

Report of the School Holiday Food Review Group

Summary

1. This report is the final report of the Scrutiny Review into actions taken during the pandemic to address holiday hunger for those children who are normally entitled to benefits-related free school meals during term-time. The report considers the school holiday food voucher programme, its coverage and effectiveness and then presents options and recommendations that can be considered in addressing the challenge of school holiday hunger going forward.

Background

2. Executive made a request on 30th September 2021 for Children, Education and Communities (CEC) Policy and Scrutiny Committee to consider: **the effectiveness, impact and funding of the free school meal voucher scheme alongside other grassroots community-based provision and other schemes to address food poverty impacts.**
3. CEC Policy and Scrutiny committee discussed this referral on 4th January 2022 and resolved to form a task group comprising councillors Daubeney, Fenton and Fitzpatrick, whose purpose would be to research, evaluate and consider the key issues in supporting children's food provision during school holidays. A draft scoping report written by officers was considered by this group on 28th February. The group resolved to research the topic and to cover:
 - a) the position pre-pandemic with respect to support for children's food during school holiday times for those entitled to Free School Meals

- b) the support made available during the pandemic from various funding sources, CYC provision and other community-based food support
- c) options to support the ongoing food needs of children during school holidays as the Pandemic food support comes to an end.

Entitlement to Free School Meals

- 4. Pre-pandemic there was no additional funding to support families during school holidays for children eligible for benefits-related free school meals. Schools themselves do receive funding to provide free school meals during term time.
- 5. During the pandemic there was a marked increase in the number of children eligible for benefits-related free school meals with School Census data showing that between January 2020 and January 2022 there was an increase across Primary, Secondary and Special Schools in eligibility for benefits-related free school meals, only in the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) did numbers decline slightly. Total eligibility rose from 2,721 in January 2020 to 3,624 in January 2022, an increase of 903 children and young people or 33.2%. The largest proportionate rise was in Secondary education where numbers rose from 980 pupils in January 2020 to 1,411 in January 2022, a rise of 43.9%. A table and chart demonstrating this rise may be found in Annex 1.

Free School Meal Voucher Scheme

- 6. During the period of national lockdown from March 2020 to August 2020, the government introduced the national voucher scheme to fund food vouchers for children eligible for benefits-related free school meals. This provided food for those children unable to attend school and was extended to cover the summer holidays in 2020. Schools received funding directly from the Department of Education to provide food during the period of the first national lockdown and to provide food assistance during the lockdown between January 2021 and March 2021.
- 7. This direct funding to schools did not cover the school holidays and the government provided funding through the various grant schemes for food and fuel. Together with other local authorities, the council chose to extend support for free school meal vouchers during the school holidays from October 2020 onwards.
- 8. £50.5k was provided from the council emergency budget for free school meal vouchers at the rate of £15 per week per child for October 2020

half-term holidays and from that date the government's Winter Support Grant funding and Local Covid Support Grant (which superseded the Winter Support Grant) was 'top-sliced' for school holidays up to and including two weeks in summer 2021. Further council-funded decisions have ensured vouchers were provided up to Easter 2022.

9. Data covering the holidays from October half-term 2020 to Christmas 2021, shows that for the holidays in question funding was sourced from the Council's Covid Emergency YFAS Fund, Government's Winter Grant, or Government's Local Covid Support Grant to fund school holiday food vouchers at a cost of around £50k per week to a total of £597k.
10. In considering the number of children and young people eligible for Free School Meals by ward, the three most affected wards in January 2020 were Hull Road, Westfield and Clifton. This remains the case two years on.
11. This data has been mapped and the Free School Meals entitlement from the School Census for January 2020 and January 2022 may be found in Annex 1. In addition, there are maps which show children living in low-income families 2019/20.
12. From September 2021 there was, and is, no requirement for schools to provide free school meals during school holidays. Where pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals are self-isolating at home during term time, schools should work with their school catering team or food provider to provide good-quality lunch parcels. Rules are due to change again shortly however and arrangements are likely to revert to pre-pandemic status of no support being offered to families during holiday times.

Studies on the impact of measures designed to tackle Holiday Hunger

13. In December 2020 the Department for Education published a report (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-literature-review>) following a literature review it had commissioned to understand the evidence about the impact of school holidays on pupils, especially those from disadvantaged homes. The review also covered evidence on existing holiday food provision, including best practice on encouraging participation and attendance among disadvantaged groups.

