

Institution: University of Northumbria at Newcastle		
Unit of Assessment: 20 (Social Work and Social Policy)		
Title of case study: Mitigating holiday hunger: increasing the funding, scale, and operation of holiday clubs for disadvantaged children		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Greta Defeyter	Professor	01/09/2003 – present
Paul Stretesky	Professor	01/05/2014 – present
Michael A. Long	Associate Professor	01/08/2014 – 17/08/2017
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2017 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Research undertaken by the Healthy Living Lab (HLL) at Northumbria University, examining the role and effect of programmes to mitigate holiday hunger, provided critical evidence that led to the development and expansion of UK Government's Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF). As a result of the findings, the Department for Education (DfE) allocated GBP20,400,000 to provide healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children, reaching an extra 50,000 children from 2018-2020. HAF Programme operators also used the research to implement and refine their own services. The End Child Food Poverty consortium (led by footballer Marcus Rashford) confirmed how the findings provided vital evidence to support their campaign for the implementation of summer holiday support to all areas in England, so that it could be made available to all children in receipt of free school meals (as recommended by the UK National Food Strategy Part 1, which was also informed by HLL studies). This combined research contribution to Government reviews, civil society advocacy, and parliamentary process, was instrumental in the announcement by the UK Government in November 2020 to expand the HAF programme to the whole of England, at a cost of GBP220,000,000. This increase enables the programme to reach an estimated 1,100,000 children, including some of the most disadvantaged in the country.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The issue of holiday hunger is a major concern for thousands of UK families, with the risk and effects of food poverty posing serious threats to the health and development of children growing up in low-income households. Based at the Department of Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing at Northumbria University, the Healthy Living Lab (HLL) is one of the UK's leading research groups focusing on food poverty and food provision [R1-R6].</p> <p>Led by Professor Greta Defeyter and Professor Paul Stretesky, HLL researchers were the first in the UK to provide a formal definition of 'holiday hunger', which refers to the tendency for children to be unable to access an adequate supply of nutritious food during school holidays [R2, R3]. The researchers went on to provide a comprehensive picture of breakfast and holiday clubs in England and across the UK, using a mixed methods approach to balance the voices of staff, children, and adult attendees simultaneously. The findings highlighted the potential for holiday clubs to alleviate the threat of food insecurity among low-income communities and the wider socio-economic benefits provided by them. Benefits include provision of childcare to support employment, food security for the wider household, safe play spaces for young people, improved community networks to build more resilient communities, and informal learning experiences to mitigate summer learning loss [R1, R2].</p> <p>Subsequent studies focused on the role holiday clubs play in household food security and specific effects on education [R3]. These showed that a large percentage of children attending holiday clubs come from households that can be defined as suffering from food insecurity, and a significant number of children in these programmes come from households that are not only food</p>		

insecure but also face frequent episodes of hunger (i.e. face food insecurity with hunger) [R3]. In addition, the research also suggests that children who come from households that are defined as 'food insecure' benefit disproportionately from these clubs when compared with children who come from households that are food secure [R3]. HLL also carried out the first UK-based study to demonstrate that summer learning loss, or at least stagnation, occurs in a population of children attending schools in areas of low socioeconomic status in relation to spelling. This was determined using cognitive testing of children before and after the holidays. It provides evidence suggesting that holiday clubs may be an effective means of providing children with educational activities across the summer, which in turn may alleviate a drop or stagnation in educational performance [R4].

The research studies identified the piecemeal nature of provision, with clubs run by a wide variety of organisations, in settings including schools, community buildings, churches, and food banks. All often rely on volunteers. These findings highlighted the pressing need for a strategic programme of engagement with providers and policy makers [R1, R2]. The recommendations informed the future development of holiday hunger clubs, indicating how they could achieve greater impact within communities by targeting specific attendees [R3], improving planning and advertising, more consistent provision in terms of hours, staffing and activities, and sensitive selection of locations [R2]. This research was complemented by the first census of holiday club distribution across England, commissioned by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Hunger. This highlighted the makeup of existing provision but also provided the first empirical evidence of the extent of the problem. While over 593 organisations provided in excess of 190,000 meals during school holidays in 2017, the study demonstrated how this fragmented network could cater for only a small proportion of those children in need [R5]. It also demonstrated that, although holiday clubs were more likely to operate in low-income communities, there were noticeable inequalities in distribution across minority ethnic groups [R5].

