



Food and Fun School Holiday Enrichment Programme 2016

Evaluation Report

Welsh Local Government Association

The WLGA's primary purposes are to promote a better local government, its reputation and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public service and democracy.

It represents the 22 local authorities in Wales with the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities as associate members.

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Contents

Section	Heading	Pages
1	Executive summary	3-5
2	Background	6
3	Overview of the Food and Fun clubs participating in the evaluation	7-8
4	Evaluation methods	9-10
5	Reach and engagement	11
6	Families' needs	12-13
7	Costs of running a Food and Fun club	14
8	Impacts on children's health and wellbeing	15-16
9	Impacts on parents and family life	17-18
10	What makes the Food and Fun clubs work?	19-22
11	Conclusions and recommendations	23-24
12	Research funding, team and acknowledgements	25
Annex 1	List of 49 external organisations involved in the delivery of Food and Fun clubs in the 10 schools featured in this report	26

1 Executive summary

1.1 Background

The school summer holidays are a crunch point for low-income families: children who benefit from free school breakfasts and lunches often miss meals and go hungry once their school shuts for the holidays, while the lack of free play schemes and sports activities impacts most on disadvantaged children. Missing meals, a sedentary lifestyle and social isolation in the school holidays reinforces existing health inequalities and undermines the success of free school breakfast and lunch policies.

In this context, new community projects are now emerging to address 'holiday hunger'. The UK All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food report *Filling the Holiday Gap* found a range of new projects but these were typically small scale and relying on local activism. The Food and Fun school holiday enrichment programme, developed and piloted in Cardiff in 2015, is the first UK example of a multi-agency project providing healthy meals, nutrition skills, sports and other physical activities in the school holidays.

1.2 Food and Fun clubs

The Food and Fun club model is an innovative partnership approach involving schools, health professionals, local authorities and community sports staff. The aim is to prevent children going hungry in the summer holidays and to improve children's health and promote learning through a programme of enrichment activities.

Each holiday club is open for a total of 12 days over a 3 or 4 week period in the school summer holidays, with core daily components involving: a free breakfast, a minimum of one hour physical activity, free lunch and nutrition education. One day each week, family members are invited to join the children for lunch.

The model was rolled out beyond Cardiff in 2016 and implemented in 19 schools in Communities First Cluster areas across Wales following support from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and five local authorities (the City of Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan, Neath Port Talbot, Denbighshire and Wrexham).

1.3 Evaluation

In summer 2016, 10 out of the 19 Food and Fun clubs took part in an evaluation (6 in primary schools, 4 in secondary schools) to examine: reach and engagement; the characteristics and needs of the families engaged; the costs and impact of this model on children and parents' health and wellbeing; and the experiences and views of children, parents and staff. A total of 196 children, 86 parents¹, and 32 staff took part in the research in July and August 2016.

¹ The term 'parent' means all parents, guardians and carers looking after children and is used throughout this document

1.4 Reach and engagement

A total of 323 children attended the 10 Food and Fun clubs participating in the evaluation during the 2016 summer holiday, with 525 occurrences of a family member attending these holiday clubs for lunch or other activities. There was no drop off in children's attendance rates over the summer. A total of 49 external organisations were involved in the delivery of sessions across the 10 holiday clubs, delivering 217 sessions to children in total (ranging from 9 to 59 sessions per club).

1.5 Families' needs

Material deprivation measures revealed that 47% of children attending the club were classified as either deprived, very deprived or severely deprived, and 28% felt hungry at home 'a lot'. Of the parents surveyed, 19% reported that they had used a food bank, church, community or charity group to help supply food. As well as these financial pressures, parents also reported other 'holiday challenges', including managing commitments, and finding safe, local places to go. Many parents using the clubs viewed their children as socially isolated in the summer holidays as they could not afford social activities, which also led to increased sibling conflict. When the club was not open, the majority of children reported they would normally stay at home in the holidays (e.g. watching TV, in bed, etc.).

1.6 Costs

Accounting for the average number of children in attendance over the 12-day period, the average unit cost of providing a school-based Food and Fun project is £30.71 per child per day.

1.7 Impact on children's health and wellbeing

The evaluation found evidence of positive impacts on children's activity levels, diet, social isolation, and opportunities for learning and engagement with school. Data collected via activity monitors worn by 48 children showed children were significantly more likely to achieve the daily recommendation of 60 minutes moderate to vigorous physical activity when attending the club (71%) compared to other non-club weekdays (48%). Overall, 98% of children reported eating breakfast and all children ate lunch on club days. The majority reported consuming more fruit and vegetables (67%), less sugary snacks (66%) and less sugary/fizzy drinks (81%) at club than at home. Potential social and educational benefits were also found: 75% of children reported making new friends at holiday club; parents and staff observed more positive attitudes to school among children attending the holiday clubs.

1.8 Impact on parents and family life

Parents reported that the Food and Fun club helped them make food last longer at home (53%), improved their health (e.g. through alleviating pressure and stress), and provided new opportunities for learning and skills development (e.g. 26% reported that the holiday club taught them how to cook different foods at home).

Survey data also revealed that for 55% of parents, the club provided childcare they wouldn't usually have or be able to afford and 70% reported that the club relieved financial pressure during the summer holiday period.

1.9 What makes the Food and Fun clubs work?

The following were identified as three 'key ingredients' that ensure this model is popular with families, can be implemented at low-cost, and provides health and education benefits: (1) the use of existing school facilities and staff; (2) the flexible, multi-agency partnership model; and (3) involving the whole family. The model achieves a good balance between compulsory 'core components' that all clubs implement to ensure health benefits, while allowing for local tailoring and individual needs.