Key findings included:

- Only a few UK providers of holiday activities with food had sufficient records to draw any substantive conclusions about best practice or value for money in holiday food and activity delivery. The most informative evidence came from those which had been formally evaluated. Services which provide consistent, easily accessible enrichment activities for more than just lunch or breakfast, and which involve parents and children in the preparation of food are those which work best. Three examples are Food and Fun (McConnon et al., 2017), Holiday Kitchen (O'Connor et al., 2015) and 'A Day Out, Not a Hand Out' (Defeyter et al., 2018). These three projects had thorough and robust evaluations that describe an effective service in each case.
- Evidence from the US suggests that the best ways to encourage attendance include 'word of mouth' recommendations, verbal presentations to communities and calling door to door. Involving parents and carers can encourage participation and represents value for money in terms of marketing, while promotions such as competitions and free food for parents and carers have also been found to be effective in some programmes.
- The term "holiday hunger" can be stigmatising to families experiencing hardship and should not be used when delivering provision.
- Neutral settings can aid participation. For example, facilities in parks or community centres rather than a church or school.
- Branding and marketing are important. There was evidence that some young people are put off by the term 'club'.
- Provision for children from food insecure households should include support for families as a whole especially in the light of the evidence to show that involving parents improves participation.
- The evidence on food insecurity indicates that many families with children have a year-round challenge with consistent nutrition, whether or not they are on welfare benefits or in receipt of free school meals. This means that there will be a section of children whose families are struggling financially but who do not receive benefits.
- In St Helens and Wigan some provision adopts a drop-in 'bistro' model for all age groups, giving an opportunity to enjoy food and social or cultural activities, such as talks and music, while other provision is just for children in the holidays. The motivation for the all-age bistro model was to reduce stigma for all service users whatever their age.

- Local councils rarely fund provision. For example, despite having council funding the service covering Derbyshire obtained the food from Fare Share. Forsey (2017) recommends that ‘the voluntary sector should be in the driving seat wherever possible’ as this allows for the greatest flexibility in responding to local need.
 - An alternative, more corporate, approach is taken by Make Lunch (<https://www.tlg.org.uk/your-church/make-lunch>) which is a large UK wide enterprise, which offers a social franchise model at a cost of £240 to each provider who are often church or community groups. This pays for branding and marketing (which are key to promoting participation) and menus (which assure quality across all providers). There is an additional cost of £500 for food safety training and certification. The provision is then run by volunteers in community premises, usually in churches.
14. Other research suggests mixed results in relation to the impact of holiday clubs in tackling holiday hunger. In a pilot study on the impact of holiday clubs on household food insecurity (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/hsc.12507>) 38 parents were surveyed who had children attending seven different holiday clubs. 24% of the children were defined as “food insecure with hunger”. The study concluded that compared to the food secure households, the food insecure households benefited most from these programmes and that they can play an important role in alleviating household holiday food insecurity. They were found to be an efficient method of providing children with food during the holidays.
 15. Another study (https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-02/holiday-hunger-playworks-pilot-2019-evaluation_0.pdf) considered a pilot scheme introduced by the Welsh Government to alleviate holiday hunger. £100,000 was invested into holiday club programmes across the country and whilst researchers found that the programmes had provided many benefits, they concluded that their efficacy at alleviating holiday hunger was not particularly strong, with only 10% of settings believing they had helped the children be less hungry.
 16. The Task Group is currently engaged with a number of schools in York to obtain their views and feedback on the effectiveness and impact of the holiday food voucher scheme.

York Foodbank

17. York Foodbank have kindly provided foodbank voucher usage figures for this report and while they have data going back ten years, considering those dates which align with the entitlement to free school meals in paragraph 5 above, the number of vouchers fulfilled at York Foodbank in January 2020 was 141. The number rose to 186 in January 2021 and to 214 in January 2022 showing a clear rise in use of the foodbank of some 73 vouchers over the two-year period or 51.8%, suggesting a significant increase in need which aligns with the greater entitlement to free school meals over the same period.
18. Helpfully, the Task Group felt, York Foodbank put forward the following hypothesis, *“What might be most helpful to identify is that in previous years, August in particular would be a peak month for us, driven by the issuing of extra vouchers in the summer holidays (we offer an additional three vouchers which we invite schools to issue to families at their discretion to help in the summer – we also did this for each of the main Covid-19 Lockdowns too)...*
19. *“By contrast, August 2020, and again in 2021, saw a decline in overall foodbank voucher fulfilments, which we interpreted at the time to be a direct result of the School Meal Voucher provisions which were in place. Either fewer families redeemed vouchers, or schools issued fewer of them or a combination of the two in the summer holidays of 2020 and 2021.”*
20. The Task Group would suggest that this opinion from a key provider of food support in the city for those in need strongly suggests the popularity of the school voucher scheme, albeit anecdotal, in moving food support from the foodbank to the voucher scheme for that period, underlining its impact for the families that benefited.

