

Holiday Kitchen



An evaluation of Holiday Kitchen 2014: Learning, food and play for families who need it most in the West Midlands

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Foreword

The long summer holiday from school often conjures up images of endless warm days, more family time and lots of opportunities for children to play with their friends.

For many vulnerable and low income families the reality is rather different. For them, the summer holiday also means the loss of a much-needed free school meal for each child in the family and a long period of increased financial pressure to pay for additional food and activities. For at least some of these children and families the idea of a pleasant holiday wears thin when increased social isolation, indebtedness and family stress are closer to what they actually experience.

This is where Holiday Kitchen can really help.

Holiday Kitchen aims to provide *Holiday learning, food and play for families who need it most*. It has core objectives to:

- Improve social inclusion and aspiration;
- Improve family nutrition and wellbeing; and
- Reduce financial and emotional strain.

As a partner in the developing Holiday Kitchen story, Family Action was proud to collaborate in providing a range of Holiday Kitchen programmes in Summer 2014 and to co-fund this initial evaluation of Holiday Kitchen's effectiveness. I now urge you to read this Evaluation Report and to see the difference that Holiday Kitchen is already making to children and families.

This Evaluation Report shows not only that Holiday Kitchen works but also how great the need is for a programme like this over the school holidays and particularly over the long summer holiday.

It is hard not to be moved by the difference that Holiday Kitchen has made to individual children and families who attended the programme e.g. the parent who commented: *"Holiday Kitchen has helped calm me down and focus on my children. It has also helped my kids make friends."* This Evaluation Report also underlines just how much potential there is for Holiday Kitchen to develop further. Wouldn't it be fantastic if we could have a Holiday Kitchen programme operating in every community that needs it?

At its core, Holiday Kitchen is a locally co-produced and run programme that can be flexed and adapted to different settings and to meet local needs. The programme is being informed all the time by a rapidly growing body of delivery experience.

I am sure that I speak on behalf of everyone involved with Holiday Kitchen in saying that we are all committed to helping to grow and develop the programme in the future.

But we really need your help if we are to reach more children and families.

Let's do this together. Let's help Holiday Kitchen to achieve its potential. Let's make it a special part of summer.

David Holmes CBE
Chief Executive
Family Action

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Executive Summary

Holiday Kitchen works to complement government investments to meet Child Poverty commitments laid out in the 2010 Child Poverty Act¹ by providing a structured programme of meals and activities for children during the summer holidays.

The educational and health benefits of Free School Meals for children living in relative or absolute poverty are widely accepted, as are the financial benefits for low-income families. Together with Pupil Premium these two interventions form central pillars to the government's Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2017 (HM Government, June 2014)².

For many vulnerable and low-income families, nursery and school holiday periods, which make up at least 13 weeks or 25 percent of the year, are a time of stress and indebtedness. For these families, the opportunity gaps regarding nutrition, learning, financial security and play are most pronounced during long summer holidays. In addition to poor nutrition, social isolation, emotional and financial family stress can undermine children's school readiness, cognitive functioning, well-being and social integration beyond school holiday periods and for vulnerable and neglected children, these challenges can be even more acute.

Based on a simple formula of *Holiday learning, food and play for families who need it most* Ashrammoseley Housing Association took action to address local holiday challenges in the key low income neighbourhoods in which they work and launched Holiday Kitchen in 2013. This report is an evaluation of the expanded programme which ran in 11 centres in the West Midlands in the summer of 2014 with almost 300 participants, supported by a diverse range of community, commissioner, staff, sponsor and volunteer stakeholders.

The primary aim of the evaluation was to understand, measure and communicate the social impact of the Holiday Kitchen programme in relation to its core objectives of:

- Improved social inclusion & aspiration;
- Improved family nutrition & wellbeing;
- Reduced financial & emotional strain.

Each of these core objectives was assessed in relation to a series of outcomes and related indicators identified within a bespoke Holiday Kitchen 'Theory of Change' model using a range of innovative evaluation techniques developed by Planning for Real³. The findings and conclusions reached by this study indicate that Holiday Kitchen is an extremely effective programme for meeting the needs of low-income families and their children during the summer holidays and, relationally, in addressing the Child Poverty agenda. Based on the evaluation feedback from children, parents, staff and volunteers, recommendations are made for taking Holiday Kitchen forward, and a detailed Delivery Framework is presented to support effective future programme delivery.

