

ENDING HUNGER IN THE HOLIDAYS



A FEEDING BRITAIN
REPORT

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Contents

Foreword -----	Page 2
Executive Summary -----	Page 3
Part One: Holiday provision in 2017-----	Page 6
Part Two: Why Holiday Provision Matters -----	Page 8
Part Three: Gaps in Current Holiday Provision-----	Page 17
Part Four: Moving Towards National Provision -----	Page 21
Support for the School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill -----	Page 22
What happens next? -----	Page 24
References -----	Page 25

This report was amended in January 2018 to update figures in the table on p6.

Foreword

Three million children at risk of hunger during their school holidays? Beggars belief, doesn't it? That in one of the richest countries in the world, *any* child should go hungry during the holidays, let alone three million of them. Holidays are meant to be fun, a time to play and explore and spend time with your pals, but for so many of our children and their families, poverty turns those weeks into a series of cruel choices. Do we eat or heat the house? Do we eat or go to the fun fair? Do I not eat so my child can?

Currently, there is no statutory provision for children in the holidays. Even those families entitled to free school meals do not get any extra support to feed their kids in the holidays. What help there is – and there is, thankfully, a lot – comes from the army of volunteers, community organisations, local authorities and others all across the country who have set up holiday clubs. They're amazing. They, literally, move mountains to ensure that as many kids as possible get a tasty and nutritious meal every day.

But, as this new report from Feeding Britain shows, we are still only scratching the surface. We are learning, too, how children who eat little and badly over the holidays start to suffer in terms of educational development. So this is more than just a simple act of kindness – feeding a hungry child during the school holidays – this is also a massive issue of inequality and compromised chances.

We cannot leave it to the voluntary sector and supportive local governments to cope with alone. It cannot be left to the lottery of chance or of postcode. We need to do something about it, and we need to do it now.

That is why we urge all of you to support Frank Field's School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill on January 19th. If you're an MP, please come to vote. If not, please urge your MP to show up. We need at least 100 MPs in the chamber to pass this bill into law. This a first crucial step towards ending holiday hunger for good. It cannot come too soon.



Rosie Boycott

Chair of the London Food Board

Trustee of Feeding Britain

Executive Summary

The scale of holiday food provision

Holiday clubs provide free meals and fun activities during the school holidays for children who may otherwise go without. They are operated by charities, community groups, local authorities, youth groups and others.

This report draws together figures from Feeding Britain and several other major holiday provision projects from around the UK. Together, these organisations provided over 190,000 meals to over 22,000 people during the summer and October half term holidays. This snapshot is a sample of the estimated 593 organisations running holiday clubs for school-aged children this summer.

While these numbers represent a laudable community effort, they are a mere drop in the ocean compared to the scale of the need. The hundreds of thousands of meals served still do not represent consistent coverage across the whole of the UK, and are not reaching all children who need help during the holidays.

Holiday clubs provide an urgently needed safety net to protect children from hunger and social isolation, but an incomplete one, and one that is increasingly strained.

Why does holiday provision matter?

Reducing hunger

First and foremost, holiday clubs protect children from hunger, and the catalogue of negative physical and mental health impacts it brings in its wake. Holiday clubs disproportionately serve children from lower income families and make the biggest difference in strengthening food security for the poorest families. They help charities identify people at risk, and ensure they get the support they need.

“In the holidays my mum doesn’t normally eat at all during the day. [Because of the holiday club] my sisters have gone to bed on full stomachs, and it has given Mum a chance to eat twice a day.”

Key facts

- 3 million children are at risk of hunger during the school holidays
- Children in poorer areas saw their spelling skills decline or stagnate over the summer holidays, taking weeks to make up the learning loss
- 19% of children under 15 live with someone who is moderately or severely food insecure
- 436,938 emergency food parcels distributed by the Trussell Trust in 2016-17 went to children
- The loss of free school meals during the holidays costs a family £30-40 per week

Reducing pressure on family budgets

Holiday clubs help to relieve the pressure on family food budgets, at a time when parents are faced with finding the money to cover the gap left by the loss of term-time free school meals. They can also help parents to continue working during the school holidays, and mitigate the prohibitive costs of holiday childcare.

The clubs also provide fun activities for children who might otherwise miss out, due to pressures on family budgets. These activities range from coding clubs to sports activities, arts and crafts, and trips to the seaside or skating rinks.

“These activity days have been a life saver and given my children something to look forward to- they keep asking when there are more.”

Educational achievement



Kitchen Social project, Paradise Park Children's Centre

Children who are hungry are less likely to flourish at school, and perform worse on maths and literacy tests than their peers who are learning on a full stomach. Studies from other countries have shown that children from lower socio-economic groups suffer disproportionately from summer learning loss, with the holidays exacerbating the achievement gap between rich and poor children. This reverberates through a child's life, leading to poorer educational achievement, life chances and job prospects.

For the first time, research from Northumbria University has shown that this learning loss is also seen in the UK, with children from lower socio-economic groups returning to school several weeks behind where they were at the start of the summer holidays on spelling tests.

By providing food and enrichment activities for children, holiday clubs can help to alleviate drops and stagnation in educational performance. In this way they can help to safeguard social mobility by preventing poorer children from falling further behind their richer peers during the holidays.

Combating social isolation

Holiday clubs provide valuable social interaction for children and parents, who might otherwise be lonely and isolated during the holidays. They also help volunteers feel more involved in their communities and help to build bridges between communities.

"This club has turned my life around, I'm normally sat alone when it's holidays."

Healthy eating and physical activity

Holiday clubs contribute to the fight against obesity and related health problems. They provide healthy, nutritious meals, and encourage children to try a wider range of foods than they may otherwise eat. Many of the clubs provided cooking activities and healthy eating education, for children and families.

"I learned how to be creative with food and tried so many dishes, like bean curry, which I would never have had before."

Holiday clubs also encouraged children to be more physically active, through formal sports sessions and more informal outdoor play, including gardening projects and active games.

