

TITLE OF REPORT: Brighten The Day – Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek the views of the Housing, Environment and Healthier Communities OSC on the delivery and impact of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021 and highlight the announcement for 2022.

Background

2. DfE funding allocation of £850,000 for 2021 in Gateshead to fund Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) over the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays for benefits-related Free School Meal (FSM) recipients and vulnerable children.
3. The holiday club places are available for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week for 4 weeks (Summer Only) and must include healthy meals (one healthy meal a day meeting the School Food Standards guidance), enriching activities (provide fun activities with opportunities to develop skills and knowledge), physical activities (which meet the Physical Activity Guidelines), nutritional education (awareness of healthy eating and how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food, signposting and referrals: (to other services and support)
4. In total there are approximately 7,200 children who are eligible for free school meals entitlement in Gateshead, living in approximately 4,500 households but clearly the programme aims to help additional families who are struggling to make ends meet but do not access this benefit.
5. A HAF Steering group meets regularly to plan and co-ordinate the Brighten the Day programme. Representatives include University of Northumbria, Education, Public Health, Children's Social Care, Early Help, Libraries, Leisure, Catering Services and VCS organisations.

Delivery over Easter 2021

6. The Easter programme was delivered mainly remotely due to Covid-19 restrictions in place. Overall, the programme delivered:
 - 1,750 Cook n' Eat food boxes delivered to FSM eligible families with fresh ingredients and recipes for 5 meals for a family of 4.
 - 1,500 activity packs of crafts, books and sport equipment delivered to FSM families via primary schools with highest numbers of FSM and in deprived areas.

- Tyne and Wear TV on freeview channel, broadcast content aimed at 3 different age groups for local children and young people over the Easter holiday period.
 - A limited number of schools, community, church and sports organisations delivered small scale face to face holiday clubs. These were exclusive to known FSM eligible families connected to the venues and providers. The Easter clubs reached 780 children attending 2,600 places, with 12,400 hours of delivered activity.
 - This included for the first time a club at Cedars School for children with physical and learning disabilities.
7. During May half term face to face delivery took place at a small number of venues using outdoor facilities, including Gateshead International Stadium with 560 places, delivered to 250 children attending 2,600 hours of activities in bubbles. Half term delivery was not a requirement of the DfE grant.

Summer Programme

8. The summer clubs in Gateshead were delivered in 52 venues; 23 community organisations, 12 schools (including 3 secondary and 2 special schools), 5 sports venues and 3 church organisations. Over 21,000 places were delivered across the 6 week period to approximately 1,450 children per day.
9. Activities included Sports, Dance, Work Skills, Cooking, Cycling, Circus Skills, Bush Forestry, Open Spaces, Environmental and Educational Visits, as well as Cook n Eat, online activities, exercises and games.
10. The Council's Catering Service complimented the food provision within community venues with hot food in 7 schools, healthy packed lunches at 11 venues without catering facilities, and provided healthy snacks to the Active Kidz programme and our pop-up sports activities. All other providers and venues organised their own catering to School Food Standards. This standard must be met for the HAF programme, and so all groups liaised with the Council for quality assurance on their planned menus.
11. The programme was mapped to our latest FSM eligible households' dataset to ensure locations of delivery venues were in close proximity to FSM communities. The Gateshead map showed 95% of FSM households were within reach of a summer programme location.
12. The expanded programme in 2021 included new venues – Cedars and Gibside special schools, new coaching providers – Gateshead Storm Rugby Club, and new activities – Learn to Swim @ Gateshead Leisure Centre (for Y5 & Y6 children who missed out on school swimming provision).
13. Most of the Summer programme was targeted by the venues and providers to reach FSM families and those in need whilst adhering to current covid risk assessments. Therefore, most provision was publicised in a targeted way.
14. Referrals from Children's Social Care and Early Help teams helped link families in need to provision at their local schools and community groups, ensuring reserved spaces at open provision before bookings went live on Gateshead Brighten the Day website.

15. The DfE arranged a virtual visit for the Permanent Secretary, Susan Acland-Hood on 24 August 2021. The visit covered the departments priorities and policies and included a live stream of holiday clubs taking place. DfE representatives were able to speak to children, teachers and providers to receive instant live feedback.

Proposed Delivery over Christmas 2021

16. Due to the shortage of time, volunteer time and facilities availability, the programme will be focused on large scale events based strategically in key local venues.

Christmas Fun Days

17. To be held at Gateshead Leisure Centre for three days consecutively, 21st-23rd December with 300 guests invited on a ticket only access basis. The tickets will be distributed through our network of partner organisations to FSM families and those families identified as benefitting most from attending. The programme will include:

- Live Reindeer
- Visit to Santa
- Sports
- Story Telling
- DJ
- Pantomime
- Hot Food and Refreshments

Community Pantomimes delivered by Blowing a Hooley

18. Our 7 Community pantomimes will be based in 5 community venues

- Dunston Activity Centre x 2
- Swalwell Community Centre x 2
- Winlaton Centre
- Felling Community Centre
- Birtley Community Centre

Further pantomime shows will be delivered in schools and community centres in the Central area of Gateshead TBC

ICE Skating

19. Families are to be offered a coach trip to the centre for life in Newcastle for family ice skating. Ten Coaches will take 480 Gateshead residents to the Centre for Life on the 18th, 19th, 22nd, 29th and 30th of December 2021.

Targeted Families Support

20. The team will work with 240 children identified by partner organisations to provide specialist activities in Childrens Centres across Gateshead.

Community Groups, Sports Clubs & Schools

21. We are delighted that 5 schools, Larkspur, The Drive, Chopwell, Kelvin Grove and Whickham will all deliver projects over the Christmas holidays. As will an additional 5 community venues, Springwell CC, St Chads CC, Happy Feet, and the Comfrey

Project. A total of 4 sports clubs will deliver a range of activities for children, including Redheugh 1957, JJ O'Donnell Sports, Gateshead FC, Futsal and Gateshead Harriers.

Cook & Eat Programme

22. Following the success of last year's 'Christmas Cook n' Eat' programme, this will again be rolled out to circa 1,000 families across all areas of Gateshead. This Christmas, the offer has been extended and will see each family receiving a box with enough fresh and ambient food to feed a family of four for five days, including a full Christmas Dinner to include, meat, vegetables, stuffing and gravy. The boxes will contain 4 recipe cards with instructions on how to prepare and cook the other four meals.
23. Families will be identified by the Council's Community Hub Network, various teams within Children and Families services across the Council, and a select number of community organisations and charity partners. Once again, the operation will take place at Gateshead International Stadium, where all of the food will be packed, despatched and delivered by a team of volunteers with deliveries arriving with residents on the 22nd and 23rd December. Calls for volunteers will soon be circulated to allow all processes to be planned, which will ensure another smooth operation.

Proposals for 2022

24. As part of yesterday's budget announcement, it has been confirmed that the Holiday Activities and Food programme will continue, following the successful nationwide delivery of the 2021 programme. The spending review announced over £200 million per year for the continuation of the holiday activities and food programme, providing enriching activities and healthy meals for disadvantaged children during school holidays.
25. Detailed guidance is awaited for 2022, however early indications suggest the size and scale of the programme and funding allocations will be broadly similar to 2021.

Recommendations

26. The Housing, Environment and Healthier Communities OSC is asked to note the content of the report and comment on the proposals for 2022.

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