¹ HMSO (2010) Child Poverty Act.

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/9/pdfs/ukpga_20100009_en.pdf

² HM Government (June 2014). *Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17*. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to section 9 of the Child Poverty Act 2010.

³ www.planningforreal.org.uk/

Chapter 1: Introduction – The Holiday Kitchen story

In partnership with committed actors and agencies our aim is to reduce the impact of child poverty on individuals, families and neighbourhoods through integrated action to support families' wellbeing; neighbourhood improvements; alongside social, financial and labour market inclusion. (Ashram Child Poverty Strategy, 2012)⁴

It was in pursuit of this goal that Holiday Kitchen was born. Based on a simple formula of *Holiday learning, food and play for families who need it most* Holiday Kitchen works to complement government investments to meet Child Poverty commitments laid out in the 2010 Child Poverty Act⁵. How and why this non-term-time activity formula could make a considered contribution to this agenda forms the rationale for this study.

Holiday Kitchen rationale

The educational and health benefits of Free School Meals (FSM) for children living in relative or absolute poverty are widely accepted, as are the financial benefits for low-income families⁶. FSM sit within a suite of statutory measures to address child poverty in the UK with Pupil Premium, the educational investment schools can access to close the attainment gap between better off and disadvantaged pupils, tied to FSM registration. Together these two interventions form central pillars to the government's Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2017 (HM Government, June 2014)⁷.

In November 2012 prior to the introduction of Universal Free School Meals, 'School Census data shows that around 1.2 million (18 percent) of 4-15 year old pupils in maintained schools are registered to claim FSM.'⁸ That same year the Children's Society argued that approximately 1.2 million of the 2.2 million school-aged children living in England miss out of FSM provision due to eligibility and uptake issues.⁹ Whichever statistics are used, the demand for this intervention is significant.

Beyond FSM, schools and the Family Support Services attached to schools and state funded nurseries, offer an extensive framework for children and families to access support, learning, friendships and active play. This provision is central to the wellbeing and social inclusion of low income and vulnerable families. Out of education, the support of FSM, learning and play infrastructure disappears. In their place are disrupted routines and demands for additional meals, snacks, social contact and activities. For many vulnerable and low-income families, nursery and school holiday periods, which make up at least 13 weeks or 25 percent of the year, are a time of stress and indebtedness.¹⁰ For these families, the opportunity gaps regarding

⁴ www.ashrammoseleyha.org.uk

⁵ HMSO (2010) Child Poverty Act.

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/9/pdfs/ukpga_20100009_en.pdf

⁶ Gill, O. & Sharma, N. (2003). *Food poverty in school holidays*. Barnardos, England.
<http://www.barnardos.org.uk/foodpovertyreportv3.qxd.pdf>

⁷ HM Government (June 2014). *Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17*. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to section 9 of the Child Poverty Act 2010.

⁸ Department for Education (November 2012). *Research Brief: Pupils not claiming free school meals*. DFE-RB235, UK.

⁹ Royston, S., Rodrigues, L. & Hounsell, D. (2012). *Fair and Square: A policy report on the future of Free School Meals*. The Children's Society, London.

http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/fair_and_square_policy_report_final.pdf

¹⁰ The effect of the spending pressures in the school holidays on the lives of low income and disadvantaged families was clearly explored in the Family Action report *Breaking the Bank: Summer on a Shoestring* (2012).

nutrition, learning, financial security and play are most pronounced during long summer holidays.

The research by Kellogg's reveals that 39 percent of teachers say there are pupils in their school that do not get enough to eat over the school holidays.¹¹ Of this 39 per cent, more than a third (36%) of teachers notice children coming back after the holidays with signs of weight loss and 77 percent have seen a noticeable difference in their readiness to learn when they return for the new term. (Trussell Trust, 2014)¹²

Most recently, school holiday hunger has been recognised as a problem in the *Feeding Britain*¹³ (2014) report by the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in Great Britain.

In addition to poor nutrition, social isolation, emotional and financial family stress can undermine children's school readiness, cognitive functioning, well-being and social integration beyond school holiday periods.