Building skills and employability

As well as helping some parents stay in work over the summer, the clubs also provided opportunities for others to build up skills and experience that could help them into employment. Parents got involved as volunteers in the running of the clubs, benefiting from training and skills opportunities. Many parents have gone on to volunteer on a regular basis. Holiday clubs have provided valuable volunteering opportunities for people with multiple barriers to employment, including those with experience of homelessness, and one organisation is developing a training module to help unemployed parents to run holiday clubs.



Action Homeless volunteers, Leicester

Gaps in current holiday provision

That there is any holiday provision at all in the UK is testament to a small but growing band of organisations providing a last line of defence to protect children and families from going hungry during the holidays. Despite their efforts, there are gaps in provision and significant strains on the current set up which, impressive though it is, is also piecemeal, ad hoc, varied and often precarious.

The need vastly outstrips the current level of provision, and too many excellent holiday clubs are operating on a hand to mouth basis, with erratic and minimal funding.

Holiday provision is currently geographically patchy, with children subject to a lottery system as to whether there will be holiday clubs operating in their neighbourhood.

Provision is also not consistently available throughout the year, with half term and Christmas holidays often having fewer clubs running.

Inevitably, when the provision of support has fallen to those noble groups willing to step up and fill a gap, there is variation in the quality and standards of provision.

There are differences in the food provided, from snacks and sandwiches in some clubs, to sit down hot meals in others. Some clubs currently have resources and training to provide professional sports coaching, while others rely on volunteers to come up with free activities to entertain and inspire children.



"I do support the Bill proposed by Frank Field. It is shocking to consider the possibility that children in this country are going hungry during school holidays. I applaud the work being done by many local groups, not least the food banks who offer practical help needed, but this Bill will ensure local authorities have to take their responsibility seriously, and ensure good local partnership working to aim to prevent any holiday hunger."

***The Most Revd and Rt Hon Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury
President of Feeding Britain***

What is needed

Holiday club providers are doing their very best, and have achieved a huge amount on limited budgets and resources. It is time now for robust national structures which would ensure consistent coordination, put sufficient and reliable funding in place, and provide clear standards, guidance and training to support the extraordinary individuals and organisations providing services.

The School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill would give local authorities the legal duty, and the resources, to facilitate holiday meals and activities for children who would otherwise go without. It would pave the way for national standards and resources to help ensure consistency of provision, and stop individual groups having to reinvent the wheel on training and processes.

The Bill, which was presented to Parliament by Frank Field MP and has cross party support from 130 MPs, has its second reading on 19th January 2018.

Feeding Britain is calling on MPs to:

- Commit to being in the House of Commons on 19th January 2018 for the second reading of the Bill
- Review the evidence, talk to holiday clubs and vote for the Bill
- Ask the Prime Minister to take the Bill up as government legislation.

We are also asking individuals and community groups to write to their MPs, requesting that they support the Bill

Part One: Holiday provision in 2017

In 2017, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Hunger conducted an inquiry into 'holiday hunger'. Their report, *Hungry Holidays*, revealed the scale and human consequences of this social evil, highlighting that over 3 million children are at risk of going hungry in the holidays. It also drew attention to the extraordinary response from the charities, community groups, faith groups, local authorities and others who operate a network of holiday clubs providing food and fun to children who might otherwise go without.

A recent survey by Northumbria University mapped holiday provision around the UK in summer 2017.¹ It showed a small, but growing, number of clubs, reflecting the increasing scale of need around the country. Of the 837 organisations who completed the survey, 593 operated holiday clubs for school aged children, compared with 325 in 2016. Voluntary or community based groups and church or faith based groups together make up over half of all holiday club providers, while 111 local authorities reported they

delivered some form of holiday provision over the summer holidays.

We have pulled together data to suggest what this might represent in terms of reach. The table below is a snapshot of the support provided by selected holiday provision projects over the most recent school holidays, from Feeding Britain and other major providers who form an informal working group on holiday hunger.

These organisations together provided in excess of 190,000 meals over the 2017 summer and October half term holidays, reaching more than 22,000 people. There are many others around the country also working to protect children and families from hunger in the holidays, from housing associations to faith groups, local authorities and charities.

However, while these numbers represent a laudable community effort, compared to the scale of the need they are a drop in the ocean.

	Summer Holiday 2017		October half term 2017	
	No. meals	No. people	No. meals	No. people
Feeding Britain				
Barnsley	1,668	1,261*	454*	-
Bradford	2,145	635	377	222
Birkenhead	9,846	814	220	101
Cheshire West	834	834	393	393
Cornwall	3,000	-	-	-
Derbyshire	11,585	2,550*	1,585	210*
Leicester	11,000	900	-	-
South Shields	-	-	207	-
Sub total	40,078	6,994	3,236	926
Other providers				
Street Games	70,315	8,187		
Kitchen Social	10,000	1,800		
Trussell Trust	4,679	911		
SHEP Cardiff	8,382**	-		
Brakes Meals & More	38,000	3,900		
Dundee Bairns	19,637	-		
Sub total	151,013	14,798		
TOTAL	191,091	21,792		

* Estimated figure

**Corrected in January 2018 to reflect accurate data for Cardiff

The organisations currently working to combat holiday hunger, and the many thousands of meals they have served, do not represent consistent coverage across the whole of the UK, and are not reaching all children who need support and help throughout the holidays.

Even in this limited snapshot, there is huge diversity in holiday provision.

Structure

Some clubs were independent community groups or charities running holiday sessions within their existing projects. Other clubs were part of wider national holiday provision programmes, or were coordinated by local authorities.

Locations

The holiday club sessions ran in a wide variety of locations: schools, community centres, sports clubs, adventure playgrounds, children's centres, libraries, churches, food banks, leisure centres, youth clubs and parks.

Food

All the clubs included a food component, either breakfast, lunch, supper (or in some cases more than one meal), and often with the addition of fruit snacks. Some clubs provided a hot meal, others cold food or packed lunches. Some had self-service while others provided a sit-down family style meal with table service. Some clubs prepared food on-site, while others received food deliveries from outside. Some followed the School Food Standards and others were not able to.

