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Impact Assessment of Holiday Provision in West Cheshire, 2019

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University of
Chester

Impact Assessment of Holiday Provision in West Cheshire, 2019

Report by Michael Francis, Seóna Dunne and Rosa Fernandez for the University of Chester

On behalf of: Edsential CIC and Partners (Welcome Network, Cheshire West
Voluntary Action and Cheshire West and Chester Council)

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Executive summary

This report details an impact assessment of Edsential and Partners' holiday food and activity provision. The consortium was one of eleven areas in England awarded the funding by the Department of Education to coordinate Holiday Activity and Food Clubs over the 2019 summer holiday period in West Cheshire. This holiday provision was aimed at children, teenagers and their families to provide food and activities over the summer break from school. The provision took the format of a '4x4x4' approach; this meant that each child should have been able to access four days of provision, for at least four hours a day, for four weeks of the summer holidays. Another aspect of the provision was education on nutrition and healthy living activities. The provision engaged with 4303 young people over 25,232 attendance instances with an estimated total of 27,784 meals provided. This accounts for 35% of children in need across Chester and Cheshire West. Cheshire is deemed to be a wealthy part of the United Kingdom and as a result is often overlooked for funding opportunities. The communities targeted by this provision clearly were in need and the findings show that the provision was well targeted. The communities were overwhelming positive about the provision and clear about their need. Children from deprived areas lack activities for the summer, face hunger in the form of unhealthy food and shortages, and these centres and hubs assist with filling these gaps. The largest concern reported was whether or not the funding would continue into the future. If funding for holiday club activity and food provision could be assured it would enable a greater reach and impact. Many providers had little time to plan activities around the provision and year to year funding would keep these centres as community hubs. These providers are helping to build communities and support the nutrition and food availability to young people and families over the holiday period. This project clearly fills a need across the county.

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Introduction

The Partnership

Edsential CIC and Partners that include The Welcome Network, Cheshire West Voluntary Action and Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC) (referred to as Edsential and partners hereafter) have been successful in accessing funding to coordinate Holiday Activity and Food Clubs over the summer holiday period in West Cheshire for 2019. This project had begun in 2017 where it provided 12 days of provision that grew in 2018 to 90 days of provision, and this year it provided over 500 days of provision.

The partnership gave a unique approach and strength. Edsential, the lead partner, provided strong links with schools and the ability to target, along with their experience of working with young people and due diligence and compliance of safe practice and contracts. The Welcome network contributed through their historic work in building community partnerships and having food equality as part of their core agenda, while Cheshire West Voluntary Action helped with their direct links within the community voluntary and faith sector supporting them with advice and guidance. Finally, CWAC public health ensured this provision was addressed through local delivery plans and future sustainability.

The Evaluation

The University of Chester has been invited by Edsential and partners to perform an impact assessment of their Holiday Activity and Food provision for the summer of 2019. This report is an impact assessment of a funding programme for 2019 summer holiday clubs and food clubs across West Cheshire, United Kingdom.

This is a holiday provision aimed at children and young people and their families to provide food and activities over the summer break from school. An aspect of the provision is education on nutrition and healthy living activities. The need across West Cheshire is quite large with 2018 consensus data highlighting that 7609 primary school children and 4071 secondary school children were entitled to free school meals. Cheshire West and Chester is often deemed as an affluent borough, however over one fifth of children and young people are described as disadvantaged. This perception has often led to those in these areas not receiving support and funding that other counties attract. Of the 11,680 pupils eligible for Free School Meals in Cheshire West and Chester, Edsential and partners aimed to engage at least 35% or 4,035 of those pupils. They targeted areas of high need to try and reach as many children eligible for Free School Meals as possible. The areas they targeted were

- Winsford Over and Verdin
- Lache
- Winsford Wharton
- Ellesmere Port Town
- Blacon
- St Paul's
- Rossmore
- Winsford Swanlow and Dene

These areas are within the borough of Cheshire West and Chester and rank in decile 1, the 10% most deprived areas in England in terms of Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015.

The impact assessment examined the broader social impact of the provision and the educational activities. This pilot project has counted on the participation of 33 centres/clubs/providers with an additional 8 sub-groups. The report is based on the empirical evaluation of a significant sample of those participants from 15 centres, combined with the analysis of quantitative data collected by Edsential and partners.

