

CAMDEN SUMMER HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME: LEGACY REPORT

Georgia Box

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**YOUNG
CAMDEN
FOUNDATION**

www.youngcamdenfoundation.org.uk



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Camden Council for giving me the opportunity to intern with them this summer. I have learned a great deal about the operations of local government and cannot think of a better place to have started my early career in public policy. I would like to thank Keith Morgan, the CEO of the Young Camden Foundation, and the rest of the team, for guiding and supporting me throughout. Thank you to the delivery partners, community organisations, Cabinet members, Council staff, parents, children, and everyone who gave up time to talk to me about the programme, thereby making this report possible. And most of all, thank you to everyone who has contributed, and continues to contribute, to the fight against holiday hunger. My hope is that this report will highlight the incredible impact that your work has on the lives of low-income families, and the continued need for perseverance, collaboration, and investment.



Georgia Box

Policy Intern

FOREWORD

3 million children in the UK are at risk of going hungry during the school holidays. With the loss of free school meals during term time, and the extra cost of childcare during the holidays, families already struggling with low budgets find it difficult to feed their children. Since 2019, Young Camden Foundation has been shining a light on the issue of holiday hunger. We have been working with our members to build an infrastructure of support for children and young people experiencing food insecurity. We started by setting up holiday hubs in the local community that offered food and some form of physical and enriching activity during the summer holidays. Holiday hubs work as a means of tackling holiday hunger because they are community-led, and the settings are entrenched in the local community. In addition to tackling food insecurity, they can reduce social isolation, anti-social behaviour and increase learning. They can give parents the option to stay in employment or increase their hours, and they provide a reliable and essential source of nutritious food.

We were so pleased to be chosen as partners by London Borough for Camden to develop the HAF programme for Camden. With support from so many of our extraordinary members and partners we have managed to deliver a large-scale response to a complex issue. By supporting 2,300 children and young people so far this year we have demonstrated both the need and the shared endeavour to tackle holiday hunger in Camden.

No child should be going hungry in the UK. This report highlights the scale of the problem and evaluates the HAF programme as a local response.

Keith Morgan

Chief Executive Officer



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ACRONYMS

HAF - HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD

FSM - FREE SCHOOL MEALS

DFE - DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

YCF - YOUNG CAMDEN FOUNDATION

SEND - SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINDINGS:

- There were spaces for 2,300 children to partake in Camden's Summer HAF Programme.
- There were 37 providers across 52 sites.
- At least one meal per day was provided to each child. Food that was cooked on site, with the involvement of the children, received higher levels of satisfaction than food from external providers. The children were also involved in nutritional education activities.
- The children took part in enriching activities, from sports to arts and crafts, theatre to farm work.
- The new Coordinate Sport booking system worked well.
- New partnerships were formed within the children and young people's sector which will likely last beyond the HAF Programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Department for Education should make it mandatory for schools to offer their facilities during the school holidays for future programmes.
- There should be a reconsideration of the 4x4x4 model as both parents and children would benefit from a full day of provision, rather than four hours.
- Future programmes should also be accessible to non-FSM children who are at risk of going hungry during the holidays.
- HAF needs to be communicated better to ensure that all those eligible for the programme know of its existence.
- Greater focus on SEND inclusion.
- Digital assistance needed for less tech savvy parents who may struggle to access the booking system.



2,300

spaces for children to partake in Camden's Summer HAF Programme

1. INTRODUCTION

My name is Georgia Box and I have recently graduated from UCL with a first-class degree in the History and Politics of the Americas. I am from a low-income family in the West Midlands, and I am acutely aware of the opportunity deficit that exists for disadvantaged children and young people in this country. As I begin my career in public policy, I hope to contribute to changing this narrative, ensuring that children and young people from low-income backgrounds have the opportunity to thrive.

In June 2021, I was employed as a policy intern for Camden Council's Children's Integrated Commissioning Team. I began working closely with the Commissioning group and the Young Camden Foundation in researching food insecurity during the holidays and assessing the impact of Camden's Summer Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, an interventionist scheme funded by the Department for Education to tackle holiday hunger amongst children and young people. I was assigned the task of producing a legacy report about the Camden Summer HAF Programme, detailing its successes and shortcomings, and advocating for its continuance beyond 2021. For the past two months, I have engaged with a host of stakeholders, from delivery partners to HAF coordinators in other boroughs, nutritionists to parents and children. This report contains the compilation of my findings. Through a combination of case studies, interviews and data, the real-life accounts scattered throughout this report highlight the importance of the HAF programme and the need for continued funding beyond this year.

1.1 BACKGROUND

In 1914, M.E. Bulkley wrote that 'the discontinuance of the school meals during the holidays has been shown to undo much of the benefit derived during term-time, and it entails unnecessary suffering on the children'¹. It has been more than a century since her publication, but holiday hunger remains a prevalent issue in the United Kingdom. With food insecurity on the rise, the holidays prove a difficult time for low-income families as they experience increased financial hardship which is exacerbated by the discontinuance of Free School Meal (FSM) provision.

Holiday hunger has a long and distressing history in the UK. Recently, footballer Marcus Rashford's campaign to tackle child food poverty has brought the issue to the forefront of British news. Rashford's involvement with FareShare since March 2020 has helped raise enough money to be able to distribute over 21 million meals to families and children who are in need². Whilst his campaign brought temporary food provision to disadvantaged families across the country, we must question the lack of governmental provision which made room for Rashford's involvement.