Participation

Most of the clubs were open access, with some additionally proactively reaching out to families they knew to be in need via schools or community groups. Some were open to younger children only, some targeted young people and a very small number supported children with additional needs. Others encouraged parents and families to join the sessions, and included siblings who wanted to join but were technically outside the target age range.

Wider support for families

Some clubs were able to provide additional support to families, including advice services, advocacy for housing or benefits issues, and signposting and referral to other services. There were also opportunities for volunteering, training and skills development such as first aid and food handling. There was huge variation in whether this type of support is offered, and it is often precariously funded.

Activities

The clubs offered a range of activities in addition to the meals. These included sports, arts and crafts, circus skills, drama, coding, storytelling, cooking activities, gardening, fancy dress parties, discos, trips to the seaside, outdoor adventures, playgrounds, ice skating and more.

Funding

The funding for clubs is again a patchwork of different approaches. Funding comes from local and national trusts and foundations, private donations, local authority grants (mainly from public health funding), the commercial sector, proceeds of crime money, and public fundraising. While a small number of holiday clubs have been able to secure longer term funding, guaranteeing the clubs for 2-3 years, most clubs operate on a hand to mouth basis, and often have to find funding for each holiday. Many of the clubs keep their costs down by using good quality surplus food donated directly from supermarkets or provided by food surplus redistribution organisations.

There are excellent examples of holiday provision projects that have been supported by local authority school catering services for years, but even these are subject to budget cuts and have to make the case each year to keep this valuable community service in place.

This diversity in holiday provision accords with upcoming research by researchers at the University of Sheffield who found significant variation across holiday clubs, in terms of opening hours and days.ⁱⁱ

Part Two: Why Holiday Provision Matters

Reducing hunger

We know that children are going hungry during the holidays. Given we recognise the need to support poorer families during term-time with free school meals, what is likely to happen to those children during the holidays, when the financial pressures on their families are even greater but the extra family income is not there?

Academic research has shown that the absence of free school meals in the holidays increases the risk of food insecurity for these low-income families. Parents in food insecure households are likely to skip meals to provide food for their children, to purchase cheaper and unhealthier food during the summer holiday to make ends meet, and in some cases have no choice but to stop paying household utility bills or rent in order to purchase food for their children during the holidays.ⁱⁱⁱ

The University of Leeds recently conducted a survey of primary schools in Leeds, and found widespread concerns among teachers, child protection officers and school staff about children's food insecurity, both during term and during the holidays. The holidays were a particular concern, with the researchers finding that "holiday hunger is a widespread problem spanning all areas of Leeds". In the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods, 26% of schools report 'a lot' of children experiencing hunger over the school holidays. Even in the least deprived neighbourhoods, some children go hungry during the holidays.

This was noticed by teachers and those working closely with children:

"You can tell how much more the children eat on a Monday- only after two days at home. We see a difference in children after 6 weeks."
(Family Liaison Officer)

"Access to healthy food (or enough food) during holidays is a growing concern in our school. We have a number of families who are not eligible for pupil premium but who are struggling and hovering just above the breadline." (Headteacher)

The implications for children are significant. Research has shown that hunger and food insecurity in children are linked to poorer health, including a higher likelihood of serious and life-threatening health problems, and a higher incidence of hospitalisation, as well as a higher likelihood of emotional and behavioural problems, poorer social skills and a higher risk of being suspended from school.^{iv} A 2017 analysis of repeat food bank use highlights that:

"Alongside dietary considerations, experiences of food insecurity are also associated with increased risks of general health impairments in adults and children, alongside a range of chronic conditions including diabetes, overweight and obesity, HIV, asthma, migraines, and heart disease, and risk health behaviours. Experiences of food insecurity are also linked with impaired mental health in adults and children, alongside elevated suicide rates."^v

One of the most important and immediate impacts of holiday clubs, therefore, has been to ensure that children who might otherwise go hungry, have been able to eat well during the holidays.

The evidence is that, while many of the clubs are open access to reduce inequality, they predominantly serve low income families. Research by Northumbria University looked at the proportion of children attending holiday clubs who come from food insecure households. 42% of children came from households defined as 'food insecure' and 24% came from households that are food insecure with hunger.

The study found that households struggling with food security benefit the most from holiday clubs, pointing to their important role in mitigating household food insecurity. While all families felt that the holiday club helped them during the holidays, and that they would have spent more on food had the holiday club not been available, households that are food insecure would be otherwise less able to cope with the additional costs during the summer. The food at holiday clubs ‘disproportionately helps protect food insecure households from the negative consequences of rising food costs’.^{vi}

This is borne out by holiday clubs on the ground. Feeding Britain’s pilot in Leicester found that 59% of children sampled at the projects came from the 10% most deprived areas in the UK, and 78% came from the 30% most deprived areas. The majority of children using Trussell Trust holiday clubs received free school meals during term time.

The feedback from parents and people running the clubs confirm the important role they play in making sure children and their families have enough to eat.

“We had a 100% take up and little waste which showed it is needed. It’s better than junk food bought at local shops or no food at all, all day!” (Project Leader, Feeding Britain Leicester pilot)

“We provided pack lunches in a local park alongside youth workers. Four young people were identified by the youth workers whose parents send them out of the house for the day and they are not fed.” (Holiday club leader, Feeding Derbyshire)

“In the holidays my mum doesn’t normally eat at all during the day [Because of attending the holiday club] my sisters have gone to bed on full stomachs, and it has given mum a chance to eat twice a day.” (Young person, Trussell Trust holiday club)

Many of the clubs also provided wider support to help families struggling during the holidays. Many offered signposting and referral to other support services. Several had informal schemes where parents were offered items to take away at the end of the day.

Case study- Leicester

With funding secured from Public Health and Brakes Meals and More programme, Leicester City Council was able to fund meal provision in already existing play schemes located in areas experiencing the highest levels of deprivation. Over the summer months 11,000 meals were provided to approximately 900 children.