Map of West Cheshire

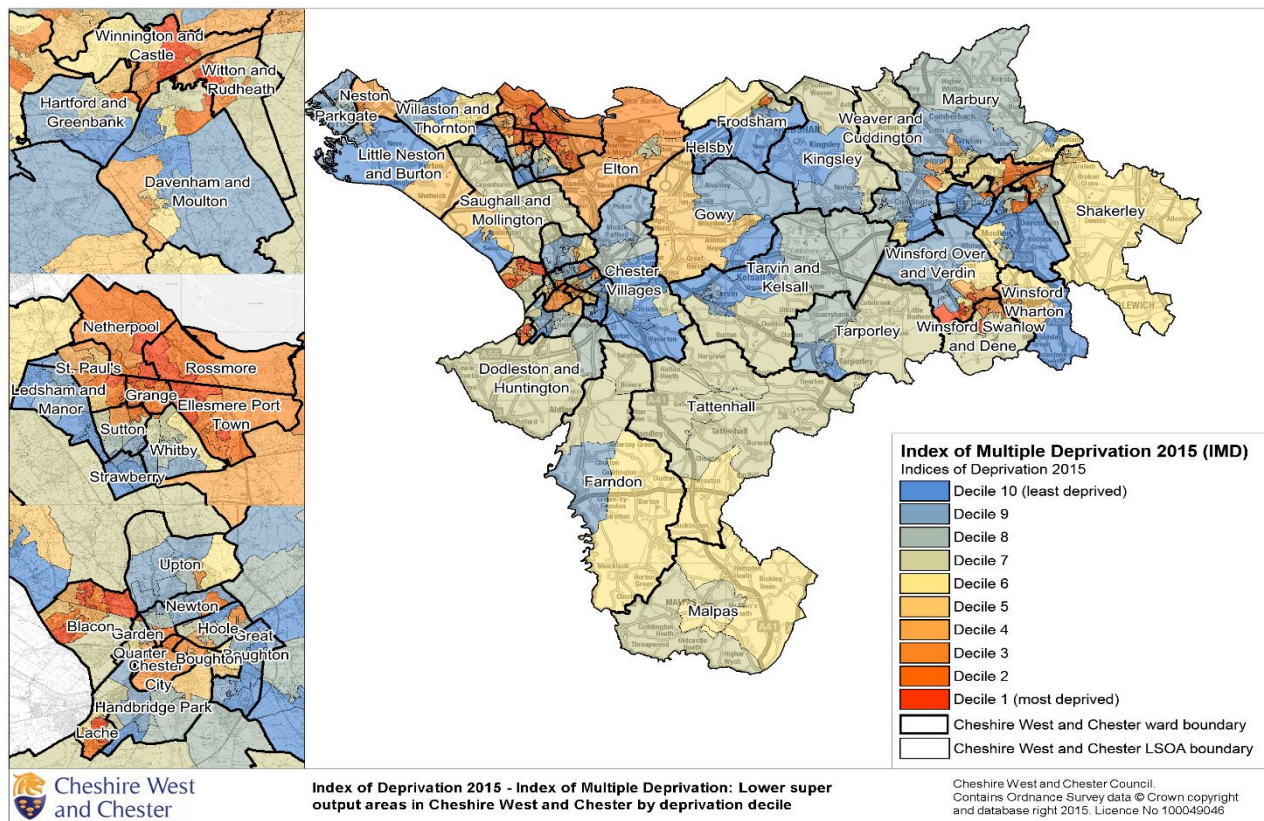
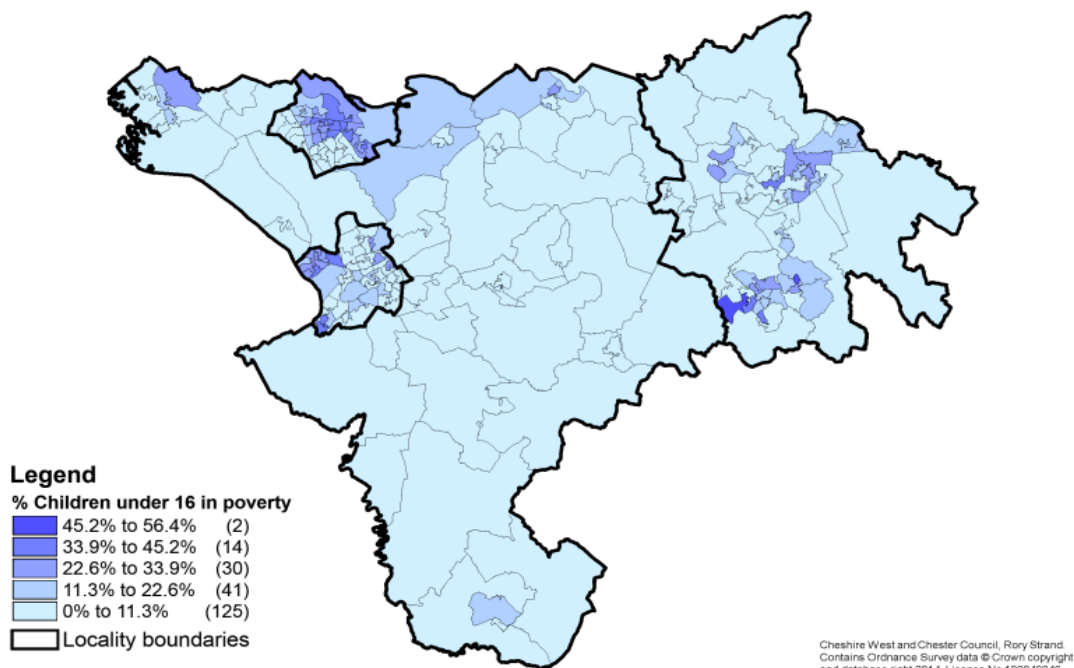


Figure 1:

http://inside.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/find_out_more/datasets_and_statistics/statistics/indices_of_multiple_deprivation_2015



Proportion of children in poverty under 16) by lower super output area (2012)

Figure 2: Map of Children under 16 in poverty in West Cheshire

Objectives of the assessment

The key expected outcomes of the research project are:

- To understand the impact and scale of the holiday activities and food provision during the specified time period.
- To understand the quality and the diversity of the holiday activities and food provision
- To understand the impact of the clubs on individuals, families, local and school communities.
- To understand the changes of behaviour which has resulted as part of the nutrition education delivered as a key element of the clubs.
- To understand what policy changes or services would be required to ensure that clubs were able to run during every school holiday
- To understand whether further food support is required for young people and their families, and if so to make recommendations.

