

Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6 July 2023

Holiday Activities with Healthy Food (Fun and Food) in County Durham

Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services

Purpose of the report

- 1 The report accompanies a presentation to Durham County Council's Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny members on the progress of Durham's Fun and Food programme during 2022.

Executive Summary

- 2 The Department for Education (DfE) provided all Local Authorities with funding to provide free holiday activities and healthy food for children that are eligible for benefits related free school meals during Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods in 2022. Half term school holiday periods are not funded by DfE. Durham was allocated £2,338,740.00, to provide free 'holiday clubs' and committed offering all eligible and other vulnerable children access to a range of enriching activities with healthy food.
- 3 Recognising the need and demand for holiday activities with healthy food remains during half term holidays an additional £80,00 from Public Health for February half term and £150,000 was secured from the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG) for May and October half terms 2022.
- 4 Holiday Activities with Healthy Food has been branded as 'Fun and Food in County Durham'. A dedicated webpage is now available for families and providers www.durham.gov.uk/funandfood and also a Facebook Group [Fun and Food County Durham | Facebook](#)
- 5 A central coordination team lead on the programme and have developed a partnership delivery model working together with the Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) to develop, administer and distribute funding for enriching holiday activities with healthy food over the holiday periods 2022.
- 6 Funding was allocated to a range of partners including Voluntary and Community, private providers, schools, family hubs, leisure services and libraries.

- 7 Nearly 35,000 children and young people engaged with the Fun and Food programme in Easter, Summer and Christmas 2022 (DfE funded holidays). Over 11,000 children and young people engaged in the half term holidays (DCC funded holidays February, May and October 2022). Throughout 2022 a total of 46,000 children and young people engaged in Fun and Food provision.
- 8 Partners delivering projects have been particularly creative and all activities were delivered face to face and included arts and crafts, environmental and wildlife activities, STEM activities and sports & physical activity, yoga and wellbeing. Healthy meals and snacks were provided with each activity.

Recommendation

- 9 Members of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to note the content of the report and presentation and comment accordingly.

Background

- 10 The Department for Education (DfE) provided all Local Authorities with funding to provide free holiday activities and healthy food for children that are eligible for benefits related free school meals during Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods in 2022. Half term school holiday periods were not funded by DfE. Durham was allocated £2,338,740.00, to provide free 'holiday clubs' and committed offering all eligible and other vulnerable children access to a range of enriching activities with healthy food.
- 11 The Child Poverty Working Group is responsible for coordinating the programme in County Durham. The aim of the programme is for children and families who attend provision to:
 - a) eat healthily over the school holidays
 - b) be active during the school holidays
 - c) take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment
 - d) be safe and not to be socially isolated
 - e) have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition
 - f) be more engaged with school and other local services
 - g) develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting
 - h) are signposted towards other information and support, for example, health, employment, and education

County Durham Model

- 12 The Social Inclusion Operations Manager provides programme leadership and coordination of the Fun and Food Programme, supported by two Development Officers. A Funding Support Officer was appointed and aligned to the AAP Funding Team.
- 13 Governance and steering of HAF is through the multi-agency Child Poverty Working Group. The following organisations are represented:
 - a. Early Help
 - b. Children's Social Care
 - c. Culture and Leisure
 - d. Cabinet Member
 - e. Housing
 - f. Education
 - g. Public Health
 - h. Neighbourhoods and Climate Change
 - i. Progression and Learning
 - j. VCS/Faith Communities
 - k. 0-19 Community Family Health
 - l. Police
 - m. Communications and Marketing
 - n. Assessment and Awards