1.10 Conclusions and recommendations

The Food and Fun club model is an innovative and cost-efficient multi-agency model that can be implemented across a range of school sites and local authorities in Wales to reduce the impact of poverty and social deprivation during the school holidays. Targeting families on a geographical basis appears to be an effective means of reaching and engaging deprived families while avoiding the labelling, stigma and unintended consequences associated with selecting individual families. The use of activity monitors shows objective evidence of health benefits. In 2017, the model should be scaled up further, ideally as part of larger evaluation to understand the educational and health benefits for children and their families in different contexts. The 'key ingredients' must be retained to ensure the current levels of engagement and impacts continue (i.e. using schools, the flexible multi-agency partnership model, and whole family focus).

2 Background

The school summer holidays are a [crunch point](#) for deprived families: children who benefit from free school breakfasts and lunches often miss meals and [go hungry](#) once their school shuts for the holidays, while the lack of free play schemes and sports activities impacts most on the poorest children. Missing meals, sedentary behaviour and social isolation in the school holidays reinforces existing health inequalities and undermines the [success](#) of free school breakfast and lunch policies.

There is evidence to suggest that holiday hunger is becoming more widespread and acute. For example, the demand at [food banks](#) spikes dramatically in the school holidays – including in the half-term holidays when schools are only closed for one week. In 2015, researchers at Glasgow University found the [cost of school holidays](#) is now a major source of stress and food insecurity for low-income working parents as well as those out of work.

New community projects are now emerging to address school holiday hunger, inactivity and isolation, but there is very little research to help policymakers identify feasible, effective and scalable approaches. There are some examples of successful community partnership projects from the [USA](#), which use school facilities to provide healthy meals, sports and other activities to poor children out of term time, but the All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food report [Filling the Holiday Gap](#) identified projects in the UK that are typically small scale, relying on local activism.

The problem of school holiday food insecurity is particularly acute in [Wales](#). The universal provision of free breakfasts at primary schools in Wales, as well as free school lunches for families on low income, means that many families now rely on schools for two meals a day in term time. The cost of some holiday schemes in Wales has also increased by [70%](#) since 2014, yet it's the area with the [highest child poverty rate in the UK](#).

In this context, the Food and Fun school holiday enrichment programme was [developed and piloted in Cardiff in 2015](#). This is the first UK example of a multi-agency project providing healthy meals, nutrition skills and sports and other physical activities in schools in the summer holidays. The aim is to prevent children going hungry in the summer holidays and to improve children's health and promote learning through a programme of enrichment activities.

A [small-scale qualitative study in 2015](#) found that the clubs were viewed as a valuable source of support for children and their parents, providing food, activities, and new learning experiences. The model was scaled up and implemented in 19 schools (including two Welsh medium schools, and one school for children with severe learning disabilities) in Communities First Cluster areas across five local authorities in Wales in 2016 and subjected to more rigorous evaluation.

3 Overview of the Food and Fun clubs participating in the evaluation

In summer 2016, 10 of the 19 Food and Fun clubs, spanning five local authorities in Wales, took part in an evaluation funded by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). Two clubs participated within each of the following five local authorities: the City of Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan, Neath Port Talbot, Denbighshire and Wrexham. Figure 1 provides a map and list of the 10 clubs. The proportion of children eligible for free-school meals (FSM) at the ten participating school sites ranged from 22-57%. It was not possible for the school designed for children with severe learning disabilities to be included in this evaluation, which is a limitation that should be addressed in future evaluations.

Each holiday club was open for a total of 12 days over a 3 or 4 week period. Clubs were either open for a whole day (e.g. 9am-3pm) or half day (e.g. 9am-1pm) with some core daily components implemented across all clubs: free breakfast, a minimum of one hour physical activity, free lunch and [Nutrition Skills for Life™](#) sessions. Nutrition Skills for Life™ is a programme of quality assured nutrition skills training developed and co-ordinated by dietitians working in the NHS in Wales, with session content mapped on to the [National Literacy and Numeracy Framework](#). SHEP co-ordinators received Nutrition Skills for Life training to enable them to deliver practical sessions to children at their clubs. One day each week, family members (parents/guardians and siblings) were invited to join the children for lunch. The two Cardiff clubs (open full days) also offered a range of family activities in the afternoon on family days.

