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Sunderland City Council

Holiday Provision Clubs Programme Leader Survey

Summary of Findings

**1. Introduction**

In April 2016 the East Sunderland People Board endorsed a grant of £15,000 to support the ‘Fancy a Day Out’ holiday programme during the 2016 Summer school holidays. The aim of the holiday programme was to provide assistance to families, who are eligible for free school meals, during the six weeks of summer holidays. Research has shown that school holidays are a difficult time for families on low income and the absence of the free school meal provision during the school holidays puts additional pressure on these families (Graham & Defeyter, 2014). Following a recommendation from the North East Child Poverty Commission, the grant was used to provide free activities and a basic lunch to children and was delivered by local youth clubs, churches and community groups. In total 12 organisations participated in the holiday programme: 7 voluntary or community groups, 3 council groups, 1 church and 1 school; delivering a total of 92 sessions.

**2. Objectives**

A PhD researcher from Northumbria University undertook a quantitative investigation to evaluate the holiday programme in Sunderland. The aim of the study was to gain an understanding of:

* the perceived needs of the community during the summer holidays
* the objectives of the holiday provision clubs
* the types of holiday provision clubs on offer
* the perceived outcomes for parents and children.

**3. Method**

A survey was designed for programme leaders or staff delivering holiday provision clubs in Sunderland. The survey was available to complete online via Qualtrics from 30 August 2016 until 21 September 2016. In total 10 programme leaders from the 12 organisations completed the survey, a response rate of 83%.

Prior to commencement of the survey, ethical approval was sought and approved by the University of Northumbria’s Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Ethics Board. All materials and procedures were independently scrutinised to ensure strict ethical practices were upheld. Informed consent was gained from participants prior to completing the survey. Care was taken to maintain confidentiality of all participants.

**4. Findings**

The following is a summary of the findings from the 10 surveys completed by the programme leaders.

**4.1 Community Needs**

Recent research (CPAG in Scotland, 2015; Graham, Crilley, Stretesky, et al., 2016) has illustrated that families face a range of challenges during the school holidays which not only relate to food insecurity but also isolation, affordable childcare provision and financial and emotional pressures, so we asked programme leaders to state the main needs for families in their community during the school holidays.

The programme leaders of the holiday clubs were asked to write down the three main needs for families in their community. The responses were given initial codes relating to their content and grouped based on similarity of content. Appropriate theme headings were generated to represent the content of each group. The programme leaders highlighted the perceived priority needs for families in their community during the school holidays are a place for parents and children to socialise, affordable or free activities and food provision. In addition financial assistance and childcare provision were also considered important needs (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Needs for families in the community during school holidays

**4.2 Location and Timings of Sessions**

The ‘Fancy a Day Out’ holiday programme delivered a range of sessions across a number of different locations with some organisations providing more frequent provision than others (see Table 1).

Table 1: Location and Timings of Sessions

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Holiday Provision Club | Location of Holiday Club | Timing(s) of Session(s) | Total Number of Sessions |
| 1 | Library | Sessions of 1 hour | 22 |
| 2 | School, Community centre, Children’s centre | Sessions of 2 hours | 20 |
| 3 | Youth centre | 10am – 2pm | 11 |
| 4 | Youth centre | 4.30pm – 6.30pm | 6 |
| 5 | Park | 11am – 1pm | 6 |
| 6 | Church hall | 10am – 1pm | 5 |
| 7 | Youth centre | 10am – 1pm | 5 |
| 8 | Community centre, park | 10am – 4pm | 4 |
| 9 | Church hall | 9.30am – 1pm | 3 |
| 10 | Park | 2pm – 4pm | 1 |

The location of the holiday provision clubs was considered suitable for the families attending and for the types of activities offered at the clubs. In addition, the locations were considered convenient for families to reach and less than one third (30%) of programme leaders considered families required transport to reach the event or club (see Table 2).

