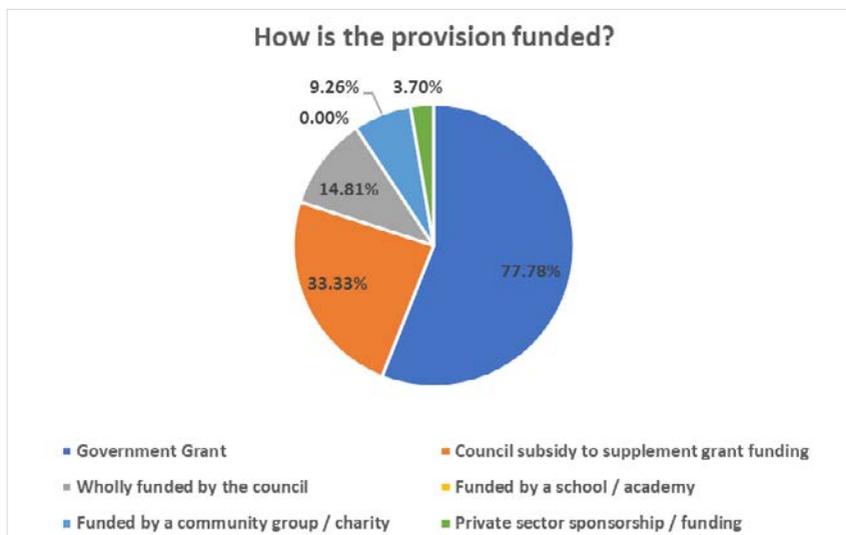
3.13. How does the local authority publicise that the provision?

How the provision is publicised within the community can determine whether families are aware of what's on offer and also that the sector of the community that the provision is targeted at receives the information. Therefore, respondents were asked how local authorities publicised the holiday sessions.

The vast majority, 92.59% used schools as a conduit for the information, 64.81% put information on the council's website and 61.11% used social media. It was also reported that 55.56% promoted the provision through other council services. From the responses received to this question, it is clear to see that councils are using a range of channels to get the word out to the community.

3.14. How is the provision funded?

There is a cost to providing holiday provision, and APSE was keen to understand how local authorities were funding the provision. The graph overleaf highlights the responses received.



Over two-thirds of respondents, 77.78% report that a government grant was used to pay for providing the provision, 33.33% advised that the council provided a subsidy to grant funding and although a minority of respondents but 14.81% confirm that the council fully funds the cost of running the provision. It should be noted, that none of the respondents reported that the provision was funded by a school or academy.

3.15. How is the provision staffed?

The nature of holiday provision means that it is only open for a few weeks a year. Therefore, the survey sought to establish how the provision was staffed.

The majority of respondents 81.48%, reported that permanent members of staff employed by the council in other areas were seconded to staff the holiday provision. 48.15% advised that staff were employed on temporary contracts specifically to work in the holiday provision setting and 40.74% confirmed that volunteers were used to staff the provision.

In the comments received in response to this question respondents also reported that other organisations provided the staff for the provision including staff from the school or the third sector.

3.16. How many children do you estimate have accessed the provision in the 2020/21 school year?

To gain an understanding of the scale of the provision the survey asked local authorities to provide an estimate of how many children had accessed the provision in the 2020/2021 school year. The responses ranges from circa 100 to 22,000 which clearly shows that the differing models of delivery have been adopted in response to local need.

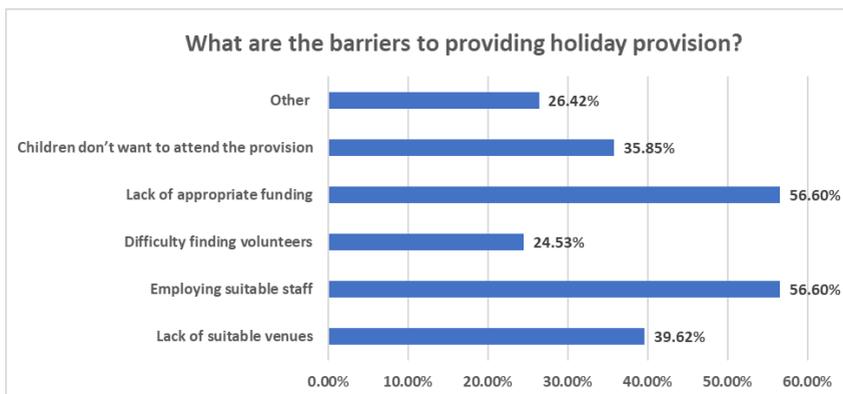
3.17. What do you think the demand for Holiday Hunger provision post COVID-19 will be?

