



Filling The Holiday Gap

UPDATE REPORT 2015



Background

The issue of non-term time hunger for children and young people on free school meals and those living in poverty in the UK remains a concern for us all. With the end of year holidays and Christmas breaks approaching fast the Holiday Hunger Task Group recognises the added pressures that these times bring to families and children in need. We hope that this short update will help keep this issue in the public eye. Prior to the introduction of Infant Free School Meals in England and Scotland approximately 1.7 million children were registered for free school meals. Holiday hunger as it is now known continues to lack policy, research and funding support from government. This update for the All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food outlines holiday provision activity in the UK. It covers outcomes from the Filling the Gap National Conference in June of this year, latest research and reports on holiday hunger, testimonies from projects across the UK and makes further suggestions as to how central and devolved government could support future activities that would alleviate Holiday Hunger. On June 2nd 2015 the All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food's Holiday Hunger Task Group in conjunction with Sheffield Hallam University School of Business held the UK's inaugural national conference into school holiday hunger.

As well as launching the 'Filling the Holiday Gap Guide' (www.fillingtheholidaygap.co.uk) the event aims were to:

- To raise awareness of non-term-time child hunger in the UK.
- Share practice in international innovation on holiday meal and activity programmes.
- Debate and agree solutions to progress with policy makers and potential project funders

The event, which was free to attend, attracted a wide range of delegates from across the UK. The 140 delegates included public health specialists, school catering providers, children's charities, faith groups, youth organisations, foodbanks, academics, the commercial sector, and funding bodies.

Video of main speakers and presentations can be found here (<https://www.shu.ac.uk/sbs/news-events/news/main-speaker-presentations-filling-holiday-gap-conference-0>)

These included representatives from:

- Child Poverty Action Group
- United States Department of Agriculture
- 'Healthy Living' at Northumbria University
- Local Authority East Renfrewshire County Council
- Ashram Housing Associations Holiday Kitchen
- MakeLunch

Workshop sessions led by APPG Holiday Hunger Task Group members covered the following topics: linking to national policy / evaluating projects; enrichment activity; developing a programme in your area; valuing the views of service users.

Feedback from the day and a delegate survey included the following suggestions for action in priority order:

1. The setting up of a UK child hunger coalition
2. Continue to lobby for change and support from government on the issue
3. The development of a local authority resource including a common evaluation framework
4. Mapping of existing holiday provision projects and programmes for signposting
5. Research into the scale of the issue of child hunger in the UK
6. Share more examples of best and innovative practice
7. Consulting children and young people on their views of holiday provision
8. Development of a monitoring and quality assurance process

The Holiday Hunger Task Group has committed to look at these suggestions over the next twelve months and progress as resource and time allows in liaison with colleagues in all four UK regions. Initial focus to be development of a Local Authority Guide and enhancing the current Filling The Holiday Gap website.

Research and Reports

Academic research shows that pupils experience a clear learning loss across the summer holidays and this appears to be most significant in pupils from low socio economic status backgrounds (e.g. Paechter et al., 2015). In general, the reports and papers listed below demonstrate a clear need for holiday provision both in terms of food, activity and support. However, to date there is only one peer-reviewed paper published from data originating in the UK on the efficacy of summer holiday programmes. Hence, further research is required in order to effectively measure the efficacy of holiday programmes on a number of outcomes.

Published Research and Reports

1) No Kid Hungry – Summer is too expensive to ignore report June 2015
https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/resources/NKH_MicroReport_02_SummerHunger_Final.pdf

2) “The Cost of School Holidays” (2015) produced by What Works Scotland and University of Glasgow provides a literature review that examines evidence of the impact of school holidays.