Other initiatives addressing food need in the city

21. At a local level, many communities will have their own informal and formal organisations who provide or distribute food to residents in times of need. These can flex in line with the nature of an event such as flood or the pandemic and may provide one-off support or something more regular. This may range from informal foodbank provision through to ‘pay as you feel’ cafés to volunteers assisting with very local food distribution activities.
22. Set out below are some examples of the informal food support available in communities, either through schools or voluntary and community

organisations. This is not an exhaustive list – for example, we have not had time to engage with parish councils and other organisations that may be providing support in communities – but provides an overview of the types of support available. We have not had time to check the accuracy of all of the information set out below, i.e. whether the details of the provision have changed recently.

Examples of school-based provision

| School | Ward | Nature of provision |
|---------------------------|-----------|--|
| Westfield Primary | Westfield | The school's Community Hub is a resource for families to access. It provides food and uniform to anybody who would appreciate it, open at the end of the day on a Tuesday and a Thursday. This provision is made possible with the support of local food charities, supermarkets and local businesses. |
| Our Lady Queen of Martyrs | Holgate | A food bank in school which is stocked by parishioners, staff and parents for the benefit of anyone who needs help. |
| Burton Green Primary | Clifton | <p>The school provides a lot of food for families. Most of this is on a weekly basis, but prior to a holiday they increase the amount that is available for parents. The school receive food from the following organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Luke's Larder. Food available weekly, but in addition holiday packs have been available - Rethink Food - Food available weekly - Rapid Relief - large deliveries of food, which is distributed over a number of weeks, with the amounts increased prior to a holiday - Salvation Army - food parcels prior to the Christmas Holidays and also request food parcels at other times of the year - National School Breakfast Programme - Bagels for all children every morning |

Examples of community-based provision

| Venue | Ward | Nature of provision |
|--|---------------------|---|
| Foxwood Community Centre | Westfield | 'Pay as you feel' light lunch every Friday at the Community Hub. During school holidays 'grab a bag' lunches are available for children |
| Sanderson Community House, Chapelfields | Westfield | Every Thursday 10-12 at the Community Hub. |
| Red Tower | Guildhall | 'Pay as you feel' light lunch and food shop every Monday from 11.30am to 2pm |
| Door 84 in The Groves | Guildhall | Every Friday (11-1pm) 'pay as you feel café' and fresh and non-perishable items. Support, guidance and signposting opportunities throughout the two-hour session |
| Tang Hall Community Centre | Heworth / Hull Road | YourCafe every Wednesday for a 'waste food' supermarket and café serving light refreshments and cake. The event is 'pay as you feel' and runs from 11am-12:30pm Breakfast Club every Friday 10-11am for freshly-made porridge or granola with fruit toppings and shopping from the waste food supermarket. All 'pay as you feel' |
| Bell Farm Social Hall & Bell Farm Community Association Foodbank | Heworth | Monday to Saturday 12-4 |
| Haxby Food Share Project | Haxby & Wigginton | Every Wednesday (11-1.30) and Friday (12.30-2), food gifted by the community, local shops, businesses and other food collection services is made available at Haxby Memorial Hall |
| I am Reusable foodbank | Holgate | Informal foodbank in the Leeman Road area. 10am – 5pm every day except Wednesday and Friday. |

| Venue | Ward | Nature of provision |
|--|-------------|---|
| Danebury Drive foodbank | Acomb | Informal foodbank in the Danebury Drive area of Acomb |
| Lidgett Community Café and Drop-in at Lidgett Grove Methodist Church | Acomb | Wednesdays 9.30-11.30am. Information and advice drop-in services are provided by a range of organisations at the Lidgett Community Café every Wednesday morning |
| Planet Food York at Southlands Community Centre | Micklegate | 'Pay-as-you-feel' community café and food store, every Thursday 10.30am - 2.00pm. |
| Scarcroft Collective Sharehouse at Clements Hall | Micklegate | Tuesdays and Fridays 9.15-11am, Wednesdays 5-6pm |
| Luke's Larder at St Luke's Church | Clifton | Wednesdays 12.30-1.30 |
| York Travellers Trust | Clifton | Thursdays 10.30-12.30 |

23. It is noted that a new post is to be created within CYC - Food Poverty Officer. It is assumed that the post holder will provide a co-ordination function across the current range of statutory and informal support available to maximise its effectiveness.
24. In recent years some wards have chosen to invest ward funding in school holiday activities run by York City Football Club Foundation (<https://www.yorkcityfootballclub.co.uk/club/foundation>) and York City Knights Foundation (<https://yorkcityknights.com/foundation/>) and the provision of a snack pack has been a part of some of these sessions. Other holiday hunger activities run by both clubs have merged within the Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) programme to an extent.
25. The Live Well York website (<https://www.livewellyork.co.uk/>) contains a large volume of information on support available in communities.