Table 2: Programme leaders’ views on location and timings of holiday clubs

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | % of programme leaders rating strongly agree or agree |
| The venue was suitable for the families that attended | 100% |
| The venue was suitable for the type of activities offered | 100% |
| The location was convenient for families | 90% |
| Families had to use transport to get to the venue or event | 30% |
| The frequency of the club or event was suitable for families | 90% |
| The timings of the event were convenient for families | 100% |

**4.3 Activities Offered**

Programme leaders were asked to rank the total amount of time devoted to each activity at the holiday provision club, with Rank 1 being the most amount of time spent on an activity:

Table 3: Rank order of activities provided

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Rank | Type of Activity Provided |
| 1 | Craft / Art Activities |
| 1 | Physical Activities |
| 3 | Educational Activities |
| 4 | Cookery |
| 5 | Advisory services for parents (off or on-site) |

Most time at the holiday club was devoted to craft or art and physical activities and programme leaders considered that these activities were suitable for the ages of children attending and for children with additional support needs (see Table 4).

Table 4: Programme leaders’ views on types of activities

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | % of programme leaders rating strongly agree or agree |
| The activities offered were suitable for the ages of the children that attended | 100% |
| The activities offered were suitable for children with Additional Support Needs | 90% |

**4.4 Attendance**

The survey asked programme leaders about targeting families in their communities and attendance rates at the holiday club (see Table 5).

Table 5: Referral system

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Yes | No |
| Do you use a referral system to recruit families to your holiday provision club? | 10% | 90% |
| Do you specifically targeted families in their community for the holiday provision club? | 80% | 20% |

Whilst the majority of clubs specifically targeted families in their community to attend the holiday club, full attendance was not achieved across all of the holiday provision programme with 60% of programme leaders agreeing that their club or event reached full attendance (Table 6). Only one organisation (10%) used a referral system to help engage with families.

Table 6: Programme leaders’ views on attendance at holiday club

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | % of programme leaders rating strongly agree or agree |
| The club or event was fully subscribed | 60% |
| There was full attendance at each session of the club or event | 60% |
| Families from ethnic minorities, refugee or asylum seekers attended the club or event | 40% |
| Families with children with disabilities and / or special needs attended the club or event | 80% |
| Families with parents with disabilities attended the club or event | 20% |

**4.5 Staff and Volunteers**

Table 7 presents findings of programme leaders’ views on staffing. The majority of programme leaders were able to recruit sufficient staff and volunteers for their holiday club and all programme leaders agreed that staff received sufficient training and developed skills from participating in the holiday club provision.

Table 7: Programme leaders’ views on staffing

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | % of programme leaders rating strongly agree or agree |
| We were able to effectively recruit staff to participate in the club / event | 90% |
| We were able to effectively recruit volunteers to participate in the club / event | 80% |
| Staff and volunteers received sufficient training | 100% |
| Staff and volunteers developed new skills by participating in club / event | 100% |

**4.6 Outcomes for parents and children attending the club / event**

All programme leaders agreed that the holiday provision clubs provided financial assistance to parents by helping to reduce financial pressure on household budgets. In addition, the majority of programme leaders considered that the holiday provision helped to reduce parental stress and parents enjoyed socialising with their peers although less than half of programme leaders (40%) considered that parents received emotional support from attending. All programme leaders agreed that the children enjoyed socialising with their peers and the majority of programme leaders considered that the clubs improved the children’s diets and provided children with new activities and skills (Table 8).

Table 8: Programme leaders’ views on outcomes of parents and children

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | % of programme leaders rating strongly agree or agree |
| Parents enjoyed socialising with their peers | 80% |
| Parents received emotional support | 40% |
| The holiday provision helped to reduce parental stress | 90% |
| The provision of food improved the parent’s diets | 60% |
| The holiday provision helped to reduce financial pressure on household budgets | 100% |
| Parents received signposting to other services | 70% |
| Children tried new activities or learnt new skills | 90% |
| Children enjoyed socialising with their peers | 100% |
| The provision of food improved the children’s diets | 90% |

**4.7 Objectives of the holiday provision club or event**

The programme leaders were asked to write down three main objectives of their holiday club and to specify if these objectives were fully met, partially met or not met. The responses were coded relating to their content and grouped based on similarity of content.