¹ Bulkley, M. E. 1914. *The Feeding of School Children*. London. G. Bell and Sons, Ltd, p.129
² FareShare. 2021. Marcus Rashford's work with FareShare. [online] Available at: <<https://fareshare.org.uk/marcus-rashford/>> [Accessed 27 September 2021].

The 1996 Education Act maintains that schools must provide free school meals to disadvantaged pupils aged between 5-16 years old³. Free School Meals are a statutory requirement during term time only, and there is a growing worry for the wellbeing of FSM children during the holidays. In April 2018, the criteria used to determine free school meal eligibility was narrowed to reflect the roll out of Universal Credit and the phase out of other income-based benefits; thereby excluding families experiencing in-work poverty. Hence, the number of children who are suffering during the holidays is likely to expand much further than those eligible for FSM. A recent study found that there are 1.74 million children in the UK who are known to be eligible for free school meals, but three million who are at risk of going hungry during the school holidays⁴. Increased attention must be paid to disadvantaged children from working families during the holidays. As of last year, 7 in 10 children living in poverty were from a working family⁵. Attention must also be paid to those families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). Whilst councils are supporting some families with no recourse to public funds, they receive no funding from the Government, and the localised funds are extremely limited⁶. This leaves those children with no recourse to public funds particularly at risk during the school holidays.

There are also growing concerns about the negative impact of physical inactivity during the school holidays. A study by ukactive found that British school children are 'losing 80 per cent of fitness gained during term time through inactive summer holidays'⁷. This is incredibly worrying, as we know that physical wellbeing is integral to mental wellbeing and educational attainment. For many low-income families, paid holiday clubs which offer sports and fitness activities are not an option. With food provision also being a fundamental issue, children from low-income backgrounds are more likely to be nutritionally and physically deprived during the school holidays. The heavy absence of food, childcare and play provision during the holidays is a fundamental issue which affects both FSM and non-FSM children, and a nation-wide approach is needed to help our disadvantaged children and young people.

The Holiday Activities and Food Programme is the result of years of campaigning about the issue of child food poverty in the UK. It is the result of high-profile campaigns, such as Rashford's. In addition, the explosive social media controversies, such as the pictorial revelation of the insufficient amount of food being delivered to FSM families during the early stages of the pandemic^{8,9}.

³ Legislation.gov.uk. n.d. Education Act 1996. [online] Available at: <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents>> [Accessed 27 September 2021].
⁴ Feeding Britain. 2021. Holiday Hunger - Feeding Britain. [online] Available at: <<https://feedingbritain.org/donations/holiday-hunger/>> [Accessed 25 August 2021].
⁵ Joseph Rowntree Foundation. 2021. UK Poverty 2020/21. [online] Available at: <<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2020-21>> [Accessed 27 September 2021].
⁶ Londoncouncils.gov.uk. n.d. No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) | London Councils. [online] Available at: <<https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/asylum-migration-and-refugees/no-recourse-public-funds>> [Accessed 23 September 2021].
⁷ ukactive. 2016. Inactivity time-bomb caused by inactive summer holidays, new research suggests | ukactive. [online] Available at: <<https://www.ukactive.com/research/inactivity-time-bomb-caused-by-inactive-summer-holidays-new-research-suggests/>> [Accessed 23 September 2021].
⁸ Endchildfoodpoverty.org. 2021. EndChildFoodPoverty. [online] Available at: <<https://endchildfoodpoverty.org/>> [Accessed 27 September 2021].
⁹ The Independent. 2021. Food parcels sent to schoolchildren are 'completely unacceptable', government admits. [online] Available at: <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/food-parcels-free-school-means-government-b1785989.html>> [Accessed 27 September 2021].

1.2 HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme is a new Department for Education (DfE) funded programme of investment into healthy food provision and activities for children and young people during the school holidays¹⁰. The programme is free for those eligible for free school meals. The scheme was piloted in 2018 and has been trialled in multiple local authority areas across the country. This year, the DfE has allocated £220 million to cover provision in every local authority in England. The aim is that provision should be available for the equivalent of at least 4 hours per day, 4 days a week for 6 weeks per year: four weeks in the summer and a week during the Easter and Christmas holidays of 2021.

HAF is the first collaborative, national effort to tackle holiday hunger which enables localised provision. It encompasses local food delivery for local people, with community partnerships being at the core of its ideal. The local authorities allocate the money to a range of delivery partners who in turn run the holiday club provision. Each club is expected to supply healthy food and engaging activities for the children, with a significant focus on nutritional education. Whilst the programme is free for FSM children, paying children are also able to attend most clubs. The goal is that the children will be more physically active, more nutritious, more resilient, and less socially isolated - with a greater understanding of health and nutrition.

There are no plans for continued funding for the HAF Programme beyond 2021, and there are growing concerns for the wellbeing of disadvantaged children after the programme ceases to exist.