A local organisation, Action Homeless, alongside a team of 90 volunteers, worked with partners such as British Gas and Pret a Manger to prepare and distribute over 5,000 lunches. These were delivered to several adventure playground projects around the city, which provide activities for children during the holidays, primarily targeting areas of multiple deprivation. The wider community and voluntary sector added to this provision with an additional 6,000 meals.

Despite this scale of coordinated provision, there are still many children going without, and more funding, improved training of volunteers and robust networking within the community is crucial.



Highfields Playground, Leicester

Reducing pressure on household budgets

As well as ensuring children and families have enough to eat during the holidays, the clubs also contribute to reducing wider financial pressures on families. This is because they reduce the cost of putting food on the table, in addition to reducing costs in other areas such as entertainment and childcare. The average cost of holiday childcare is £124 per week in the UK, almost two and a half times as much per week as after-school clubs during term time.^{vii}

“This has been a life saver – especially towards the end of the holiday when funds are running out!” (Parent, Feeding Britain pilot Cheshire West)

“I didn’t have to spend my rent money to keep them [children] entertained.” (Parent, Trussell Trust Holiday club)

“The activities were very helpful to me due to everything else costing a small fortune.” (Parent, Feeding Britain pilot Cheshire West)

By reducing the pressure on budgets by providing food, as well as free fun activities, the clubs helped make sure that poorer children are able to gain as much enjoyment and fulfilment from the holidays as their more fortunate peers. Studies have shown that financial pressures during the school holidays have a more general impact on the quality of children’s lives, as families lack money for entertainment, socialising and educational or developmental activities.^{viii}

The importance of this cannot be overestimated. Teachers report that, unlike their richer peers, poorer children returning to school are often unable to share any special activities from the holidays, which can be a source of stress and shame.

A survey of parents and guardians of children coming to Trussell Trust holiday clubs, found that 86% said it made a difference to what they and their children could do during the holiday. The sense of relief from parents at

being able to offer their children fun activities when they otherwise may have missed out, was palpable.

“These activity days have been a life saver and given my children something to look forward to – they keep asking when there are more!” (Parent, Feeding Britain Pilot Cheshire West)

“Because it shows people care, realize people can be on a tight budget and allows you to come to something with your child that benefits both of you.” (Parent, Trussell Trust Holiday club)

Case study- Cheshire West

Holiday food and fun activities are coordinated by the Feeding Britain pilot, “the Welcome Network” across Cheshire West and Chester, with active participation from community organisations, local businesses, faith groups, social enterprises, and volunteers.

Over the summer holidays and October half term 1,227 children and families received hot meals or packed lunches, and took part in fun filled activities. By bringing together a wide range of people to both provide and take part in food and fun clubs, the group aspire to build a community network that is inclusive, supportive, and life changing.



Family! Food! Fun! Activity day, Wolverham Community Centre, Ellesmere Port

Educational attainment



Kitchen Social project, Paradise Park Children's Centre

Children who are hungry are also less likely to flourish at school. A recent global survey of primary school students found that 25% of students in England reported feeling hungry every day or nearly every day, and 44% reported feeling hungry sometimes. There was a direct relationship between the frequency of arriving at school hungry and average reading achievement: students in England who felt hungry every day, or nearly every day, scored 45 points lower on average in reading tests than their peers who never reported feeling hungry.^{ix}

By the end of primary school, children receiving free school meals are significantly less likely to obtain the highest scores in Maths and English than other children.^x There is evidence that, school holidays, and in particular the long summer break, have an additional adverse effect on the educational attainment of poorer children. Pioneering research from the USA shows that children from lower socioeconomic status (SES) households lose skills and knowledge, while higher SES households gained.^{xi}

Children from lower SES families in the USA start school behind children from higher SES families, and the educational gap in attainment continues to grow with each summer holiday.

In the UK, a similar gap is seen:

“Children from low SES families in Britain start their educational career behind their peers from high SES families. The gap is evident at age three and widens by the age of five and expands at a faster rate in primary school (5-11 years) than secondary school, but poorer children still go on to perform less well in GCSE examinations at age 16 compared to children from higher SES families. Good grades in GCSE exams are strong predictors of post 16 destination. As with American children, this impacts on their life course and increased likelihood of following a lower level academic route at post 16 years of age and decreased likelihood of attending university and ergo poorer employment prospects”.^{xii}

Shinwell and Defeyter from Northumbria University have recently conducted one of the first studies to examine the impact of summer holiday learning loss in the UK. The study looked at learning outcomes for children in low SES areas who did not attend holiday clubs. Following the summer break, children's spelling skills declined, or at the very least stagnated. While children did make up this loss after 7 weeks of teaching, “the first few weeks of school are negatively affected by learning loss as children first have to catch up to accommodate lost knowledge and skills”.



Holiday Food and Fun club, Cheshire West

The study suggests that holiday clubs, which offer educational or enrichment activities alongside meals, may be an effective means of providing children with educational activities across the summer, which in turn may alleviate any drop or stagnation in educational performance.

Holiday clubs also reported benefits for getting children ready to start school, or to make transitions to new stages after the summer.

*“[One of the Dad’s attending the club] noted that his 7-year-old loses confidence when he first starts back in September. Dad felt that the summer school holiday food programme maintains his child’s confidence and familiarities associated with the continuation of attending school out of term time.”
(Feeding Derbyshire project)*

“Great to see the children developing – one used a knife and fork for the first time to cut up her own dinner, another tried something new, and another helped bring the dirty plates back into the kitchen. It felt like family life rather than an institution, and that makes all the difference, I think.” (Make Lunch Volunteer)^{xiii}

Case study – Barnsley

Over the summer holidays and October half term Barnsley Council supported the coordination of holiday activity schemes in the Dearne, Central, and North areas, at 11 different venues, providing over 2,000 meals with activities.