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities in society and APSE was keen to establish what local authorities believed would be the impact on the future demand for holiday provision. The vast majority of respondents 77.77% stated that there was a belief that demand would increase or increase significantly. It was reported by 20.37% of respondents that the demand would stay the same and only 1.85% thought the demand would decrease.

3.18. What are the barriers to providing holiday provision?

Providing holiday provision is an additional service that councils provide therefore the survey asked what barriers local authorities had experienced in providing the service.

The graph below provides an overview of what the barriers are to providing holiday provision.



Over half of respondents, 56.60% reported that employing suitable staff was a barrier. Employing suitable staff is an issue that is being reported across local authority frontline services and the wider hospitality and care sectors, therefore, the responses received are consistent with the wider issues of recruitment.

There were 56.60% stating that the lack of appropriate funding for the provision acted as a barrier. Although the respective UK governments are now funding some form of provision, 33.33% of respondents advised that the council provided an additional subsidy to the grant funding. It was also commented that as there was no commitment from governments regarding the future funding for provision. Therefore, it made it difficult for local authorities to plan future provision.

There were 39.62% of respondents advising that there was a lack of suitable venues and the comments highlighted that this was in part due to schools not committing to the holiday provision programme and not wanting their facilities to be used during the holiday period.

It was also reported by 35.85% of respondents that children did not want to attend. The comments provided a greater insight into this barrier; and the three main aspects centred around attracting those children in most need and are least engaged with services to attend, children who had booked a place not attending and also in encouraging secondary school-age children to attend the provision. It was also commented that if there was secure long-term funding, this would assist local authorities in being able publicise the provision further in advance, it would provide additional opportunities to reach out to the harder to engage families and give additional time to secure venues, recruit volunteers and broaden the range of activities to attract older children.

3.19. How do you monitor the success of the provision?

The monitoring of how successful the provision is remains important, this allows an assessment of what works well to enable the approaches to be continued moving forward, ensure the money is used where it is most needed but also to allow an effective evaluation, to establish what does not work as well to enable the provision to be amended.

A large proportion of respondents, 74.07% report that feedback is sought from children, 68.52% confirm feedback is gained from families and 64.81% advise that the criteria set out as part of the grant funding is used to monitor the success of the provision.



APSE Comment

The survey conducted for this research and the associated comments highlight that there is a range of delivery models that have been adopted by local authorities in respect of what holiday provision is offered. The approach taken is determined by local need, the availability of venues and available resource.

It is clear that the provision that has been put in place is far more than just ensuring that children are provided with food, with respondents reporting that they provide indoor and outdoor activities, as well as activities for the families.

The perceived benefits of holiday provision are wide-ranging and include contributing to tackling poverty, supporting vulnerable families and providing a safe place for children. In addition, the provision supports families with child care and supports the health and wellbeing of the child. Schools being closed during the pandemic has further exacerbated the attainment gap and some local authorities are incorporating educational sessions to support children in catching up on learning that has been missed.

Local authorities have been running holiday provision for some time with over 30% of respondents to the survey reporting that they had been running sessions in the school holidays for four to seven years. The respective UK governments have now allocated funding for holiday provision and extended the pilots that had been in place to ensure more children are able to access provision. However, many respondents commented that without a long-term commitment to fund holiday provision it made it difficult to plan their offering and expand on the provision offered.

Food insecurity in the holidays is a wider symptom of poverty and holiday provision is not the solution, just a short-term stop-gap. Therefore, governments need to do more to tackle the root causes of poverty and use all available mechanisms to support families and address societal inequalities.

APSE welcomes the recognition that local authorities are best placed to co-ordinate and put in place provision that meets the needs of the community. However, the short lead time for the implementation of HAF has presented councils with challenges in delivery such as difficulty in recruiting staff for the

provision, putting in place effective food supplies and planning a programme of activities.

Further work is required to gain an understanding of what works and also in developing an offering that reaches those families who are not engaged and are in most need of the support that holiday provision provides.

The survey also highlighted that one of the barriers to delivering their programmes was the lack of engagement by schools. Therefore, more needs to be done to bring schools on board and get their support and buy-in for holiday provision.

APSE's Catering Advisory Group has been and will continue to provide a forum for local authorities to highlight the work they are undertaking to deliver holiday provision and share best practice.



APPENDIX – Case studies

- Gateshead Council
- Stirling Council
- Telford and Wrekin Council
- Tower Hamlets Council

Case Study One – Gateshead Council

Context

Gateshead has approximately 7,200 children eligible for means-tested free school meals benefits, living in around 4,500 households.

There are many more children and families on the fringes of this benefit, so the offer is very much open and accessible to all school-age children, using mapping tools, the programme is targeted in localities to ensure provision matches need and proximity of activities.

What provision is provided?

The programme at Easter and Summer delivered over 20,000 face-to-face places. These took place in Schools, Community Centres, Church's Sports Clubs, Leisure Centres, Outward Bound locations, Dance Groups, Swimming Clubs, parks, local Open Spaces and family trips.

