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SUBJECT:	Together for Children Holiday Activity and Food Programme Summer Evaluation.
PURPOSE:	To report on the Summer delivery of Sunderland's Holiday Activity and Food Programme Wear here 4 you.

1. BACKGROUND

The Department for Education recognised that school holidays can be pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap, with children from disadvantaged families.

- less likely to access organised out-of-school activities
- more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health
- more likely to experience social isolation

Last Autumn, the Government confirmed that the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) would be expanded to all 151 top-tier authorities in England, as recommended in the National Food Strategy. This substantially expanded the Department for Education's pilot scheme which has run since 2019. The programme has grown from four weeks in the summer to a minimum of six weeks for 2021, including one week at Easter, four weeks in the summer and one week at Christmas^{1.3}. In December 2020, Together for Children submitted an application of interest to the DfE. In January 2021 the DfE informed TfC that the application of interest was successful. TfC were awarded £1,365,160 to coordinate 24 days of provision over:

- Easter 2021 (Four Days)
- Summer 2021 (16 Days)
- Christmas 2021 (Four Days)

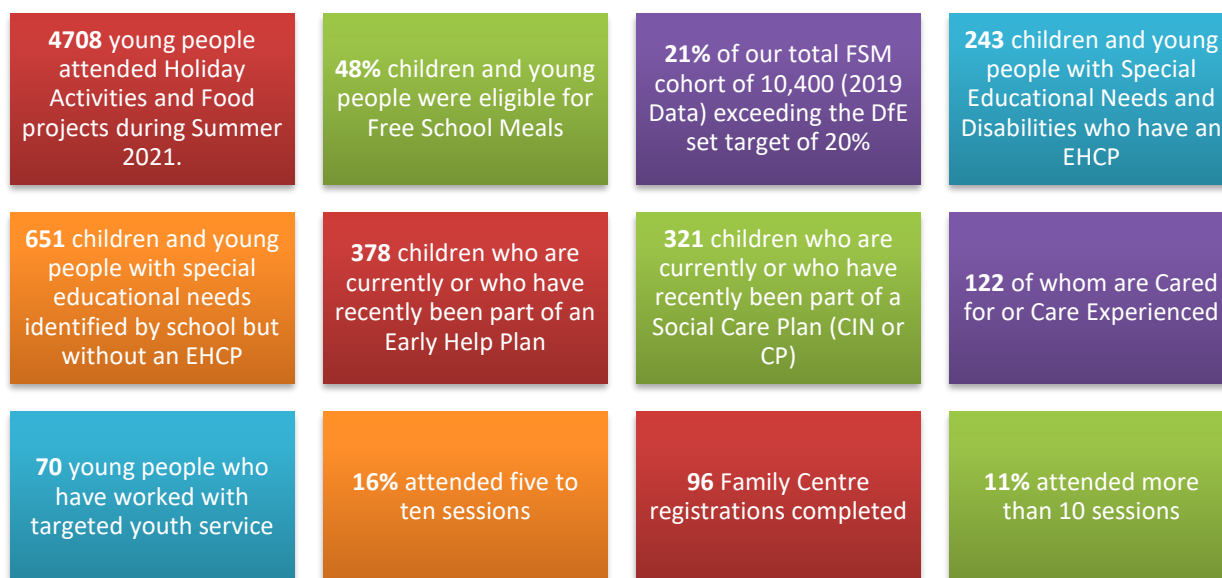
Local authorities were asked to ensure that the offer of free holiday club provision is available for all children eligible for and in receipt of free school meals in their area. This does not mean they are all required to attend as the provision is voluntary. Local authorities were encouraged to make the holiday clubs available to any children not eligible for and in receipt of free school meals, who can pay to attend. This might be through operating.

- bespoke provision
- as part of already existing holiday provision in the area
- a mixed arrangement depending on the local supply and demand for provision

COVID-19 restrictions at Easter 2021 limited TfC to a virtual Holiday Activity and Food offer. 2657 children and young people eligible for free school meals received packs containing ingredients and simple recipes to make four healthy meals for four people, sports equipment to encourage themselves and their families to be active and craft packs & library packs to nurture creativity. All children, young people and families were able to engage with the digital Easter programme consisting of an online programme of events such as cook along's and keep fit sessions. TfC also worked with other local authorities to deliver a week of health and wellbeing related TV programmes on the Local TV Freeview channel.

2. SUMMER PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Data was gathered between July – August 2021 by several means to provide a robust set of findings and recommendations. This included consultation with children, young people and parents/carers and interviews with HAF activity providers. Data was also collected between 7th September to 19th October through a representative survey that was sent to all parent/carers who had left their email address with providers.



3. OVERVIEW OF SUMMER PROGRAMME (WEAR HERE 4 SUMMER)

Despite the extremely short lead-in time, providers from the Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations (VCSOs), public and private organisations and Children's Services (delivered by Together for Children) stepped up to the challenge and were successful in providing a wide range of activities across the board, with the inclusion of a meal. However, the short turnaround for set-up may have affected activity take-up by children as there was very little time to market and promote the programme.

Sunderland's Holiday Activity and Food Programme was named by Sunderland Children and Young people as '**Wear Here 4 Summer**'.

Providers had to apply for funding through Sunderland City Council procurement portal (NEPO). A strict scoring mechanism was used to ensure that providers commissioned were of a high standard and could provide good quality food and activity to children and young people. The first round of procurement was advertised on NEPO between 2 June 2021 to 18 June 2021 and was awarded 24 June 2021. There was eight approved in the first round of procurement which included a consortium of nine youth service providers.