1.3 CAMDEN'S 2021 SUMMER HAF PROGRAMME

Child food poverty in the borough of Camden is reflective of the rise in food insecurity across the rest of the UK. There are 14,429 children living in relative poverty in Camden, equivalent to 39.92% of our population of children. Approximately 6,300 of these children are eligible for free school meals. During the Covid-19 pandemic, childhood poverty in Camden rose from 39% to 43%. The Trussell Trust runs a network of 1,300 food banks across the UK and saw a 47% increase in support needed during the pandemic¹¹. More than ever, there is a pressing need for services for vulnerable children and young people during the school holidays. There must be a provision of safe spaces and nutritious food. Without such, disadvantaged young people in Camden face a high risk of being malnourished and socially isolated during the holidays.

Prior to the introduction of the HAF programme, councils were responsible for funding programmes of investment into holiday hunger and activities. As of 2019, only five out of the 33 London boroughs had an explicit food programme for children at risk of hunger during the

school holidays¹². There was no unified approach to alleviating holiday hunger. As of 2020, 11 Camden community organisations or centres had delivered holiday food programmes. The pandemic brought the issue of holiday hunger to the forefront of public attention, and organisations in Camden responded accordingly. The Camden Food Poverty Alliance was established in July 2020 to find collaborative solutions to tackle food poverty in the borough. During the 2020 October half-term, food vouchers were made available to all families receiving benefits which could be used at local supermarkets. Despite such efforts, the Council lacked sufficient funding to ensure that every child in need could be helped during the holidays.

Camden has been allocated £843,320 from the DfE for the 2021 Holiday Activities and Food Programme to cover Easter, summer, and Christmas provision. The Young Camden Foundation (YCF) and the Council are working in close partnership on the 2021 programme. Camden's first HAF programme took place in Easter and had 17 providers, with 815 free school meal children and an additional 500 paying children taking part. The feedback from the Easter programme was very positive, but it was a significant task to mobilise so quickly and to accommodate for all needs. There was not space for as many children to participate as was desired, and the first-come first-served booking system model made it difficult for some parents to secure a spot for their child. Further, there was consensus that there needs to be a bigger focus on SEND inclusion in the summer programme. In turn, it was decidedly crucial for improvements to be made ahead of the summer to increase accessibility.

The summer programme aimed to reach 2,500 children and young people with around 25 delivery partners. There was space for 2,298 young people, with 37 providers offering activities over 54 sites, including schools, youth centres, community centres, libraries, and community gardens. The holiday hubs delivered a range of fun activities, from boxing to filmmaking, farm work to dancing. Every child involved in the HAF programme received at least one meal per day, and nutritional education was taught through a collection of activities and workshops. Despite the success of the summer programme, there are measures that need to be taken to ensure that every child in need of support during the holidays is cared for.

There are plans to deliver HAF during the winter holidays in December 2021, it is expected that at least half of the participants on the summer holiday HAF will apply to deliver at least one week of activities during the break. Participant organisations have suggested that HAF should be extended to all of the half terms: February, Easter, May, Summer, October and Winter half terms in order to meet demand of both food security and affordable childcare for low income working parents.

¹⁰ GOV.UK. 2021. Holiday activities and food programme. [online] Available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme>> [Accessed 27 September 2021].

¹¹ The Trussell Trust. People forced to use food banks at the start of the pandemic faced extreme poverty [online]. Available at <https://www.trusselltrust.org/2021/05/13/people-forced-to-use-food-banks-at-the-start-of-the-pandemic-faced-extreme-poverty/> [Accessed 4 October 2021]

¹² Westwater, H., 2019. Only 5 of 33 London boroughs helped children stay fed during the holidays. [online] The Big Issue. Available at: <<https://www.bigissue.com/news/social-justice/only-5-of-33-london-boroughs-helped-children-stay-fed-during-the-holidays/>> [Accessed 23 September 2021].



2. METHODOLOGY

The research for this report was entirely qualitative, aiming to highlight the empirical benefit that this programme brings to disadvantaged children and families in the borough. To create a convincing evidence base, a list of stakeholders was compiled. This acted as a methodological reference base for my prospective interviewees.

CAMDEN HAF DELIVERY PARTNERS	THE UK SAPPHIRE FOUNDATION; PACE; LEGACY SPORTS; KENTISH TOWN CITY FARM; APTO
YOUNG BENEFICIARIES (5-18YRS)	ACTION YOUTH BOXING INTERVENTION; CHRISTOPHER HATTON PRIMARY SCHOOL; RHYL PRIMARY SCHOOL; KENTISH TOWN CITY FARM; APTO
PARENTS (BENEFICIARIES AND NON-BENEFICIARIES)	CAMDEN'S PARENT ADVISORY BOARD MEETING; AFTERNOON PICK-UPS AT MULTIPLE HOLIDAY CLUB LOCATIONS.
HAF PROGRAMME LEADS IN OTHER BOROUGHES	YOUNG KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA; YOUNG HARROW FOUNDATION; LET ME PLAY (HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM)
COMMUNITY PARTNERS	FEAST WITH US; UNITY WORKS; CAMDEN HEALTH IMPROVEMENT TEAM

The stakeholders listed above were interviewed separately throughout the course of the summer programme. In speaking with them about their experiences of the HAF programme, two questions were kept in mind:

1. How does the HAF programme benefit children and young people?
2. How can it be improved for the future?

Data was also collected through online feedback surveys which were sent out to children, parents, and delivery partners. Both the interviews and surveys informed the findings of this report.