The council worked with partners from Cedars School, Gibside to deliver a programme and support young people in Gateshead with a learning need. This included a team from our Early Help Service working with young people identified as at risk or who would benefit from attending the programme.

The programme delivered 1,761 'Cook n Eat' packs to households with children eligible for FSM, who have got in touch from a mailshot, the Easter 'Cook n Eat' included enough ingredients for 5 meals for 4 people, this equates to 35,220 individual meals.

Over 2500 activity packs were distributed through schools and community partners to children and families.

5000 hot meals, which equates to approximately 25% of the places offered included a hot meal, the remainder received a nutritional pack lunch or snack pack (15000) 75%.

The council also worked at a regional level with several local authorities to develop content for 3 x ½ hour tv programmes on Tyne & Wear TV per day for the Easter holidays.

They also offered online games, activities, and exercises on the Brighten the Day website.

How does the provision link with the councils' wider strategies?

Gateshead's approach is to align the Brighten the Day programme to the Gateshead's Thrive agenda:

The five main themes are:

Put people and families at the heart of everything we do

We consult with local organisations and communities to ensure we are delivering what they want.

Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

The programme has been mapped to our latest FSM eligible households dataset to confirm locations of delivery venues are in close proximity to FSM communities.

Support our communities to support themselves and each other

Our analysis shows 95% of households with children eligible for free school meals benefit are within a short distance to access activities in Gateshead.

Invest in our economy to provide sustainable opportunities for employment, innovation, and growth across the borough

Wherever possible we use local providers to deliver the programme, practically and financially supporting local businesses and charities in Gateshead.

Work together and fight for a better future for Gateshead

We work hard across all sectors of our community to ensure that all communities and cultures have an opportunity to get involved in our programme.

How is the provision funded?

DfE funding allocation of £850,000 for 2021 in Gateshead to fund Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) over the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays for benefits-related Free School Meal (FSM) recipients and vulnerable children.

The holiday club places were available for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week, 6 weeks a year and must include healthy meals (one healthy meal a day meeting the School Food Standards guidance), enriching activities (provide fun activities with opportunities to develop skills and knowledge), physical activities (which meet the Physical Activity Guidelines), nutritional education (awareness of healthy eating and how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food, signposting and referrals: (to other services and support).

Key Challenges

COVID-19

Without any doubt the biggest challenge in 2020/21 has been COVID-19, the council ensured that staff attended every project delivered by the HAF programme to check on compliance with government guidance by both venues hosting activities, providers delivering and children and young people who attended. A flexible approach to the overall programme was key this year to make sure resources were redirected where gaps and opportunities were identified in provision to respond quickly to move activities to more suitable venues e.g., from a public park to a community centre, and to increase activities offered in neighbourhoods where venues could not open by delivering them as pop-ups outdoors. Innovation in the form of a change of approach to enable access to the programme for families who could not participate face-to-face resulted in new activities and ways of delivering through the digital offer and doorstep activities delivered directly to families in need.

Engaging schools

Many challenges engaging schools either to act as activity providers or to make their venues available for other activity providers to use them. There was a range of reasons for this including:

- Schools had building works over the summer, so the buildings were not accessible.
- Staff needing a break over the summer, particularly due to exhaustion from working through the pandemic.
- Logistics of opening the building and having the appropriate staff on site.
- Timescales being too late to engage schools.
- Capacity challenges if schools were involved in the summer school catch-up programme.

Reaching secondary-aged young people

The council found that their programme worked well for primary-aged children, but they were struggling to reach secondary-aged children or maintain attendance from this age group. Flexible provision, such as pop-up activities or events in parks worked particularly well to engage older young people.

Key outcomes

HAF fills a critical societal gap when schools close for extended breaks. Regular nutritious meals, social and emotional support, planned activities that continue to support children's development and offering all children attending the opportunity of at least an hour of physical activity per day.

The overwhelming sentiment among children, parents, and holiday clubs is that they want to see HAF continue in future. Children have reported having fun, memorable, and healthy summers and that they enjoyed taking part in HAF. Parents and carers reported that HAF has been a significant source of support for them, particularly in respect of managing household budgets and provision of food during the holidays, as well as providing childcare and positive activities that keep their older children safe so they could remain in work and continue to earn money.

Providers of holiday clubs have identified the value of a co-ordinated approach to supporting children and families across local authority areas. Those providers have also identified the strengths associated with the development of their offer the value of stronger local connections between different providers. Enabling the sharing of good practice and resources through local networks. Supporting resilient children, families, and communities through early identification, referral, and support across the holiday periods when schools are closed.