Take-up of other income-related support

26. In addition to the school voucher scheme, other grants were available to York families in need over the course of the pandemic. Here we consider York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS), the Household Support Fund, Isolation Payments, Covid Individual Grant, Covid Top-up Grant and Covid Support Grant.
27. Tables showing the number of grants and financial packages of grants may be found in Annex 1, but here it is worth highlighting the largest financial scheme, the York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS), which made 536 payments to York families worth £253.6k. It should be noted that individuals may receive multiple payments across available grants.
28. Looking at the York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS) 2021/22, the Household Support Fund 2021/22, Isolation payments 2020/21 and 2021/22, Covid Individual Grant 2021/22, Covid Top-up Grant 2021/22 and the Winter Support Grant 2020/21, the wards which saw the greatest uptake were Westfield, Clifton, Heworth, Hull Road, Guildhall and Acomb.
29. The total support over the city (noting that individuals can have multiple payments made, shown in parentheses), was as follows:
- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| York Financial Assistance Scheme | £253.6k (536) |
| Household Support Fund | £821.5k (3,264) |
| Isolation Payments | £1,560.5k (3,121) |
| Covid Individual Grant | £158.6k (548) |
| Covid Top-up Grant | £225.9k (1,747) |
| Winter Support Grant | £527.8k (2,009) |
30. A map showing YFAS uptake across the city may be found in Annex 1.

Ending of Covid Welfare Support schemes

31. Although support was withdrawn gradually by the government, by the end of March 2022, there was a significant reduction in existing nationally-provided Covid welfare support for the financially vulnerable with the ending of:

- Household Support Grant which has:
 - Supported families with extra funding for food and fuel costs
 - Funded school holiday free school meal vouchers.
- Test & Trace payments - £500 for those with low or unstable incomes to cover Covid isolation periods.

This followed on from the ending of the following in September 2021 of:

- Furlough support for those unable to work.
- £20 per week Universal Credit supplement.

32. This loss of financial support for the financially vulnerable has exacerbated existing issues around debt, food and fuel poverty, and the number of residents on Universal Credit (in work and out of work) remains around twice as high as prior to the pandemic with January 2022 figures standing at 11,349.
33. Data collected in 2019 by the Department of Work and Pensions found that, even before the pandemic, 4% of families experienced disrupted eating patterns or were forced to reduce their food consumption due to a lack of resources (this is known as 'very low food security'). Among those on Universal Credit, this proportion rose to 26%.
34. Locally, the council's 2022/23 budget included £100,000 for measures to tackle holiday hunger, of which £57,000 has been spent to support families in receipt of free school meals at Easter through the provision of food vouchers. The budget also included £200,000 to support Covid recovery efforts in local communities.

The wider picture

35. Paragraphs 36 to 71 below include material from the Scoping Report and provide further context around the financial and other challenges that are affecting families in York.
36. Members will be aware that since the lifting of national lockdown restrictions, there have been several distinct economic pressures affecting UK households and firms that have not been felt to this degree for decades. This national section, and following local section, assess some of the pressures currently falling upon households and felt most keenly by those on the lowest incomes-including of course those who are, or have become, entitled to free school meals.

37. Such cost increases as the marked rise in the cost of crude oil, feed through to the cost of personal and public transport as well as the logistics of transporting food and goods. Gas has risen markedly as well which increases household heating bills clearly, but it also has huge effects in industry where there is no protection from the government energy price-cap. The price of gas affects industry adversely therefore and leads to increases in the cost of raw materials such as steel and glass to name but two. Finally, the war in Ukraine is likely to have marked effects on the price of grain on world markets since both Russia and Ukraine are leading world grain suppliers and war clearly adversely affects the production of foodstuffs to a considerable degree.
38. Many of these price shocks feed through to the general level of prices for everyday items with Inflation, which has been low for decades, now beginning to rise to problematic levels, reaching 7% in March 2022. Such increases fall hardest upon those on modest incomes, causing hard choices to be made around basics such as heating and food.
39. There has been considerable coverage in the media recently of the work of the *Resolution Foundation*, an independent think-tank focussed on improving living standards for those on low to middle incomes.
40. In their report published on 1st April, the *Resolution Foundation* focussed on the cost-of-living intensifying as energy prices jumped by more than half overnight, pushing 5 million English households into fuel stress, even when accounting for recent support measures announced by the Chancellor.
41. The report suggests there is more pressure to come in October when fuel prices are expected to rise further against a backdrop of the highest inflation rate in 40 years and continued falls in real incomes. They suggest all indicators point to the price cap rising again in October with an increase to £2,500 possible for the average home, pulling another 2.5 million households into fuel stress – defined as where households spend more than 10% of incomes after housing costs on fuel.
42. The *Resolution Foundation* note that levels of fuel stress will continue to be more acute in poorer households, those in the North and Midlands, and those in wasteful, energy-inefficient homes.
43. The food writer and campaigner Jack Monroe, meeting the House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee on 16th March and reported in *The Guardian*, has called for social security benefits to be

uprated in line with inflation as the crisis has become 'untenable' for those in poverty.