Hearing one of the parents say 'thank you for running the programme' and how much of a lifeline it had given her. She has a small baby and a 6 year old and she told me that without the programme she would have been 'crawling the walls' at home.

Objectives of Research Project

The key objectives of the evaluation are:

- To work with a range of activity and food providers to develop a comprehensive understanding of impact and effectiveness of the holiday provision.
- Make a set of recommendations which create a blue print, or a list of success criteria for a holiday activity and food provision.

- To work with a range of organisations and community groups to explore the necessity of longer term food support and the services required

The project aimed to gather qualitative data from a cross section of the Holiday provisions. Sites were selected to gather data from all of the different types and scales of organisations that were provided with funding or food provision through Edsential and partners. The organisations ranged from community gardens that had a maximum of 10 children up to large centres that arranged activities for many children. The research is to understand the broader impact of the holiday provision and not to serve as a critique of individual centres, their activities or staff. This report makes no statements about individual centres or communities. This report builds on the perceptions of children, parents, staff and volunteers, collected in a series of semi-structured interviews, as well as the observations of the researchers in their visits to each location.

Holiday Provision Rationale

In Cheshire West and Chester there are some wards that experience multiple indicators of high deprivation and inequality (Cheshire West and Chester Inequalities Report, 2015). West Cheshire has deeply impoverished communities that have been defined locally as ‘lower super output areas (LSOA)’. Super Output Areas are a set of geographical areas used to facilitate the calculation of the Indices of Deprivation and for a range of statistics used for planning and targeting government services and support. Those designated as a low super output areas are those areas that experience high levels of deprivation ranking in the 10% most deprived areas nationally across three or more of the seven domains (IMD, 2015) such as health deprivation and disability, and income deprivation amongst others. Some of the LSOA’s in this provision include Blacon, Lache and Winsford, which rely on foodbanks and government assistance for food, housing and social services. The latter reflects a larger need across the United Kingdom where levels of poverty have risen over the last few years and cuts linked to government austerity measures have worsened health and social outcomes (Watkins, et. al. 2017). Experience has found that the need for free school meals is often higher than the official figures as some children in need may not qualify for a variety of reasons or errors (Francis, ND, personal observation). Food poverty or food insecurity is a growing public health issue in the UK and within Cheshire (Austin, 2018).

Another parent reported that her daughter has enjoyed so many different experiences which without the programme just simply wouldn't have been an option as she doesn't have any spare money to be able to provide many options for her during the holidays.

One of the frameworks underpinning this research is the connection between health and education as components of human capital, acting both as inputs and outputs of development (Todaro and Smith, 2015). In this sense, the right nutrition (calorie intake with a balanced composition) is understood to contribute to better health conditions, which in turn will result in better productivity, and in the case of children, better performance at school. Malnourished children are less likely to remain at school and more likely to struggle academically (Utzinger and

Tanner, 2013 as cited in Thirlwall and Pacheco-Lopez, 2017). There is strong evidence put forward linking poor diet to illness and disease and the strong rationale showing that eating well in school could play a major part in protecting the nation's health (Crawley, 2005). In addition, the report is also framed by the links between physical activity and health (Biddle and Asare, 2011), particularly in children, in order to cover the second part of the provision (activities). In that sense, evidence suggests links between physical activity and self-esteem and cognitive functioning, with negative effects associated between sedentary behaviour and mental health (Biddle and Asare, 2011). Physical activity in children has also been linked to improved behaviour in the classroom, and better school attainment levels (Public Health England, 2014).

This holiday provision provides a much needed service of holiday activities for disadvantaged communities across West Cheshire. The impact assessment being conducted may have repercussions on future funding for the holiday provision as well as reshaping what is provided for young people across West Cheshire. This type of research has the potential to positively enhance young people's lives and youth services in West Cheshire. The provision is run with public funding and thus there is a need to ensure that the services are adequate and impactful, which is also for the public good.

This is a great place for the whole community. Many of our children have special needs and here they have a place to go and be safe.

Studies have identified the importance of building linkages between stakeholders, fostering trust and establishing a common identity among the community as an important aspect of reducing food poverty in the UK. One study that examined the Welcome Network in Cheshire showed the crucial role in reducing food insecurity played in building networks and connections between grassroots organisations and national level charities (Austin, 2018). Edsential and Partners as part of this network foster and build relationships across Cheshire that assist with reducing food poverty by supporting a wide variety of organisations and businesses.