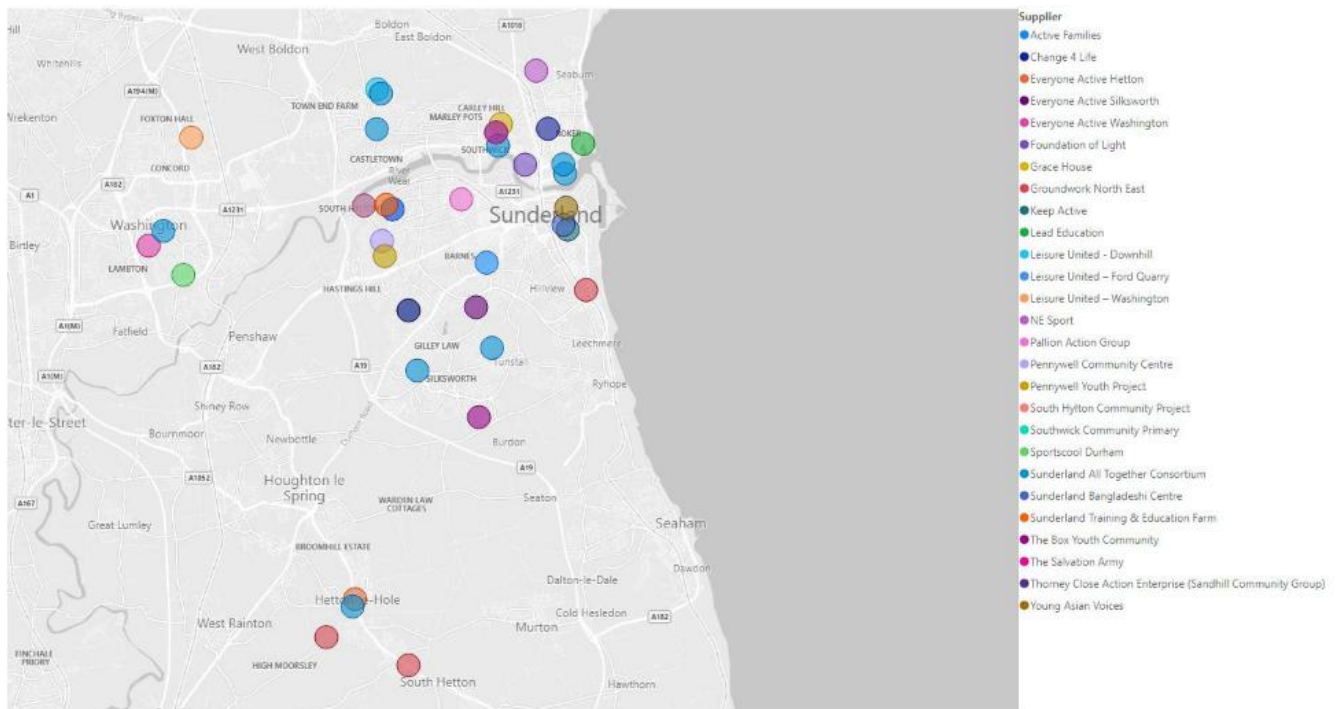
Once the first round was complete, a more targeted second round took place between 22nd June and 2nd July 2021 after conducting a mapping exercise to identify areas of the city with no HAF provision. This resulted in a further 15 providers being approved and an additional provider being added to the Sunderland All Together Consortium. 5573 places were made available for FSM children and young people.

When reviewing the eligibility of the programme we quickly realised that the FSM eligibility didn't offer a free place to all children who would benefit from the programme, so decided to request 15% of the funding to be extended to provide places for children and young people who are considered as vulnerable or in need of the provision. We extended our places to children assessed as being in need, children and young people with an Education, health care plan (EHCP), cared for and care experienced young people and those we assessed as otherwise vulnerable or living in areas of high deprivation.

Internally Together for Children ran their own Holiday Programme targeting our most vulnerable children and young people and providers were asked to extend their offer to those most in need.

The below maps demonstrate where children and young eligible for FSM live (Red = high levels of FSM) compared to where children and young people attending Summer 2021 HAF activities live (Red = high levels of attendance). The maps demonstrate that children and young people living in areas of high FSM were able to access HAF Activities across the majority of the city.

Fig 1.



Free School Meal Mapping

The below maps show the proportion of FSM eligible children in the city (left) where the highest number of children attended HAF activities lived (Centre) and where FSM and vulnerable lived who attend HAF activities (right). The darker the colour the higher the population in that cohort.

Fig 3.