44. They suggest children and disabled people experiencing food insecurity risk being trapped in a 'never-ending loop of difficulty' including chronic health conditions, mental illness and depression, Monroe told the Commons Work and Pensions select committee.
45. Individuals on the lowest incomes had been hit hardest by increases in the cost of everyday foodstuffs and the reduced availability of value product lines, with Monroe suggesting a £20 shopping trip now bought only around two-thirds the amount of food it would have done a few years ago.
46. Starkly, Monroe said, "And that's not people deciding not to go to the theatre or not have legs of lamb or bottles of champagne; that is people deciding 'We won't eat on Tuesday or Thursday this week' or 'we'll turn the heating off' or 'we'll skip meals'," they said.
47. Monroe added that people on low incomes were cutting down on food to cope with the soaring costs of rent and energy. "In my experience of 10 years on the coalface of anti-poverty work, I can tell you that people are just eating less or skipping meals or having less nutritious food, bulking out on that 45p white rice and 29p pasta in lieu of being able to have fresh fruit and vegetables and nutritionally-balanced meals. It's not that food has got cheaper because it certainly hasn't. It's that everything else has got more expensive so there is less in the household budget for food."
48. In their report of May 2021, titled, *State of Hunger*, **the Trussell Trust** note the rapid growth in the number of charitable food banks, with food banks in the Trussell Trust's network distributing 61,000 emergency food parcels in 2010/11 rising to 2.5 million in 2020/21.
49. The Trust's research reveals that 10% of households in England and Wales experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months in 2018 and in 2020, 5.8% of UK households in July of that year reported food insecurity in the previous week.
50. Food insecurity is most likely to be experienced, the Trussell Trust believes, by younger people, single parents, social renters, people from ethnic minorities and those in poor health.
51. In 2019-20, the Trussell Trust network supported 370,000 unique households (a 28% increase since 2018-19), 520,000 adults (a 30%

increase since 2018-19) and 320,000 children (a 49% increase since 2018-19).

52. In examining the reasons for the need for support from food banks, the research highlights a fundamental lack of income, leading to being unable to afford the essentials with the immediate driver being social security, often due to the design of the system. Often social security issues are also compounded by other 'background' factors - difficult life experiences, ill-health and a lack of local support.
53. **The Centre for Social Justice** briefing on *Free School Meals and Holiday Hunger*, summarises the free school meals system by setting out the eligibility criteria with pupils generally eligible for free school meals (FSM) if their parents are eligible for Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, support under Part VI of the Immigration Act, the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit.
54. Under Universal Credit eligibility, parents are eligible for FSM if their household income after tax but before benefits does not exceed £7,400 pa. Since 2014 pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 have all been eligible for FSM under separate funding arrangements. The total cost for free school meals in January 2020 was £629.6m for the academic year.
55. During the lockdown period between March-July 2020, parents whose children would normally be eligible for free school meals were unable to receive them since the children were not attending school. This left the parents worse off as they had to cover the cost of a further 5 meals per week that would normally be provided in school.
56. To redress this, the government introduced a national food voucher scheme for pupils eligible for free school meals, under a contracted-out service run by Edenred. This provided eligible families with access to a rolling £15 per week food voucher redeemable at certain supermarkets. This was extended throughout the summer of 2020 via the Covid Summer Food Fund with schools able to support eligible pupils with a £90 voucher valid for the 6-week holiday period. According to the DfE, £380m worth of vouchers were redeemed under the lockdown and summer schemes in total.
57. The DfE responded to further campaigning to extend the food provision for the October half-term, 2020 Christmas holiday up to Easter 2021.
58. However, responding to calls to extend the voucher scheme, the DfE said: *"It is not for schools to regularly provide food for pupils during the*

school holidays. We believe that the best way to support families outside of term time is through Universal Credit...”

59. The Centre for Social Justice say in the long-term, a national solution to the problem of child food poverty is needed and should be provided via the existing Universal Credit system. Food poverty must be addressed via completion of the Universal Credit system through the development of universal support and the Key Worker model as a way of tackling its complex social causes.