Methodology

The impact analysis will primarily draw on qualitative methods with quantitative analysis used to frame the impact based on previously collected meta-data about numbers of participants and types of participation already held by Edsential and partners. Qualitative impact analysis is often advocated primarily in conjunction with other evaluative functions such as implementation analysis, process analysis, community self-analysis, the empowerment of staff, and the interpretation and understanding of experience (Mohr, 1999). This impact assessment aims to further the understanding of the impact to include community self-awareness and to understand the experience from the participants and providers viewpoint.

The research team selected 15 centres for interviews and observations in conjunction with Edsential staff to ensure that a broad selection of provision was covered, in order to account for all the different types of centres and scale of operations to better understand the overall picture. At the different centres staff, volunteers, parents and children were interviewed and observed during a site visit. No participants' names were collected during interviews as all were granted anonymity.

The project aimed to understand the broader impact and is not meant as a commentary on individual centres. No names, locations or identifying information for individual centres appears in the report.

Range of activities undertaken by Holiday provision

Edsential and Partners had proposed to work with existing providers in order to develop pre-existing networks. These included existing holiday club providers, schools, community, voluntary and faith sector groups with the private sector filling gaps of provision where other groups were not present or in a position to deliver at the short time frame. This collaboration was to create and enhance a network of local services and agencies to ensure joined-up collaborative working and support for organisations. They aimed for the provision being developed to be sustainable beyond the funding period through training opportunities, working with local businesses, sharing learning and good practice.

Some centres had been running different holiday activities for several years and are well regarded by the communities where they sit, with regularly high number of children attending (usually of younger ages, with parents taking part too). For other centres, summer 2019 was their first experience of running healthy food and/or activities provision with the support of the partnership.

Ages of children vary widely, with some centres targeting younger ones (4-12 years) and others covering older groups (8-14 years). Some staff pointed the need to widen the age of the children targeted, as vulnerabilities exist across all age groups including those aged 12 – 18 years. Furthermore it was recognised the need of more staff resources to cover differentiated activities by age groups, as the needs and interests of children vary widely. Figure 4 in the next section reinforces the small participation of the older age groups (less than 3%), quite likely related to the lack of activities on offer for this group. The barriers to participation of young people in activities are wide ranging from cost, transport, awareness, perception, times and locations of activities to internal, social barriers (Edcomms, 2009). To fully target this group requires additional targeted services.

The diversity of the provision was also affected by the geographical location of the clubs, and their accessibility without using transport. While most centres are integrated and easily accessible on foot, some were in areas that required the use of car (which not everybody had access too) or public transport. This increases the cost for families already in precarious situations. Some centres constituted the only holiday provision in the area, with participants having to travel some distance to have access to any activity (more than 10 miles in some cases).

Activities on offer included swimming, forest schools, team building exercises, community gardens and farms, drama, education on healthy food, education on how the digestive system works, sports including rugby, football, multi-sport and dance.

Overall Impacts of the provision

In terms of the coverage of the provision, it can be said that the target set by Edsential and partners was reached, with 4,303 children of different ages attending the range of activities on offer. Classification by age and gender can be seen in Figures 3 and 4 below. Participants included children from almost 200 primary and secondary schools from the targeted areas, in activities provided in almost 50 locations.

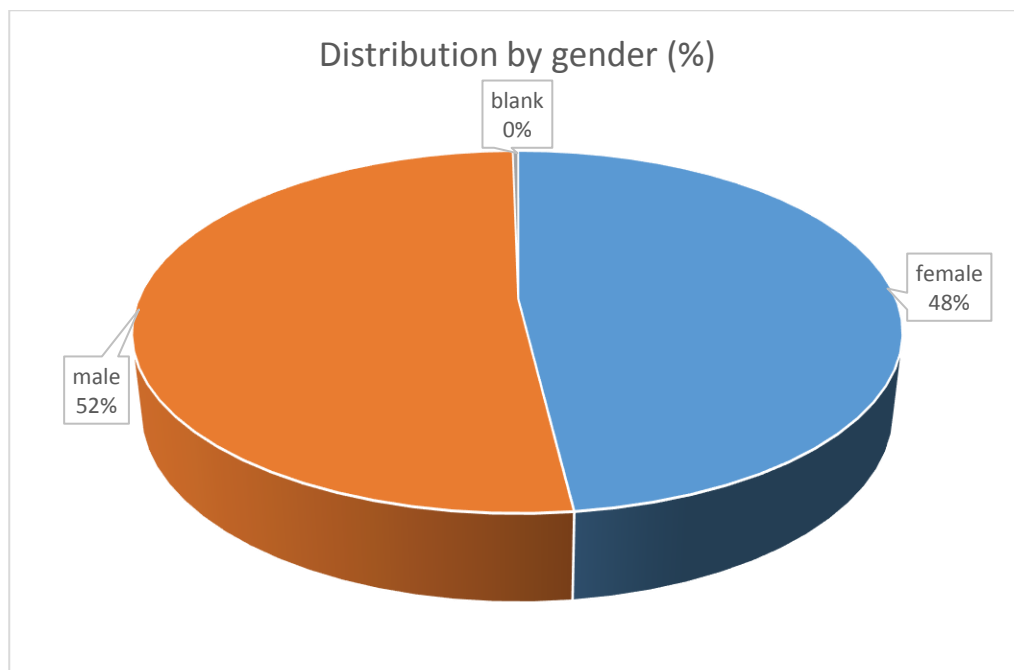


Figure 3. Distribution of children by gender (%)Source: Edsential

More than 45% of the children were under the age of 8 years, with the age group between 7 and 11 constituting the highest single proportion, reaching almost 40%. This is likely connected to the fact that most centres offered activities open to the participation of this age range.

