

TITLE OF REPORT: Gateshead Holiday Activities and Food

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Communities and Environment

SUMMARY

This report provides a summary update on the initial feedback on the Gateshead Holiday Activities and Food programme which ran from Monday 22nd July to Thursday 5th September.

Purpose of the Report

To explain the approach to holiday provision in Gateshead and highlight the impact of the Gateshead Holiday Activities and Food programme based on the evaluation information received to date and to seek the Committee's views on the programme and its impact in the context of helping Gateshead thrive.

Background

Earlier this year, the Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering Team successfully secured £204,403 to provide free summer holiday activities and healthy food for disadvantaged children. The funding is from the Department for Education (DfE) with Gateshead Council one of only eleven organisations across England that were selected to be part of the government pilot.

DfE invited local authorities, charities, third sector organisations, and holiday club providers to apply to the new £9 million fund to coordinate a more joined up approach to the delivery of free holiday clubs. The requirements of DfE included the provision being frequent and for a good duration. The ideal minimum requirements for each provider were stated as 4 hours of provision per day, for 4 days per week and for 4 weeks during the summer holidays.

When drafting the application, it became clear that Gateshead's chances of success were limited given that a borough level figure of 15.9% for children who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) is relatively low compared to the other eleven North East local authorities. Only North Tyneside (12.6%) and Northumberland (12.3%) have lower figures whilst the highest figures are Hartlepool (25.8%), Newcastle (25.6%) and Middlesbrough (24.2%).

The narrative within the bid was therefore to highlight the ward and neighbourhood areas which are masked to an extent by the 15.9% figure. This includes the figures below at ward level:

- Felling – 34%
- High Fell – 33%
- Deckham – 32%
- Bridges – 27%

However, it was the analysis at a neighbourhood level which really demonstrated the case for intervention:

- Beacon Lough East (High Fell) – 51%
- Sunderland Road (Felling) – 45%
- Old Fold / Nest Estates (Felling) – 41%
- Bensham Central (Saltwell) – 40%
- Elisabethville (Lamesley) – 40%
- Sheriff Hill (Deckham) – 39%
- Bensham West (Lobley Hill & Bensham) – 39%
- Shipcote (Deckham) – 38%
- Springwell Estate (High Fell) – 37%
- Deckham East (Deckham) – 36%

These figures alongside a summary of the *'Fill the Holiday Gap'* work that the Council has previously done to help support children and families in this area helped make a compelling case.

The DfE feedback was extremely positive about the proposed programme with the value for money and sustainable approach being developed in Gateshead through our community networks specifically mentioned. The original proposal involved delivering at 19 venues across Gateshead but further mapping work when the funding was confirmed led to 39 venues being engaged to deliver activities.

Programme Delivery

As stated above, 39 venues took part in the programme with a range of activities provided. These included stage schools, indoor and outdoor sports camps, sessions with artists and trips to Chopwell Woods to take part in mountain biking.

Venues were a mix of community settings and schools with 8 primary schools and 4 secondary schools used as venues. This included Parkhead Community Primary School, Brandling Primary School, Birtley East Primary School and Heworth Grange School. Dunston Activity Centre and Teams Life Centre also delivered activities as did the Central Library and the Elgin Centre.

Some of the venues prepared a packed lunch or hot meal on site with the project at Heworth Grange School led by a chef and focusing on cooking skills. Those taking part on the 29-day project prepared dishes from around the world for lunch and were also provided with breakfast. Healthy packed lunches were provided for those projects without facilities on site with the Council's Catering Service preparing and delivering over 8,000 packed lunches over six weeks.

Monitoring returns and surveys are still being compiled but the initial feedback has been overwhelmingly positive which is reflected in the comments from parents shown below. The first comment is from a parent who took part in the activities delivered at the Central Library.

- The Holiday Club has been an amazing opportunity for me and my family this summer. It has helped us make so many memories this summer and allowed us to make new friendships, learn new skills and for us to be part of a brilliant programme. Staff and volunteers have been amazing, couldn't have asked for anything better. The club has provided 4 weeks of jam-packed activities some of which we may not have been able to access if it was a payment per child etc. The food every day was lovely and fab to have that given each day for free. A massive thank you to all involved, it has been amazing. This programme is so needed and valuable to families. Hopefully this will continue next year. We have loved it.
- It has helped us a family as we are a large family with complex needs. The house was quieter four mornings per week.
- Xxxxx has really enjoyed attending these events. She has been able to socialise with her friends throughout the summer.
- Xxxxx has loved coming and has kept him in a routine which has helped keep him calm. This has helped his brothers have quality time with me.

Monitoring data received to date shows projects providing access to activities for anything from 5 children to almost 300 attending, numbers are very much dependant on the activity and also the capacity of the venue.

Data has though been examined in more detail from 3 of the venues. That shows a total of 165 children attending with 1,092 spaces taken up. This data shows that children attended for approximately half of the days available with the 87 children at the Chopwell scheme on average attending for 8 of the 16 days.

Cost per place is approximately £15 per place for the 3 projects mentioned above, however across the entire programme costs ranged from £5 to £40 per head.

The rest of the data will be examined to provide a fuller picture and will be accompanied by a report by academics at the Healthy Living Lab at Northumbria University who are working with the Council to provide some insights to shape policy.

Programme Challenges and Initial Conclusions

The most significant challenge when developing the programme was ensuring the children and families that needed support most could take part. The first part of addressing this challenge was mapping FSM data in Gateshead and delivering in neighbourhoods that had the highest percentages of FSM children. For Gateshead this meant enhancing provision in the rural west and the densely populated east which has the highest percentages of FSM children with numerous neighbourhoods having percentages in excess of 40% and one in excess of 50%.

The second part of the challenge once the geographical issue was addressed was ensuring the places were filled and that those that would benefit most had the opportunity to do so. This involved asking schools to help identify the families that would benefit most so the approach was targeted whilst at the same time not restrictive on who could attend; this ensured that there was no stigma attached to the provision. Given this approach, schools delivering directly to their own pupils are well placed to identify children and to encourage participation.

Schools that weren't delivering directly were asked to refer children to the provision within community centres and onto free places that had been purchased on sports camps ran by the local authority and private providers. An example was 'golden tickets' being distributed to children in most need to attend a project session. Established community centres were also able to identify children given their work with families. Community centres that were less established or with a cohort that was more adult focused had more of a challenge to identify the children that would benefit.

Delivery in schools was a combination of school business managers arranging for external providers and also delivery arranged at the programme level. Gateshead Council as programme lead provided options including sports coaches, skateboarding lessons and stage schools for schools to choose from. In some cases, the school provided the venue with the provision entirely organised at the programme level. Schools administrators did though complete the monitoring information.

From a cost perspective, most schools requested no charge for the use of their facilities as they were not foregoing income. Some schools requested a modest charge for opening and cleaning. Community venues were more likely to charge a fee given that facilities that otherwise would be hired out were in use.

The key messages for DfE are that provision takes place on the school premises and is led by the school or that schools' partner with community venues to ensure that the children who would benefit most are identified.

Recommendation:

- Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider the approach taken to the holiday activities and food programme, comment on the programme and advise on how future provision could be shaped and resourced.

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