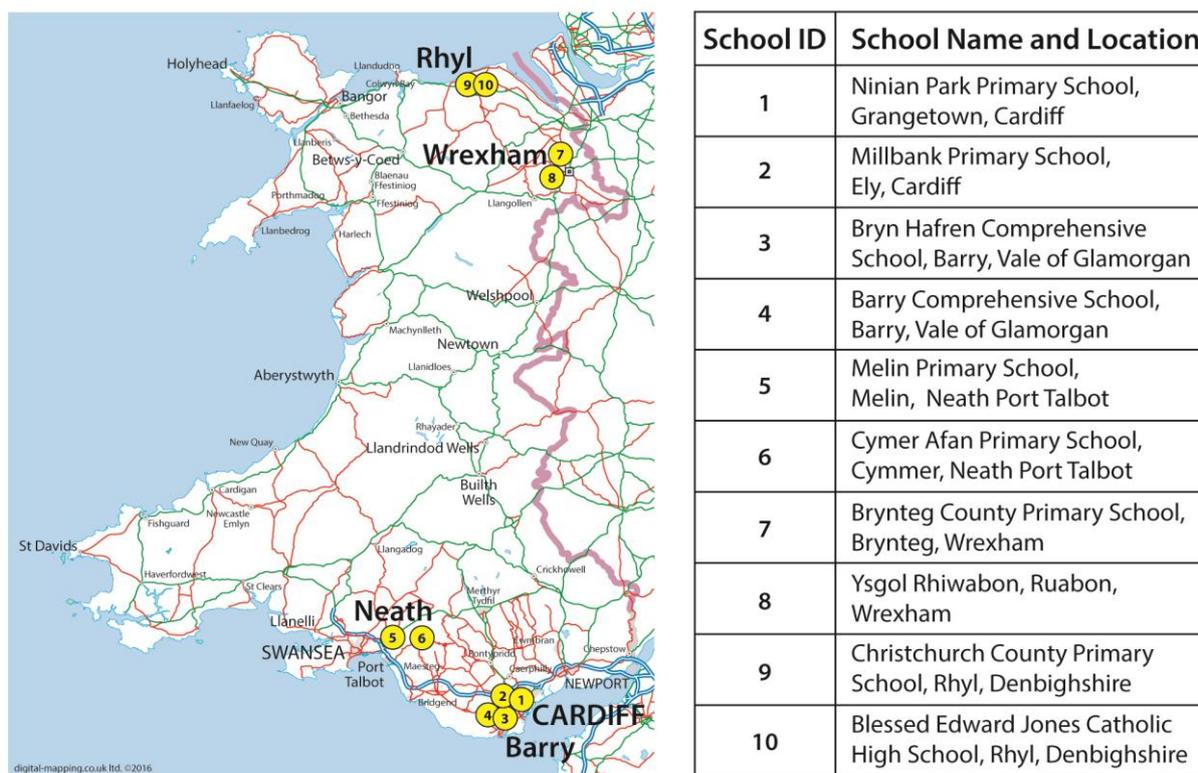


Figure 1: Location of each evaluation site across Wales

Six clubs in the research were based at a primary school site and four clubs used secondary school facilities. Five of the six primary school sites targeted their own students; one of the primary school-based clubs catered for local 'transition pupils', inviting year 5 and 6 children from local feeder primary schools as well as their own primary students. The secondary schools used a mixture of approaches to targeting and recruitment: two schools provided open access clubs for all local children; one school invited its own year 8 and 9 children; and one school provided a 'transition' programme for its new year 7 pupils. Recruitment strategies took the form of either a targeted approach, (e.g. only children meeting pre-specified criteria were invited) or an inclusive approach (e.g. all children in year groups 3-5 invited). Across the 10 clubs, the ages of registered children varied from age 3 to 14 years. As displayed in Figure 2, the majority (78%) of children were aged 7-11 (educational key stage 2).

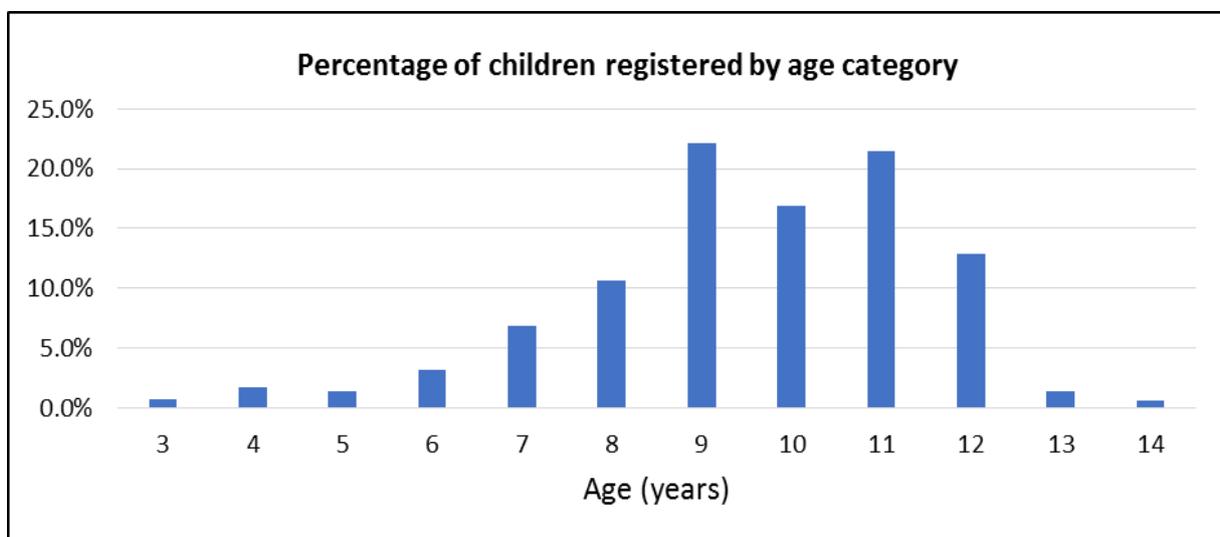


Figure 2: Age range of registered children for all 10 holiday clubs

4 Evaluation methods

Following ethical approval from the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Cardiff University, several data collection methods were used to carry out the evaluation. Prior to collecting data all participants (children, family members and school staff) were supplied with written information about the evaluation and were asked to provide written consent. All data were collected in July and August 2016, and stored in strict accordance with the Data Protection Act, 1998. Table 1 outlines the timing of data collection and the type of method used.

Table 1: Methods and tools

Club Week	Methods and Tools	Number of Participants
1	Club Observation Record	10
1	Child Activity Monitor (Accelerometer)	72
2	Child Survey	196
2	Parent Survey	84
3	Child Focus Group	74
3	Parent Focus Group	69
3/4	Club Staff and Volunteer Interview	32
3/4	Club Observation Record	10

Onsite researchers completed a club observation record during week 1 and week 3 or 4 of the project. Their field notes captured pen portraits of the environment, activities, mealtimes and club dynamics.

Child activity monitors (GT3X ActiGraph accelerometers) were deployed during each club's first week and children were asked to wear the monitor around their waist for seven consecutive days during waking hours. The monitors captured movement, e.g. when a child is running around or sitting still. Data were analysed using ActiLife software in order to compare activity levels and intensities on days when children were attending the club and days when not in attendance.

All children attending the club were given the opportunity to complete a brief paper-based survey exploring their views of the club, activities and food at home, their family and the area they live in. Parents attending on family days also completed a paper-based survey exploring their experiences of the school summer holidays, views about the club, food and diet at home and their family circumstances.