3. RESULTS

3.1 FOOD AND NUTRITION

The nutritional aspect of the programme centred around providing healthy food for children and young people throughout the summer. Guidance from the Department for Education states that delivery partners must provide at least one meal a day for each child. Delivery partners could choose whether to provide the food themselves or use an external food provider. The guidance also states that an element of nutritional education must be taught each day for the entirety of the provision.

3.1.1 COOKING ON-SITE

Throughout my research, I found that provision worked best when delivery partners provided their own meals, and the children were involved with the preparation of the food.

CASE STUDY: LET ME KNOW AND EAT CLUB

Based at Rhyl Primary School, two providers - Let Me Know and Eat Club - worked in partnership for the first time this summer to deliver HAF. Let Me Know is a charity which educates young people on how to build positive and healthy relationships, and Eat Club teaches culinary, nutritional, and budgeting skills to young people. When I visited the site, the children were preparing lunch, and I got the chance to speak with them about their cooking experiences.

MARIAM, AGE 12:

'My mom was really happy that she found this summer club for me because I always want to help with the cooking at home and now I spend every day cooking here. We have made so many meals and I have learnt so many recipes. We use the vegetables from the garden, like the courgettes, and I am learning how to use vegetables in different meals.'

LEWIS, AGE 13:

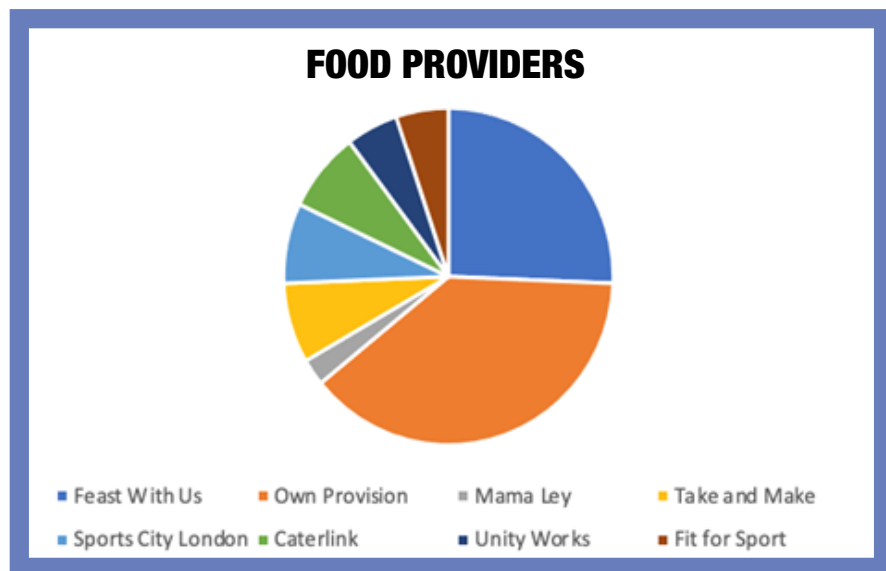
'Today I helped to make everyone an Eton Mess for dessert. I made the sauce by using sugar, berries, and water. I also whipped the cream and used yoghurt. It's really fun cooking with other people and all eating together afterwards.'

Where providers cooked onsite the feedback from children and parents about the food was very positive. Where providers outsourced the food, the feedback was more mixed. Based on the positive feedback from children and providers, it is possible that cooking food onsite, with the help of the children, may be the optimal route for future programmes. The involvement of the children in the cooking process increased their likelihood of enjoying the food, whilst also teaching invaluable lessons in nutrition and health.



3.1.2 EXTERNAL FOOD PROVISION

Over 50% of delivery partners used external food organisations to provide food for the children. The decision to promote working with external food providers was made by the Council and Young Camden Foundation for two reasons: a) the majority of partners did not have an existing relationship with a food provider; b) the quality of food could be better controlled from the centre. The main food providers recommended by the Council and Young Camden Foundation were Feast With Us, Unity Works and Mayor's Fund for London 'Take and Make boxes'.



Despite the overall satisfaction with the partnerships between delivery partners and food organisations, there were a few instances during the summer where delivery partners were unhappy with the food provided. Three complaints were officially received about children not liking the food, and subsequent requests for simpler food such as jam sandwiches. Many food providers felt that this took away from the nutritional purpose of the programme and that delivery partners should have done more to encourage the children to eat the healthy food being provided. This reflects the wider national conflict between encouraging healthy eating and ensuring that children eat the healthy food provided. For example, Jamie Oliver's own difficulty with raising the school meal standards back in 2005 is indicative of the disconnect between the issue at hand and the mobilisation of forces to ensure that children are eating healthily .

¹³ Rose, K., 2019. Jamie Oliver 'revolutionised' school lunches... so why are they still so unhealthy?. [online] The Independent. Available at: <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/school-lunches-meals-menu-jamie-oliver-change-childhood-obesity-a9027446.html>> [Accessed 23 September 2021].

3.1.3 PROMOTING NUTRITIONAL EDUCATION

Nutritional education materials were provided by organisations themselves, or external charities such as the Camden Health Improvement Team. Materials were delivered to the delivery partners, and then distributed to children. The overall feedback from the children that were interviewed was positive, with 15/20 ten to fifteen-year-olds stating that they now know more about healthy eating than they did before they joined the holiday hubs.