Key Learning Points

- Work towards develop capacity, training, and facilities within holiday clubs and providers to improve programme delivery.
- Investment in organisations that will ensure the smooth running of and maximum impact from the programme.
- The development of methods to cater even more effectively for the needs of the most vulnerable children and families.
- Look at leveraging additional resources and support from private, public, and voluntary sector partners.
- Build self-confidence among families who can then factor this into their plans around work, childcare, and budgets for the year.

Conclusions

Gateshead Council would like to see the Department for Education allowing more flexibility within the HAF programme so that children from households on low or median incomes, who do not qualify for free school meals, are able to take part in, and benefit from, the programme in subsequent years.

Case Study Two – Stirling Council

Context

The Stirling Council area has a combination of affluent communities and areas with persistent poverty. There is a child poverty rate of 21.3% across the area which rises to 24% in the Bannockburn ward. The Council covers a large geographic area encompassing former mining towns in the East to rural communities in the North and West. There are poverty related challenges across the area however these are compounded in some of the more rural communities where access to services and transport can present a further obstacle. There is a reliance on jobs in the service and tourism sectors with associated lower pay rates and security of employment.

Across the area, there are 878 children accessing FSM in primary and 699 young people accessing FSM in High Schools

As of August 2021, 16,249 people in Stirling were on Universal Credit.

The number of households in Stirling in receipt of Universal Credit has increased steadily throughout the pandemic: with 4,704 households in May 2020; 4,931 households in November 2020; and 5,170 in February 2021.

What provision is provided?

The council try to ensure that Holiday Fun clubs run through most of the summer holidays – and have been running clubs for five years and found that there was less uptake in week one and in the last week of the holiday period so Stirling Council tend to run clubs in those weeks. The offer is for two-hour periods unless the provider is Care Inspectorate registered and then the area operated for the span of the lunchtime period. In the past, sessions have run where there is an overlap between those attending a morning session and those coming for the afternoon and the children have eaten together but this is not standard practice. The offer is predominantly for primary school aged children though older siblings have attended on occasion.

The council provide Fun Clubs in the October and Easter Holidays but have found the Christmas period to be more challenging and so in the past, have supported the local foodbank to provide additional family parcels over the Christmas period.

There is a cross party working group of Councillors and they oversee the work of officers in developing and delivering the Holiday Fun Club programme.

The council work in partnership with not-for-profit organisations who are part of a procurement framework for the Holiday Fun Clubs. The council realised early on that it could not resource the number of clubs (across a large geography) that might be required and that partnership delivery was the best way to proceed.

Stirling Council are able to specify what kind of meal provision they are looking for and this is based on guidance from our schools catering team so that they can ensure that nutritional standards are being worked to. In instances where providers can supply premises and activities but not food, the council can supply the food via their catering team and this forms part of the procurement framework. In the past there have also had some of the organisations who are more “food based” providing food (at cost and through the procurement framework) to other organisations so that they can fulfil the brief of food and activities. This has been good for building relationships and capacity between those organisations.

When the council first started the Holiday Fun Clubs, they offered parents the chance to attend exercise classes on the premises or to speak to welfare and benefits advisers. This provision did not garner much uptake and many parents were happy to simply have a couple of hours to attend to other responsibilities.

The primary aim of the clubs has always been to provide food but the council wanted to avoid any stigma, so their marketing and messaging around the clubs is heavily focused on the activities on offer. These have included art, music, sport and sessions from STEM ambassadors. The food is absolutely key, but a light touch approach has been taken on how this is promoted.

How does this provision link with the councils' wider strategies?

One of the council's key priorities is tackling poverty and inequality and this work is absolutely aligned to that. It's one of the councils earliest direct interventions and they have continued to adapt and develop the approach over the past 5 years.

This work also forms part of the wider community planning focus on tackling poverty and inequality. Partners such as the Police and Fire and Rescue Services have taken part in the Holiday Fun Clubs.

The council have a specific child poverty theme forming part of the action plans for 8 Locality Action Plans and of course, it sits with the Local Child Poverty Action Report work that is produced in conjunction with NHS Forth Valley.

The council work closely with colleagues in the Schools, Education and Learning Service and they are the key referrers to the Holiday Fun Clubs. They recognise the value not only in the food provided but, in the opportunities, to maintain contact with some of our families when the schools are closed and to provide activities and learning in a fun environment. Whilst it is not the primary aim of the Holiday Fun Clubs, it is hoped that they would provide an indirect benefit in terms of the poverty related attainment gap given that a focus is to put on provision in those areas experiencing the poorest SIMD outcomes.

How is the provision funded?

The council has now mainstreamed annual funding of £80k to provide the Holiday Fun Clubs. Like other Local Authorities, they have received additional funding (£213k) from the Scottish Government as part of the Summer of Play provision in the wake of the pandemic. The council were able to use this to broaden and deepen their reach to some of the more specific children and young people identified by Scottish Government however they have also maintained their core offer.