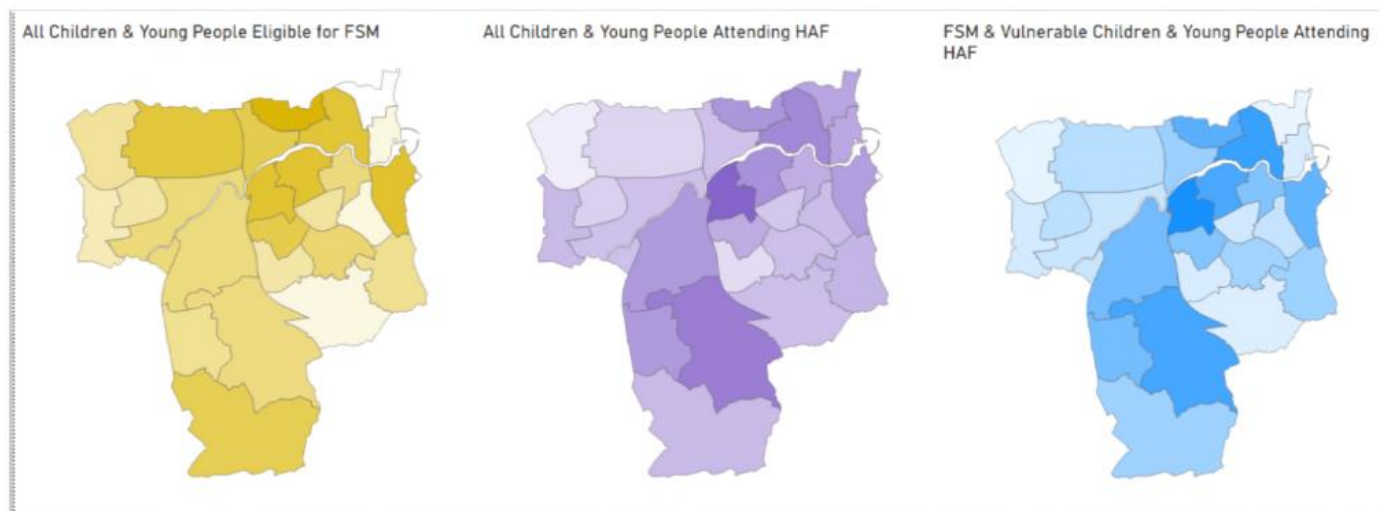


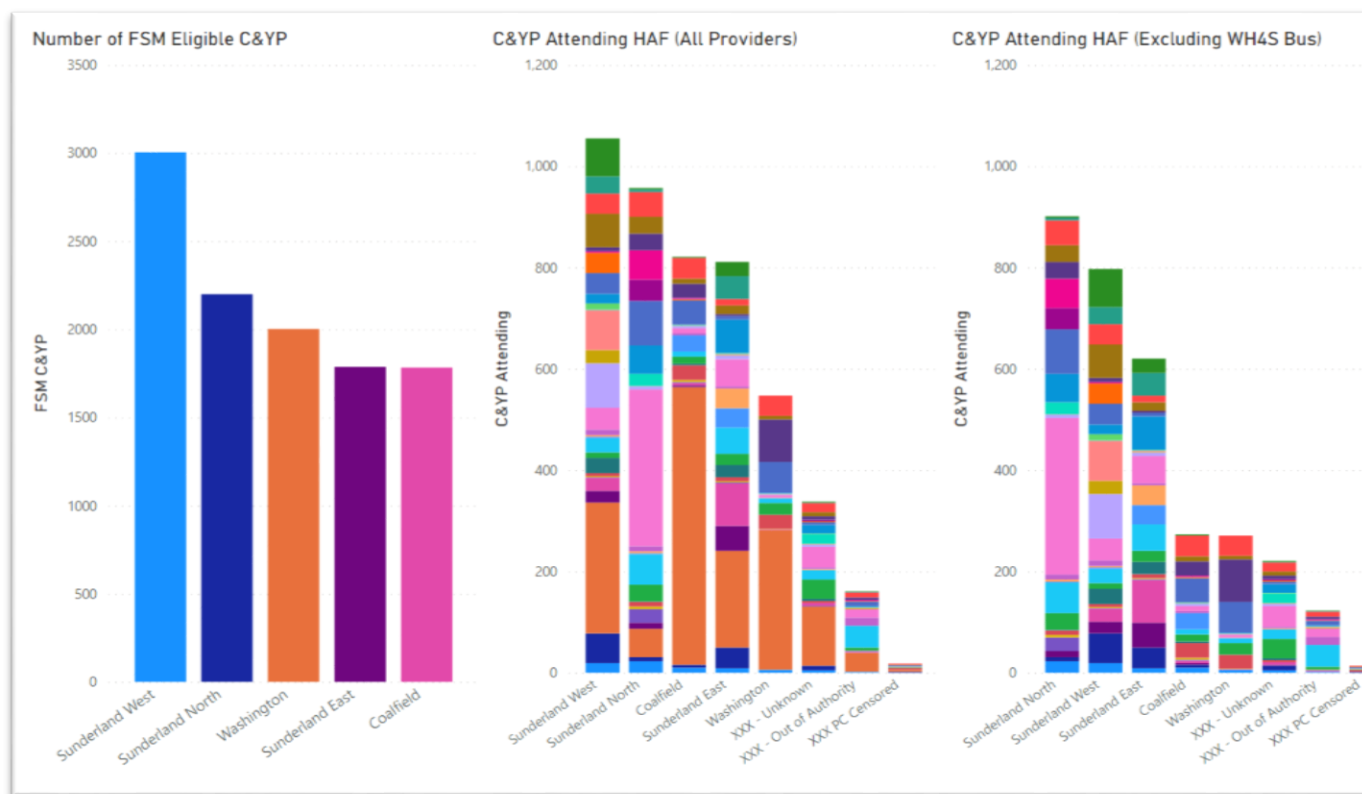
Fig 4. Compares the Total number of C&YP eligible for FSM per Locality (Left) against the total number of C&YP Attending HAF Activities per Locality (Centre) and total number of C&YP Attending HAF Activities per Locality, Excluding the TfC coordinated HAF Activity bus (Right). The colours in the centre and right charts correspond to the HAF providers, demonstrating the diversity of provision in each locality.