In the light of increased funding from central Government, HLL analysed data collected in summer of 2017 to explore the value of holiday clubs as wider anti-poverty resources, supporting low-income families beyond just food provision [R6]. The research concluded that centralised funding proposals could disrupt important club functions that contribute to community well-being, particularly if clubs receiving funding are focused on singular and externally driven objectives. A unilateral focus on providing and reporting on food provision can potentially limit broader benefits. However, mobilisation of significant funding levels can greatly expand wellbeing across the UK as long as equitable provision is emphasised [R6].

Since 2015, this body of research has been central to collaborative initiatives, with organisations including the Mayor's Fund for London, Feeding Britain, and local authorities such as Gateshead Council. Defeyter is the academic lead for the Kitchen Social Advisory Group, London's largest provider. She is also a member of the North East Child Poverty Commission, the APPG on Hunger, and the Holiday Hunger Task Group. In February 2020, Defeyter was named as one of *The Big Issue's* Top 100 Changemakers for the important contribution the research has made to society.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1. Margaret Anne Defeyter, Pamela Louise Graham*, and Prince, K. (2015) 'A qualitative evaluation of holiday breakfast club in the UK: Views of adult attendees, children and staff', *Frontiers in Public Health*, 3:199 doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2015.00199

R2. Pamela Louise Graham*, Crilley, E.**, **Paul B. Stretesky**, **Michael A. Long**, Palmer, K, J., Steinbock, E., and **Margaret Anne Defeyter** (2016) 'School holiday food provision in the UK: A qualitative investigation of needs, benefits and potential for development', *Frontiers in Public Health*, 4:172 doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2016.00172

R3. Michael A. Long, Paul B. Stretesky, Pamela Louise Graham*, Palmer, K, J., Steinbock, E., and **Margaret Anne Defeyter (2017)** 'The impact of holiday clubs on household food insecurity - a pilot study', *Health & Social Care in the Community*, **26**: 261-269 doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12507

R4. Shinwell, J. and Margaret Anne Defeyter (2017)**, 'Investigation of summer learning loss in the UK: Implications for holiday club provision', *Frontiers in Public Health*, **5**: 270 doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2017.00270

R5. Mann, E., Michael A. Long, Paul B. Stretesky**, and **Margaret Anne Defeyter (2018)**, A question of justice: Are holiday clubs serving the most deprived communities in England? *Local Environment*, **23**:10 1008-1022 doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2018.1518415

R6. Paul B. Stretesky, Margaret Anne Defeyter, Long, M.A., Zeb Sattar*, and Crilley, E. (2020) 'Holiday Clubs as Community Organizations', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* doi.org/10.1177/0002716220917657

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4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The outlined studies have been instrumental in shaping the UK Government's Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) and its delivery through partners. The research (i) underpinned a series of funding decisions by the DfE, supporting the delivery of healthy food and activities across England. Since 2017, the DfE has allocated GBP20,400,000 to 280 holiday club partners. Policy-makers and civil society drew on the research during public debates about child food poverty in the light of COVID19 with the result that (ii) the research has informed the expansion of the HAF programme to all of England, with an increase in budget to GBP220,000,000. HLL research (iii) enabled organisations such as Kitchen Social to provide effective assistance to some of the nation's poorest children, young people, and families.

