

Report of the Director of People

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme 2021

Summary

1. To inform the Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee about the new HAF programme 2021 and give an overview of pilot delivery during Easter as well as the plans for future delivery during the summer and Christmas holiday periods.

Background

2. In November 2020 the government announced that the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme would be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. This was a national scale up of the previous programme which had been targeted at specific geographical areas. These 'Healthy Holidays' activities target families who are struggling financially over the school holidays, particularly those eligible for benefit based free school meals. The school holidays can bring additional pressures on families already struggling financially regarding food and activities. This can have a detrimental impact on children's and families physical and mental wellbeing.
3. The HAF programme aims to make free "holiday club" places available to children eligible for free school meals for the equivalent of at least four hours a day, four days a week, six weeks a year (4 weeks in the summer and a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays).

4. The government intends that as a result of this programme, children who attend these activities should;
 - eat more healthily over the school holidays
 - be more active during the school holidays
 - take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment
 - be safe and not to be socially isolated
 - have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition
 - be more engaged with school and other local services
5. The Government would like children and families who participate in HAF to develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting as well as being effectively signposted towards other information and support for example health, employment, and education.
6. In line with government delivery guidance a local steering group has been set up to support the coordination of the local programme and work with a wide range of partners to achieve implementation. The University of York are the regional evaluators for the HAF programme and they also sit on the local steering group.
7. Childcare Works have been appointed as the DfE's strategic support partner for delivery of the HAF and they are working closely with LAs to achieve successful implementation of the programme.

Pilot Delivery – Easter Holidays

8. Given the lockdown restrictions and tight timescales for introduction, the government took a pragmatic view about delivery and gave flexibility to local authorities new to the HAF to treat the Easter Holidays as a pilot of activities to inform a fuller delivery later in the year.
9. In York, the LA invited expressions of interest to target the 2nd week of the Easter Holidays as a test run and providers were also required to set

out how this could lead to a larger project during the summer and beyond. A small range of covid safe activities were offered in the Westfield and Clifton areas in line with current lockdown guidelines and children were referred directly by schools to avoid unnecessary stigma. The activities delivered included;

- York Theatre Royal activities for Years 4 and 5 children at Westfield and Clifton Primary Schools. The activities included good quality packed lunches. A total of 27 children attended. There was much better attendance at Westfield which may have been due to the active role of the Westfield Primary School Children's Champion and going forward promotion by key staff will be key to the successful engagement of children and families.
 - York City FC Foundation delivered football activity sessions at St Peter's school field and Woodthorpe green. A total of 35 children attended. Choose2 Youth provided the packed lunches that were delivered to the School Food Standards in providing healthy and balanced meals.
10. Evidence of impact for these children has been gathered and includes a video clip captured by Westfield Primary School which may be featured in future promotion.
11. It should be noted that all eligible families in York were able to benefit from the council's Winter Support Grant during Easter 2021 which paid for food vouchers and for those children attending activities they also received a good quality packed lunch.

Plans for Future Delivery

12. The LA has undertaken a procurement process and commissioned 20 providers to deliver the HAF programme during the summer holidays for eligible children. The providers were able to evidence quality holiday activities and/or food to children, have experience of delivering inclusive provision for children and young people and demonstrated examples of this within their application. The suppliers were also required to demonstrate a commitment to partnership

working across the voluntary sector, schools, local authorities, police and other relevant organisations. We particularly welcomed bids from organisations who can demonstrate that they are working with community partners and organisations to meet the aims of the programme.

13. The Local Area Team model divides the city into three areas, North, West and East and these have been used to target each most vulnerable locality. We have targeted HAF provision in these areas and prioritized bids accordingly. This shows the areas we aim to cover with HAF provision, which will give the highest number of eligible children and young people the best opportunities to access provision locally.
14. As York has a rich and diverse provision of community partners and organisations including the out of school sector there should be sufficient places to meet demand from eligible families. Learning from the early implementer LAs does suggest it is more challenging to engage older children and therefore the HAF specification for commissioning did include specific reference to Years 9-11 as well as those transitioning into secondary school. We recognise that the engagement process for this age group will need to be very different to the primary approach, and we would look to draw on the experience of already existing providers who are working with secondary aged children, so we can ensure that any potential stigma is minimised.
15. The provision of meals during activities is an important aspect of the programme and suppliers must meet the national school food standards, as well as conform with the allergen requirements. We therefore engaged the school catering officer to offer expertise about seeking assurances from potential providers. Potential suppliers were able to submit joint applications for example in a partnership arrangement between an activity and food provider. They were also able to seek other sources of funding such as the Summer Holiday Programme to open up activities to all children whilst supporting financial viability. The community café run by Choose2 Youth is working with many providers to deliver hot food directly to the activity.

In the Out of School club sector we are able to use their existing kitchen facilities to provide the food element alongside varied activity programmes.

16. A range of providers and partners in the city have begun to be engaged in developing ideas of how to offer provision. Examples include York Cultural Education Partnership, York Libraries and the wider York Youthwork Network and Out of School Club sector.

Summer Holiday Mapping

17. A mapping exercise is currently taking place to understand any gaps across the city. From the commissioning process there is a good spread of enhanced and enriching activities across all three local areas which should be sufficient to meet demand from eligible children. There are some gaps in the more rural areas and this could be mitigated by directly purchasing places with holiday clubs. There are also some gaps for children aged 14+ and for children with more complex needs and targeted approaches are being made to specialist schools to see if there are creative ways in which we can work together to provide appropriate activities.
18. Schools were eligible to apply to deliver HAF activities however, few schools applied and this may be due to a number of reasons such as capital works in school kitchens or simply that teaching staff are exhausted after a very challenging year. Five secondary schools are also running summer schools as part of the Department for Education education catch-up programme. The summer schools target a similar group of children to those eligible for the HAF.

Communications

19. CYC comms team worked on the Easter promotion and a plan is being drawn up to promote an exciting menu of activities that encourages families to contact their local school direct to confirm eligibility so as to

avoid any stigmatisation. Referral processes will need to be robust via the schools to ensure children are identified and encouraged to participate.

Consultation

20. The Local Authority has engaged with the regional HAF network facilitated by Childcare Works to understand good practice. A number of virtual meetings were held to explain the new HAF programme and the commissioning process to potential providers. A similar virtual meeting was also held with headteachers.

Council Plan

21. The HAF programme supports the Council's corporate priorities in relation to Good Health and Well Being, A Better Start for Children and Young People and Safe Communities and Culture for All.

Implications

22. **Financial**
All activity described in this report will be funded from the £383k Department for Education, Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021 grant allocated to York.
23. **Human Resources (HR)**
There are no HR implications.
24. **Equalities**
There are no equalities implications.
25. **Legal**
There are no legal implications.
26. **Crime and Disorder**
There are no crime and disorder implications.
27. **Information Technology (IT)**
There are no IT implications.

28. **Property**

There are no property implications.

Risk Management

29. There are risks associated with covid and this could impact on face to face activities if restrictions are not lifted on 19th July 2021. In mitigation all providers have been asked to set out their plans for alternative arrangements such as on line activities or some indoor activities if the latter is in line with government guidance and robust risk assessments being in place. Many of the grant applications allowed for partial restrictions to still be in place during the summer in terms of limiting numbers and managing covid secure environments.

Recommendations

30. Members are asked to note this report.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) *List information for all Implication
ie Legal*

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Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None