Children and youth who reside in economically disadvantaged households and in low-resource, urban neighborhoods are more likely to lose ground in math and reading over the summer than their higher income peers. (Terzian & Moore, 2009:1)¹⁴

For vulnerable children, these challenges can be even more acute.

It is estimated that up to 10% of all children in Britain are neglected; failing to receive the right care and attention, including enough food, clean clothes, safety and security, warmth and love... the long summer holidays can lead to an increase in problems faced by neglected children, as they lose the routine, structure and regular meals provided by schools in term time. (Moran, 2011)¹⁵

As a housing provider, we are aware that anti-social behaviour and rent arrears spike seasonally in relation to holiday periods. Social services, Mental Health Services, Family Support Teams, domestic violence teams and debt advisors similarly recognise an increase in referral rates linked to the summer holidays in particular. The police in some places still fund school holiday activities to divert children and young people from higher risk activities. Schools and charities also report more pronounced educational loss, poor health and school readiness amongst lower income and vulnerable families following holiday periods (see Butler, 2014¹⁶; Graham, 2014¹⁷). Cumulatively, we recognise that the holiday challenges low income and vulnerable families face have notable social and financial costs. It is clear that holiday periods can effectively act as a child poverty risk in themselves.

¹¹ *Teacher Research*: The research was conducted by YouGov with 1,176 teachers. (Trussell Trust, 22 Aug 2014)

¹² Trussell Trust (22 Aug 2014). *School holidays leave kids hungry for three meals a day*. <http://www.trusselltrust.org/holiday-hunger>

¹³ All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in Great Britain (8 Dec 2014). *Feeding Britain*. The Children's Society, www.foodpovertyinquiry.org

¹⁴ Terzian, M. & Moore, K A. (September 2009). What works for summer learning programs for low-income children and youth: Preliminary Lessons from Experimental Evaluations of Social Interventions, from *Child Trends Fact Sheet*, Washington, www.childtrends.org

¹⁵ Moran, A. (2011) *Neglect in the Summer*. You Gov, <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2011/08/09/neglect-summer-holidays/>

¹⁶ Butler, P. a (24 October 2014) Ministers told to act over 'holiday hunger' of schoolchildren. *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/oct/24/ministers-holiday-hunger-schoolchildren-poor-health>

¹⁷ Graham, L. (2014) *170 Days: Innovation in Community Projects that address School Holiday Child Hunger*. Winston Churchill Memorial Trust & The Rank Foundation, UK.

Even though formal school education doesn't happen all year round, the fact is that it's significantly affected by behaviours, practices and routines that happen outside the school term. There is a concern that holiday hunger could be having a substantial impact on the developmental needs of children and therefore should be addressed. (All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food, 2014)¹⁸

The child poverty risk holidays pose is heightened by the rising costs of childcare and the closure/scaling back of accessible voluntary sector and local authority funded holiday activities through youth services, leisure centres and children's centres. The Family and Childcare Trust Holiday Childcare Survey 2014 states that 'one in five parents are forced away from work to cover childcare over the holidays; research shows that many families face a holiday childcare lottery of high costs and patchy provision.'¹⁹ Parents in low paid jobs face difficult choices during holiday periods. In a You Gov (2011) survey of parents it was found that, '23% of parents surveyed have worried that their children's friends were being neglected during the summer holidays'.²⁰

Responding to calls from our residents for our support in relation to both food and holiday activities, in summer 2013 Ashram Housing Association took action to address local holiday challenges in key low income neighbourhoods in which we work.²¹ With the aid of BBC Children in Need funding, Holiday Kitchen was developed into a short experimental programme to address some of the holiday challenges our communities were facing. Over summer 2013 Holiday Kitchen delivered 3000 days of quality activities and free nutritious lunches to almost 500 children in East Birmingham and North Solihull. End of programme evaluations with parents, children and staff engaged in the 2013 programme reported positive outcomes in relation to improved social inclusion, wellbeing and nutrition, and reduced financial and emotional family stress.

In April 2014 Ashram convened a national roundtable event for stakeholders from Public Health England, the Department of Work and Pensions, the Cabinet Office, local government departments, voluntary sector leaders, housing associations and private sector representatives. Its purpose was to discuss the challenges summer holiday times pose for low-income and vulnerable families in relation to their wellbeing, nutrition, out-of-school learning, financial and social inclusion. Specifically, we explored if the Holiday Kitchen model was a relevant and useful means to addressing these challenges going forward.