The local picture in York: Deprivation

60. In terms of Deprivation in the city, the **Index of Deprivation Affecting Children Index** ranks all the York wards from 1-21, with the most deprived wards displaying the smallest numbers. The wards identified as being most deprived under this index are Westfield, Clifton and Heworth.
61. In terms of **Income**, the same three wards are most affected by poor levels of income. The relative ranking for other indicators of deprivation is exactly the same for **Education, Skills and Training**. In terms of overall deprivation, the Index for Multiple Deprivation, Westfield, Clifton and Guildhall wards are the most deprived.
62. In terms of Free School Meals (FSM), the School Census in 2020 showed entitlement of 2,668 growing to 3,569 in January 2022. In January 2022 there were 13,354 pupils in Primary Schools, with 11,494 in Secondary Schools.
63. Considering distribution across the city’s wards for Free School Meal entitlement in 2020, the wards with the highest numbers are Westfield, Clifton and Hull Road. This was unchanged in 2022, although the numbers had increased.
64. This consistency in the data provided the statistical basis for the Task Group’s decision to approach Westfield Primary, Tang Hall Primary, Clifton Green Primary, York High and Archbishop Holgate’s for a sample survey of the impact of the FSM Voucher Scheme.
65. A map showing the coverage of households in Fuel Poverty, Low income – Low energy efficiency (LILEE) for 2019/20 may be found in Annex 1.

The local picture in York: Health

66. In considering **Day to Day Activities** of the York population, data examined here comes from the 2011 Census through Public Health England, and the picture in York is a positive one with York presenting a better picture than the national one in all categories.
67. In **General health** too, nearly 50% of residents reported their general health as 'Very Good' in 2011, several percentage points higher than the national average. For those who felt their general health was 'Good' this matched the national average at 34% while in the categories 'Fair', 'Bad' or 'Very Bad' the York data is lower than the national, presenting a more positive result overall.
68. For **Life Expectancy**, both male and female life expectancy at 79.8 years and 83.4 years respectively are close to, if not marginally higher, than the national average.
69. For **Premature Mortality**, for causes considered preventable, York is 7 percentage points below all deaths, for all cancers in 2017/18 5 percentage points below all deaths and for all causes under 75 years, 6.6 percentage points below all deaths. For circulatory and coronary heart disease, for 2017/18 York's premature mortality is some 10 percentage points better than the national data.
70. For **New cases of cancer**, for 2017/18, York reports lower than all national figures for All cancers, Breast, Lung and Prostate cancers but not colorectal cancers where the standardised incidence ratio is higher by some 5 percentage points in the city.
71. Overall, York presents a positive profile in terms of public health.

Council Motion on Residents' Right to Food

72. At Full Council on 21st October 2021, and within the context of a pandemic in which access to food had been identified as a challenge for many York residents, families and communities, Full Council approved a motion supporting York Residents' Right to Food. This included actions around setting up a food network, understanding the level of informal food bank use in the city and using the Community Hub strategy to establish further opportunities to provide further sources of nutritional food provision and activity where it is needed.
73. Linked to this Full Council motion, on 14th February 2022, approval was given by the Executive Member for Finance and Performance to fund a

further Community Involvement Officer (Food) within the Communities Team to work alongside the HAF officer to assist in delivering the key actions set out in the Council motion. The work planned as part of the Full Council motion will also help in mapping all known resources across the city and align this to need.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

74. In November 2020, the government announced the extension of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) across the whole of England for 2021. This programme offers to children who are eligible free healthy meals activities over the Easter, Summer and Christmas Holidays, recognising that there are families who struggle financially over the school holidays, particularly those eligible for benefit-based free school meals.
75. 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).
76. The government's intention is, that by participating in the HAF 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 alongside their wider educational attainment
 - Be safe and not be socially isolated
 - Have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition
 - Be more engaged with school and other local services
77. In line with government delivery guidance, a local steering group is in place to support the coordination of the local programme, with the University of York as a regional evaluator.
78. The DfE have confirmed that HAF funding will continue in all Local Authorities 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. York's allocation for 2021/22 was up to £383k to project manage and deliver the programme, based on 3,349 children and young people being eligible for Free School Meals in all of York's schools from the January 2021 Census.

HAF Summer and Christmas Delivery 2021

79. In summer 2021, fifteen activity providers were commissioned to deliver the programme, all activities being face-to-face and included:
- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) based at St. Nicks Nature Reserve, together 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.
80. 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
 - 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 Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and young people in universal activities
81. 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 experienced in these

areas, and this does mirror the experience of schools since the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

- Limited activities for children aged 14+ who are on free school meals. There are few youth providers in the city who are well-engaged with older young people, and this limited the amount of provision which could be offered.
- The need to improve the booking system arrangements to smooth this process for parents.
- Preparing the programme well ahead of the holiday period and developing the publicity/marketing of the programme.
- Developing the offer of hot meals and engaging with community hubs and providers to deliver this.

82. The HAF programme for Christmas 2021 provided 675 children and young people with 4 full days of activity at 4 hours per day during the first week of the Christmas holidays, together with food provision in various forms for each day.

83. A full report on the HAF programme thus far was presented to Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee on 4th January 2022. At that meeting the extension of government provision for the HAF programme for a further three years was confirmed which will also provide staffing costs to fund a HAF officer within the Council's Communities Team.