<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/The-cost-of-school-holidays.pdf>

3) Kellogg’s produced a report titled, “Isolation and Hunger: The reality of the school holidays for struggling families” This report highlighted a number of key findings and case studies. The figures for the survey data were provided by YouGov and the evaluation framework for 12 pilot clubs was provided by Northumbria University.
<http://pressoffice.kelloggs.co.uk/Going-hungry-so-their-children-can-eat-Third-of-parents-on-lower-incomes-have-skipped-meals-during-school-holidays>

In addition to contributing to the Kellogg’s report Northumbria University published the findings in an academic paper titled, “A Qualitative Evaluation of Holiday Breakfast Clubs in the UK: Views of Adult Attendees, Children, and Staff”. This is the first academic paper published on this topic from data gathered in the UK.
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4534775/>

4) Accord Group Programmes (Housing Social Care) Holiday Kitchen produced an online report titled, “An evaluation of Holiday Kitchen 2014: Learning, food and play for families who need it most in the West Midlands” on 22 summer programmes delivered across Gt Manchester, W Midlands and Lincolnshire in collaboration with Birmingham City University. Further details about the scheme can be found in the following section. Report for 2015; forthcoming:

http://accordgroup.org.uk/filemanager/resources/hk_bcu_report.pdf



Forthcoming Research and Reports

5) ‘Cost of the School Holidays for Low Income families’ Child Poverty Action Group Scotland. Research in the city of Glasgow due to be published November 2015. Survey and focus groups with parents, children and voluntary sector. (John Dickie, CPAG Scotland).

6) ‘School Holiday Food Provision’, Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency. Needs assessment to tackle holiday hunger in the Royal Borough of Greenwich to be published November 2015 (Mel Taylor, GCDA).

7) Sheffield Filling the Holiday Gap project – This project has been evaluated by Sheffield Hallam University; report forthcoming. Further details of this project are provided the following section. (Dr Rachel Rundle, Sheffield Hallam University)

8) The Summer Holiday Brakes (2015) project has been evaluated by Northumbria University; report forthcoming. Further details of this project are provided in the following section.

9) Cardiff-Food and Fun (2015) project has been evaluated by Northumbria University; report forthcoming. Further details of this project are provided in the following section.

Holiday Provision Projects

The following testimonies from across the UK are a snapshot of different models of community action supporting children and families in need during the 2015 summer holiday period. These organisations are just a fraction of those involved in tackling the issue.

Cardiff – Food and Fun

Partnership working across Cardiff has resulted in a successful pilot to open five schools in deprived areas of the city during the summer holidays to provide children with a safe, familiar environment in which to run around, be creative, to learn and to share meals with their friends.

The Summer Holiday Enrichment Programme has been led by City of Cardiff Council Education Catering and Cardiff & Vale University Health Board (Public Health Team and Public Health Dieticians) under Food Cardiff. Partners in this joint initiative, which aims to enhance children's quality of life, reduce health inequalities and reduce learning loss during the summer holiday period, also include Public Health Wales, Sport Cardiff, and Schools.

"Determined partnership working has resulted in delivery of this programme in less than four months from conception to more than 100 children and families. The partnership aims to create a replicable template to address the issue that for 170 non-school days in the year, Free School Meal pupils cannot access their entitlement to a school lunch".

The summer pilot received visits from Assembly Members, Cabinet members and Welsh Government and was described by BBC Wales Today as "a lifeline for parents". (Katie Palmer, Food Cardiff)

Durham - Communities Together

During the summer holidays 17 churches from Durham Diocese provided activities such as drama, crafts, sports and cooking, often building on initiatives they have done in the past such as Messy Church of craft clubs. Over 3000 children and adults were fed a variety of food including picnics, BBQs and full two course homemade meals. Close working with local schools helped to ensure those who may struggle were invited. 'People in Sulgrave have very little to do and little money to take children on days away. Some families came every day and the children said it was the best week ever' - Volunteer in Sulgrave. The feedback highlighted the new relationships that were made and initiatives are developing in light of these, including more provision in holidays. (Val Barron, Communities Together Coordinator)



Gateshead – Filling the Holiday Gap Project

In Gateshead there are already some great projects that try to fill the holiday gap. Our aim as Council was to try to bring all those different organisations and projects together for a celebration event while at the same time building our own experience and volunteering capacity for launching our own projects next year. Our event was not just about the food provided by Gateshead School Catering Service and its staff who volunteered but about providing free access to leisure facilities and showcasing other partner organisations. These organisations included: Citizens Advice Bureau, Foodbank, Fairshare, Foodnation, Weight Watchers, Gateshead Learning and Skills, Library Service and Loan Shark Awareness. On the day we had over 260 parents and children for lunch and accessing swimming, archery, trampoline and soft play. A great success. (Michael Lamb, Gateshead Council)