The most common objectives stated by programme leaders were to provide stimulating activities or experience for children and to provide children with a nutritious meal. In addition enhancing community cohesion and developing children’s social and educational skills were also commonly cited objectives. Sixty percent of clubs fully met all their three objectives.

**4.8 Implementation and Future Projects**

Programme leaders completing the survey would consider supporting future holiday provision programmes. Whilst programme leaders agreed that the holiday clubs received sufficient funding, more funding and support from partner agencies would be beneficial (Table 9).

Table 9: Programme leaders’ views on implementation of holiday provision and further projects

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | % of programme leaders rating strongly agree or agree |
| The club / event was communicated effectively to the community | 90% |
| The club / event gained sufficient support from partner agencies | 50% |
| The club / event gained sufficient funding | 70% |
| More support around funding would be beneficial | 70% |
| The service / organisation would support future holiday provision programmes | 100% |

**4.9 Additional Feedback**

The programme leaders had the opportunity to provide additional feedback on positive aspects or challenges that their organisation experienced delivering the holiday provision clubs.

In total, 70% (N=7) programme leaders provided comments. The comments were analysed by a process of thematic analysis. The data was given initial codes relating to their content and grouped based on similarity of content. Main themes were developed from these groups and appropriate theme headings were used to represent the content of each theme. The themes of the programme leaders’ comments focused on the following areas:

Planning & Implementation of Holiday Provision Club

Programme leaders mentioned the importance of planning for successful implementation of the holiday provision and this was helped by the skills of staff or developing links with partner agencies:

*“The programme worked well due to planning organisational skills of staff”*

*“The range of activities and support from partner organisations enabled [our organisation] to deliver a fully inclusive programme”*

Limited time for planning created challenges for one organisation:

*“We were asked to consider doing this in May this year. This left only three months to prepare. Our first event drew 80 people, the second 160 and the third 190! So we got off the ground OK, but we will plan further ahead this year”*

As a result of a limited time to plan, the organisation missed the opportunity to benefit from publicity:

*“We missed a deadline and were not included in the council publicity”*

Advertising and developing community links was considered important in helping to raise awareness of the holiday provision club before the start of the school holidays:

*“Leaflets distributed in local schools as well as leaflets distributed by outreach and detached youth workers. This enabled [name of organisation] to contact people it may not have normally been able to do”.*

Attendance

Organisations commented on the success of reaching out to families in their community:

*“The numbers confirm the need for this kind of provision. We recognised real need in many families attending - though this is hard to quantify”*

*“The club attracted higher than expected numbers of children”*

Although one programme leader expressed concern about attracting families in need:

*“We as a service feel the parents whom did attend the holiday activities were not our most vulnerable parents and children within our community.”*

The impacts of attending the club for staff

Programme leaders considered the holiday provision helped to develop skills of volunteer and staff members:

*“Volunteers and a student on placement learnt new skills and gained more experience of working with children and young people”*

*“An additional positive aspect of this programme is that a Youth Worker has been supported with course fees to qualify at Level Two Food Hygiene enabling her to use this qualification in other [name of organisation] provisions”*

The impacts of attending the club for children

Many of the organisations involved children and young people with planning the activities and preparing the food:

*“We advertised on social media, and asked for feedback regarding ‘what young people wanted’”*

Organisations highlighted the importance of involving children and young people with planning and running of the holiday provision club, equipping them with new skills and knowledge.