Feast With Us, one of the main food providers, expressed that they felt there was a missing link between the food preparation and the children's involvement. They had hoped that providers would gather more intelligence about what healthy food options children were willing to try and would prepare and support children with adapting to eating the healthier food. In the future, they hope to see a greater relationship between the external food providers, the delivery partners, and the children. This further points to the preference of on-site cooking, with collaborations between delivery partners and food providers needing reinvigoration. Through such, the nutritional education element of HAF will be improved.

3.2 FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

The summer programme saw the roll out of hundreds of fun and engaging activities across the borough. From dancing to boxing, acting to arts and crafts, the provision created opportunities which encouraged resilience, confidence, and growth. In total, there were 37 providers offering activities over 54 sites including, schools, community centres, and cultural institutions. The most rewarding part of my research involved visiting these sites and seeing the programme in action.

The Kentish Town City Farm offered provision over four weeks during the summer. The children were involved with caring for the animals, preparing food, doing arts and crafts, and contributing to the general upkeep of the farm.

CASE STUDY: OLIVIA, AGE 12, KENTISH TOWN CITY FARM

Olivia attended the City Farm for the entire four weeks. She suffers from anxiety and was, at first, very hesitant to get involved with the activities. After the first week, Olivia grew in confidence and began to make friends at the farm. She got involved with the goat grooming, food preparation and mucking out! Olivia showed me around the farm and described her day-to-day activities.

'I was scared of the animals when I got here, especially the goats. But now I have spent a lot of time with the animals, and I am not scared of them anymore and the goats are actually my favourites now. Last week we did an obstacle course in the horse's arena, and we did the egg and spoon race, and it was so funny. I have made loads of friends here and I can't wait to hang out with them even after we finish coming to the farm.'

OLIVIA, 12



I also visited Action Youth Boxing Intervention, whose four-week programme was being held at Somers Town Community Sports Centre. The programme teaches boxing to disadvantaged children and young people. They also offer other sports activities, as well as day trips.

CASE STUDY: ISMAIL, AGE 13, ACTION YOUTH BOXING INTERVENTION

When I arrived at the site it was break time and Ismail was teaching a dance to the other children.

'I love it so much here. I have learnt how to do boxing and I find it really fun. We do dancing upstairs and we play games, and we also play basketball. A couple of times we've also been out go-karting. I love dancing and I have made new friends who also like dancing. I definitely want to come back next time.'

ISMAIL, 13

Legacy Sports was offering provision at Christopher Hatton Primary School throughout the summer. The holiday club offered a mixture of sports activities, such as football, cricket, and tennis, as well as arts and crafts. I spoke with Levi, a programme coordinator for Legacy Sports.

“It is so important to engage and provide services to families whilst they're struggling but before it gets to the point where they need more costly interventions. It's a preventative measure. The kids have so much fun. For them, it's not really about the food. It's playing with their friends, doing new fun activities, doing stuff that their parents can't afford for them to do. This is just as important as the food side of things. It is vital that this programme continues.”
Henry Purkis.

“When I was younger, we didn't really have stuff like this going on during the summer and I feel like it kind of takes children away from that negative route. We have a few older kids that are like 13 and instead of them doing whatever on the streets, they're here doing something proactive and positive. That's why I like doing this.” Levi.

The importance of the activities for the children cannot be understated. Levi's discussion of avoiding the negative root was echoed in conversations that I had with other delivery partners, as well as parents and community organisations. Henry Purkis, the COO of PACE, referred to the programme as an 'interventionist and preventative measure' – ensuring that those children who aren't open to social care, but whose parents cannot afford for them to attend holiday clubs, are taken care of during the holidays.

3.2.1 SCHOOL FACILITIES

One of the primary aims of the Young Camden Foundation this summer was to get schools on board with the programme. By encouraging schools to offer their facilities for the summer, the programme would be able to run more efficiently, with less time being consumed by trying to find appropriate venues for delivery partners. Further, the participation of schools would aid in maximising the programme's capacity by reaching more families. Schools are often seen as high quality, safe learning environments that have critical and trusted relationships with parents and children. As such, parents may feel most comfortable with sending their child to a programme delivered at a school.

There was some initial difficulty in securing school facilities, and the problem was not unique to Camden. Let Me Play - the HAF lead for Hammersmith and Fulham - only secured the cooperation of one school, despite their huge outreach, due to planned building works and existing paid holiday clubs. Similarly, the Young Harrow Foundation had issues in securing state school facilities. After an extensive outreach push, eight schools agreed to offer their facilities in Camden, which meant that delivery partners could operate from fully equipped bases. For future programmes, it would be great if more schools could offer their facilities. This would ensure that on-site cooking was guaranteed for those delivery partners who could not secure a site with a kitchen and would also mean that there was scope for a broader range of activities.

3.3 BOOKING AND ACCESSIBILITY

During the Easter HAF programme many parents missed out on securing a place for their child because there was no method of checking the real-time availability of spaces on a programme. This summer, in response to feedback from parents and providers after the Easter HAF programme, the summer HAF Programme was orchestrated predominantly through an integrated software for timetable, coach, & booking management. The online booking system gave parents a more accessible and transparent process of booking their child/children onto a programme.