Key challenges

Key challenges have included being able to source suitably qualified and disclosed providers but the council have been proactive in their partnership approach to securing these and are looking to encourage more providers to join our procurement framework.

Staff who know many of the children best, i.e., teachers and SLAs are not available to support the clubs during holidays.

A real challenge has been in how the clubs are promoted without stigma. The council have asked schools to discreetly put information about the Holiday Fun Clubs into schoolbags of those children who would benefit most, however, it is appreciated that the run up to the end of term is a busy time for schools and this can place additional pressure on staff. GDPR considerations mean that the best way to promote the clubs is to produce a table with information about which offers are running in different areas, have this sent home in schoolbags and then ask the parent/carer to book their child(ren) on. Information is provided to priority families and they generally have a week or two to book on before the information is shared wider.

The two-hour limit on offers from the majority of partner organisations means that whilst the holiday fun clubs are of benefit, low income families cannot use them for any extended period that might help with childcare costs, for example. However, it is recognised that the need to ensure that the children and young people are being safely and appropriately looked after and the role of the Care Inspectorate in this.

Key outcomes

The council have done some evaluation with children attending and feedback is generally positive; and they take on board any suggestions for improvement.

Learning

There's no "one size fits all" model that will work. Be aware of local differences and also do some homework about which organisations, if any, are already working in the area – it's counterproductive to replicate an offer when you could work with existing provision. Get feedback from children and families to help shape things year on year and explore the opportunities to work with local arts and music providers as well as sports clubs and not for profit organisations.

Sitting down and eating with the children and young people is a really important part of the offer. Making the meal a sociable and enjoyable experience is very rewarding for all involved.

Being able to let schools know which children attended and how they got on can be useful for teachers at the start of a new term.

Conclusions

The Holiday Fun Clubs are an incredibly rewarding intervention to be involved in.

Case Study Three – Telford and Wrekin Council

Context

Sixteen percent of the borough's population (28,900 people) live in areas ranked in the 10% most deprived in England. By 2019, eighteen of the borough's 108 Lower Layers Super Output Areas were in the 10% most deprived in England. Providing quality holiday activities for vulnerable children and young people has been a priority for the authority and community organisations in Telford and Wrekin for many years.

What provision is provided?

Prior to the government's Holiday Activity and Food programme, Telford & Wrekin Council has supported local community organisations to deliver holiday clubs that deliver 30 minutes of physical activity and a healthy nutritious meal in the most deprived wards. Thirteen organisations deliver our Holiday Activity & Eatwell (HAEW) council funded programme over Easter, summer and October holidays. This programme works as organisations utilise their own community assets and the council's funding to deliver a quality offer that meets the needs of local people. This summer all HAEW providers delivered sessions for local children and families on income related Free School Meals and some also increased their offer with support through the government's Holiday Activity and Food programme. This requires specific acknowledgement as many of these organisations have provided a consistent, high quality COVID-19 support, since March 2020 to the community, providing breakfast initiatives, support with shopping and prescriptions and part of the winter coats scheme. They have kept on going for the greater good, despite being tired.

Telford & Wrekin Council continue to work with families who have significant support needs. This year despite difficulties in recruiting staff the council managed to deliver the annual, Bridge Playscheme and also to extend their activities, to provide an excellent offer at Arthog Outreach all supported by the Council's Catering Service.

The government's HAF programme has provided significant resource to enable Telford and Wrekin Council and key providers to increase engagement in fun physical, enriching, healthy activities as well as providing a healthy nutritious meal that met the school food standards for just under 7000, of which over 2000 have SEND, children who are in receipt of income related Free School Meals. Those numbers we continually see increasing due to the impact of COVID-19 and the inequalities these children and families face.

Due to the impact of COVID during the Easter Holidays, Telford & Wrekin Council provided an online activity hub for Children and Families to access and find fun and engaging ways to, get active and eat well, as well as signposting to additional support services. The approach was joined up with the welfare team providing food vouchers and messaging, plus recipe cards to encourage those families to look at ways of providing a low-cost healthy nutritious meal.

This was complimented through the delivery of their HAEW providers who found creative ways of getting activities and food to the homes of some of the most disadvantaged. This includes activity and equipment packs consisting of materials for crafting, equipment for physical activities and also colouring for mindfulness. Some providers gave out ingredients to make meals as a family at home.

The summer saw provision go back to face to face with such a varied offer, coordinated and delivered through key council services, community organisations, local businesses and a school. The offer centred on a children's, youth, family and a specific Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Offer (supported by Parents Opening Doors (PODS)) at local hubs and also leisure facilities. The activity offer provided by all was extensive. In total over 10,000 places were offered, all with a healthy nutritious meal. Activities provided included swimming, ice skating, canoeing, party with a princess, fishing, learning to ride a bike, cooking meals, taste the rainbow, three different types of golf, high ropes adventure course and a visit Telford's exotic zoo. All of which was supported with healthy, nutritious meals prepared by community cafes, local businesses which included care home providers and our very own catering service.