The scheme was supported by Feeding Britain with funding from the Scurrah Wainwright Charity, and with assistance from the wider community, including donations of food and services from churches, community organisations, supermarkets, family centres, and local volunteers.

The holiday activities with food provision took place in libraries, churches, a community association childcare centre, and other community centres, and offered a wide range of activities including picnics, storytelling, science workshops, crafting, cooking, community lunches, and tea parties.

Healthy eating



Fruit Fun offer, Together Middlesbrough

Diet and nutrition among children is a critical issue for their health, development and future well-being. In 2015-16, over 1 in 5 children in Reception, and over 1 in 3 children in Year 6 were measured as obese or overweight.^{xiv} Obesity, and its related health problems, are strongly linked to poverty.^{xv}

Holiday clubs provide an opportunity for children to try a wider range of healthy food than they might otherwise eat at home.

“My child has eaten better being here than at home and tried different things, as he is around other children and they all eat at the same time. It’s great.” (Parent, Feeding Derbyshire project)

“I learned how to be creative with food and tried so many new dishes, like bean curry, which I would never have had before.” (Young person, Kitchen Social project, London)

“I tried new food I haven’t eaten before - and I liked it.” (Young person, Trussell Trust holiday club)

Projects also reported that the benefits in healthy eating and cooking had impacts outside the holiday clubs themselves. Kitchen Social found that the cooking skills that parents and carers had developed through the projects in turn helped with family budgets and ensured more nutritious meals were made at home.

Exercise and physical activity

The holiday clubs also helped to boost children’s physical activity levels. This includes formal sports sessions, but also increasing physical activity through outdoor play, trips to the seaside and to parks, and gardening activities. Parents and carers at several clubs reported that their children would otherwise have spent time in sedentary activities.

“My grandchildren got to mix with other kids and away from tv and computer games.” (Grandparent, Feeding Britain pilot Cheshire West)

“It’s good to see my children making new friends, being active and eating healthy food as at home they just watch TV and eat junk food. The programme also helped us as a family.” (Parent, Kitchen Social project, London)

“We live in a high-rise building and being at the club enables the children to have fun in a safe outdoor play area... wished we had heard about it earlier, we would have turned up every day.” (Parent, Trussell Trust holiday club, Southwark)



A&M Summer Camp Glasgow

Helping children and families access support

The holiday clubs represented a safe space for children and families, and allowed children and families to build up strong relationships with volunteers and project workers. The clubs were able to identify children or families who may be really struggling and in need of additional support. Kitchen Social, which works with some of the most deprived communities in London, found that the projects “provided a safe environment for youth workers to engage with young people in a ‘family’ setting; allowing them to identify and support those children most at risk or with needs”.

Significantly, it is not only younger children who may be at risk:

“We had an 18-year-old living in a hostel and noticed she was eating the available food with appetite; this grabbed our attention and we discovered the difficult situation she was living in and her food insecurity. We assisted her assuring she gets help through the correct services.” (Youth worker, Kitchen Social project, London)

Many clubs involve parents, as volunteers, or through joining their children in activities and meals. The ability to build longer term relationships also meant that they are likely to be more open to discussing their problems and accepting help than they would be in a more formal setting. Holiday clubs provide an opportunity to help people resolve underlying issues and to signpost people to further support.

“It allowed us to get to know other volunteers along with some of our clients. In each case a relationship, at some level, developed. Many clients spoke freely of their concerns and worries in the time available so that suggesting signposting along with other practical suggestions were given.” (Holiday club manager, Trussell Trust holiday club)

Case study- South Shields

Holiday club providers in South Shields operated over the summer holidays and October half term, and plan to continue provision over the winter break. Funding came from the Brakes Meals and More programme and the clubs were implemented by a local charity, the Key Project. Over the October half term one club alone provided 50 children with a packed lunch, and sent them home with a “broth bag”. Each bag contained a recipe, stock cube, carrots, swede, leeks, potatoes and lentils, and were welcomed as an easy way for parents to get their kids around the table for a warm and nutritious meal.

Another holiday club was focused on provision of food and fun for asylum seekers and refugees- an all too often hidden aspect of hunger in the community.



Holiday Food and Fun club, The Key Project, South Shields

Combating social isolation

The holiday projects played an important role in reducing social isolation, providing social interaction and building social skills for the children who participated.

“This club has turned my life around, I’m normally sat alone when it’s holidays. Club is really good, it helps families that can’t afford food or activities. Kids get to socialise. I’m now looking at doing an apprenticeship in Bricklaying and getting supported at school to do that.” (Young person, Feeding Derbyshire project)

This positive impact was not limited to children. Parents or carers in many cases attended the clubs along with their children, providing a valued opportunity to meet other parents.

“The day gave me a chance to meet other mums in the area and made me feel less alone in the holiday – a brilliant event with lots of lovely food!” (Parent, Feeding Britain Cheshire West pilot)

A single mum said how nice it was to have some adult conversation. One mum with 2 special needs children who came along with her keyworker said that she doesn’t go out usually as the children find it hard to cope – she said the club was a ‘Godsend’. (Holiday Club Manager, Trussell Trust)



Holiday Food and Fun Club, Cheshire West

At a wider community level, too, the clubs can help to build connections. Most of the projects, while targeted in areas of multiple deprivation, were open access, meaning that children and families have an opportunity to come together.



Craft activity at St James Centre, Birkenhead

Some, like projects within Feeding Britain’s pilot in South Shields, enabled youth workers to engage hard to reach families, including families from the traveller community and refugee families. For the latter, when children returned to school, they were reportedly able to participate with more confidence in school activities around festivals they had learnt about during the holidays, such as Halloween and Bonfire Night, and their parents were able to engage with their school work on these topics.

For volunteers, too, the holiday clubs provided an opportunity to meet new people and feel more connected to their communities.