The Coordinate Sport booking system significantly improved the ease with which parents could secure spaces. The system's landing page updated automatically to reflect the availability of each club. The centralised booking system also meant that it was easy to broadcast the link across the official webpages and social media platforms of the Young Camden Foundation and Camden Council. Whilst the system was developed for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, there is a legacy to be made for the efficiency of the system, and discussions are on-going regarding its continuation for other borough-wide programmes.

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There were a few complaints from delivery partners who felt that they did not have enough time to familiarise themselves with the booking system before it went live. This is not expected to be an issue with the winter programme, as the Coordinate Sport system proved to be an overall success, and greater familiarity of the site will come with time.

“
‘I found it really easy to book a space for my child. I am really happy with the system, and I can't think of any improvements that could be made.’
Sarah, parent.”

A concern was raised by one provider about the accessibility of the booking system. It was described it as a ‘...Glastonbury style booking frenzy’ where tech savvy parents with time to spare could quickly secure spaces for their children, whilst those children whose parents could not operate the system with such ease risked falling through the net. The feedback from parents on the accessibility of the booking system was largely positive, with a couple of parents stating that they would prefer the booking system sign-up to be quicker. Looking ahead, parents who are less tech savvy with little time to spare should be assured by the Council and the Young Camden Foundation that digital assistance can be provided to help them secure a spot for their child.

3.3.1 COMMUNICATION

The schools were mainly responsible for communicating the existence of the HAF Programme to parents. This is because schools, for the most part, have the strongest relationships with parents and children and the most accurate details for children eligible for FSM. This worked relatively well during the Easter HAF Programme, where brochures and letters were distributed by the schools. This summer, the schools were expected to notify parents of the HAF programme through an email which contained a link to the booking site. The programme was also advertised on Camden Council's website, under 'Summer in Camden'.

The majority (56%) of parents found out about the summer HAF programme through their school. However, after attending meetings with Camden's Parent Advisory Board, and talking to parents who were picking their children up from the hubs, it became clear that more could have been done to promote the HAF programme to parents ahead of the school holidays. Many parents (21%) had found out about the HAF Programme through word of mouth, rather than through targeted communications delivered by the Council or Young Camden Foundation. A group of parents whose children were attending the African Physical Training Organisation (APTO) revealed that they only knew about the programme because one of their friends worked for the Council. Further, two-thirds of the parents in the Camden Parent Advisory Board meeting in July had never heard of the HAF Programme, even though they were all eligible to send their children. This raises the question of how many parents whose children are eligible for FSM could have missed out on the opportunity because they did not know it existed. It may be that the frequent school closures, coupled with the ever-changing covid-19 advice, created communication grey areas. Nonetheless, communication is an area that requires greater focus in future programmes. The Council and the Young Camden Foundation must work together to ensure that those eligible are able to access the scheme. Further, given that HAF is a national programme, the Department for Education should do more to publicise HAF, ensuring that all those who are eligible for the programme know of its existence.

3.3.2 SEND ACCESSIBILITY

A huge aim of the summer programme was to ensure that there was greater accessibility for SEND children. This summer, the booking system was opened a week earlier for parents with SEND children to give them the time to contact providers and determine whether the individual programmes could accommodate their children. The Young Camden Foundation sent a feedback survey to all parents whose children participated in the programme. Out of the 176 responses so far, 26 are from parents who have a child with special educational needs or disabilities. The feedback from these parents is overwhelmingly positive, with 25 stating that they were very satisfied with the overall programme, including its accessibility, and one stating that they were unhappy with the quality of the food. The feedback is insightful and encouraging, but more can be done to ensure that the programme is accessible for all children with SEND.

I spoke extensively with one parent, Kimberley, who felt that despite the attempt to make the programme more accessible for SEND children, Camden was failing to accommodate.

CASE STUDY: KIMBERLEY, PARENT

Kimberley has a 13-year-old son with SEND. My discussions with Kimberley centred around the accessibility of the HAF programme, and her experience in trying to secure a space for her son.

'First of all, I only found out about the HAF Programme through the Camden Parents Forum, that was back in Easter. They said we should've found out through the school, but my son's school did not send anything home in a newsletter. When I asked someone from the Council whether any of the holiday hubs could accommodate for my son, they said I'd have to ring each programme to find out. I work full time and I am a single mom looking after my son, I really don't have time to be calling each place to find out if they can have him. The people organising this have no understanding of the lives of parents and children. What needs to happen is the Council needs to think of the weakest link in the chain and make it accessible for them first, so that it is accessible for everyone. The weakest links are SEND children and it's not fair that they are missing out. The Council has a responsibility to make sure that each holiday club can offer provision for SEND children.'

KIMBERLEY

The launch of the booking system one week earlier for parents with SEND children was a step towards creating greater inclusion in the HAF Programme, but there is work to be done before this programme is accessible for all eligible children. It is crucial that no child falls through the net, and it will be the challenge of future schemes to ensure full accessibility.

3.4 TIMESCALE

The summer programme was coordinated in conjunction with the 4x4x4 model, ensuring that children had space at the holiday clubs for 4 hours a day, 4 days a week for 4 weeks. The 4x4x4 model was successful in ensuring that nearly 2,300 children in Camden were safe, well fed, and active across this period, a significant improvement in comparison to summers prior to 2021.

