
**Children, Education and Communities Policy and
Scrutiny Committee**

04 January 2022

Joint Report of the Director of People and
Director of Customer and Communities

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to update the members of the Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee about the delivery of the new HAF programme in 2021 and plans for future delivery in 2022.
2. On 30 September 2021 Executive received a report on Welfare Winter Planning and Support in which it considered school holiday food provision (see extract at Annex A). Executive approved the continuity of provision of vouchers for children receiving free school meals up to February half term at a cost of £50k per week and also the following:
 - (iv) That the subject of school holiday food provision be referred to the Children, Education & Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee for them to consider the effectiveness, impact and funding of the voucher scheme alongside other grassroots community-based provision and other schemes to address the impact of food poverty; this work could also inform further formal responses back to the Department for Education.
3. Members are asked to consider the information in this report as whole and the request from Executive, and how it may wish to take this work forward perhaps through a task group approach and within the context of the wider work being undertaken in relation to the recent council motion on York Residents' Right to Food but also given that food vouchers are only funded to February 2022 half term.

Background

4. 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.

5. 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).
6. 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
7. 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.
8. In line with government delivery guidance a local steering group is in place 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.
9. Childcare Works are 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.

10. The DfE have confirmed that funding will continue in all LAs in England for the next three years with funding of over £200m each year. This covers the period of the current spending review 2022-23 and 2024-25 meaning that planning and preparation for 2022 onwards can now take place.
11. York's allocation for 21/22 is up to £383k to project manage and deliver the programme. This is based on 3,349 children being eligible for Free School Meals in all of York's schools (January 2021 Census).
12. City of York has contributed to research (not yet published) which should include positive impact statements by children and young people about summer delivery.

Summer and Christmas Delivery 2021

Summer 2021

13. In York, the LA invited expressions of interest to target four weeks of the Summer Holidays. Fifteen activity providers were commissioned to deliver the programme. All activities were face to face and included;
 - The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) based at St. Nicks Nature Reserve along with St. Nicks themselves teamed up with the Choose2 café in Hull Road Park to deliver environmental activities for children and families incorporating food provision from the café.
 - Speedkix multi-sports delivered sessions in various schools across the city, using their existing relationships with schools to target eligible children who could access the provision alongside fee paying attendees.
 - Young Carers used the HAF funding to further support their existing summer provision and include meals for attendees and extra activities around cooking and arts and crafts. This was a much needed provision for young people with shared experience of caring roles. After much time in lockdown this activity showed the value of face to face provision for these children and young people who were able to meet up with old friends as well and make many new ones.
 - Parents were also able to access places within registered holiday clubs.

14. A total of 677 (20%) eligible children and young people attended activities. Evidence of impact for these children has been gathered and includes:

- Improved awareness of healthy eating and alternative options
- Building confidence and resilience through increased contact with peers and appropriate role models.
- A positive experience of being engaged in activity on school sites in the holiday period.
- Greater knowledge of environmental issues through local schemes (TCV/St. Nicks)
- Engaging with peers with shared experience during some targeted provision.
- Inclusion of SEND children and young people in universal activities.

15. Overall the summer delivery was successful although there were some key learning points;

- Managing the behaviour of some children was more challenging for providers than expected even though they are very experienced in these areas and it does mirror the experiences of schools since the start of covid.
- Limited activities for age 14+ who are on FSM. We have few youth providers in the city who are well engaged with older young people and this limited the amount of provision we were able to offer.
- Improving the booking system arrangements to make this a smoother process for parents.
- Preparing the programme well ahead of the holiday period and developing the publicity of the programme.
- Developing the offer of hot meals and engaging with community hubs and providers to deliver this.

16. It should be noted that all eligible families in York were able to benefit from the provision of food vouchers during Summer (and again during Xmas 2021) and for those children attending activities they also received a good quality lunches.

Christmas 2021

17. The LA has commissioned 13 organisations to deliver activities during the first week of the Christmas holidays.

18. The current programme has used £74,431 of the funding to provide 675 children and young people with x 4 full days of activity (x 4 hours per day) along with food provision in various forms for each day.

19. This programme will be supported with places on Out of School Club provision where possible and the delivery of 6-7 community drop in parties for eligible families through our network of community hubs and food share schemes. These will aim to pick up eligible families who may not be attending any of the organised programme as described above. Families will be able to take part in some activities on the day and take away activity packs and food hampers for the holiday period.
20. A verbal update about Christmas delivery will be made to the Scrutiny Committee on 4th January 2022.

Building the Offer

21. Learning from other early implementers of the programme and from our own experience in 2021 shows that it does take time to build a strong offer for eligible children and young people. However the continuation of national funding will support City of York to increase capacity to develop an even richer programme to engage all year groups, especially older children and young people. Other steps include building community capacity around food including food allergen training, engaging more schools to consider delivering activities especially SEND schools. Developing training for behaviour management where this is more challenging for providers.

Communications

22. CYC comms team worked on the Summer and Christmas promotion to encourage families to contact their local school direct to confirm eligibility so as to avoid any stigmatisation. Referral processes are now more robust via the schools to ensure children are identified and encouraged to participate.

Consultation

23. 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 HAF programme and the commissioning process to potential providers. York is also acting as a peer support for Brighton and Hove Local Authority and is working in partnership with North Yorkshire.

Council Plan

24. 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

Financial

25. 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.

Human Resources (HR)

There are no HR implications.

Equalities

There are no equalities implications.

Legal

There are no legal implications.

Crime and Disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications.

Information Technology (IT)

There are no IT implications.

Property

There are no property implications.

Risk Management

26. There are still risks associated with covid and the new variant which could impact on face to face activities for the Christmas delivery. 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.

Recommendations

27. Members are asked to note this report and decide on how to take forward the review as agreed by Executive and outlined in paragraph 2 and 3 above.

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Date: 14th December 2021

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Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None