4.1 Informing the creation and expansion of the HAF programme

Research highlighting the problems of holiday hunger and the role of holiday clubs in mitigating this, played a key role in government setting up and funding Holiday Food and Activity Clubs (HAF). In 2015, Kellogg's issued a report using HLL research; 'Isolation and Hunger' [E1a] that was sent to all 650 MPs, including those on the APPG on Hunger [E2]. The findings were subsequently highlighted in a report by the APPG's holiday hunger task force, which together enabled policymakers at Westminster to gain a detailed understanding of the important role that holiday provision schemes play and scale of need [E1b]. The Chair of the APPG, Frank Field, MP, singled the research out as not only bringing the urgent issue of Holiday Hunger to mainstream attention [E3a], but also 'as transforming how policy makers ... understand and promote the function of holiday food Clubs' [E2]. Specifically, the findings 'provided the essential evidence to reinforce legislative proposals [for a cross-party, government supported solution to Holiday Hunger]' [E2].

Civil society organisations also used the research evidence to pressurise the Government, such as an extensive follow-up report published in December 2017 by Feeding Britain, an influential hunger charity chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury [E3b]. Frank Field MP used the research to introduce a Private Members' Bill, 'The School Holidays (Meals and Activities) Bill' which would have placed a duty on local authorities to ensure disadvantaged children were fed in the holidays. Once the Government committed to a major new holiday programmes initiative, the Bill was withdrawn [E4; E5, p12-15].

The DfE has acknowledged the contribution of HLL's work on the different holiday provision models, and on health and other outcomes for children, parents, organisations, and communities. Matthew Chappell, DfE Team Lead on the HAF programme stated:

'these papers helped to inform the Department's awareness about the need, provision, and rapid expansion of school holiday programmes operating across England. This, in turn, has resulted in a series of developments that together represent a transformation in strategic thinking and policy with regards to ensuring children have access to healthy, nutritious food, physical and enriching activities that improve children's overall wellbeing over the school holidays, and provide important childcare support to working parents' [E4].

These advocacy initiatives and policy developments, which relied on HLL research, underpinned the decision to commit GBP2,000,000 to fund a series of HAF pilot schemes during the summer of 2018, supporting organisations to deliver healthy food and activities to children living in some of the most disadvantaged areas of England [E4]. This provision was distributed to 280 clubs and reached more than 18,000 children [E4]. The original pilot scheme was later extended with further investment of GBP9,100,000 to support 50,000 children across the school summer holidays in 2019, with the DfE again allocating the same level of funding for HAF delivery in 2020, totalling GBP20,400,000 [E4]. As the DfE noted, the *'successful, and arguably life-changing policy and funding initiatives [HAF programme], are in no small part a direct result of the vital contribution that Northumbria's research made during the development of the HAF programme'* [E4].

4.2 Shaping long-term allocation of resources by DfE for holiday provision

During the COVID-19 pandemic, public concerns around the issue of child hunger grew, informed by the efforts of a civil society coalition, End Child Food Poverty (ECFP), led by footballer Marcus Rashford. The Executive Director of the Food Foundation explained that HLL research had underpinned the National Food Strategy. This came from an independent review commissioned by Government to set out a vision and a plan for a better food system [E6a]. The 2nd recommendation outlined in the report, was to *'extend the Holiday Activity and Food Programme to all areas in England, so that summer holiday support is available to all children in receipt of free school meals'* [E6a]. The ECFP campaign worked to implement this and *'the civil society consortium drew on her [Defeyter's] evidence to inform their policy position and ensure their advocacy strategy was evidence-based'* [E6b].

Within Government, HLL's research has also been at the forefront of these developments. In March 2020, the HLL co-hosted an event in Westminster with the charity Feeding Britain that was attended by senior representatives from the DfE, the Department of Work & Pensions, and key stakeholders from the third sector [E4]. The DfE noted that a key objective of the event *'was to draw upon the research expertise of the HLL (and knowledge gathered on the back of the initial pilot schemes) to deliver a "design sprint" that would generate a range of co-created and co-produced delivery and funding frameworks'* [E4]. Following this event, Defeyter produced a new paper for the DfE which focused on the development of four possible frameworks that could guide the future provision of meals, childcare, and activities for children during school holidays. The DfE confirmed how the findings enabled it to consolidate existing knowledge, expertise, and practical experience, *'and supported ...their thinking concerning the expansion of the HAF programme to the whole of England'* [E4].