To fully maximise the potential of HAF, there is consensus that the 4x4x4 model should be expanded. In June I spoke with the representative for Young Kensington and Chelsea, who stressed that there needs to be flexibility with the existing model. With more funding, the hubs could operate for longer hours each day, meaning that parents would be able to leave their children all day rather than for just four hours.

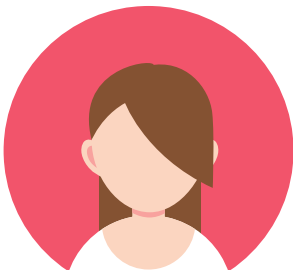


“I am so grateful that this programme is happening, but it would be better if my children could attend the club all day. It would mean that I could do a full day of work without having to rush back to pick them up at lunch time.”
Jalal Ahmed, parent.

There was consensus amongst parents that longer hours at the holiday clubs would improve their ability to work. Additional funding for future HAF Programmes would mean that parents could maximise their time whilst their children were gaining valuable experiences at the clubs.

3.5 COLLABORATION

A wonderful and unintended outcome of Camden's Summer HAF Programme was the formation of new partnerships within the children and young people sector. There was a certain value in the Young Camden Foundation being involved with the orchestration of HAF, as they were able to introduce different organisations and encourage collaborations. For example, the British Library partnered with KCBNA to deliver a fun and exciting programme of creative writing, library tours, entrepreneurship talks, nutritional education and exercise. The Sapphire Foundation partnered with Camden School for Girls to deliver sports, dance arts and crafts this summer. Further, Let Me Know and Eat Club formed an impressive partnership, combining nutrition and cooking with lessons in forming healthy relationships.



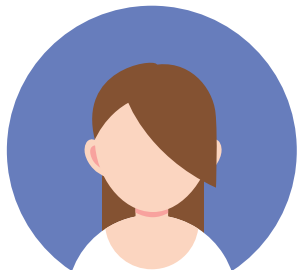
“My greatest reflection of the programme itself was the involvement of the Young Camden Foundation. They brought with them the local knowledge, local connections, local networks, and they allowed for new and exciting partnerships to be formed. They really were the boots on the ground and were able to successfully coordinate this extraordinary summer programme.”
Eve Stickler, Director of Early Intervention and Prevention, Camden Council



It has always been a difficulty to form collaborations within the children and young people sector, be it because of funding or resource issues. The Summer HAF Programme proved an impressive opportunity for different sectors to work together. The cross-sector collaboration is a testament to the commitment of organisations to eradicating holiday hunger and providing safe spaces for children to thrive during the holidays. It boosts community engagement and increases the possibility for the creation of more opportunities in the future. In the wake of the summer programme, we can begin to think about how partnerships can continue to form beyond HAF 2021. How can we work with other boroughs? How can the Department for Education help in incentivising cross-sector partnerships?

DISCUSSION

This summer, there was space for 2,300 FSM children to take part in the Camden HAF Programme. As of the final week of the programme, 75% of the holiday clubs were at full or near full capacity. The programmes have helped to build resilience and confidence through encouraging social skills and introducing the children and young people to new and exciting activities. From day trips to sports, arts and crafts to team building exercises, the children were busily occupied during what can often be one of the most socially isolating times in the year for disadvantaged families. The food provided, be it cooked onsite or delivered on the day, ensured that Camden's disadvantaged children and young people were well fed during the summer break. The nutritional education standards were upheld by all providers, meaning that the children and young people will have finished the summer programme with a greater understanding of healthy eating. There are no words to quantify the importance of this, and all stakeholders involved should feel proud to have made such an impact this summer.



“The summer HAF programme was part of our overall Summer in Camden programme. This was absolutely invaluable as it meant that there was no stigma around participation. Having holiday activities and food for children running alongside some of the other cultural and leisure activities, and alongside our normal Camden summer university, gave this enormous sense of wellbeing, a sense of ‘let us, all of us in Camden, have a great summer’. This was just wonderful as it created such inclusion.”

Eve Stickler, Early Intervention and Prevention,
Camden Council

The programme also eased the pressure on parents and meant that they did not have to worry about food provision and childcare during the long summer break. The interviews conducted highlight the overwhelming benefit that the programme had on the financial and mental wellbeing of parents and families. The programme also encouraged the collaboration of cross-sector organisations, marking new partnerships which will undoubtedly improve the children and young people's sector for years to come. There now remains the question of how more partnerships can be formed to tackle the issue of holiday hunger in Camden.



“The HAF Programme restores dignity to those families who are struggling to provide food for their children. It keeps their children occupied whilst also ensuring that they are well fed. It is truly wonderful.”