All the activities could be promoted and booked through a new website and booking system which was developed in under 6 weeks. This system enabled the council to keep track of attendances and helped promote take-up of sessions through a weekly newsletter.

Training was offered to all holiday club providers and delivery partners. This included: Inclusion and Awareness – PODs, School Food Standards and Eatwell

– TWC Catering Team, CYP Wellbeing – BEAM, Physical Activity – Street Games, Cooking Sessions – Learn Telford, Paediatric First Aid by TWC Leisure and Food Hygiene – TWC.

Key outcomes

Monitoring is still being collated from all the different holiday activities that took place over the summer. However, the commitment across council services and community was immense. Summer holiday activities, the Happy, Healthy and Active Holiday programme (HHAH), consolidated collaborative working has achieved a number of priority outcomes:

Every child young person and adult lives well in their community: being active and eating well are fundamental components to children and young people being able to stay healthy and live well. Add in enriching activities and you have a recipe for success, creating conditions for children and young people to thrive, build confidence, reduce anxiety and going back to school ready to learn. Helping those who normally experience that holiday gap to excel. One child said, "We don't have fruit salad at home. This is the best pudding I've ever tasted!"

Everyone benefits from thriving economy: through the programme the council supported and invested in local business, as well as utilising our own commercial services, all offering high quality activities and meals. Supporting parents, carers and care leavers to continue to work as a result of their children being able to attend activity or gaining employment as a result of the holiday offer.

All neighbourhoods are a great place to live: Having a local offer, delivered by new and existing community partners brought real support and excitement around the activities on offer right on the doorstep. As a result of the programme

some children stepped into Leisure Centres for the first time, not realising it was so close to home. With the message 'We'll be back!' This has helped the council promote its swimming offer.

A community focused innovative council providing efficient and effective quality services: the residents and communities are at the heart of everything the council do and providing this programme alongside community partners demonstrated cooperative working. It was apparent that throughout the targeted promotion of the provision more families were struggling financially as an impact of COVID. The council's welfare team provided crucial support to families by undertaking benefit assessments quickly so they could receive the right support, including taking part in the holiday activities. The council team behind this programme had one driving force – let's deliver the best that they could for children and families so they can have a happy, healthy and active holiday.

The council's plan for the Christmas holiday is to start planning and coordination now. The council have already launched Happy, Healthy and Active Holiday grants. A key focus is around engaging schools as they have fantastic indoor facilities, which some community organisations don't have, particularly space. A fantastic youth offer had been provided but struggled to engage with some age groups. To help overcome this, the council are working with our youth associations in offering flexible provision in local areas and also to help them access, the amazing activities we have to offer in Telford. Adding some additional functions to the website and booking system will enable children and families to search for activities by location and age. The council did also have a lot of no-shows even though those registered could look at their bookings. Work is being undertaken to look at how reminders can be sent, preferably by text to increase attendance. Finally, through targeted promotion and local sessions the council will be helping children and families to register through local sessions, supporting schools as well as they understand that they need to support those with literacy, parents/carers have who special needs or disabilities themselves, English isn't their first language and also down to digital capacities (have a phone but not the data to book) to access this great offer.

Continued government support for this programme still focusing on the key standards around HAF is vital provision for local families, who even without COVID-19 continue to struggle, helping those to provide positive and the right activities and food for which they are so grateful, which without this offer just wouldn't be able to afford. Long-term investment goes some way to helping reduce the inequalities we see and that it is not just about a holiday programme but so much more – improving educational achievement, supporting employment, supporting our children and families to live well, contributing to the government's Childhood Obesity Plan and epidemic.

Case Study Four – Tower Hamlets Council

Context

In Tower Hamlets the child poverty rate is the highest of all the London boroughs, with 57% of children deemed to be living in households in poverty (after housing costs), compared to 38% in the typical London borough. Meanwhile, in the borough, just over 15,000 children are eligible for free school meals, representing a third of all children.

For households in poverty, school holidays can be particular pressure points because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap – with children from disadvantaged families less likely to access organised out-of-school activities, more likely to experience ‘unhealthy holidays’ in terms of nutrition and physical health, and more likely to experience social isolation.