Children actively participated in focus groups to voice their opinions of the Food and Fun club. Using playful and artistic methods of engagement (making posters, picking ideation cards and drawing plates of food) children discussed their diet and what they do when the club is closed. Parents participated in focus group discussions exploring the challenges to providing food and fun/entertainment for their families during the summer holidays. They also discussed the beneficial impacts of the club on their families, and their recommendations for the future.

A range of club staff and volunteers were interviewed about their experiences at the Food and Fun club. They were asked to reflect on their job role, feedback from children and parents, the potential benefits of the project and what advice they would give to another school starting up their own club.

Survey data were managed and analysed in Stata 14 software, with the reporting of global figures across all 10 clubs. For analyses of physical activity data, logistic regression models were used to examine the proportion of children meeting recommended physical activity guidelines on club days, non-club days and weekends. Paired sample t-tests were used to examine differences between accelerometer data on club days and non-club days. Data from focus groups and interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed using NVivo 11 software using the following method: line by line open coding (descriptive labelling); axial coding (clustering relationships, links and associations); selective coding (exploring key codes and variables).

5 Reach and engagement

5.1 Children

In Wales, a total of 684 children attended a Food and Fun club in summer 2016. Across the 10 evaluation sites, a total of 323 children attended the clubs, with ages ranging from 3–14 years. There was an almost equal split of boys and girls in attendance (52%/48%) with engagement across all ethnic groups: 79% of children reported they were 'White British', 10% 'Asian' and 11% 'Black', 'Mixed ethnicity' or 'other'.

Examining attendance numbers for all 10 sites, 50% of children attended the club for at least 6 out of the 12 days, with 30% and 12% of children attending 9 or all 12 days respectively. As Figure 3 shows, there was no drop off in attendance rates as the days progressed.

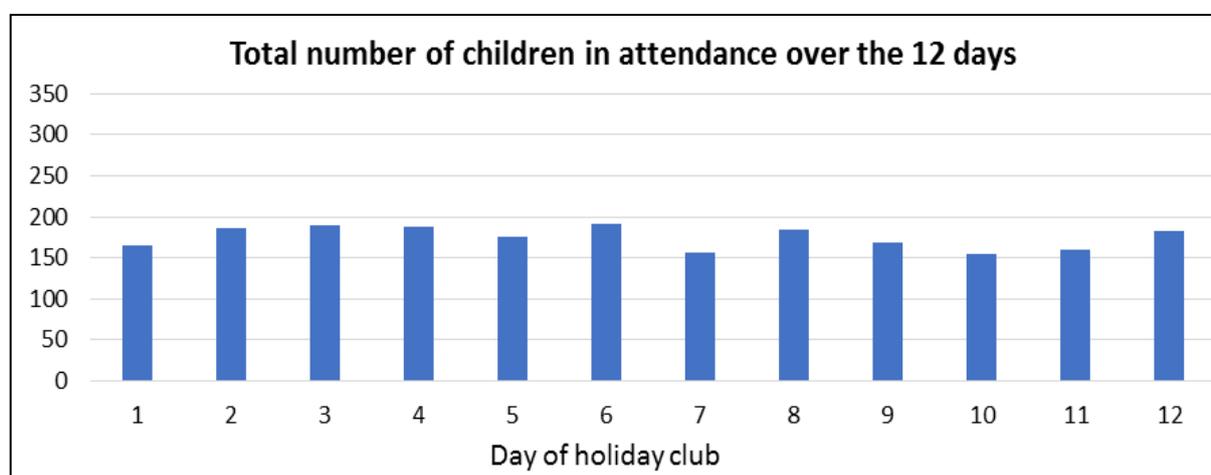


Figure 3: Child attendance rates for all 10 holiday clubs

5.2 Family members

In total, there were 525 occurrences where a family member attended the holiday club. The highest number of family members in attendance at any one time reached 42 at one club and on average 12 family members were in attendance across all 10 clubs.

5.3 External organisations

Over the summer period, 49 external organisations were involved in the delivery of sessions across the 10 holiday clubs (see Appendix 1 for list), delivering 217 sessions to children in total (ranging from 9 to 59 sessions per club). Three clubs also provided externally-led sessions for parents (18 in total), including sessions on: fire safety, first aid and English for speakers of other languages.

6 Families' needs

'I dread the holidays and always have done. When they first mentioned it, it gave me hope that I would get through the six weeks' – Parent

The [child material deprivation index](#) measure revealed that approximately 47% of children surveyed were classified as either deprived, very deprived or severely deprived. One in five children (20%) reported that they do not get enough to eat at home because they run out of food, with nearly a third (28%) reporting that they feel hungry at home a lot. Of the parents surveyed, 19% reported that they had used a food bank, church, community or charity group to help supply food for their family.

Six main school holiday challenges were reported during the parent focus groups: supplying sustenance; encouraging healthy eating; managing commitments; finding safe, local places; financial pressure; and family dynamics. Financial pressures and family dynamics overlapped both food and fun challenges, with all parents of the opinion that everything costs more in the school holidays and that the size of their family and the range of children's ages impacted on their ability to provide for them. Figure 4 provides an overview of these challenges.