The frequency of attendance by age group shows some interesting variations. The highest numbers of attendance instances are, as expected, coming from the 7 to 11 age group, with a decrease in the younger age groups and a substantial increase in the 11 to 14 age group (See Figure 5). This can be explained by the fact that some of the provision, as explained later in the report, is not a '4x4x4', and the fact that this age group appears to have the will to attend the activities regularly, 'because they want to, not because their parents ask them to do it'. In the younger age groups (0 – 7 years), however, it was more frequent to see children attending with their parents so their attendance relied on parents availability, which could be hindered by work or other family obligations.

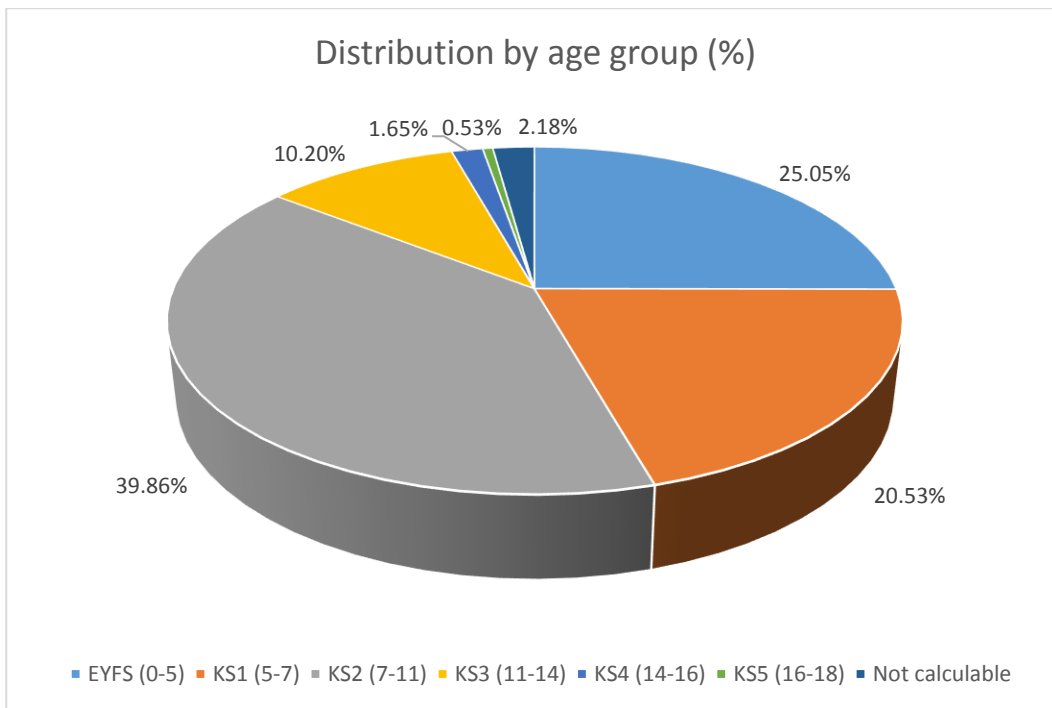


Figure 4. Distribution of children by age group (%)

Source: Edsential

The provision clearly assisted with a situation of real need across West Cheshire. Children from the LSOAs targeted in the project lack resources to attend other holiday clubs or professional childcare services. The centres provide much needed activities for holiday periods and provide resources for the communities. They also foster a sense of community and belonging in often fractious spaces. Parents that send their children, or attend with them, find the centres a much needed relief for childcare assistance and socialisation for their children. Centres that had parents stay with the children also found it gave them a chance to socialise themselves and provided relief over having to find suitable and affordable summer activities. Some of the larger centres also had an appeal and usage by the larger communities in the area and were not exclusively used by socially deprived communities, but serve West Cheshire in general.

The additional support to the centres in the form of food or financial support to purchase food was echoed as a much needed boon. A number of centres are run by volunteers on a 'shoe-string' budget and the new provision enabled them to offer a varied level of support. This included increasing the length of the day (number of hours) of the support offered, and the ability to provide food or in some cases, an increase in the quality and variety of food.

Volunteers reported that the food is great and "in previous years we gave what we could to feed the kids, but it was what I could afford from my own pocket or what I could get given by others".

A number of centres also dealt with children with special needs in the form of learning disabilities and social problems. The centres may not have had training to deal with this but also served a role in providing additional support and care for children and families with additional needs. In family

run centres parents remarked on the role of the clubs bringing the community together, as well as a sense of relief due to the ‘understanding’ and ‘inclusiveness’ displayed, appreciating ‘not being judged’ for their children’s ‘odd behaviour’. Some of the centres also offered adults access to activities and support, although they were not included in the food provision discussed here. The use by other members of the community shows the overall need for social activities and services across the county.