Ideally the left and central charts would be mirrored. This would illustrate equal distribution of C&YP attending HAF activities per locality when compared to the distribution of C&YP eligible for free school meals across the city. For the most part this pattern is present for example Sunderland West has the highest number of FSM children and the highest attendance at HAF Activities. The exception is Washington who has lower than expected HAF Activities attendance.

Details of a relatively high proportion of C&YP are unknown meaning these C&YP are not included in the Locality columns of the centre and right charts (see XXX – Unknown in the charts).

It is worth noting the considerable positive impact the HAF Activity Bus (orange bar in central chart) had in all areas of the city, especially Coalfield and Washington (see comparison with bus data in the Central chart and without bus data in the Right chart).

Fig 4.



Summer Mobile Provision

After completing the procurement process, there were still some areas of Sunderland that had little or no HAF provision. Together for Children decided to launch a Mobile HAF Bus to support these areas. With support from partners outside spacious areas were identified large enough to park the bus, have toilet facilities and enough space to deliver a few activities. The mobile provision was a huge success engaging with 1754¹ children and young people over the period of 12-day sessions and three sunset evening sessions targeted at young people. The bus sessions were planned in consultation with children and young people

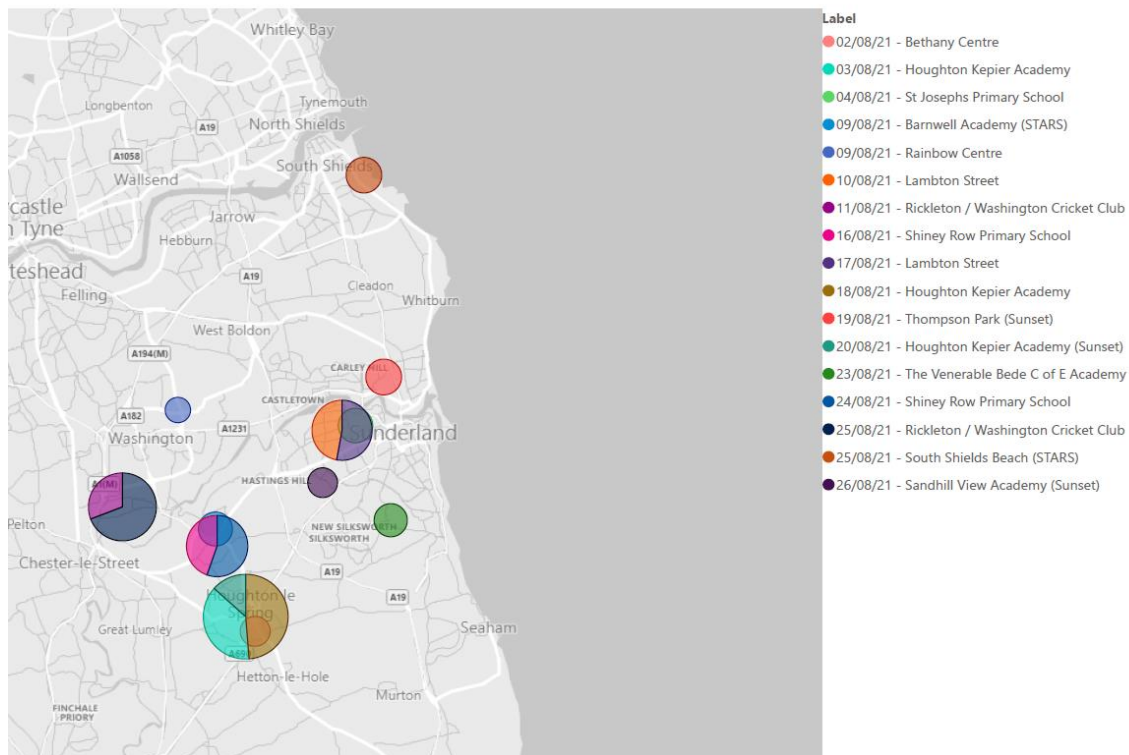
A wide range of activities were made available and healthy nutritious food along with information, advice and guidance support from Together for Children, Northumbria Police, Change for Life, Growing Healthy 0-19 service, Tyne, and Wear Fire Brigade and North East Ambulance Service.

Activities included Sunderland Climbing Wall and Cave, Battle Archery, Dancing, Skipping, Yoga, Arts and Crafts, Boot Camp, Music, Djembe Drumming, Zumba, and food was provided by Olivia's Kitchen, don't you know I'm loco, The Jacket Inn and DDC Event Catering.

Fig 5. Illustrates the locations the HAF bus provided provision in the city. The size of the bubbles equates to the number of C&YP attending, split bubbles show multiple sessions at an individual location.