Plymouth - The CATERed Big Summer Food Tour

Aim: "That a pilot is undertaken to assess the potential take-up, costs and benefits of providing a free daily meal to disadvantaged pupils outside of term-time". Every Tuesday and Thursday throughout August the CATERed team prepared and delivered 200 bagged meals to children and young people at various play-parks and locations across the City. The locations were chosen by reviewing data of benefit-based Free School Meal eligibility within localities and then adding

in levels of take-up for FSM and Universal Free School Meals (i.e. where take-up was lowest) but also trying to ensure a city-wide reach. All food ingredients and packaging was donated free of charge by our suppliers. All labour was provided free of charge by CATERed staff. Number of children received food across the month was 1,210. Positive press coverage in The Herald, BBC Radio Devon Breakfast Show, ITV West country News. CATERed worked with Radio Plymouth to promote the event and upcoming locations and also provided free face painting for children.

“It is not possible to under-estimate the socio-economic benefits of well-nourished children and young people throughout school closure periods not only for their health and well-being but also for engagement within their communities.”
(Brad Pearce, Managing Director CATERed)

Magic Breakfast 365

Magic Breakfast 365 ran in four Magic Breakfast partner schools over the summer holidays, reaching an average of 30 children in each school. The children received a healthy breakfast and also joined a cookery club, where they learnt basic cookery skills and made a healthy lunch to take home. The charity is in discussion with funders on how the model can be delivered across the 460 Magic Breakfast partner

schools. This is planned as soon as funding becomes available. (Ellie Williams, Magic Breakfast 365 coordinator)

London - FutureVersity

A small educational youth charity, based Tower Hamlets since 1995, FutureVersity runs an annual programme of free, high quality courses and activities for 11-25 year olds.

In summer 2015 FutureVersity ran its first ever Vacation Education programme, a 10 day multi-activity course for 75 young people aimed at tackling educational inequality by providing purposeful activities for vulnerable young people in school holidays.

FutureVersity recognised that many young people were coming to the courses hungry due to the absence of free school meals during the holidays. Thus throughout the Vacation Education programme there was an overall theme of supporting general wellbeing by providing healthy breakfasts and lunches.

FutureVersity hopes that there will be increased recognition of the difficulties faced by low income families in school holidays in providing adequate food and activities for children and increased support for the charities trying to facilitate this. (Chantal Toby, Volunteer Manager)

Birmingham - Holiday Kitchen

Founded in 2013, Holiday Kitchen (HK) is based upon New Economics Foundation Wellbeing principles, offering vulnerable families: learning, outdoor play, nutritious meals and food activities in Domestic Violence refuges, community and children's centres. This summer HK delivered 4400 quality assured activity days with meals through 22 local partners, and have more days plan for 2015. Ongoing programme development is being fostered through collaboration between social landlord Accord Group and the charity Family Action.

HK has been welcomed by families: “It has helped my family cope over the holidays. We've made and eaten new things, having breakfast has helped our routine. The children can play with other kids, and we have something to look forward to! I've also not had to waste money” (Parent).

Working with and through Family Support Teams, HK actively complements government priorities of safeguarding, Early Help, Troubled Families, poverty, healthy start, nutrition, physical activity, financial



inclusion, learning and achievement. Greater systematic engagement from local authority officers working in these areas would be welcomed.