Children valued very positively the provision offered, both in terms of food and activities. They liked the idea of meeting new friends, ‘getting out of the house’ and spending more time having fun with friends from school. The alternatives in some cases would be limited, such as ‘being dropped at my nan’s watching TV till 5’, ‘playing with the console’ or ‘just staying in my room and looking for things to do’. This indicates an added value of the provision keeping children active in safe spaces.

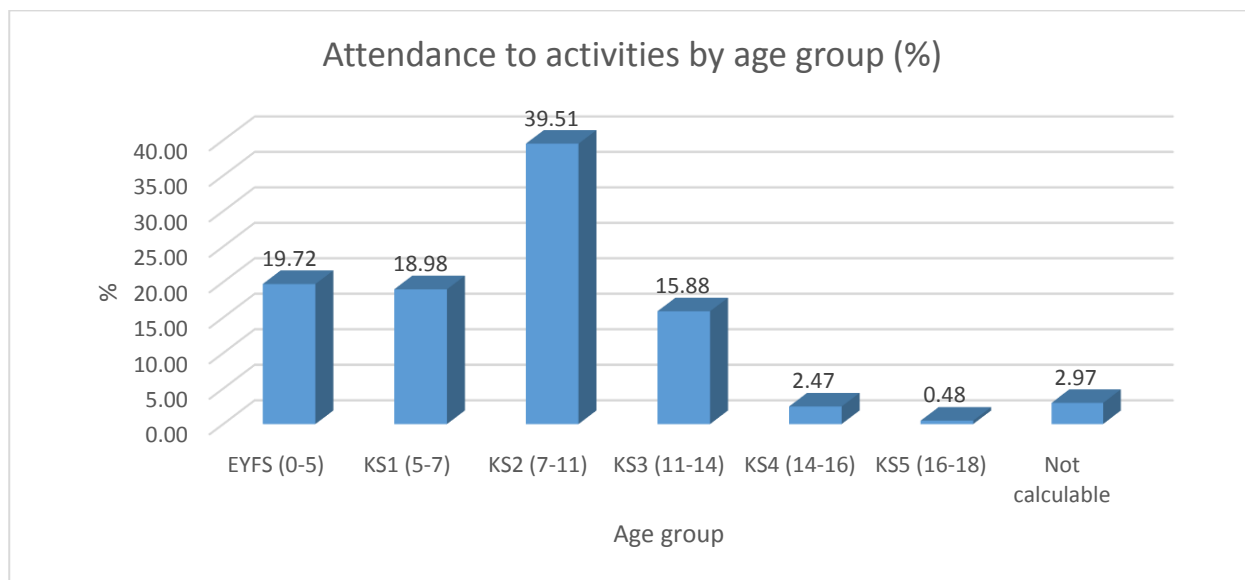


Figure 5. Attendances distribution by age group (%)

Source: Edsential

Parents in that regard do not recall big changes on eating behaviour, but a good number of them indicate that children are excited about attending the clubs, asking ‘What are we doing tomorrow...?’. Some observed that due to the physical activity during the day, they arrived home more tired, which meant that they were calm and in that sense their behaviour was less challenging; ‘she comes home tired after the day’s activities and is much better behaved’. In addition another mum commented that her daughter’s behaviour has improved as well as her socialisation skills.

One family felt that the community centre really averted a crisis. They had a delay in obtaining Universal Credit and having access to lunches really assisted in filling that gap. They did not need to go to the food bank.

One centre reported that antisocial behaviour was reduced in their area. It was felt that this was the result of the activities and the engagement. Children that were deemed to be at risk were included in some of the programmes and areas. The activities kept them busy and created a sense of community that disrupted the antisocial behaviour. Children were brought together in some areas from neighbouring communities and it was felt that this reduced friction between youth and created a bigger sense of community.

Staff participating in some clubs observed changes between the first and last weeks of the provision, which children presenting more self-confidence, easiness in socialising and willingness to teamwork. One member of staff remarked the change in a child 'from having a grin face in school to a big smile' and it being 'heart lifting'.

I feel that we have had a much quieter summer than normal with regards to Anti-Social Behaviour. I feel that the activities provided [...] have greatly influenced this as if local young people have a place to go to they are less likely to cause problems within the community.

In this line, it was pointed out the need to perform some short follow up once children go back to school, so that the gains achieved during the break are not lost. This will necessitate further involvement and coordination by the different social services dedicated to children's care, including schools. It was noted that the centres did provide some continuity between school activities and the summer so that the children were not just free to do 'nothing productive' as reported by a parent.

Volunteers in some centres may come from an elderly age (retirees, etc) and living in lonely conditions. Participating in holiday clubs for children gives them a sense of purpose and a positive mindset, with some mentioning the positive effect on their own health. Some centres that offered activities for the whole community alongside holiday provision for children also saw their purpose enhanced as part of a larger community. Support for these centres builds that community across neighbourhoods and across generations. A lively community hub increased the chances for all members of the community to come together and benefit. The growth of a community spirit was widely reported. Those centres that engaged people more widely including adults really seemed to foster a sense of community. Support for adults at these places could be beneficial. Currently adult volunteers typically get fed while working, but perhaps this could be added in officially to further support communities in need more generally.