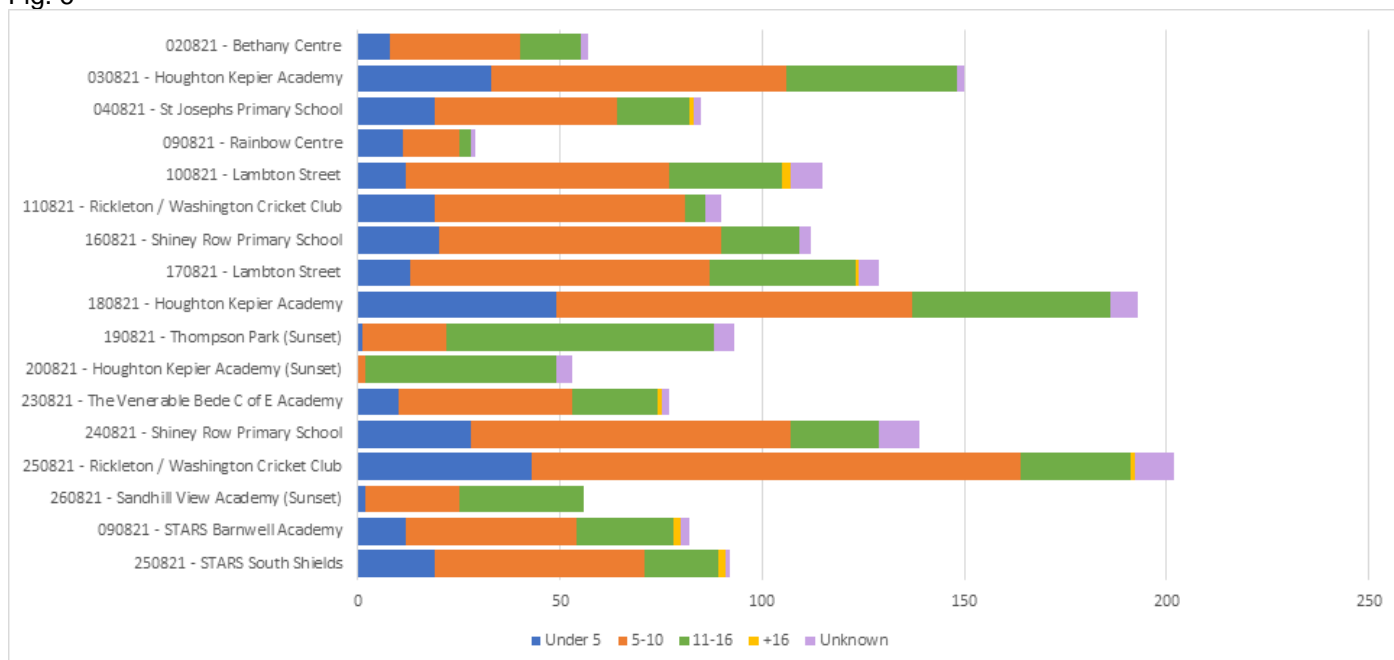
Fig 5.

¹ This counts children and young people who may have attended multiple sessions.



Engaging with older young people throughout the HAF programme was proving difficult, the mobile bus evening sessions that were named as sunset sessions were specifically tailored to engage with young people 11+, sessions took place 4-8pm in the evening time and had activities and food more appropriate for that age range. All sessions were co-produced with young people from Together for Children's engagement groups. You can see from chart below Fig 6 that our sunset sessions did support the attendance of young people 11+.

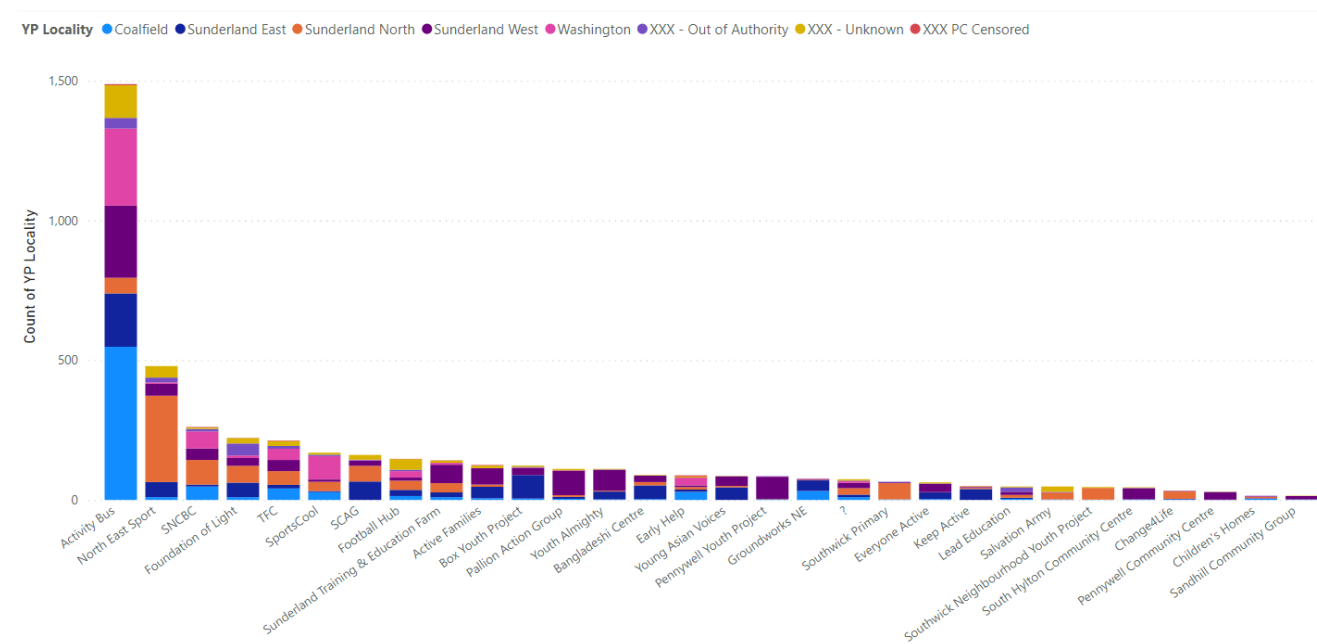
Fig. 6



Attendance

The below graph Fig 7. shows attendance of each provider by Locality, the mobile bus had the highest number of attendees over 17 sessions (only planned 16 sessions were originally planned but after a very successful day bus at Kepier School, young people requested that we returned to offer an evening session) which is to be expected due vast outside space and multi activity providers available.