(Dr Caroline Wolhuter, Head of Social Inclusion Ashram Moseley Housing Association Accord Group)

Norwich – FISH

FISH – Food (and Fun) In School Holidays – is a project within Norwich foodbank that was launched in 2014 in response to increased family referrals during the long school summer holidays. Working closely with local schools, children from low income families were invited to attend a local club and, one year on, 9 different areas around Norwich have run FISH seeing 281 different children and serving over 2,300 meals (not counting seconds or puddings!). FISH also wanted to put on free, fun activities to counter the potential for anti-social behaviour and because if food is scarce, it's likely that days out / entertainment will be too. Staffed entirely by volunteers and thanks to a grant from the Norfolk Community Foundation and donations from the public, businesses and supermarkets, a hot healthy dinner was followed by some great activities including a visit from Banham Zoo, a CSI investigation and a beatbox workshop. Debbie Buxton (Parent and Support Advisor): 'This club is the most important facility that I have found to support our families consistently during our holidays. I can't tell you how much the scheme means to me.' (Hannah Worsley, Norwich foodbank Project Manager)

Birkenhead – Feeding Birkenhead

'It has been a godsend having somewhere like this during the holidays', according to one mum whose child was one of the 2,058 who accessed Feeding Birkenhead's provision during the Summer Holiday.

Not only did the projects ensure hungry children were fed, and that they could access the same fun activities as their more fortunate peers, but the projects were able to establish contact with their families to begin a programme of longer term support.

Eight voluntary groups laid on 'food and fun' projects with free, universal access. The cost per child over the Summer Holiday was £14.13. Food was sourced via a mixture of FareShare, supermarket donations and the rescuing of surplus cereal from Kellogg's. Each project intends to resume its provision in the October half-term.

A next step to secure the longer term future of Feeding Birkenhead's school holiday provision is to

seek a permanent base in schools and community kitchens. (Frank Field, MP)

East Renfrewshire – Holiday Camp

East Renfrewshire Council have for the past 10 years offered a holiday school, held in two schools in the authority, at all extended school closures periods. The programme which provides meals for on average a 100 children per day and is supported by catering and sporting staff. It aims to:

- Ensures children who are entitled to free school meals continue to have access to a free healthy meal outside of the school term.
- Provides sport, physical activity and creative activities which promote health and wellbeing during the school holidays.
- Engages with vulnerable children during holiday times, ensuring a safe and nurturing environment as well as support from positive adult role models, who encourage them to make friends and play with others.

All of the above takes place whilst giving consideration to:

- Future funding
- Parental involvement: Links to Early Years Collaborative; coaching and volunteering opportunities; Adult Learning opportunities – healthy eating, cooking on a budget.
- Community Hub vision – one stop shop for families to access services
- More formal support from other council departments/services and evaluation with our partners. (Loraine Lawrie, Quality Manager, East Renfrewshire Council)

The Trussell Trust

'Holiday hunger is highlighted as a problem at a number of our Foodbanks across the UK. This summer 1,137 referrals were made to our Foodbanks specifically because people needed extra food to feed themselves and their children. Approximately 30 of our foodbanks offered extra holiday meal provisions this summer. During our research over the summer holidays we found a number of issues highlighting the absolute need for food in the school holiday. A lunch club ran in Southbank by Redcar Foodbank noticed that children were asking for food before lunch because they hadn't had any breakfast.

This led to them expanding to a breakfast and lunch club to meet the needs of the community. We're working to roll out holiday meal projects through our Foodbanks nationally to tackle the evident issue of holiday hunger, but more needs to be done, starting with a change in Government led policy.' (Lucy Williams, More Than Food Project Coordinator)

Sheffield – Filling the Holiday Gap Pilot

In summer 2015 three primary schools in Sheffield delivered a pilot programme of summertime activities and meals to over 60 children. The programme was jointly developed by the schools and Taylor Shaw, the local government contracted school meals provider, in line with "Filling the Holiday Gap" guidance for summertime provision; in each school the scheme ran for two days each week of the summer holidays.

Funding for staff time and activities was via the pupil premium with the food and kitchen staff being fully funded by Taylor Shaw. Children participated in sports, craft, photography, cooking as well as trips to local libraries and days out - each day the children were provided with a hot meal or packed lunch which they ate with their friends and school staff. "Those two days a week were everything to her; she didn't miss a day; she enjoyed everything" [Mum, daughter attended summer programme].