A real impact was found in the network approach that was used by Edsential and Partners. This strengthened the working networks already in place and enhanced their role in the communities in which they work. This strong partnership approach follows the World Health Organisation's action means to effective health promotion. The local community groups' within this provision role and position in the community was improved and people reported that it was great to get the community together. This enhanced a sense of community and

With the summer provision funding we are able to open '9am – 9pm, 7 days a week during the summer holidays. The site has existed for 50 years, it is well embedded in the community and doesn't get vandalised or broken into. It has respect in the community'

small centres occasionally coordinated activities and brought children together from different neighbourhoods.

Impacts of the food and nutritional aspect

The four day provision fits a real need. Parents discussed going hungry themselves as they gave all the food available to their children. They also discussed running out of food each month with the summer being particularly hard. This summer they felt some relief as they knew their children had a good meal during the day even if there was little food at home. One parent commented that 'they don't just feed children, if there is left over food, they feed the parents too'.

One lady reported that she "was able to keep a job this summer because my children had a place to go while I was at work".

While meals at the holiday clubs were appreciated and overall popular they did not seem to change the behaviour or diets of people at home. The meals varied between clubs with some children receiving 'sandwich bags with crisps, biscuits and drink (juice or water) in one club and some receiving 'potato, chicken curry, chicken burger' in another club. Respondents did not report any changes to what they eat at home, other than perhaps to make sure that if a sandwich is eaten for lunch they would not have another sandwich for dinner. They did however report that it was good to know that the children have a good healthy meal during the day. A group of parents reported that they sometimes ran out of food by the end of the month and they were comforted that their children had a good meal during the day because some nights they only have 'pot-noodle¹' left to feed the family. There are some indications that children are learning what healthy food is. This is shown by a number of centres uses of targeted activities and educational materials being used. There were a few groups that did offer training in how to cook healthy meals for cheap. This was a welcome feature that perhaps could be further developed across other community centres.

Education on healthy eating and nutrition was well valued by parents, with some mentioning the quality of the food (in centres where food is cooked) and how good it is for children to learn about healthy eating at an early age. Some children in this respect expressed their 'wish to grow fruit and vegetables at home'; however, this was not a consensus by all of the clubs that were visited by the researchers.

The provision of food in itself may have had an additional welcomed impact. In previous years, food banks have seen a spike in food bank use over the holiday periods (Food Bank personal communication, 2019). The increase in need during holidays is linked to the absence of the free school meals programme that currently operates across the country. During the summer when the schools are closed children lose access to a meal and consume more of the meagre resources

¹Pot Noodle is a brand of instant noodle available in a range of flavours made by adding boiling water to the cup it comes in.

found in poorer households. West Cheshire Foodbank data show a significant drop in the need for Foodbank support in August 2019 (697 people) compared to the same month in August 2018 (1013 people). Data on vouchers provided for 'child holiday meal' confirmed a decrease from 62 vouchers in 2018 to only 17 vouchers in 2019. Though it cannot be fully inferred that this is solely the result of the intervention undertaken by Edsential and Partners, and further investigation is required, it is clear it had an impact as reported by families and service providers. In this sense, the continuation of the funding and future evaluation of this impact is recommended.

Impacts on wellbeing

Some of the impacts on wellbeing have already been pointed out in the previous paragraphs; The increase in the sense of community, the feeling of purpose in volunteers, the reduction of anti-social behaviour, and the improvement in socialisation, all contribute to individual and community wellbeing. Physical and outdoor activities also contribute to the health aspects of wellbeing.

In addition to all these improvements noticed across a majority of centres, it is worth mentioning a specific project where deeper interventions took place. Targeting children in an area at risk of exploitation, apart from physical activities and food provision, this project attempted a one-to-one approach to help children aged 9 to 14, aiming to improve their situation in six areas: Making a difference, hopes and dreams, choices and behaviour, wellbeing, education and work, and communicating. Researchers did not have the opportunity to interview the children, but only to observe them, and interviewed instead the members of staff involved in the project. They collected their own data and their conclusions confirm improvement in all the areas within the four weeks in which the intervention took place. The biggest improvements were observed in the indicators of hopes and dreams, wellbeing, choices and behaviour, and communicating.

With regard to wellbeing, all the children participating in this initiative experienced an 'increase in confidence and self-esteem, improvement in their emotional health and wellbeing as well as increased confidence in their strengths and ability to achieve' (Project Evaluation, 2019).

One of the main characteristics of this initiative is the partnership approach, with follow up and involvement of schools, so that there can be an assessment of the continuation of the improvements once children go back to school.

Though the results of this initiative cannot be extrapolated to the rest of centres, the need for collaboration between institutions and the establishment of partnerships, as well as a follow up on the children during school terms, are findings that are worth considering for the future at a wider scale.