The combination of HLL's research contribution to Government reviews, civil society advocacy, and parliamentary process was instrumental in the announcement by the government in November 2020 of the expansion of the HAF programme to the whole of England in 2021, at a cost of GBP220,000,000 [E4]. As noted by MP Frank Field, in the six years since holiday hunger became a major political issue: *'the demonstrable benefits the new policy has had for thousands of families throughout UK, is testament to the strength and importance of the research [carried out by the HLL]'* [E2]. The expansion of the service means that an estimated 1,100,000 disadvantaged children can now benefit [E6a, p2].

4.3 Supporting grassroots organisations to deliver services to those in need

The benefits of policies that have been informed by HLL research can be seen with the positive results at a grassroots level. In 2015, Kellogg's acknowledged that research findings on food

insecurity, the social and behavioural benefits of holiday clubs, and the optimum model for clubs identified in the research were the foundations of its holiday breakfast club model rolled out in London and Manchester [E1a, p11].

A further example can be seen with Kitchen Social (KS), the largest provider of food for children in London during the school holidays, reaching more than 5,000 children across 24 London boroughs [E7a]. After hearing about Defeyter's research in Parliament and during the Hungry Holidays Inquiry, KS requested assistance from Northumbria to assess its implementation of, and how it produces, social change [E7b]. The Head of Social Inclusion at KS confirmed the research '*played a significant role in the development, implementation, and refinement of [KS programme] resulting in improved, positive outcomes for hundreds of children, parents, and communities*' [E7b]. The research evaluation for example, identified a problem with the food supply model used by KS, which enabled them '*to quickly rectify this issue, resulting in an improved delivery model and better dietary outcomes for children*' [E7b].

Similar results have been achieved with other HAF partners, including the StreetGames UK initiative, a national sports charity. The Chief Executive noted how the research '*inspired us to develop Fit & Fed – a new way of delivering sport and physical activity which would include the provision of food ... during school holidays*' [E8]. Launched in the summer of 2017, this national programme grew to support 19,839 young people by the 2019 summer holidays [E8], serving approximately 100,000 meals. The HLL team have been praised for their '*rare and valuable combination of the ability to blend academic rigour, knowledge and expertise with significant levels of professional empathy and understanding of the lives and circumstances of some of the nation's poorest children, young people and families*' [E8].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Ref.	Source of corroboration	Link to claimed impact
E1	a) Report (Kellogg's, 2015) b) Report (Holiday Hunger Task Group, 2015)	Confirms how research informed understanding among policymakers, and development of new HAF policy
E2	Testimonial - Rt. Hon Frank Field MP, Chair APPG Hunger	Confirms how research informed understanding among policymakers, and development of new HAF policy
E3	a) Collated media coverage b) Report, 'Ending Hunger in the Holidays (Feeding Britain, 2017)	Confirms how research raised public profile of holiday hunger issue and supported development of new policy
E4	Testimonial - HAF Team Leader, DfE, 2020	Confirms how research supported development of new HAF policy
E5	Parliamentary address, Under-Secretary of State for Education (Hansard, Nov 2018)	Confirms how research supported strategic thinking among policymakers to develop/expand the new HAF policy
E6	a) Food Strategy Recommendations in Full b) Testimonial, Executive Director (Food Foundation)	Confirms civil society campaign relied on research
E7	Kitchen Social: a) Service Description b) Testimonial, Head of Social Inclusion	Confirms how research supported third sector organisations to mitigate food insecurity through HAF schemes
E8	Testimonial - Chief Executive, StreetGames UK	Confirms how research supported third sector organisations to mitigate food insecurity through HAF schemes