Building the HAF offer and communications

84. Learning both from other early implementers of the HAF programme and from CYC experience in 2021, it takes time to build a strong offer for eligible children and young people. However, the confirmation of the continuation of national funding will support the council in increasing capacity to develop a richer programme to engage all year groups, especially older children and young people. Other developmental steps include:

- Building community capacity around food including food allergen training
- Engaging more schools to consider delivering activities especially SEND schools

- Develop good practice with the help of schools to improve behaviours
85. The CYC Comms Team worked on the Summer and Christmas 2021 promotion to encourage families to contact their local school directly to confirm eligibility to avoid any stigmatisation. Referral processes are now more robust via the schools to ensure children are identified and encouraged to participate.
86. CEC Policy and Scrutiny Committee received a report on the HAF Programme on 4th January 2022 from officers and the minutes noted the following:
- Where possible, the holiday activity should include a hot meal. The minutes of the meeting note, “Providing a hot meal had proved difficult, especially for smaller activity providers. Food provision had been mainly in the form of packed lunches and hampers for families”.
 - Covid had made delivery of the programme difficult, particularly at Christmas with the Omicron variant. Families had tended to be more insular over the Christmas period.
 - During the Summer approximately 20% of eligible families benefitted from the scheme, with 25% benefitting at Christmas. This contrasts with approximately 10% in other local areas.
87. Officers responded to a variety of questions from Members on a range of topics that included the differences in take up between the summer and Christmas provision, the level of take-up compared to the funding available, and the feedback received from families. They noted the following:
- The budget for HAF hot meals was £2.63 per head, this had been set on the basis that school canteens were to have been providing the meals. Community kitchens and smaller providers had not been able to match that budget requirement and could not be expected to do so. The food provision must align with school food standards
 - It had been difficult to find outreach projects for older children
 - Food vouchers had not been provided during HAF weeks.

Community Hubs

88. In 2019 the council administration set out an intention to create community hubs to serve all communities in York. This was somewhat overtaken by the events of the pandemic, which prompted some 'Hubs' to be established to provide support to communities, which included emergency food provision, shopping and prescription collection, support to access financial support and advice and access to practical measures such as lateral flow tests and booking vaccination appointments.
89. In June 2021 it was agreed by CEC to form a Scrutiny sub-group to look at how Community Hubs could best support communities in York. The findings of that scrutiny review will be relevant to actions to tackle holiday hunger as, going forward, there is likely to be a continued need for the provision of community-based support.

Conclusions and Recommendations

90. The rising cost of living and broader pressures on household finances are unlikely to alleviate in the near future, meaning that the need for support is likely to remain and in all probability increase. Free school meals during term times provides eligible families with some respite, which obviously presents a challenge during the holiday periods when additional food costs are incurred.
91. The voucher scheme has provided a relatively straightforward way of providing support to FSM-eligible families, but at a cost of c£50,000 per week that is no longer funded by Government. The council's budget for 2022/23 included £100,000 for school holiday food support, but this will not enable the voucher scheme to continue in its current form throughout the year. There is clear evidence however that the need for food support during the school holidays will remain and the recent upward trend in the number of FSM-eligible children suggests that demand will grow.

Recommendation 1 - The Task Group therefore believes that it would not be appropriate for there to be no holiday food provision put in place for the remaining school holidays in 2022/23.

92. The question then is what form this provision should take, and how it can benefit those most in need. We know that £43,000 remains of the £100,000 for school holiday food support, and in addition £200,000 has been earmarked to support Covid recovery efforts in local communities. CYC is funded by Government to deliver the HAF programme during the long summer and Christmas holidays. The requirement for children to

attend organised activities in order to receive food will work well for some families but not for others, for example where getting to and from the location of the activity proves practically impossible. Research also suggests that a 'holiday club' approach for the provision of support will not benefit all families.

Recommendation 2 Despite its acknowledged limitations, HAF will remain an important part of the school holiday food offer, and CYC should continue to promote it and work with providers to make activities as genuinely accessible as possible.

93. So aside from HAF, we believe that the focus should be on making sure that FSM families are aware of and are supported to access the financial, food and other practical support that is available. This will not be cost-free and will require investment and effort on CYC's part. We know that in terms of staff resource there will be a Food Poverty officer and a HAF officer, but these postholders alone cannot be expected to deliver support to all families. It will require a CYC-wide effort and the use of all of the levers at our disposal, including the established networks with schools and the voluntary and community sectors.
94. We believe that the intention to establish 'Community Hubs' (in some cases building on what already exists in the form of largely volunteer-run activities) provides an opportunity to take steps to provide holiday food support for those in need and including those for whom the HAF-style offer isn't a practical option.