Recommendations

The variety of centres offered a range of provision that ranged from daily support, to smaller providers offering a single day of provision once a week. Many of the centres that did not offer the '4x4x4' provision of 4 hours a day, 4 days a week for 4 weeks see it as something to move towards in the future with ongoing support. It is suggested that Edsential and Partners do not limit the resources to those centres that offer the '4x4x4' provision or more than this. Many places are run by volunteers and community groups on very small budgets. They feel that some provision over one or two days is better than none. While it would be ideal to encourage centres to be open more days to extend their impact, this may be down to time and resources of these groups and centres. If time permits, organising between and across the centres that offer summer provision over limited days could increase access. Some centres could provide activities and meals on certain days and other centres could cover alternate days. In many cases this did occur with cross planning of activities and mutual support. This highlights the strength of the existing network that is being supported and enhanced through the project.

A number of centres reported having children and even volunteers with special needs. Additional support for special needs children and care would be appreciated as a way of increasing community cohesion and trying to eradicate stigma and increase integration of those with special needs. In this regard some of the centres visited over the course of the research activity worked in doing this and increasing community cohesion and awareness.

It is suggested that Edsential and Partners do not use the 'free school meals' label as being criteria for inclusion. The locations are targeted into areas of need and this ensures the provision reaches those in need. There is also an issue that many children and families go hungry across West Cheshire, not just those that qualify for free school meals. This requirement is also impossible to confirm as schools are closed during the holidays and could not legally share that information with community centres or groups. The data they may provide is overall numbers in the area which is useful for targeting need but not useful for inclusion or exclusion. Centres that did not request the data from families did not find that the provision was being abused by those that could afford to supply meals for their children. At some centres those families that could afford more than others often supplied other activities and resources. Also opening up the provision would have the added benefit of bringing together communities across class lines rather than entrenching class differences. The activities and food clearly targeted the correct communities in need and this already ensures the provision is targeted correctly.

The majority of people were thankful for the food and enjoyed it. What was a common request was to offer more variety as many people prefer not to have sandwiches daily at those centres that received the packed lunches. However, comments about quality of the food were limited and it was largely well received.

While Edsential and Partners had offered training in Food Hygiene, Health and safety, safeguarding and grant funding, the uptake was limited. This was due to a variety of factors including timing of training, not being certain it was needed, and transport among others. At some centres volunteers

had even paid for the training themselves, as the need for it became apparent. It is expected after this year's provision that there would be a greater uptake of the training opportunities now that the network is in place and the value of the training is better understood. For future training opportunities it will be essential to give sufficient notice for the training to increase the uptake and to offer it on various dates for flexibility.

Other training aspects that would be useful to pursue was cooking lessons for the community. One centre that trained parents on how to make cheap healthy meals was a 'real hit'. Showing parents that they could make a home meal simply and for less than prepared foods could be extended as part of provision for centres that have more than just children attending the location.

The impact of nutritional food education would be bigger if the larger community were engaged by targeting parents and carers rather than just children. The parents at one centre were being taught how to make decent inexpensive meals by a volunteer. This type of outreach and targeting would be more effective than targeting children.

The most ideal situation would be to offer this provision and funding over many years going forward. The impact would be much greater if communities and families knew in advance that this is a resource that will be there in the future. The continuity of funding for the future would also encourage word of mouth spread about the centres and what they provide. Community centres are continually seeking funding and are always seeking stability. They are key resources for communities in need and ensuring their longevity and support enhances communities as they serve a vital role.

A child reported that the summer activities were priceless. They never had anything to write about their summer holiday when they went back to school and used to dread the first week back when this was asked. It was a summer of things to do and learn and was something they wished to share with their schools.

Continuity in the provision offered to children through the year and not only in the summer break, as well as coordination with Youth services, is also recommended, to ensure a follow up of children's progression in school.

A wide spread need for support and activities for children during the other breaks such as October, Christmas and school half term breaks was identified. If this provision could cover other breaks from school to fill in gaps and keep children engaged and occupied would greatly assist the communities in need. This highlights the need for such provision and the continued support of the network already in place.

The single biggest issue that was raised is that of timing. If the calls for the funding applications could be made earlier it was widely reported that they would be able to organise better applications for the initial call. The need for venues to host activities is always present and more time would assist with locating venues and liaising with other groups to organise shared use of the venues. Groups that offered complimentary activities felt they were inadvertently placed in competition with one another as they rushed to organise. More time could assist with centres arranging their summer activities so they support rather than detract from each centres. An example of this was a centre not connected to this year's provision, which offered a youth football club for a week, meaning that the centre was almost empty for this period. Had they been better

organised they would have reduced their provision during this period and then done more in other weeks.

The ideal of consistent funding was more important than the amount of funding. Many centres ran excellent programmes on for very little funding. While additional funding is always welcome, the amount given really supported the wide variety of service providers. Here, if centres had more time and knowledge about the certainty of the funding they could plan and mobilise the communities earlier. This would ensure better organisation, better services and more uptake of the full support being offered.

Conclusion

Edsential and Partners have run an excellent support network and assisted with the filling of a great need across Chester and Cheshire West. Poverty and its negative impacts on society are mitigated by the role of communities working together. These summer activities offer excellent value through a holistic approach and aid in averting 'holiday hunger'. This report aims to show what impact this programme of support has had this past summer. The wide network supported here is vital to these communities and shows that the broader social value of Edsential and Partners work needs to be underscored. Their work strengthens the network already in place and efficiently organises the provision of food alongside wider support of communities and the service providers that serve these communities.

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