*“Children were involved in cooking and serving the meal which helped to improve their knowledge of nutrition and food preparation skills …* *Children also enjoyed clearing away tables and washing up afterwards”*

*“Involving participants with the planning of activities and the lunch menu improved skills such as organisational and decision making skills”*

By providing food at the holiday club, organisations viewed this as an opportunity for children and the wider community to sit together and socialise:

*“Children enjoyed the social aspect of eating at a table with their friends. For some children this was a new experience”*

*“The provision of an outdoor BBQ and outdoor seating area enabled all children, young people and families to sit together stimulating a community environment where people helped each other and shared food and condiments.”*

Challenges of implementing holiday provision

For one organisation, access to funding created a challenge for implementing their holiday provision programme:

*“Whilst funding did allow for the purchase of food and consumables to deliver activities, this amount did not cover the staffing costs of extra staff that had to be drafted in at short notice to ensure safe levels of supervision”*

One organisation cited the challenges of their venue and having to rely on the weather:

*“Backhouse park isn't a family social park like the other large parks in the city, it is predominantly a park where people walk their dogs, and unfortunately it did smell really bad of dog urine and dog poo. We also had to move empty bottles and cans before we took park in activity's. We also had a complete washout on the 25th of August as it rained really heavy and we didn't make contact with anyone that day”*

Some organisations cited ways of overcoming unexpected challenges:

*“The flexibility of the programme meant we were able to respond in appropriate way when required to, for example, a trip out to bowling for a group was changed to alternative activities in order to accommodate higher numbers attending”*

Future Provision

Organisations were keen to implement holiday provision clubs in the future:

*“On reflection the programme could have ran for more days during the week. We hope to be able to offer same / similar during future holiday periods”*

*“We had an amazing time on each of our days. Our volunteers thoroughly enjoyed themselves and are keen to do it again!”*

**5. Conclusion**

Programme leaders cited the main needs in their communities during the summer holidays and illustrated how the holiday provision programme is addressing these needs. Whilst programme leaders considered food provision to be a significant need during the school holidays, it is the provision of affordable or free activities and a place for parents and children to socialise which are most commonly cited as the main needs. The holiday clubs provided parents and children with a safe place to socialise and mix with their peers. It was considered to help reduce financial pressure on household budget and reduce parental stress.

For many clubs, the primary objective was to provide a range of stimulating activities. The majority of the time, at holiday clubs, was designated to physical activities and craft or art activities. These types of activities were considered appropriate for the age and needs of the children attending; children had the opportunity to try new activities and learn new skills. In addition, some of the children and young people were involved with running and planning the holiday provision clubs further developing their skills.

Programme leaders noted the benefits of the holiday clubs for the individual participants and also noted benefits at a community level with enhanced community cohesion. By delivering holiday provision clubs, organisations were able to strengthen links within their community. This was demonstrated by organisations consulting their local community on the types of activities to offer. Community cohesion was further enhanced by the provision of food and the opportunity for all participants to sit and eat together. In addition, staff and volunteers from the community gained valuable experience, training and skills from participating in this project.

Although programme leaders considered the holiday provision was effectively communicated, not all events or clubs achieved full attendance. Whilst the majority of holiday clubs specifically targeted families in their community, one programme leader raised the concern that they may not be reaching the most vulnerable families. Only 10% of the organisations used a referral route to target families and half of programme leaders considered they received sufficient support from partner agencies.

Some of the programme leaders cited funding as a challenge of delivering this type of provision and more support for funding would be of benefit. Furthermore, limited time for planning created an additional challenge for some of the clubs. All programme leaders would support future holiday provision projects.

**6. Recommendations**

* There is a need for a holiday provision programme and this was positively viewed by programme leaders citing benefits for children, parents and staff.
* The development of links with partner agencies and the use of a referral route may help in engaging with more vulnerable families as well as ensuring greater attendance levels across all holiday clubs.
* Holiday clubs would benefit from support with funding for future provision.
* Greater length of time for planning would be of benefit.
* A broader range of participatory research methods might also be considered to explore the health and wellbeing of children and parents attending the holiday clubs.

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