Fig 7.



Food

A range of provider types were used across areas, with almost half being Voluntary Community Sector Organisations with private organisations next most common. Providers generally had a mix of paid and unpaid staff and providing for both primary and secondary age groups. Providers were asked to provide at least one meal a day (breakfast, lunch, or tea) and all food provided at the holiday club (including snacks) must meet [school food standards](#).

A variety of options were given across the providers, some cooked with the young people, whilst other offered packed lunches due to the weather and the activities they were carrying out. The School Meal Service also provided hot and cold options for some of the providers.

5. NURTITIONAL EDUCATION

One of the requirements of the programme was to provide children, young people and their families with weekly training and advice sessions for parent, carers, or other family members. These should provide advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food.

Some providers gave information and links to online tools, some gave a recipe box with cooking instructions whilst others did cookery sessions along with the children and young people at their premises. Below are a few of the different examples to support nutritional education:

Pallion Action Group

Pallion Action Group made homemade food with their children and young people; parents also had the opportunity to get involved in creating the menus. Everyone who attended the programme received recipe cards and fact sheets which included information around healthy food choices, portion sizes and tips and ideas on how to make fruit and veg look fun on the plates for children and young people. Fresh produce was also donated to families.

Smoothie Bike

A part of the mobile Wear Here 4 Summer programmes was the use of the smoothie bike. The smoothie bike promoted healthier eating by increasing the children and young people's fruit and vegetable consumption and supported some children to try new fruits such as pineapple and strawberries. The smoothie bike is an interactive tool to physically demonstrate and link healthy eating and exercise.

Change 4 Life

Change 4 Life delivered their own HAF programme at Redby Primary school and attended the mobile Wear Here 4 Summer programme, they prepared affordable healthy meals and snacks with children, young people and their

parent/carers that could be prepared quickly and easily at home. Recipe books were given to families who attended with high-quality low-cost meals that could be made at home.

Cultural Inclusion

Sunderland's black and ethnic minority community groups are committed to delivering activities to support health and well-being. The Bangladeshi International centre used their kitchen facilities to support educational learning as a whole family. As part of their summer programme children, young people and their families got involved in creating their own healthy kebab.

Phunkyfoods

SportsCool provided engaging nutritional education through a series of activities, worksheets, and recipe videos. To engage families and carers, SportsCool partnered with PhunkyFoods, who provided one virtual cook a long session a week educating families how to make a meat and vegetarian meal for under £1 per portion. For the virtual sessions, a time and date with a unique zoom login for the group of families was provided to run the session 'live' online. There were also pre-recorded videos linked to each of the recipes in the series that can be used if parents are not able to attend the session booked. They also made fruit kebabs with the children and used fruit that they wouldn't usually have access to so they could sample new tastes.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Grace House did a variety of options with their food offer; they were combination of both hot and cold foods. They included

- Create your own pittas with a range of fillings, salad carrot sticks and fruit skewers.
- Food provided for the trips out consisted of pack lunches which included sandwiches and fruit.
- One trip was to a smoothie bar near the seaside.
- Hot food that was served at some of the activities included curry with rice and healthy pizzas.

6. BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAMME

Children enjoyed a healthy meal

Food was well received by children and young people, and certain providers also offered parents the opportunity to eat with the children and young people. Additionally, some providers allowed families to take home leftover portions and excess food from the meals.

Attending a holiday club meant that if children were from households experiencing food insecurity, they were guaranteed a full, nutritious meal that day. Some providers were aware that some children attending would be benefiting from their only hot meal of the day at the holiday club. Parents across the programmes praised the food, deeming the meals to be healthy and nutritious. This was particularly important in deprived areas where they may not be able to afford or access such food in their local area.

Cooking sessions were offered to allow older young people to learn how to batch cook healthy meals. Most of the young people who attended the sessions informed us that prior to the cooking sessions they did not cook healthy meals, largely relying on convenience foods such as prepacked meals and pot noodles. Young people throughout the sessions were encouraged to try various meals and left each session with 4 portions of a hot, healthy meal. One young person who attended the sessions hadn't tried a large variety of foods and reported only eating freezer food before the sessions, she reported enjoying trying new things and has continued to make them at home following the sessions. (Support Worker Care Experienced Young People)

It was great to see some of the older children encouraging and showing children from Asylum seeker/ Refugee background how to play pool and table tennis as they had never played before. They even saved seats for them to sit next to them whilst having their food. This created a sense of inclusion and integration for these children and formed positive relationships and friendships. (Young Asian Voices)

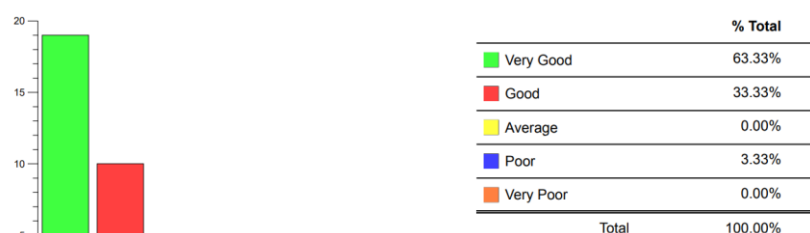
"Having one meal a day given to you is a massive help for parents" (Parent)

"I enjoyed sitting with my friends and having some food, some of the foods I didn't really like but I tried them" (Young Person Age 10)

Children and young people had the opportunity to experience new foods

Parents across the programmes often praised the food, deeming the meals to be healthy and nutritious. This was particularly important in deprived areas where they may not be able to afford or access such food in their local area. 96% of young people and parents who completed the feedback survey said the food was good or very good.