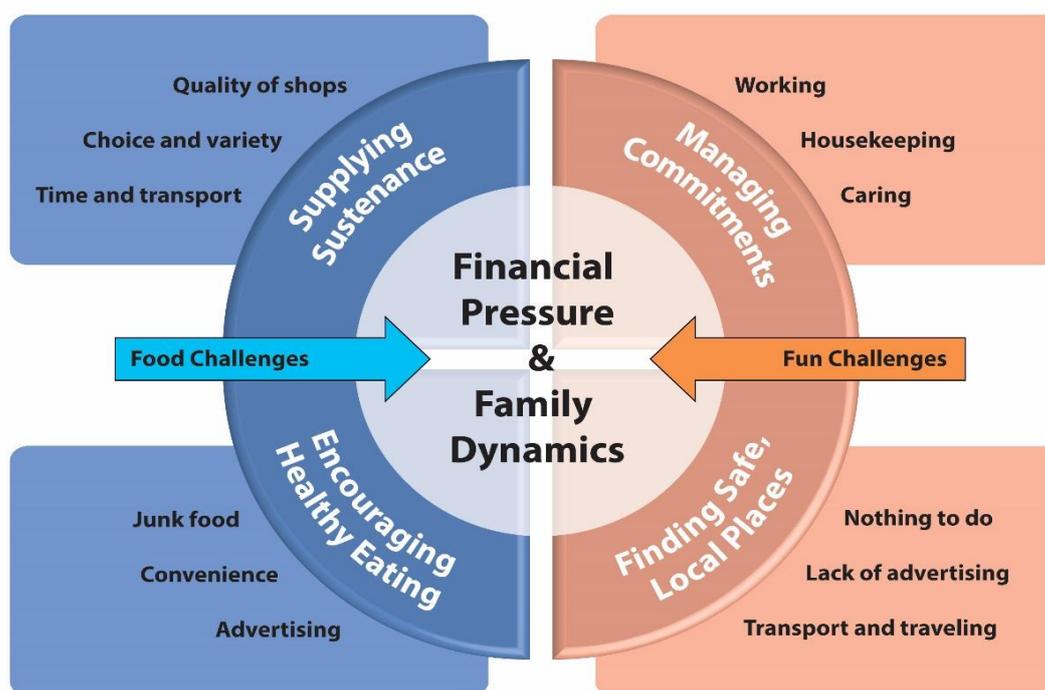


Figure 4: Parents' school holiday challenges

Many parents reported direct, adverse social and health impacts of these challenges. A recurring theme was that their children were socially isolated in the summer holidays as they could not afford to include or invite their friends, which also led to increased sibling conflict. Children's inability to access the wider community and environment they live in, impacts on wellbeing and has the potential to lead to

future mental health problems. Some parents also said that their children looked after themselves a lot of the time and lacked routine in the school holidays.

When researchers asked children what they would normally do on days when the Food and Fun club was closed, over half of the responses centred on staying at home, mostly in their bedrooms, watching television, playing game consoles or using phone and tablet devices. Children who spend increased amounts of time in front of screens often have sedentary, inactive and unhealthy lifestyles which leads to a greater risk of obesity and related long-term health problems (e.g. cardiovascular diseases, stroke and type 2 diabetes).

7 Costs of running a Food and Fun club

In order to capture the exact costs of running a holiday club, each club was asked to record a detailed breakdown of expenditure over the course of the summer holiday period. Clubs were asked to log expenditure directly relating to all aspects of the club including any additional services 'in kind' (e.g. external agency involvement with no required cost from the holiday club). Table 2 provides a breakdown of expenditure for each local authority (i.e. cost of 2 holiday clubs) and details expenditure according to staffing and 'other' requirements (e.g. costs for printing, amenities, transport etc.).

Accounting for the average number of children in attendance over the 12-day period, the unit cost of providing Food and Fun for each local authority has been calculated. As shown, across the 5 local authorities unit costs ranged from £24.97 to £38.56. Overall, the average cost per child, per day is £30.71, which is similar to the [national average for standard holiday childcare](#) without food and enrichment activities (£25 per day). It is also likely that these figures *over-estimate* the costs of provision per child if the programme was rolled out more widely due to savings associated with economies of scale.

Table 2: Reported costs for each local authority

Local Authority	Costs	People	Other	Total	Unit cost per child per day*
Cardiff	Chargeable	£10,184.68	£2,209.81	£12,394.49	
	In Kind	£1,775.60	£200.00	£1,975.60	
	Total	£11,960.28	£2,409.81	£14,370.09	£25.48
Denbighshire	Chargeable	£6,833.60	£2,381.20	£9,214.80	
	In Kind	£5,580.20	£900.00	£6,480.20	
	Total	£12,413.80	£3,281.20	£15,695.00	£27.38
Neath Port Talbot	Chargeable	£13,755.89	£3,491.15	£17,247.04	
	In Kind	£4,500.00	£0.00	£4,500.00	
	Total	£18,255.89	£3,491.15	£21,747.04	£38.56
Vale of Glamorgan	Chargeable	£10,234.67	£4,038.80	£14,273.47	
	In Kind	£5,633.33	£800.00	£6,433.33	
	Total	£15,868.00	£4,838.80	£20,706.80	£36.71
Wrexham	Chargeable	£6,868.57	£3,047.85	£9,916.42	
	In Kind	£3,869.36	£299.68	£4,169.04	
	Total	£10,737.93	£3,347.53	£14,085.46	£24.97
All	Chargeable	£9,575.48	£3,033.76	£12,609.24	
	In Kind	£4,271.70	£439.94	£4,711.63	
	Total	£13,847.18	£3,473.70	£17,320.88	£30.71

*based on the average number of children in attendance at each club and grouped at the local authority level

8 Impacts on children's health and wellbeing

The evaluation found evidence of multiple, positive impacts on children's activity levels, diet and attitudes to eating more healthily, social isolation, and opportunities for learning and engagement with school. These benefits are described in turn below.