- 14 A delivery model for the provision and distribution of funding has been developed and includes:
- (a) locality based provision funded through Area Action Partnerships (AAPs). Funding is distributed via AAPs to local providers based on the % of children on FSM. An uplift is provided to support rural localities.
 - (b) the procurement of contracted provision to fill gaps in local provision/ or gaps for specific age groups such as adolescents (area based and countywide provision) with larger providers.
 - (c) internal service providers (schools, leisure services and Family Hubs, libraries and community arts).
- 15 Each delivery partner is required to work towards DfE national standards:
- (a) Healthy meals: provide at least one healthy meal a day and must meet the School Food Standards throughout the day.
 - (b) Enriching activities: provide fun and enriching activities that provide children with opportunities to develop or consolidate skills or knowledge, to consolidate existing skills and knowledge.
 - (c) Physical activity: provide physical activities which meet the Physical Activity Guidelines on a daily basis.
 - (d) Nutritional education: improve children's knowledge and awareness of healthy eating and offer advice and training to parents on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food.
 - (e) Signposting and referrals: provide information, signposting or referrals to other services and support that would benefit the children who attend their provision and their families.
 - (f) Safeguarding: Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. We want every project to be a safe and happy place for children to be and for parents, carers and families to feel confident that their child is well looked after and that robust safeguarding arrangements are in place.
- 16 A workforce development programme is in place to support delivery partners to meet these standards.

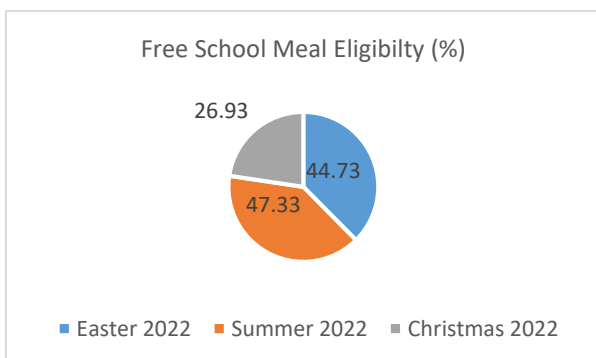
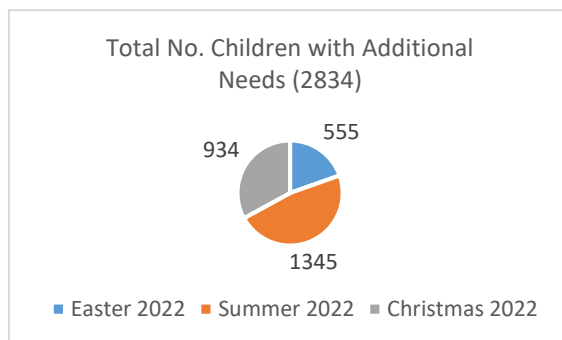
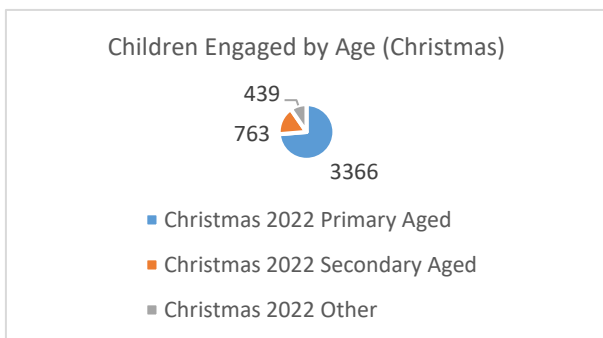
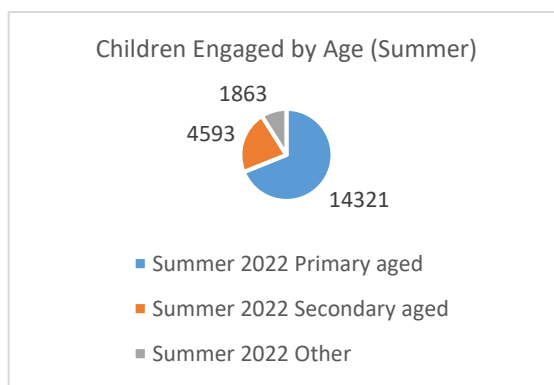
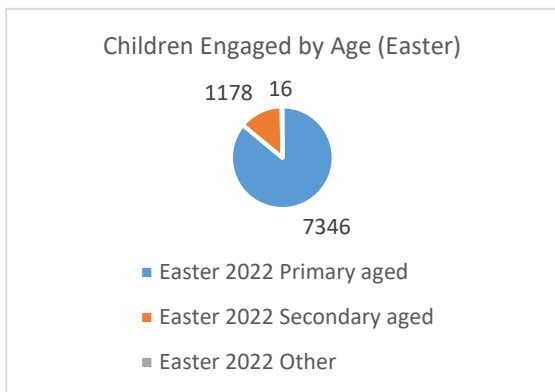
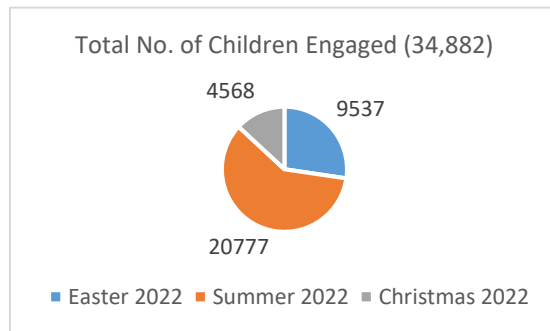
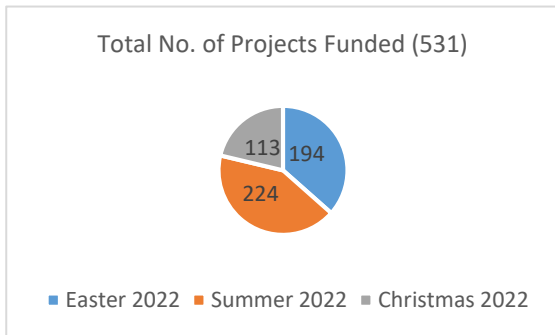
Data and Intelligence