To address this, the Council has adopted three main initiatives:

- **Delivering the DfE HAF programme** – *The Department for Education provided funding to local authorities to coordinate a holiday programme that provides Free healthy food and enriching activities to school age children on Free School meals during the Easter, Summer and Christmas Holidays.*
- **Food box deliveries** – *Funded by the council, during Summer and October half terms, all schools in the borough could request to receive free healthy ingredient boxes and recipes for any and all FSM recipients and vulnerable families. To help families sustain a healthy and affordable diet during the holiday periods where HAF programmes are not available to them.*
- **Vouchers** – *While the COVID Winter/Local Support Grant has been available, we have used this funding to provide vouchers to all FSM-eligible children, plus any children the schools deem vulnerable to food poverty through the holiday.*

What provision is provided?

HAF programme

Funded to run for a total of 6 weeks during the year, the Tower Hamlets model extends past this and offered a week of remote provision at Easter, 6 weeks of free provision during the Summer holiday period and offers 10 days during the Christmas Holidays.

Aims

The overall aims of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme are to support children and their families to:

- Eat healthier
- Be more active
- Take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character, wellbeing and other key skills
- Be safe and not socially isolated
- Have greater knowledge of health and nutrition

With either remote or in-person provision, the council provided or enabled enriching and physical activities alongside nutritional education healthy eating sessions for children and families. They also provided clubs and families with an extensive list of local and national support services. These included but weren't limited to, Citizen's Advice, School Nurses, other healthcare practitioners, Family Support Services, Housing Support, organisations providing employment support or financial education.

Easter

It was decided early on that there was not enough certainty about the end of lockdown for us to deliver in-person provision, as the roadmap had not yet been published. Therefore, it was agreed that we would deliver a programme of food boxes, recipes, and activity resources. The council worked with Oitij-jo Collective who designed recipes co-produced with local children and created recipe instructions and videos, and Thomas Ridley who supplied the boxes of ingredients linked to these recipes. These were delivered to schools in the week

before Easter for collection there, or to a local Children's Centre for schools that could not host collection.

In total 5,260 were delivered to schools or collected by parents, providing 26,300 meals for children.

Summer

The council approached a wide variety of local schools, charities, sports organisations, and community groups in the borough to apply for funding to run a HAF club during summer 2021 as part of the Department of Education HAF programme. Applications were managed and assessed by East End Community Foundation.

As a result, 42 providers / organisations were funded in total, creating a total of 52 clubs across the borough in all but one of the 20 wards and 2 clubs running outside of the borough.

Clubs were required to run for a minimum of 4 hours of activity per day for a minimum of 4 days a week for 4 weeks (with some flexibility in the structuring the schedule), during which, at least one hot meal a day (breakfast, lunch or dinner) was provided which had to meet the food standards. Many delivered for much longer than this.

Two out of the total number of clubs solely catered for SEND pupils and offered bespoke support for those who required it.

In entirety, Tower Hamlets were able to make over 3,500+ fully funded free places per day readily available to Free school Meal recipients, with approximately 50,000 attendances through the summer.

The HAF programme offered a fairly even split of provision for both primary school ages and secondary school years. Out of the 52 clubs, there was a healthy mix of both indoor and outdoor face-to-face provision in a variety of settings, including, sports centres, parks, schools, adventure playgrounds and community buildings.

Christmas

This will follow the structure of the summer HAF programme, with clubs being funded to provide in-person activity clubs with healthy meals, physical and enriching activity, and nutritional education.

Across the Christmas holiday (23rd of December to 3rd of January) clubs will run for at least three days, on any day except Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. The council are unsure what to expect in terms of scale as this is the first time Tower Hamlets has run a programme over the Christmas holidays.

If permitted, they plan to supplement the clubs with remote provision including a food box with recipes, activity ideas, nutritional advice and tips on healthy eating, open to as many FSM-eligible children in the borough as we can.

Half term provision

During the summer and October half term periods (when families are not being supported by the HAF programme) the council made funding available to supply schools across the borough with food boxes. The schools would allocate these food boxes to their Free school meals recipients or any households they identified as vulnerable to supplement the meals they would normally receive at school during term time.

Summer half-term

At summer half-term School Food Matters provided funding, which was supplemented by LBTH funding, to provide breakfast boxes to children vulnerable to food poverty. The boxes contained items for five healthy breakfasts, plus other staples, to 5,545 children (27,725 meals). These were distributed through 44 schools.

October half term

For October, Tower Hamlets will be making meal boxes available to families of Free School Meals eligible and at-risk children. Each food box sent out will contain healthy ingredients sustaining five meal plans and five low cost and easy to follow recipes with the aim of encouraging families to cook, learn and eat together. We will provide 8,936 boxes, representing 44,680 meals to 76 schools, and these will be funded through the LBTH budget.

Vouchers

While the council has had access to COVID Winter/Local Support Grant, they have used this funding to provide Tesco or Asda vouchers to all Free School Meal-eligible children in the borough, as well as those children schools deem at risk of food poverty despite not being FSM-eligible.