An evaluation of the programme is currently being undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University looking at the impact the programme has made to children and their parents, plus the operational issues in delivering the scheme over the holiday period. Initial findings show that parents valued the structure and social support the programme provided for their children. School staff report children being ready and enthusiastic for return to school in September, having made new friends and built confidence trying new activities over the summer.

In future, local government should do more to identify families most in need of holiday time support, in addition to mapping local holiday provision and evaluating whether it really meets the needs of vulnerable families. (Dr Rachel Rundle, Sheffield Hallam University)

Northern Ireland - Strabane Community Project

We have identified a large gap within our area with schools off on holidays, putting families under added pressure to feed their children. We rolled out a pilot programme over the holiday period not only offering breakfast but providing activities and learning for 17 families and 32 children to enhance the quality and



choices in their lives and reduce dependency on crisis intervention.

Importantly we are listening to what children and parents/guardians are saying and giving them the lead in this club and we are coming up with solutions and implanting programmes and initiatives that are not only crisis intervention, but preventative measures that tackle social exclusion and poverty.

"I can definitely say that my son's enthusiasm for getting involved in play has been fuelled doing different activities and trips. His confidence has definitely grown - how he feels about himself, and his new friends. He has really grown in confidence over the summer." (Parent of an 11 year old boy who had struggled to mix.) Parents also recognised that the breakfast club provided an invaluable place for kids to play and let off steam. (Ursula Gallagher, Foodbank and Breakfast Club coordinator)

MakeLunch

MakeLunch had 40 Lunch Kitchens open this summer, spread right across England and Scotland. Between them, these teams of volunteers were open for 388 days, with 681 volunteers serving 7,749 meals to 1,472 children. Of these, 11 were opening for the first time, having completed MakeLunch initial training during the summer term.

Parents/carers and children all benefit from the work of the Lunch Kitchens, with several comments about the difference it makes, not just in providing food, but also the social interaction with other families. One of the Lunch Kitchens in Luton worked closely with the school that ran a week of sports and drama activities for the children. A parent commented afterwards that this had made a significant difference to family life. "It's allowed my partner and I to continue working for another week before we've had to make childcare arrangements and plan for the impact this has on our family budget."

Our Ardeer, Ardrossan, Royston and Thurrock Kitchens have been participating in the initial evaluation pilot for the Brakes Meals & More programme, working with a researcher from the University of Northumbria to evaluate the effectiveness of the services we're providing. These Kitchens will soon be receiving the first round of the Brakes Meals & More funding and will continue to assist with the evaluation and research. We are now looking to roll out the Meals & More scheme to a further 10 Kitchens who will receive funding, volunteer support and activity materials. (Rachel Warick Founder)

The Holiday Hunger Task Group would like to thank all those individuals and organisations who contributed

testimonies and information about research and holiday provision activity to this update. We also would like to commend and acknowledge the efforts of the all who are involved in such projects up and down the UK many who are working in a voluntary capacity on meagre funding.

Conclusion and points for Government

In the summer of 2015 APPG on School Food Holiday Hunger Task Group members visited holiday provision projects across the UK. The visits were to support delivery, engage in research and to identify models of practice that could be replicated. It is clear to us that no one model fits all. What is also apparent is that funding and policy to support those organisations who are working on the front line is urgently needed. Resource by way of guidance, training and easily accessed information to address the multiple needs of children and families living in poverty that are compounded by school holiday periods must be forth coming to bring about change. We know that there is not only a growing awareness of this issue but also the will to support children and young people and particularly those eligible for free school meals with programmes in their own communities. There now needs to be a joined up strategic approach to help give children and young people access to life chances they are currently being denied. Wellbeing and achievement go hand in hand and for the next generation to thrive and become a success and healthy workforce of the future we must deliver services differently to tackle child food poverty in the UK.

We urge all UK government regions to support our call for:

- Funding for development of resources and training for organisations to deliver and support new and existing holiday provision programmes
- Research into scale of child hunger in the UK and its effect on learning
- Policy to support holiday provision programmes that include meals and enrichment activities

For further information contact Rob Bailey Secretariat APPG on School Food - rbailey@apse.org.uk