8.1 The clubs make children more active

'I think he's had about two late nights and that's a miracle in the summer holidays, they're shattered when they come home' – Parent

'I have seen a huge change in them...how more active they are' – Local Authority Sports Officer

Current [WHO recommendations](#) suggest that children should achieve 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) on each day of the week. The intensity of this activity should involve an increased temperature, faster heartbeat and sweating. Activity monitor data (n=48) revealed that a significantly larger proportion of children achieved these recommendations when in attendance at club (71%) compared to non-club weekdays (48%). On average, children achieved 17 more minutes of MVPA – (about a third of recommended levels) – when at club compared to non-club weekdays. These findings did not vary according to gender and no difference in the amount of sedentary time was observed between the days. The survey of 196 children found over 70% reporting breathlessness or sweating when taking part in the sports/games sessions at the club, which supports this evidence of an increase in MVPA. Overall, 93% of parents reported that the club helped their child/ren be more active.

8.2 Improvements in children's diets

'At my house I normally just have rubbish to eat, and never real food' – Child attending club

'It has been successful, some children have come back and said, you know, "We never ate broccoli before"... I said, okay, what do you want for seconds? And they've gone for the veg again' – School catering staff

Overall, 98% of children surveyed reported eating breakfast and 75% a healthy lunch on a club day. When asked about the specific food types consumed at the club, a large proportion consumed: more fruit and vegetables (67%), less sugary snacks (66%) and less sugary and fizzy drinks (81%) than they do at home. This clearly shows the benefits of making sugary snacks and fizzy drinks unavailable at the clubs. When asking parents about the food at the holiday club, 40% reported that the club provided different types of food compared to what they would usually have at home. The nutrition sessions were implemented across the clubs but children and staff preferred less 'classroom' orientated, and more fun and interactive activities.

8.3 Making new friends and having fun

'I've seen friendships form... strong friendships that hopefully will really get them off to a good start in September' – School staff member working at the club

'This club is the best club I've ever been in, in my whole life!' – Child attending club

Most children (75% of boys and 73% of girls) reported that their friends went to the holiday club. The club environment also lent itself to the development of new friendships with 75% of children reporting that they had made new friendships. Children attending holiday clubs told researchers that it was enjoyable and they wanted to come back. Most felt that the staff were supportive and kind, and that they liked it best when they were given agency and the freedom to choose what they wanted to do.

Similar social benefits were reported by parents: when surveyed about their child's activities in the school summer holidays, 56% of parents reported that their child would have to play alone if there was no Food and Fun club; an even higher proportion (77%) reported that their child would stay inside playing on a computer or watching TV if there was no holiday club.

8.4 Learning and engagement with school

'The cooking, the weighing and measuring, they wouldn't think that was maths. So if you said to them weigh up this in maths, they'd go "oh", but because it's something they enjoy, they're doing it and they're not really realising' – School staff member working at the club

'They are engaging you see. Sometimes you go to schools and see that staff are a bit standoffish' – Healthy Schools Practitioner

School, and other project staff, identified potential short- and long-term positive impacts that Food and Fun clubs could have on children's education, by providing access to playful activities and new opportunities for learning, including information about food and nutrition. School staff and parents also reported that some vulnerable children had improved their relationships with the school staff as a result of the club. Some children also reported being directly inspired to take up a new sport or join a lunchtime or afterschool club following the summer holidays.

9 Impacts on parents and family life

In addition to the benefits for children's health and wellbeing, there was also evidence that the Food and Fun clubs could reduce the impact of poverty and stress on parents to accrue wider benefits. These benefits are briefly described below in terms of the economic impact for parents, improved health and new opportunities for learning and skills development.

9.1 Meeting the costs of the school holidays

'Money's tight at the moment, they won't need as big an evening meal because they're having a big dinner [at club]. It's saving money' – Parent

Parents reported in focus groups, that they didn't need to buy as much food as they normally would when the club was open. In the survey of parents, 53% reported that the holiday club helped them make food last longer at home. Survey data also revealed that for 55% of parents, the club provided childcare they wouldn't usually have or be able to afford and 70% reported that the club relieved financial pressure during the summer holiday period. Some children were also able to recognise that the holiday club eased financial pressure and the worry and strain put on parents providing food during the summer holidays.

9.2 Improving parent's health and wellbeing

'It alleviates the pressure because when I go home today I know they have had a fab time and I don't feel guilty about the fact that I can't take them somewhere' – Parent

Parents reported that the club could reduce stress levels by providing free childcare that enabled them to have time to carry out household chores or continue working throughout the summer holidays without experiencing negative feelings. In the survey, 54% of parents said if the club wasn't open they would not have enough time for themselves. Both children and parents thought that the club improved family relationships through more quality time spent together at home (e.g. parents could manage their commitments at home and/or work while children were at the clubs, allowing them to do family activities in the afternoon/evenings, etc.). Families with children of mixed age ranges also reported less arguments and fighting. During club hours, parents also felt better able to cope and enjoyed dedicating 'special' time to spend with younger, non-school-age children.

9.3 Learning new skills

'First aid – we're getting a certificate as well for that' – Parent

Some parents were given the opportunity to learn a new skill or gain a qualification such as cooking or first aid, and some received professional advice from the community agencies. Where available, this was both appreciated and valued. More

than quarter of parents (26%) reported that the holiday club has taught them how to cook different foods at home.

10 What makes the Food and Fun clubs work?

10.1 Use of existing school facilities and staff

'Because it's in the school, you know the environment that they're in, you know the building, you know the teachers... a familiar face with the children, they know where the toilets are, they're not afraid to go to the toilet, they know the canteen, they know the routine, so I think for them as children as well, they feel safe' – Parent

'Everything's been just the same, it's like a normal working week for us' – School catering staff

The use of schools has multiple benefits, including supporting the recruitment of high-quality, trained staff who often already know the children and their families. A number of staff discussed how important it is to cater to children's individual needs, allowing agency and autonomy at all times. This means behaving like a playworker and not a teacher, focussing on having fun, enjoyment and developing better rapport with the children while avoiding standard classroom activities. Schools provide a pool of existing staff (e.g. teaching assistants) who can take on this role and work with external agencies to plan and deliver activities. Many teaching assistants also reported reciprocal benefits for them and their practice through doing things they had not done before at Food and Fun clubs (e.g. delivering nutrition education or sports activities), which they could then implement in their school in term time.