“I think things like the Lunch Kitchen mean we all become more human. Rather than acting like cogs in a machine, we all give, we all receive, and we become a community.” (Make Lunch Volunteer)^{xvi}

Building skills and employability

As well as providing valuable social interaction, parents often got involved in volunteering to help with the running of clubs. This made sure clubs were appropriately designed and run, and also helped parents to develop skills and experience. Parents reported feeling more confident as a result of their involvement in the clubs, helping them to look ahead to training and employment.

“We had a very successful summer and what made it so successful was that 4 mums got very much involved. They came almost every day and ran the lunch packing side of things as well as serving at tables. They were a huge help and made a few changes of their own which really helped the smooth running of the club. We have asked all 4 of them to be trustees of the Breakfast Club and will co-opt them at our meeting next week. They have already come up with new ideas for next year and have begun to look into funding for a day out at the beach.” (Project Leader, Feeding Derbyshire project)

“I initially attended as a parent with my child to the club. I now volunteer and make up the food bags and hand them out. My child helps out too and has been around doing a survey of activities today. It’s great it gives me something good to do, I meet new people and gets me out of the house. I am going to look into doing some training and would like to do first aid.” (Parent volunteer, Feeding Derbyshire project)

“I decided to join a course here and become a regular volunteer at the children's centre.” (Parent, Trussell Trust holiday club)

PhD research at the University of Bristol explored the motivation and impact of holiday club volunteers from faith backgrounds. It found that volunteering provides an important benefit to volunteers, not just to the traditional beneficiaries of the project they are serving.^{xvii}



Holiday Food and Fun Club, Bradford

Some holiday clubs are more formally working to build skills and employability for parents and volunteers. Feeding Britain’s pilot in Leicester used an innovative model to provide lunches to children at projects around the city. A charity, Action Homeless, recruited volunteers to prepare lunches which were delivered to adventure playgrounds in deprived areas of the city, which had been running holiday clubs for many years and had good relationships with families, but had previously been unable to provide a food offer. As well as positively impacting children at the holiday clubs, the project evaluation showed positive impacts on the volunteers themselves, some of whom had experienced homelessness. Volunteering helped them to build confidence, develop new skills, and feel a sense of pride that they were contributing to others in the community.

In London, Kitchen Social is currently looking at developing a training module with Havering Adult Education College to support unemployed parents to run holiday clubs, enabling them to gain skills and confidence, and improving their employment prospects.

Part Three: Gaps in Current Holiday Provision

That there is any holiday provision at all in the UK is testament to the dedication, resourcefulness and hard work of a small but growing band of charities, community groups, local authorities, businesses and others, and many thousands of volunteers. They provide a last line of defence to protect children, and their families, from going hungry during the holidays.

But despite their efforts there are gaps in provision, and significant strains on the current set up which- impressive though it is- is also piecemeal, ad hoc, varied, and often precarious.

Lambie-Mumford and Sims at the University of Sheffield recently conducted a review of holiday and breakfast club provision, which highlighted the importance of a statutory entitlement to holiday provision.^{xviii}



Frank Field visiting Kitchen Social Project at Paradise Park Children's Centre in London

The need outstrips the level of current provision

Feeding Britain and other organisations offering holiday provision around the UK are only scratching the surface.

Brakes, a major food wholesaler, has provided over 38,000 meals to children through holiday clubs supported by their Meals and More programme. So far in 2017 those meals have supported 3,900 children. However, Brakes have calculated that this represents less than 0.01% of children living in poverty. Even their ultimate goal to reach 25,000 children would represent less than 1.5% of children in poverty.

The Children's Health Fund awards grants to children's organisations around the UK twice a year. Following the APPG on Hunger's representations, the Fund began investing in holiday food provision in 2016. In their latest funding round the scale of need dramatically exceeded the funding available. They were able to fund only 2% of the applications submitted:

"It is clear from the number of applications submitted to us and the story they are telling, that the scale of the need is beyond the scope of one or even many funders... In order to meet the demand for just the applications we have received in the last funding round, we would have had to have nearly 50 times as much funding available to distribute."

At a local level, too, the need in many places overtakes provision. When the Key Project and Feeding Britain recently established a new holiday club in a deprived area of South Shields, the organisers had been expecting perhaps 20-30 children to turn up. On the first day, they saw nearly three times that. Similarly, the manager of a Trussell Trust holiday club noted that:

"Living in a town with pockets of high deprivation, I knew the need in our town was there, and this was shown by the number who

were referred to us by just one referrer-double what we could accommodate if they all came to one session.” (Holiday club manager, Trussell Trust holiday club)

Given the pressures on clubs, it may seem an obvious solution to restrict access to target only those children from the very poorest backgrounds who are in the most need of support and who most benefit from the holiday clubs. However, researchers from Northumbria University, who investigated the impacts of holiday clubs on food insecurity, “caution against the segregation of children from insecure households” because of the risks of stigma if clubs come to be defined as a service for the poor.^{xix}

Holiday club providers are acutely conscious of the risk of being perceived as services for poor children, and are careful to ensure parents are treated with dignity, so as not to stigmatise. The provision of activities, alongside food, and the openness to children from all backgrounds, help to ensure social equity and provide a significant boost to children’s life chances. It is important that levels of funding are secured to ensure that they can continue to do so.

Provision is geographically patchy

The survey by Northumbria University mapped holiday provision around the UK in summer 2017, and found 593 organisations providing holiday clubs for school age children. The survey pointed to the unevenness of provision and significant gaps. 18% of organisations reporting holiday clubs were located in the North East of England, and 13% in London, with only 2.6% in the East of England.

There is also a need to look more closely at the inconsistency of provision in different types of communities. Rural areas, for example, are often less well served, partly because of the transport barriers and the dispersed nature of communities.



Sharrow Community Forum Tea and Fun at the Highfield Adventure Playgroup with RJF Sheffield

Provision for children with special needs or disabilities

The Family and Childcare Trust point to the particular difficulties for families with children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). The 2017 Holiday Childcare Survey revealed that one in six local authorities in England report they do not have sufficient holiday childcare for this group.^{xx}

While some clubs are working hard to ensure they are accessible to children with special needs, specialist provision appears to also be a gap across holiday food and fun clubs, highlighting the importance of properly coordinated and targeted provision. It is important that local authorities with the resources and capacity to provide for SEND children are directly involved in holiday provision across the country.