This has taken place across five holidays:

Holiday	Provision
Christmas 2020	~17,500 £25 vouchers
February half term 2021	~17,500 £12.50 vouchers
Easter 2021	~17,500 £25 vouchers
Summer half term 2021	~17,500 £10 vouchers
Summer 2021	~17,500 £30 vouchers

How does this provision link with the councils' wider strategies?

Council Priorities

1. Tackling poverty and inequality – To explore options on the borough's approach to tackle food poverty and address the additional impact of the pandemic in the borough.
2. Addressing health and social inequality – Health inequalities have been exposed during the pandemic and health problems have been on the rise due to major challenges such as job and housing insecurity, learning loss, social isolation.
3. Thriving economy –To build an economy that works for local people and ensure everyone can benefit from the borough's success.

How is the provision funded?

- HAF – Funding from the Department of Education.
- Food Boxes – generous support from School Food Matters and internal LBTH funding.
- Vouchers – COVID Winter/Local Support Grant.

Key challenges

HAF Summer

The biggest challenges with HAF are outlined below:

- The timescales are tight and the programmes are very complex to manage, with multiple elements.
- At times some of the changes to the programme have happened too late to be built into the planning, such as the introduction of the contingency fund and the permission to involve remote provision at Christmas. Earlier knowledge of these would have changed our planning.
- Gaining permissions for the use of council-owned park spaces was unexpectedly long, which led to clubs starting some delivery late. They needed a six-week lead in, which, with the tight timeline, meant clubs would have had to have acquired permission before they had funding confirmed.
- Comms – clubs changed delivery times and dates meaning the information provided to schools for promotion was out of date by delivery. On top of this, we did not have sufficient control over the webpage to make real-time edits.
- Bad weather affecting outdoor delivery.

Half term provision

The biggest challenge of these projects is that not every school takes part, so it doesn't reach every FSM-eligible child. Some of the schools that did not register did so for a reason (had other provision, had low take-up etc), but this was still a downside. The provision was publicised through bulletins to Headteachers and through School Business Managers, but with more time to chase schools, the council may have got more schools on board.

Vouchers

- These projects take a huge amount of staff input, as providing individual vouchers to that many families through that many schools is a burdensome task.
- There have been many issues with lost vouchers and labour required to block voucher cards, issue new ones, etc.
- The late announcement of funding extensions has meant the amount of time to deliver the projects has been extremely limited.

Key outcomes

Holiday Activities and Food

Key outcomes for Easter

- In all, 70 schools were involved, and parents signed up for 5,350 boxes. Of these, 5,260 were delivered to schools or collected by parents and 90 went uncollected and were distributed to local food banks.
- It was one box per child, with each box containing five meals, meaning 26,300 meals were provided to children through the programme.
- 92% of children receiving a box were eligible for Free School Meals.

Key outcomes for Summer

- 42 providers were successful in securing funding and as a result, 52 clubs were commissioned.
- At least one club was delivered in each Ward. (Apart from Bow East which was the only ward not to have a club).
- 2 clubs were SEND specialised.
- 3,000+ places to FSM recipients between the ages of 5-16 years, and resources, guidance and activities also offered to parents and carers.
- There were approximately 50,000 attendances at clubs over the summer.
- As per the frameworks set by DfE, clubs featured a combination of Enriching activities, Physical activities, Nutritional education, Food education for parents and carers, and signposting of resources and services (both national and local).
- 5 local businesses supported the supply of hot meals to the clubs.

Half-term provision

Summer half-term

- The council supported 5,545 children with 27,725 healthy meals.
- Provision was available at 44 schools.

October half-term

- The council will support 8,936 children with 44,680 meals.
- Provision will be available at 76 schools.

Vouchers

- Approximately 17,500 children have been supported with vouchers across five holidays, including all FSM-eligible children.
- This has provided approximately £1.8m of direct support to families most in need.

Learning

HAF programme

- Having the programme sit within the Tackling Poverty programme has helped to ensure that links are made with support services and that provision is targeted where it is most needed.
- A wider reach than just the schools and council comms channels would be useful to advertise the clubs and drive higher uptake.
- An extensive training programme is useful to upskill delivery partners to meet the minimum standards and build sustainability into the programme.
- Collaboration with partners at the earliest possible stage is useful in revealing where issues will arise during the programme.

Half terms

- More time to chase schools would be useful in ensuring an increase in the number of schools taking part.
- Not all schools are able to take part in programmes like this. For Christmas we will hopefully have enough time to establish alternative sites for families from schools which cannot host collection.
- An ongoing partnership with a food supplier has been extremely helpful in picking up projects last minute and delivering into schools.

Vouchers

- Having more staff to handle the programme would be useful.
- The cost has been higher than it is possible to fund internally, and the programme relies on central government funding.

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