Delivery in school settings also meant that parents were also reassured that the club was held in a safe, familiar place by trusted staff. Staff described how the club was able to provide a familiar, safe and secure environment for the children to spend time with each other and discover a variety of activities not usually available to families during the holidays due to the lack of provision in the area.

The staff also identified various other 'logistical' benefits to using schools as a base for Food and Fun clubs. For example, catering staff discussed the benefits of the club using schools, reporting that their kitchens operated under the same principles and routines as it would during term time, so for them it became a matter of continuing their usual practice. As well as excellent kitchen facilities, schools have a vast array of sports equipment that is unused if schools do not open in the holidays. Schools are also well-equipped to adapting activities due to weather where necessary (e.g. large indoor *and* outdoor play spaces are usually available).

Hosting Food and Fun clubs in schools also enables geographical targeting and avoids labelling or stigmatising families which may occur as an unintended consequence of other public health interventions.

10.2 The power of partnerships and a flexible model

'The variety they put on is fantastic!' – Parent

*'It wasn't such a structured programme, if it was a nice day, [the leader] would stop the session and then take them out and maybe do a bit more keep fit or rounders' –
Local Authority Principal Catering Officer*

*'Sport Cardiff were showing the staff how to use those resources in different ways' –
Sport Cardiff Senior Sport Neighbourhood Coordinator*

All Food and Fun clubs met the standard components of the model by providing breakfast, a minimum of one hour physical activity, lunch, and nutrition education and skills. However, this model is sufficiently flexible to afford each club the space and flexibility to draw on its own local assets, enabling staff to tailor their programme at a local community level.

Across all clubs, a total of 49 external organisations contributed to the delivery of a wide range and variety of sessions, including growing food, making and playing instruments, learning to care for the environment and handling reptiles and exotic animals. Many children remarked that they had never had these types of opportunities before. External visitors to the project were also able to demonstrate how to use existing school resources in new and exciting ways to enhance the professional development of staff. Children and parents were all impressed with the variety and novelty of the activities and sessions delivered by both staff and visitors at the club. Children consistently reported liking that they had a 'full timetable' of activities, with the sports, cooking, dancing and gardening activities all very popular. They also enjoyed free play where it was available and 'loose parts' activities in-between sessions (board games, construction toys, arts and crafts, reading books and iPads were amongst their favourites).

Overall, parents were happy with the days, times and weeks that the club was open, and felt that opportunities for flexibility supported attendance (e.g. allowing a trial period if their child was anxious or unsettled or attending for only some days if they had prior commitments arranged).

This flexible model also supports the recruitment and retention of high quality staff – not only in terms of opening days, times and weeks, but school staff also described the importance of ensuring that they had ownership and control of the project in terms of planning and content, and that enthusiasm and commitment to the club's aims and objectives was viewed as an important characteristic for all staff to possess.

10.3 Involving the whole family

'I like parent days because you can eat with them and tell your family what you've been doing' – Child attending club

'It is nice that the parents can come as well and get involved with the kids and see what they have done and what food they have eaten throughout the week' – Parent

Children, parents and other family members enjoyed sharing the mealtimes and the food once a week, and this helped engage the whole family with the aim and ethos of the clubs. Many parents reflected on their own school dinners and were especially surprised and impressed with the quality of food provided. They all valued having family time in the club and felt that the opportunity gave them a chance to share experiences and communicate; this was particularly evident in clubs where family interaction was encouraged and facilitated through group activities after the meal. Some parents also felt that the club enhanced opportunities for meeting up and socialising with other parents and community members.

School staff and community-based staff (e.g. Communities First and Families First staff) also reported that this model of school holiday enrichment engaged hard to reach families. Where this was encouraged and nurtured, it afforded staff and local agencies the opportunity to build new working relationships with families and exchange information. Parents also liked having direct, open access to school staff and the school environment. Many parents said this gave them fresh insights, new perspectives and a deeper understanding of how their children behaved and interacted with others in school.

Staff helping children transition from primary to secondary school built relationships with some families throughout the course of the project. Parents welcomed the help and support that the Food and Fun club gave their children for combating transition anxiety. As well as generally increasing confidence to interact with other children and staff, transition pupils had the opportunity to get used to a new school environment.

Both staff and stakeholders discussed different strategies for maintaining or increasing attendance at their clubs including: raising children and families' awareness, oversubscribing or overbooking spaces and using incentives. Some schools employed existing school parental engagement officers as holiday club staff; this strategy proved successful enabling a 'way in', being able to put faces to names and developing rapport to encourage future communication. One particular school known for poor parental engagement said that this had improved during the course of the Food and Fun club.

Some staff also welcomed parents as club 'resources', delivering sport and gardening sessions and hoped that this would continue into the new school term.

10.4 Summary of 'key ingredients'

Figure 5 shows the working elements of Food and Fun clubs that can have a positive impact on child health and wellbeing and relieve financial pressure and stress on families.