What did you think about the food provided at the session(s) you attended?



Children and Young People had the opportunity to experience new foods by taste testing new fruits and vegetables making fruit kebabs, vegetable crudities and smoothies. Providers used lots of creative ways to encourage children and new people to try new things, however nothing inspired them more than getting them in the kitchen to cook together. Older young people enjoyed handling and combining ingredients, being inquisitive about what ingredients were being used, while young children enjoyed the weighing, mixing, and measuring jobs. Information received from providers said that children and young people who had invested in preparing the meal they were more likely to eat it.

'Parents reported cooking for the first time with their children after an activity using the cookery book, we supplied to each child who attended HAF (Provider - Targeted Youth Services)

"I have never had the chance to try tomatoes before, they are yummy" (Child, Age 7)

"We provided the children with weekly food recipe bags, which took some sorting as we had so many children attend. The children got the chance to make the following at home; Sweet potato curry and rice, five bean chilli and cous cous, fakeaway vegetable pizzas, Super five vegetable soup and homemade bread kit and vegetable pasta with cheese" (Provider - Active Families)

"Following the session, we have received pictures from 2 young people who have recreated the healthy meals at home. This means they are cooking healthier meals and increasing their fruit and vegetable intake. Reducing the number of takeaway foods and ready meals will result in weight loss and a healthier lifestyle". (Provider)

Activities provided opportunities for children to be active, socialise and learn new skills

Children and young people responded positively to the vast range of activities on offer across providers, which included arts and crafts, physical activities, nutrition-based activities as well as day trips. Activity examples ranged from dodgeball and trampolining, to surfing and rock pooling.

What did you think about the activities provided at the session(s) you attended?



Both the children and young people and their parents/ carers talked about a wide range of benefits from taking part, including children gaining new skills, socialising, and improving their wellbeing. Parents/carers praised both the quality and variety of the provision.

"Keep active have had an extremely positive impact on my child, he has made lots of new friends, learnt many new skills and enjoyed every day that he has attended. It has hugely helped with childcare as myself and my family work full time" (Parent)

"My child has grown in confidence this week, he has tried new activities and meeting new friends". (Parent)

"The summer HAF programme which we delivered was an amazing success in which children from the East Area of the City had the opportunity to participate in many activities they had not experienced previously. It was special to see some of the most disadvantaged children being able to access this type of provision, make new friends, have a healthy hot meal every day and exceed the current guidelines for daily exercise and visit local attractions which to many children was a real adventure. Social interaction has a huge positive outcome from holiday provision, many children particularly when away from school do not mix with other children, holiday camps are a great way of getting children from all backgrounds to mix together". (Provider – Keep Active)

'As a family we got to do things we wouldn't have been able to do. It was brilliant for YP especially, with new, experiences all positive and helpful with her autism' (Provider)

"One young person was offered part time work by one of the activity providers. This increased his confidence to apply and secure a full-time job elsewhere, that he had been reluctant to do previously" (Support Worker)

Through Young Asian Voices (YAV) Asylum seeker refugee drop in on Saturdays in partnership with Friends of the Drop In, HAF sessions were promoted. We had a number of families who were keen to bring their children. We had 8 children from Asylum seeker and Refugee families attend our HAF sessions on a regular basis and interact with children from various cultural backgrounds. (Young Asian Voices)

"I have liked playing football, dodgeball and cooking. I have made lots of new friends" (Young Person Age 11)

There was equality of opportunity for all children and young people to access activities

Children and young people entitled to FSM attended programmes alongside children and young people who did not meet the criteria. We also requested 15% of funding to be spent to support 'vulnerable' children and young people. With this funding we were able to support SEND young people, cared for and Care experience young people Children wards which were high in deprivation/obesity. Children and Young People open to Early Help or Children's Social Care Refugees (International Bangladeshi Centre) Youth Offending Service and areas in the city that had a high level of obesity. In total 1142 children and young people who weren't eligible for Free School Meals but who had at least one vulnerability attended at least one HAF session.

"The staff are fabulous X really took the time with my daughter knowing she has a disability, but all the staff was very nice and friendly" (Parent)

"My daughter was able to attend with friends on an evening at a school she was transferring to. Great for them to be out together unsupervised by parents but in safe surroundings" (Parent)

'As a family we got to do things we wouldn't have been able to do. It was brilliant for YP especially, with new, experiences all positive and helpful with her autism' (Parent)

"This has been the bestest day ever!" (Child living with Mother in refuge)

Depending on the activity and setting, there was flexibility for parents to either drop their child or stay for the whole session. This option helped parents to ease their children into the activities, which was especially important for parents of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) children.

Together for Children supported by Sunderland Parent Carer Forum planned two sessions in co-production with Sunderland Stars group specifically for SEND children and young people. 174 individual children and young people attended the two events, one at Barnwell School and the other at South Shields Beach.