- 17 Data and intelligence developed by the Public Health Intelligence Team provided a rich source of information for the programme to target localities and allocate funding proportionately to localities across the county with the highest level of children on free school meals.

Programme Data

- 18 After each holiday period the DfE require a robust data return as part of the grant conditions. The data and information collected is in strict adherence to General Data Protection Regulations.

19 In 2022 the Fun and Food programme has delivered:



Programme Activities

20 A range of partners including VCS, schools, leisure centres, libraries and family hubs delivered projects which included the production of an interactive performing arts experience, treasure trails, multi skills activities, gorge walking, woodwork, laser quest, dance, tennis, sailing and ice skating.

- 21 The Fun and Food programme has been very positively received by children, young people and families and providers and we are keen to further develop and upscale in 2023. (See appendix 2).

Flexibility in Grant Arrangements

- 22 DfE granted Durham the facility to utilise 15% of the grant to widen the offer to other vulnerable children and young people. The groups support included:
- (a) children on EHCP plans
 - (b) young people on a child protection plan
 - (c) young people living in areas of high deprivation
 - (d) children and young people known to social care
 - (e) younger siblings of school age FSM eligible children, who are eligible for Early years pupil premium YPP
 - (f) children and young people residing in Domestic Abuse refuge
 - (g) families being supported within Early Help
- 23 This resulted in wider societal impacts (Appendix 3 case studies)

Workforce Development

- 24 To support all delivery partners meet DfE standards a training offer has been developed and includes the following sessions:
- (a) School Meal Standards and nutritional education
 - (b) Physical Activity Standards.
 - (c) Signposting Standards.
 - (d) Safeguarding (DSCP online training).
 - (e) Financial Ability.
 - (f) Capturing the Voice of the Child.
 - (g) Youth Mental Health Awareness.
 - (h) Physical Activity Support.
 - (i) Fire Safety Awareness.

Communications and Marketing

- 25 A communications and marketing plan has been developed to ensure the programme is promoted and that children, young people and families know what provision is available near to where they live. The programme has been branded as 'Fun and Food' in County Durham. A dedicated webpage is now available for families and providers www.durham.gov.uk/funandfood and has received over 45000 unique views since it was launched in March 2021.
- 26 All activities are listed on the County Durham Families Information Service so that families can find out about activities taking place across the county and we have various press releases and social media campaigns.

