



TOWER HAMLETS

# Tower Hamlets Holiday Provision



# Tower Hamlets Context



- The Tower Hamlets child poverty rate is the highest of all the London boroughs; 57% of children are deemed to be living in households in poverty (after housing costs), compared to 38% in the typical London borough
- Just over 15,000 children are eligible for free school meals, representing a third of all children.
- School holidays can be particular pressure points



# Council Initiatives



**To address this, the Council has adopted 3 main initiatives:**

## **1. Delivering the DfE funded HAF programme**

- Coordinating a holiday programme that provides free healthy food & enriching activities to FSM children during Easter, Summer and Christmas Holidays.

## **2. 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 their FSM recipients and vulnerable families.

## **3. 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 is the provision?



- **Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)**
  - Easter HAF
  - Summer HAF
  - Christmas HAF
- **Half-term Provision**
  - Summer half-term
  - October half-term
- **Vouchers**



# HAF programme



- Funded to run for a total of 6 weeks in the year, the Tower Hamlets model extended past this
- Aims included supporting 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 enriching and physical activities alongside nutritional education sessions for children and families.
- We also provided clubs and families with an extensive list of local and national support services.



# Easter HAF



- 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 HAF



- The council approached a wide variety of local schools, charities, sports organisations, and community groups to apply for funding to run a HAF club.
- 42 providers / organisations were funded in total. Offering 52 in person clubs in all but one of the 20 wards
- Clubs were required to run for a minimum of 4 hours per day x 4 days a week x 4 weeks
- At least one hot meal a day was provided which had to meet the food standards.
- 2 clubs solely catered for SEND pupils.
- Tower Hamlets was able to make over 3,500+ fully funded free places per day readily available to FSM recipients, with approximately 50,000 attendances through the summer.
- A fairly even split of provision for both primary secondary school years was available.
- There was a mix of both indoor and outdoor provision in a variety of settings, including, sports centres, parks, schools, adventure playgrounds and community buildings



# Christmas HAF



- Christmas followed the structure of the Summer HAF programme, with clubs 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 ran for a minimum of three days each, on any day except Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.
- The council were unsure what to expect in terms of scale as this was the first time Tower Hamlets had run a programme over the Christmas holidays, hence the plan to supplement 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, meal boxes were made available to families of Free School Meals eligible and at-risk children.
- Each food box sent out contained 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 provided 8,936 boxes, representing 44,680 meals to 76 schools, 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 deemed at risk of food poverty despite not being FSM-eligible.
- This has taken place across 5 holidays:

<b>Holiday</b>	<b>Provision</b>
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

*Table 1: Provision offered per holiday period 2020/2021*



# 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



- 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.
- Gaining permissions for the use of council-owned park spaces was unexpectedly long, which led to clubs starting some delivery late.
- 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



# Key Challenges – 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.



# Key Challenges – Vouchers



- These projects take a huge amount of staff input, as providing individual vouchers to that many families through that many schools is a difficult 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 – Easter HAF



- 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 – Summer HAF



- 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.
- All frameworks set by DfE were met 5 local businesses supported the supply of hot meals to the clubs.



# Key Outcomes – Christmas HAF



- 2,300+ 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 20,000 attendances at clubs over the Christmas
- The programme met all the frameworks set by DfE 1204 total food boxes were delivered to HAF participants





# Key Outcomes – 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 supported 8,936 children with 44,680 meals.
- Provision available at 76 schools.



# Key Outcomes – Vouchers



- Approximately 17,500 children have been supported with vouchers across 5 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



# Learning – 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.



# Learning – 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