The SEND Beach party was accessible for all participants, plenty of help and support on hand throughout the day and the Surf School staff and volunteers were amazing, feedback was 10/10. Children who were apprehensive were fully supported and encouraged to try and a child who had never stepped on a beach or in the sea surfed and was so inspired he asked to come back and have more lessons. If I had asked my daughter to go to the beach and try surfing, she would have looked at me as if I had two heads. She attended the event and had a wonderful day and despite her initial reluctance attended the Surf School. She had a fantastic time, and the event boosted her self-esteem and confidence. (Parent)

Signposting and referrals

Summer HAF supported children, young people, and their families to access information advice and guidance that would benefit them. Together for Children's mobile bus was able to offer a wide range of services to children, young people, and their families from Family Centre Information to Sexual Health advice and guidance.

Six young people who accessed the mobile bus in the Summer and sought advice from Sunderland Sexual health service have had repeats visits which we hope would reduce teenage pregnancy and STI's. (Sexual Health Services)

One young person who attended the session engaged in a brief intervention around healthy relationship advice after the parent shared some potential CSE concerns, and an Early Help referral was also agreed with the family. (Targeted Youth Support)

Together for Children registered 96 new families have access to Family Centre Activities in their own areas. Children attending family centre activities can make new friends and learn as they play (Mobile Bus Provision)

One family disclosed that they were being coerced in a particular type of behaviour. PAG supported the family in being removed from the situation and provided a safe space to talk. (Provider – Pallion Action Group)

Aspirations

Young people who attend the activities have also had the opportunity to volunteer. Young people have reported that it has helped them try new things, meet new people, build new skills, and gain confidence.

When the holidays were near, I was starting to worry about how I would cope during the summer because I was too old to join any of my usual holiday clubs. When I was offered the opportunity to volunteer for Keep Active's holiday club, I was pleased that I had something to do but nervous because I didn't know what to expect. From the first day I was made to feel like I was part of the team, despite only being 12, the coaches treated me like one of them. I built good relationships with the children and the coaches and learned a lot about sports that I had little understanding of. (Young Person Volunteer Age 15)

After attending an activity as part of the HAF programme, a young person (16) was offered part time work by one of the activity providers. This increased his confidence to apply and secure a full-time job elsewhere, that he had been reluctant to do previously (Young Person Targeted Youth Services)

WINTER DELIVERY AND THE FUTURE

As part of budget announcement, it has been confirmed that the Holiday Activities and Food programme will continue, following the successful nationwide delivery of this programme in 2021. The spending review announced over £200 million a year for the continuation of the holiday activities and food programme, providing enriching activities and healthy meals for disadvantaged children during school holidays, clarification of Sunderland's allocation is yet to be determined.

From lessons learnt from children, young people, families and providers over Easter and Summer we have identified the following areas to improve delivery for our Winter HAF programme and future holiday programmes.

Training

Gaps in some providers knowledges were identified in the evaluations of the Summer Programme, in consultation with providers we have sought training to assist with the delivery of the Winter HAF. The training sessions support providers to understand young people from low socio-economic groups, Christmas holiday provision, young people mental health and working with challenging behaviour, all providers have been offered this training free in preparation for their winter delivery.

Children learning about food

Education around food and activity differed depending on the provider, to give all children and young people who attend a HAF programme the same learning a logbook is being put together. The logbook explains why it is important to eat a balanced diet and gives examples of portion sizes. It includes a section that logs the fruit and veg the children and young people have eaten, the water drank, and the exercise carried out for a week. It also includes an example of some exercises that can be done at home. Logbooks will be distributed to providers before their winter programme start.

Families learning to cook together

To change eating habits of children and young people, parents/carers need to be engaged in preparation and cooking of foods, not all activity providers have facilities to offer this however by working together and we are hoping to be able to link organisations together to provide a whole family offer.

Quality of Provision

The quality of the provision varied. Some providers were very experienced in working with children and organising activities and had access to more equipment and play spaces. Others had more limited space and resources and had less experience running holiday clubs. Training support and providers sharing best practice will enhance the quality of provision moving forwards.

Procurement of providers

Some providers who initially expressed an interest in the HAF programme didn't apply due the procurement process especially if they were new to this. We have offered support fully to providers to submit their applications however this can be very time consuming, a grant award process may work more effectively and speed up the process for future funding bids.

Booking System

Providers and parents experienced problems with systems for signing up or cancelling sessions, and all providers had different systems. Some booking systems made activity availability unclear, such as how many places were left for a session. This may have resulted in unsuccessful booking. Difficulty or confusion experienced by parents trying to cancel activities may have led to both spaces and food being wasted if a meal was prepared for a child who did not attend. Together for Children are currently working with the DfE and other Local authorities to procure a booking system for 2022.

Age of Young People

More efforts are needed to involve older children in HAF activities While there were activities on offer for older children, local authorities made clear that more effort was needed for future programmes to engage an older demographic. Working directly with young people we would like to expand our evening session offer.

Relationships with schools

The relationships built between schools, Local Authorities and providers will be key for successful delivery of provision in 2022. Existing relationships were used to publicise the programme but, due to time restraints and short turnaround time before the summer programme, new relationships were not as well-established as they could have been. Regular briefings regarding HAF have been sent to schools leading up to the winter programme. Providers have also been introduced to local schools in their areas.

A universal offering of the programme should be implemented where possible

The summer programme has demonstrated that our Wear Here 4 Summer programme was a lifeline for many of our families, regardless of FSM eligibility. We would like to allow all children and young people to attend the HAF programme, seeking affordable activity charges at the discretion of individual providers for non – FSM places.

We must build upon an understanding that HAF is open to all children which will help reduce stigma. This should be implemented using a simple, streamlined system accessible to all that overcomes language barriers and digital exclusion. Efforts should be made to ensure that FSM children are indistinguishable from non-FSM children throughout the activities.