- 27 A number of short videos have been compiled to showcase the range of activities provided for children and young people. These are available on the Fun and Food web page: [Fun and Food Videos](#)
- 28 A Facebook Group was launched in February 22 and now has over 3500 members.
- 29 A link to the 'Help with your Money' web page is also available on the Fun and Food web page. This has a wide range of information to support families to manage their money including access to hardship grants, debt advice, credit union, healthy start vouchers and how to apply for free school meals.
[Help with your Money - Durham County Council](#)
- 30 Branding for both 11 – 16 year olds and children with SEND has been designed and will be used in all communications for projects working specifically working with these groups (Appendix 4)

Half Term Holidays

- 31 Within the terms of the DfE funding half terms holidays cannot be funded. Recognising the need and demand for holiday activities with healthy food during half term holidays an additional £80,000 was secured from Public Health for February 22 half term and an additional £150,000 was secured from the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG) for May and October half terms 2022.
- 32 Fun and Food recognises the importance of offering enriching activities with healthy food across all holiday periods. Delivery partners are keen to be able to offer consistency to families throughout the year.
- 33 Across February, May and October 2022 half term holidays DCC funded 163 projects, engaging with 11,083 children, 1256 who had additional needs.

Challenges

- 34 Delivery partners reported a significant number of 'no shows'.
- 35 The Christmas holidays were challenging to coordinate due to schools in Durham having inconsistent holiday dates - break up dates ranged from 16th - 23rd Dec and then a number of bank holidays meant that the days available for provision was limited. A number of partners that have delivered during easter and the summer chose not to deliver as they closed for the holidays.
- 36 Collecting data from partners remained a significant challenge in all holiday periods. A family friendly data privacy notice has been produced, and this is available online for project leads and families. The central team continue to support groups with this.
- 37 Groups do not always provide details of children as they are registered at school e.g. use nick names/different surnames which means data matching is difficult.

- 38 The central team continue to work with partners to overcome these challenges and consideration is currently underway to procure an online management information system/booking system.

Programme Developments

- 39 A Development Worker role has been appointed to work with stakeholders and partners across the County to scope and develop an integrated, county wide, community based, physical activity programme targeting 11–16-year-old children and their families linked to the Fun and Food Programme.
- 40 There will be a clear focus on engaging more schools to be part of the Fun and Food programme supporting them to develop partnerships to deliver projects on school sites.
- 41 The programme has begun to look to expand specialist provision for children and young people with SEND and will work with universal providers to ensure that provision is accessible for all children and young people.
- 42 The programme currently encourages all delivery partners to access the Advice in County Durham portal to signpost families to a range of advice services. It is hoped that some more focussed support will be available in Summer 2023 working together with Northeast First Credit Union to attend Fun and Food activities and enable families to maximise income and encourage responsible borrowing and savings.

Conclusion

- 43 Poverty continues to be a key and growing concern for children and families living in County Durham. We understand the negative impact living in poverty has on a child's life chances.
- 44 Fun and Food is one of the initiatives in County Durham that helps to mitigate the negative impacts of child poverty and support families affected by the cost of living crisis.
- 45 The programme continues to develop the good practice demonstrated in 2022, build on existing partnerships, develop new partnerships and upscale on what has been delivered to date.
- 46 Feedback from children, young people, parents/carers and delivery partners has been very positive. It demonstrates the level of need for this programme within our communities and the impact that enriching holiday activities with healthy food can have.
- 47 Ongoing support and oversight from elected members are welcomed.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Deliver DfE Holiday Activities with Food in line with DfE expectations and sign-up conditions.

Finance

Probity of DfE Holiday Activities with Food Funding.

Consultation

Consultation with children and families will take place in developing Holiday Activities with Healthy Food programme.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality of opportunity for children and families most at risk of negative impact of poverty

Climate Change

None

Human Rights

Equal opportunities

Crime and Disorder

Research shows families living in poverty are more likely to be involved or victims of crime and anti-social behaviours.

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

None

Procurement:

Procurement of Fun and Food provision is undertaken within strict procurement regulations.