Councillor Abdul Hai, Cabinet
Member for Young People, Equalities
and Cohesion

The operational shortcomings of the programme were minimal, and with small adjustments would be a good model of delivery. It is now clear that more time is needed for delivery partners to acquaint themselves with the booking system. The disagreement in approach between some delivery partners and food providers were to be expected, as this is the first time holiday food provision has been delivered on such a large scale. There is work to be done, and a focus now needs to be placed on improving the accessibility of the HAF programme, securing school facilities for use by delivery partners during the holidays, and deciding upon an appropriate time-scale model which works best for parents and children in receipt of FSM. The summer programme was a monumental task of mobilisation across a relatively short timeframe. We can now build upon its many successes and learn from its shortcomings. To do so, there are several recommendations which should be considered.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are split into two separate categories: policy and delivery. The policy recommendations are targeted at the Department for Education, given their broader aims, whilst the delivery recommendations are for the attention of the Council and the Young Camden Foundation.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. School compliance:

Local Authorities with support from the Department for Education should encourage all schools to offer their facilities during the school holidays for future programmes. Not only would this make it easier for delivery partners to operate a successful holiday club; it would also ensure that kitchen space is available so that the children can be involved with the cooking process. This would maximise the mutual aims of tackling holiday hunger whilst also teaching nutritional education. It would also increase the likelihood of eligible parents finding out about the scheme and minimise the risk of eligible families slipping through the net.

2. Flexibility with 4x4x4 model:

There should be a reconsideration of the 4x4x4 model in light of the overwhelming agreement that both parents and children would benefit from a full day of provision, rather than four hours.

3. Rigidity:

The summer HAF programme was available for FSM children. The Council could request to use up to 15% of funding to provide places for children who were not receiving FSM but were assessed as in need. We know that food poverty is not exclusive to those children in receipt of Free School Meals, and there is a growing concern for the welfare of those families who are ineligible for FSM due to the tightening of Universal Credit legislation. It is crucial that such families are considered when designing future programmes. There is also a concern for families who have no recourse to public funds. How can future programmes be designed to ensure that no child goes hungry during the holidays?

DELIVERY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Better communication of HAF:

this summer, based on interviews with parents and the Camden Parent Advisory Group, some eligible families were unaware of the HAF programme. The existing communication channels are not working as efficiently as they could. There appears to be a disconnect between the Council, the schools, and the parents. A reconsideration of the communication channels is necessary before the winter programme to ensure that all those eligible for the scheme have an equal chance for provision.

2. Greater focus on SEND accessibility:

Before the winter programme begins, a greater focus needs to be placed on ensuring that children with special educational needs and disabilities have equal opportunities to partake in HAF. This may include, but is certainly not limited to, an increase in outreach to SEND parents, training for delivery partners, and funding of extra members of staff to accommodate children with SEND in the holiday clubs.

3. Booking accessibility:

Ensure that those families who are not tech savvy or do not have the time to partake in the 'first come first serve' nature of the booking system have an equal opportunity to access the scheme.

The recommendations would do a great deal to further the inclusion of the HAF Programme, and to ensure that support is accessible to every child in need. However, such suggestions are futile if the funding for such provision does not exist.

It is yet to be seen whether this particular model holds the optimal design for tackling holiday hunger. But what is clear is that provision is necessary. We cannot remain complacent whilst thousands of our children are malnourished and inactive for long periods of time each year. There should be unanimity across the political spectrum in ensuring that our most disadvantaged children and young people are taken care of. It would be inhumane to revert to the pre-covid norm of mass complacency in the field of holiday hunger.

“We now have one of those very difficult situations where the need is increasing but funding is disappearing”.
Cllr Angela Mason, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families.

5. CONCLUSION

Camden's summer Holiday Activities and Food Programme is a testament to what can be achieved when consideration, cooperation and time are applied to the needs of disadvantaged children and young people. The funding from the Department for Education and the mobilisation on behalf of the Young Camden Foundation and Camden Council ensured that 2,300 children were well fed throughout the summer. The nutritional education that was delivered throughout the scheme will have been invaluable for many of the participants and will hopefully encourage healthy eating outside of the programme. The diverse activities encouraged physical activity and creative thinking, meaning that the children were physically and mentally stimulated during what can typically be a very socially isolated period.

Expediency is now a priority. With no plans for future funding after the winter programme, we must be conscientious and proactive in ensuring that there is some level of provision for low-income families in 2022 and beyond. In light of recent events, the cost of living will soon be unbearable for many families. The combination of inflation, cuts to universal credit and a surge in energy prices means that families will face even more pressure in providing food for their children during the holidays. It is paramount that the Government takes accountability for this, and that, either centrally or locally, food provision is guaranteed.

An ideal outcome would be the assurance of funding to provide food and activities for disadvantaged children and young people during every school holiday. This would expand beyond HAF's free-school meal model and would encompass provision for all children who are at risk of going hungry during the holidays. Though costly, the Government must view funding as an investment in the future of a generation who would otherwise fall through the net. A desired and less ambitious outcome would be the extension of free-school meal provision during the three main holidays. This would ensure that FSM children are being fed well all year round, contributing to their physical and mental wellbeing, thereby improving their abilities to excel at a similar rate to their peers. Finally, the expected outcome is that, with the failure to secure funding from the Government, local authorities should deliver food vouchers and support community organisations in providing holiday clubs for disadvantaged children and young people. This outcome would mirror the provision that existed in Camden prior to the HAF Programme. Given the limited funds available within local authorities, this model would by no means cover the demand, but would at least assure that a percentage of disadvantaged children were receiving support. The bottom line is that doing nothing is not an option. Our disadvantaged children and young people deserve to be fed, they deserve the support, and a long-term investment in tackling holiday hunger would undoubtedly mean a brighter future for our country and the society in which we live.



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