Provision is not consistent through the year

There are also gaps in provision at different times of the year. Much of the focus of activity and funding is on the summer holidays. These are the longest holidays and there is a rationale for targeting limited resources at the period of likely highest need overall. However, the shorter Christmas, Easter and half term holidays are still periods of stress and need for struggling families, and at these times there is significantly less provision. The Christmas holidays bring particular challenges, as organisations or venues may be closed, and it can be more difficult to recruit a reliable roster of volunteers. There is also the frequently reported issue of volunteer and staff fatigue, and the need to give workers and volunteers a break over Christmas.

Across Feeding Britain's 14 pilot areas, for example, at least 8 had some holiday provision over the summer holiday. This dropped to 5 areas that were able to sustain this during the October half term, and even fewer are currently likely to be able to run holiday clubs over Christmas.



Holiday Food and Fun Club, Cheshire West

Pressure on organisations and volunteers

One of the challenges for organisations is the need to rely on volunteers to run the clubs. While holiday clubs are enthusiastic about the projects they are running and are clear about the benefits, many also point to the

challenges, the resource intensity and the sheer hard work that is currently falling on them. Volunteer fatigue was raised as an issue, not only because of the hard work, but also because of the mental strain of seeing the acute level of need among families and hearing harrowing stories of children affected by poverty and hunger.

Many of the clubs running holiday provision across the Feeding Britain network reported struggling under the pressure to deliver, the practical difficulties, and the resources required to make the clubs a success, particularly for clubs running sessions throughout the long summer holiday. The Trussell Trust found similar feedback from their holiday clubs:

*"It was a good experience and we are glad we did it, but it is not as easy as it may seem."
(Trussell Trust holiday club manager)*

"Our main challenge was space. It was also difficult to know how many were going to turn up despite having registered. The amount of admin required was a lot more than I expected – next time I plan to ask another volunteer to oversee the admin at least in part. Gathering enough volunteers and skilled volunteers e.g. with first aid training/ experience of working with children." (Trussell Trust holiday club manager)

Variation in the quality of provision

During term time, considerable resources and support go into ensuring children at risk of hunger get a free school meal. Currently, when this falls away, it is left to a patchwork of committed individuals, local groups, charities and local authorities to try and fill the gaps.

The clubs that provide support to families during the holidays are doing the very best they can with limited resources. Pressures on funding, training and skills, and often a reliance on surplus food donations, however,

can mean that there can be a wide variation in the quality of service provided. There is a variation in the food provided, with some clubs offering snacks and sandwiches, while others are able to offer a full cooked meal that meets national school food standards. Evaluations of holiday programmes have pointed to the challenges clubs face in ensuring the food provided is always as healthy, balanced and nutritious as they would like.

On the activities, too, there is variation. Some clubs, most notably Street Games projects, are rigorous in ensuring the activities meet national guidelines for physical activity in children, but this comes at a cost in terms of staff, volunteers, and training. Other clubs offer fun activities, including active games and outdoor activities, but they may not meet formal guidelines.

These findings lend weight to the importance of robust national structures which would ensure consistent coordination, funding and resources for clubs across the country, and which would provide clear standards, guidance and training to support those extraordinary individuals and organisations who are willing to step up and contribute to eliminating holiday hunger.

Part Four: Moving Towards National Provision

In 2017, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Hunger called for national action to tackle holiday hunger, through:

- A statutory requirement for local authorities to facilitate and coordinate the delivery of free school meals during the holidays.
- An adequate funding base, combined with an invitation to businesses to add to this base, to enable local authorities to meet their statutory duties. It was recommended that 10% of the Healthy Pupils Capital Programme funded by the Sugary Drinks Levy (£41.5 million) should be allocated to holiday provision.
- National minimum standards from the Department for Education, for the safe and effective delivery of free meals and fun for children in school holidays.
- A national portal to enable individuals and organisations delivering free meals and fun for children during school holidays to receive the training, information, advice and guidance they need to at least meet the national minimum standards.
- A robust research base to guide the ongoing development of projects.
- The measurement of hunger amongst children during school holidays.

In September 2017, Frank Field MP presented the School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill to Parliament. The Bill, which has cross-party support from 130 MPs, will have its second reading on Friday 19th January 2018.

What MPs can do

Feeding Britain is urging MPs to support the Bill, given its importance to:

- children and families who risk going hungry without holiday clubs
- teachers and school staff who worry about their pupils when they leave at the end of each term
- volunteers, charity workers and local authorities who work so hard to protect children from hunger during the holidays
- businesses and generous individuals who wish to unite behind a national programme.

We are calling on all MPs to:

1. Commit to being in the House of Commons on Friday 19th January 2018 for the second reading of the School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill.
2. Review the evidence, talk to their constituents, talk to experts and consider whether they can vote in favour of the Bill on 19th January.
3. Talk to Ministers and the Prime Minister to request the Bill is taken up as government legislation to give it the best chance of becoming law

How individuals and communities can help

Please visit the Feeding Britain website (www.feeding-britain.org) to see if your MP has already signed up to support the Bill. If not, please contact them to let them know how important this issue is to you, and ask them to be in Parliament to vote for the Bill at its second reading on 19th January 2018.

Support for the bill

There is considerable support for the Bill across different sectors, including local authorities, businesses and holiday club providers.

The Archbishop of Canterbury

"I do support the Bill proposed by Frank Field. It is shocking to consider the possibility that children in this country are going hungry during school holidays. I applaud the work being done by many local groups, not least the food banks who offer practical help needed, but this Bill will ensure local authorities have to take their responsibility seriously, and ensure good local partnership working to aim to prevent any holiday hunger."