Appendix2

Parent/Carer Feedback

“Money has been tight lately and I was worried what we would do when the kids were off school, we haven’t had to worry as we have had stuff to do every day and the food has been great, we have had so much fun”

“I can’t believe you have put all of this on and food to go with it – its great knowing they will have lunch, one less thing to think about as a parent”

“we had a great day out spending quality time as a family”

“This has been an amazing opportunity, the kids have loved it”

“Thanks to everyone who helped make this happen, to see their little faces is priceless”

“I was able to go to work and not worry about my child. Knowing he was having fun and being fed was the best feeling”

“It allows my daughter to socialise and gain independence and confidence away from me”

“Can’t believe all of this is free, especially at Christmas time when we all need a little help”

“Thank you, this has filled the gap from school to Christmas, otherwise they would have been at home climbing the walls”

“My son loved the teen cook club, there isn’t many sessions for older children during the holidays, It was such a great opportunity for him to meet friends outside of school and make new friends while cooking real food, he’s taken so much away with him.”

Children and Young People Feedback

“I have liked all of the centre sessions but the best have been animals day because we got to hold lots of different small animals and learn about how to look after different pets. The money skills day was really good too and helped me learn how to order my own meal and budget my money”

“I’ve had a brilliant Summer with lots of things to do every week”

“I wish I can come to this every week”

“The place is so fun and good”

“Loved having somewhere to go through the holidays, and things to do

“The slime activity was so fun. It was calming to play with and meeting new people has been fun too”

“My best part of today was everything!”

“Wow, this is amazing” when we pulled up to the museum”

“Thank you for today. I was a bit scared but everyone was really good and kind.”

“We did lots of stuff. They recorded my voice and I sounded dead good!”

“I loved today. It was fun! I loved writing! I would definitely recommend.”

“I love today, my favourite thing was the train ride and drawing.”

“I’m tired and happy. It has been a fun day.”

Provider Feedback

Feedback from a school setting

M is one of our regular children in holiday club and really enjoyed the tag rugby and the tug of war, he now attends tag rudy classes every Wednesday within school.

D told his mum he had been on holiday as he had been in the pool and played in the sand and he had ice cream (hadn’t been off school property).

Our hampers were a great help we had one grandad in tears as he has 3 grandchildren who live with him and his wife and remarked that the hamper was almost half a week’s shopping for him and was very much appreciated.

Appendix 3

Wider Societal Impacts

Feedback from parents/carer of children with SEND

“You have provided something really special for my little boy who is unable to attend many holiday clubs or camps. The experience from start to finish has been superb. The social story was clear and easy to understand and helped us both prepare for the day. The warm welcome meant my little boy felt at ease from the start and could be left. I think autistic children who have particular difficulties around social, emotional and communication can feel more at ease with animals and this is certainly the case for E. E has been able to communicate about the day. He has told me about the dogs and what they were like. He told me about helping the dogs to do the obstacle course and making the treats. He came back happy and confident and even visited our neighbours to give their dog some homemade treats”.

“It was great to meet other families who are in the in similar situations, I felt it was a safe environment for my child”

“The staff were really friendly and helped the children to bounce especially those who are less able.”

Feedback from a women’s refuge

“The activities have allowed the families to spend quality time together and rebuild relationships and make lasting memories. A lot have said without this project they wouldn’t have been able to do what they have over the summer with their children. We have had families go to places that they had never been before and a number of families have commented on how they now recognise and understand the importance of spending time together as a family whether this is getting involved in activities or simply sitting down and eating freshly prepared meals together. With guidance from worker’s mum’s have said they now feel much more confident in preparing healthy, nutritional, well balanced meals for their families. Most importantly all of the women and children involved have enjoyed the activities and socialising with other families. It has been an amazing summer holidays and it has been wonderful watching the families and children have fun and be provided with lots of new opportunities. We had one family who was struggling with being away from their family and friends, initially they were really reluctant to engage with support staff as they really wanted to go back to the area in which they were from. There was concerns that the family would return to the perpetrator also, however with encouragement from staff the family attended their first activity session and then from then onwards they engaged in all of the sessions and days out. The family thoroughly enjoyed it and began to interact with other residents too and started to form relationships. The mum said

when we got here I couldn't settle I just wanted to be back were we were from but now we are settled and the kids are happy and the support has been amazing. The summer holidays have been great and we are so grateful for everything including the food which has also been a huge support”.



Appendix 4