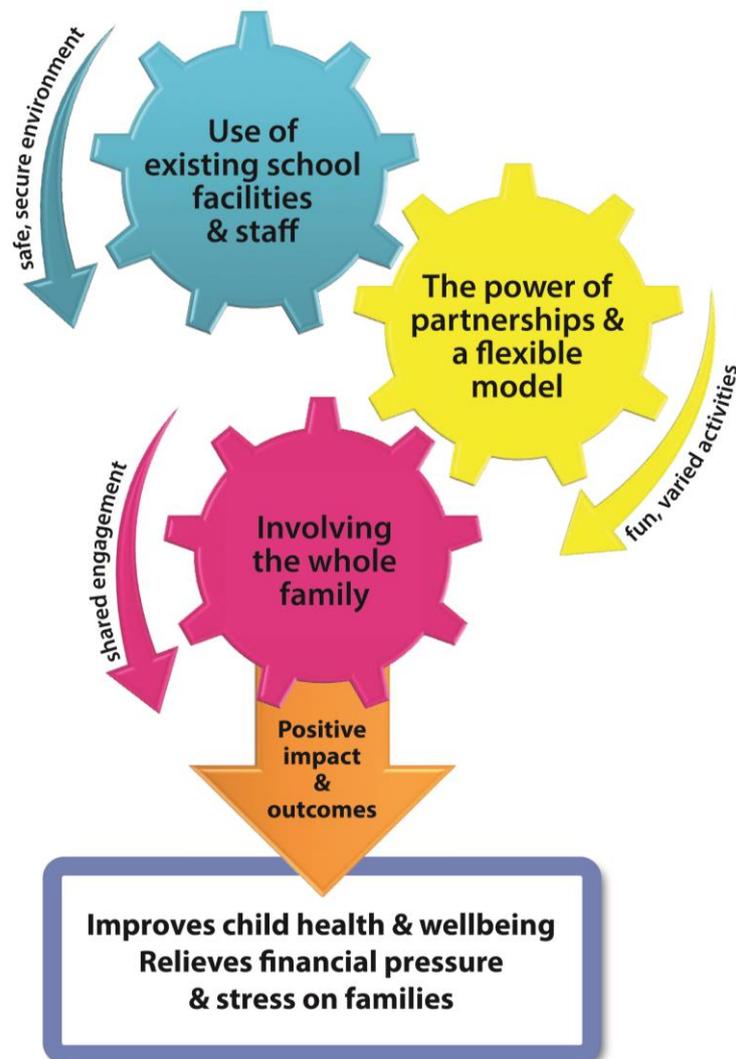


Figure 5: Working elements of Food and Fun clubs

11 Conclusions and recommendations

The Food and Fun club model is an innovative and cost-efficient multi-agency model that can be implemented across a range of school sites and local authorities in Wales, this model can be seen to reduce the impact of poverty and social deprivation during the school holidays. It addresses three major policy priorities identified by the Public Policy Institute for Wales in 2016: [food insecurity](#), [the under-use of school facilities to provide community based services](#), and the [emotional wellbeing of primary school children](#).

The running costs are similar to standard holiday childcare and are likely to reduce via the economies of scale if implemented across more local authorities and schools. As well as the health benefits and potential for savings to the NHS and other agencies, additional economic and employment benefits are likely to occur via the additional employment generated directly (i.e. 5+ staff employed by each project) and indirectly via engagement of an average of 5 external agencies partners per clubs, delivering over 50 sessions in 12 days at some clubs.

The targeting of families on a geographical basis (i.e. via Communities First Cluster areas) appears to be an effective means of reaching and engaging deprived families while avoiding the labelling, stigma and unintended consequences associated with targeting individual families. It also promotes local ownership of the clubs and supports the development of new partnerships between schools and existing community groups. There was evidence of high levels of engagement among black and minority ethnic families (21%), with no barriers identified for these groups.

11.1 Recommendations for 2017

- The model should continue to be rolled out and evaluated based on this evidence of feasibility, impact and scalability, where possible through national policy and local public services boards.
- Ensure early planning to support staff and family recruitment to new Food and Fun clubs.
- Engagement with school management teams is required to support the adoption of this model in school improvement plans and to lever additional resources via pupil deprivation grants.
- The 'key ingredients' – using schools, the flexible multi-agency partnership model, and involving families – must be retained to ensure the current levels of engagement and impacts continue.
- Food and Fun clubs should continue to open for a minimum of 12 days, with a flexible choice of days and opening times to suit local clubs and families.
- Consider the development of a subsidised family day trip to support the engagement and involvement of more families.

- The model could be further improved through greater involvement of children in the planning of the club (e.g. involvement in developing the timetable, selection of the sports/dance activities, revising the menu to offer more choice, etc.).
- Review and revise the nutrition sessions to make them less 'classroom' orientated and more fun and interactive where necessary.
- As the programme grows across Wales, promote better communication and coordination *between* different local authority teams and clubs to share learning and ideas, including on methods for recruitment (e.g. establish a national network, hold an annual event, etc.).
- Future research should examine the public health and educational effectiveness in different contexts (e.g. roll out via a trial or 'natural experiment' design), as well as exploring the barriers and facilitators to diffusing this model across Wales (e.g. qualitative process evaluation).
- Future research should include schools for children with severe learning disabilities to understand the programme in these contexts, including the additional resources needed.

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Annex 1 – List of 49 external organisations involved in the delivery of Food and Fun clubs in the 10 schools featured in this report²

Big Learning	Healthy Eating
Chris Farr (Orienteering)	Henllan Bakery
Communities First	NPT: School Nurses
Community Music Wales	Transition
Design to Smile	Community Art
Egg Seeds	Orienteering
Emotion Control	NPT Youth Service
Grow Cardiff	Brickfield FC
Holly Morgan (Transition)	Street Games
Jane Wallaby (Dance)	Caia Park Community Group
Keep Wales Tidy	Denbighshire Leisure
Nearly Wild Show	VPOD Bus
NPT Sports Development	Fuel Poverty
Nutrition Health	Healthy Schools
Pedal Bike Emporium	NPT Play Team
Police	True Relax
Road Safety Team	Fire Service
RSPB	Nutrition
South Wales Fire and Rescue	Swansea City Football Club
Sport Cardiff	Hoola Nation
Story Cardiff	Olympus Gym Club
Upbeat Music	Dancing Shoes
Vale Sports and Play	First Aid
Vale Youth Service	Wrexham Sports Development
Willow Cardiff	

² Information provided by each club (a full index can be located at www.wlga.wales/food-and-fun)