The Most Revd and Rt Hon Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

Local authorities

"Derbyshire County Council has played a key role in coordinating and delivering holiday provision to support children and families in areas of high multiple deprivation across Derbyshire, in partnership with a wide range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations as well as local businesses. Local authorities play an important and pivotal role in coordinating provision, pulling together key partners and ensuring high standards are maintained in the provision of food and activities which support those families in most need across the local authority area during school holidays. However, to continue to meet the needs requires a sustained approach which requires secure, long term funding."

As such we would welcome the School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill, as it would provide an essential framework for local authorities and their partners and would crucially ensure that the resources are in place. Derbyshire County Council are ready and willing to continue supporting this critical role to ensure children have access to food

and activities during the holidays, but we look to national government to commit to supporting this key piece of work to help us continue to support our most vulnerable communities."

Councillor Carol Hart, Cabinet Member for Health and Communities, Derbyshire County Council

"The issue of food poverty in Leicester is one that the Council takes very seriously. This summer, our holiday food project provided nearly 11,000 nutritious, healthy lunch options to children from our most deprived areas. It has proved immensely valuable to families who struggle financially to feed their children throughout the school holidays, with parents going without food themselves in many cases. The project was funded by public health, local businesses and charitable funders and whilst it was extremely successful, we were not able to meet all of the need that exists in Leicester."

There is a real need for national support to ensure that holiday provision can be consistently provided to meet the need. We would welcome the School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill, as it would provide an essential framework for local authorities."

Councillor Sarah Russell, Deputy City Mayor with responsibilities for Children, Young People's Services, Leicester City Council

"Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council has worked with partners to support the delivery of school holiday activities for families with food provided in areas of highest deprivation in the borough. The Local Authority's involvement has largely been to support delivery by building upon existing local provision, offering a platform for providers to communicate and share experiences and resources, and to bid for funds to add to locally generated donations from Ward Alliances, churches, supermarkets and other local partners."

Providers tell us that a predictable and consistent funding source would help to ensure consistency in terms of food availability, and the programme of activities offered, and improve accessibility for families

The proposals in the School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill, would provide a framework and resources that would support local authorities to work with partners to co-ordinate delivery according to evidence of need across the borough, and to monitor and evaluate the delivery of this support."

Councillor Jenny Platts, Chair of the Anti-Poverty Delivery Group and Cabinet Member for Communities, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Business voices

"We at Brakes are really proud of what we, and our network of supporters, have been able to achieve in providing holiday clubs for children, particularly in deprived areas, all around the country. However, we know that even though we've quadrupled our programme to 154, well on the way to our 500 club goal, we are still only reaching a tiny percentage of the estimated 4 million children who need this kind of holiday support.

There is much more that industry can do, and wants to do, to help end holiday hunger. Brakes have put considerable investment and time into developing our Meals and More programme, but not all businesses have the capacity to do so. Having a clear framework for holiday provision set out by local authorities would make it much easier for businesses to see where they can contribute and to get involved in their communities. We believe that the School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill would provide this framework, and would urge MPs to vote for it in January."

Pem Hulusi, Programme Manager, Brakes

"It's children like "Peter", a young boy we met at our holiday hunger club, who inspire us to highlight the plight of children in poverty. During our first lunch Peter pushed his spaghetti bolognese around his plate. So I asked him, "Aren't you hungry? With a quiet softly spoken voice he looked at me and said, 'I don't know what it is'. I energetically replied, 'It's spaghetti bolognese just like your mamma makes!'. His words back to me were so heart breaking: 'Sorry Mummy has never made this for me - we do not really have a lot at home...' These words show why holiday programmes can make a difference to children in poverty. And the truth is that in every town there is a "Peter" that can benefit from meals during the holidays from schemes like Meals& More/Make Lunch.

As a business, it was easy for us to contribute because there was a credible programme that we could support, and we knew the quality standards and partnerships were robust. If there were similar programmes all around the country that companies could easily get involved with, I have no doubt we would see more businesses like ours supporting programmes to help children in the holidays."

Geoffrey Druce, Sales Director, Three Oceans, Brakes Meals and More partner

Holiday club providers

"The school holidays can be a difficult time for families, with foodbanks seeing greater numbers of children needing help. Whilst more and more foodbanks are running holiday food and activity clubs to ease the pressure off parents and make sure children get a nutritious meal, there is only so much volunteer-led projects can do. We're supporting the Holiday Hunger bill to make sure there is support in place to make sure parents have somewhere to turn during the holidays."

Garry Lemon, Head of External Affairs, The Trussell Trust

“Food is a basic human right. If a child is assessed as needing support while at school their needs should not be ignored in the holiday period, when all the good work at school can be undone. We feel that all UK parliaments should follow the example set by Wales and set aside funding to address the issue of holiday hunger and food insecurity. We would like to see central government explore the creation of a statutory responsibility for the issue and the School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill is a welcome step in the right direction.”

Matthew Patten, Chief Executive, Mayor’s Fund for London

“Children and their families require legislative change to bring about a transformation in their quality of life. We would urge MPs to consider supporting the holiday food bill and help bring this transformation about.”

Gloria Davies-Coates, Children’s Health Fund

“Fit and Fed has been able to do a lot in its first year; but although community interventions need to be at the heart of any response to holiday hunger, national problems requires ambitious solutions. At the heart of this must be proper resourcing to make sure we can reach all those children and young people in need. The School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill could be an important first step in making this happen”

David White, Executive Director, Street Games

What happens next?

Provided the Bill gains sufficient support at its second reading on 19th January 2018, it will continue its progress through Parliament, ideally with government support, to become law.

Following this, it will then be time to put the other supporting recommendations into practice, to ensure that local authorities, and the voluntary sector partners they work with, have the funding, resources and support they need to deliver against their new statutory duties.

There is much existing training, guidance and good practice that can be scaled up and made available to support local authorities and partners around the country.

Charities, schools, local authorities, businesses, funders and researchers around the UK are ready and willing to help make national holiday provision a reality.

Leadership from MPs is needed to set the process in motion, by creating the legislation necessary to provide a proper national framework.

There is an army out there waiting to take up the baton.

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