Recommendation 3 In determining how the £200,000 for Covid recovery efforts should be spent, priority should be given to supporting settings and providers that, with appropriate support, could deliver a school holiday food offer targeted at the areas of the city with the greatest identified concentration of need. This should include consultation with ward councillors and ward teams.

95. We believe however that there will continue to be a need for food vouchers in some form for families for whom HAF, community or other provision is not accessible. Local Area Co-ordinators, school pastoral care teams and community and voluntary sector organisations are often best-placed to be able to identify the families that may find it difficult to access support.

Recommendation 4 The remaining £43,000 in the school holiday food budget should be made available for LACs, schools and community

organisations to use to issue supermarket vouchers to families who are in need and for whom other support may be inaccessible. If demand proves to be high, Executive should look at ways in which this fund could be supplemented from other sources.

96. We understand that the Government is to make available additional financial help through the 'Household Support Fund', which CYC will administer. The details are unclear at this stage, but depending on the scheme rules, it may present an opportunity to target support to FSM families. The York Financial Assistance Scheme also remains in place and can be a means through which financial support can be provided.

Recommendation 5 When details of the new Household Support Fund are available, CYC should identify how its delivery can be targeted to specifically benefit FSM families.

97. This report includes information about a range of support services and informal food banks provided by voluntary and community organisations. There is also a wide range of information and advice available, for example on household budgeting. But this information can be difficult to find. The ability of families to be able to easily access information that they need is critical, and this is something that needs to be addressed before the summer holidays.

Recommendation 6 CYC to produce an advice and information pack designed to signpost families to sources of information and support. This should be accessible to all but promoted specifically to FSM families.

Consultation

98. The following CYC Officers, Executive Members and external organisations have been consulted during the review process:
- Pauline Stuchfield, Director of Customer and Communities, CYC
 - Ian Cunningham, Head of Business Intelligence, CYC
 - David Walker, Head of Customer, Resident and Exchequer Services, CYC
 - Maxine Squire, Assistant Director, Education and Skills, CYC
 - Communities Team Manager, CYC
 - Project Assistant – Community Hubs, CYC
 - Community Leisure Officer Children and Young People, Communities and Equalities, CYC
 - Cllr Carol Runciman, Executive Member for Health and Adult Social Care, CYC

- Cllr Denise Craghill, Executive Member for Housing, CYC
- Adam Raffell, Foodbank Manager, York Foodbank
- Tang Hall Primary School
- Westfield Primary School
- Clifton Green Primary School
- York High School
- Archbishop Holgate's School

Options

98. Members can choose to make the recommendations outlined in this report or edit and adapt those recommendations before making them or choose not to make any recommendations at all. These recommendations should be made to the Executive following CEC Policy & Scrutiny Committee Agreement

Analysis

99. Any analysis is contained in the body of the report or annexes.

Council Plan

100. This report will make a particular contribution to the following Council Plan themes:
- Good Health and Wellbeing
 - A Better Start for Children and Young People
 - Well-paid jobs and an inclusive economy
 - Safe Communities and culture for all

Implications

101. **Financial** The figures referred to in this report are those already approved within the Council's budget for 2022/23. Any work associated with the recommendations of this report will be contained within relevant service budgets.

Human Resources (HR) None

Equalities An EIA (Equalities Impact Assessment) will be developed for the Executive Report.

Legal None

Crime and Disorder None

Information Technology (IT) None

Property None

Other None

Risk Management

102. If CEC policy and scrutiny committee decide to take none of recommendations forward to Executive or Executive do not accept the recommendation of Scrutiny then the best practice and possible solutions learned from the Scrutiny will not contribute to the need identified in the city for food solutions to be provided for children and families during school holidays.

Contact Details

Authors:

Cllr S Daubeney
Cllr S Fenton
Cllr F Fitzpatrick

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Not applicable – Member Scrutiny Review

Report Approved

n/a

Date 03 May 2022

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact Democratic Services.

Background Papers:

The Guardian, Cost of living crisis could be fatal for some UK children, Jack Monroe tells MPs':

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/09/cost-of-living-crisis-fatal-some-uk-children-jack-monroe-food-writer-tells-mps>

The Resolution Foundation, 'Stressed out' :

<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/stressed-out/>

The Trussell Trust, 'State of Hunger':

https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/State-of-Hunger_Exec-Summary.pdf

The Centre for Social Justice, 'Free School Meals and Holiday Hunger'

https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CSJ-Holiday_Hunger_Support_v4.pdf

Annexes

Annex 1 Data Pack

Abbreviations

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| CEC | Children, Education and Communities |
| CYC | City of York Council |
| PRU | Pupil Referral Unit |
| YFA | York Financial Assistance Scheme |
| LAC | Local Area Co-ordinator |
| FSM | Free School Meals |
| HAF | Holiday Activities |