There was clear support amongst delegates for the value in exploring the concept of Holiday Kitchen expansion further. Within this agreement, the group agreed on the need to: '*Develop appropriate evaluation criteria, evidence gathering processes and needs assessments to evidence the needs for and outcome value of Holiday Kitchen in relation to educational, social and health inequalities.*' (Ashrammoseley, April 2014)²²

¹⁸ All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food (March 2014). *Filling the holiday hunger gap*. Secretariat Association for Public Service Excellence, Manchester.

¹⁹ Family and Childcare Trust (2014) *UK economy loses 900,000 working days every year due to lack of holiday childcare*. <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/Blog/economic-cost-of-lack-of-holiday-childcare>

²⁰ Moran, A. (2011) *Neglect in the Summer*. You Gov, <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2011/08/09/neglect-summer-holidays/>

²¹ Holiday Kitchen 2013 was established at the same time reports of food bank demand spikes were being reported: 'The Trussell Trust... says this is the busiest summer it has ever experienced, with some of its branches seeing double the number of requests for emergency parcels since the start of the holidays.' (Dugan 2013)

²² Ashrammoseley (April 2014). Child Poverty Round Table Report: Holiday activities and food for children who need it most. Priory Rooms, Birmingham. <http://ashrammoseleyha.org.uk/filemanager/resources//Holiday%20Kitchen%20Round%20Table%20Report.pdf>

Evaluation purpose

Informed by the round table discussion, the primary aim of this evaluation has been to understand, measure and communicate the social impact of the Holiday Kitchen programme. What follows is an evaluation of a 'pilot' programme to assess the social impact Holiday Kitchen can make in relation to its core objectives:

- Improved social inclusion and aspiration
- Improved family nutrition and wellbeing
- Reduced financial and emotional strain

Each of these core objectives have been explored in relation to a series of outcomes and related indicators identified within a 'Theory of Change' model (see appendix A). The findings and conclusions reached by this study are based on a programme that ran over 11 sites in Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull with almost 300 participants, supported by a diverse range of community, commissioner, staff, sponsor and volunteer stakeholders. Notably there was no large grant applied for to cover 2014 costs. Delivery rather drew upon multiple small investments, including corporate product sponsorship such as cereal from Kellogg, donations and in-kind contributions.

The conclusions are drawn through the triangulation of findings from these multiple stakeholder sources. Wherever possible, the voice of the child has been centralised and prioritised.

Study methodology: Theory of Change

Theory of Change²³ is a tool which shows how a project's activities contribute to its overall mission. It sets out a clear path from inputs, through activities to outputs and outcomes. This emergent 'plan' of inputs -> activities -> outputs -> outcomes offers a valuable basis for measuring whether the intended outcomes are being achieved. It is through reflection on outcomes that the social value of an initiative can best be understood.

The Holiday Kitchen 'Theory of Change' can be viewed in Appendix A. This model was produced following detailed discussions and a practical 'storyboard' session with key Ashrammoseley staff who were central to the design and delivery of the inaugural Holiday Kitchen programme, with reference to the 2013 Holiday Kitchen evaluation, April 2014 Round Table priorities, the New Economics Foundation's Five Ways to Wellbeing framework²⁴ and some of the 'Areas for focus, outcomes and measures' set out in *Measuring What Matters* (2013)²⁵. Based on staff experience, policy maker's criteria and Holiday Kitchen 2013 evaluation material, the short, medium and longer term outcomes which it was anticipated that the 2014 programme would produce were identified, and for whom these outcomes would be experienced (i.e. which stakeholders would experience change). Outcomes were then linked to the core objectives where relevant.

²³ Theory of Change emerged from the field of programme theory and programme evaluation in the mid-1990s as a new way of analysing the theories motivating programmes and initiatives working for social and political change. C. Weiss (1995). 'Nothing as Practical as Good Theory: Exploring Theory-Based Evaluation for Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families', in Connell, J, Kubisch, A, Schorr, L. and Weiss, C. (Eds.) *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives*. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.

²⁴ Aged, J. & Thompson, S. (2011). *Five Ways to Wellbeing: New Applications, new ways of thinking*. New Economics Foundation, London.

²⁵ Roberts, J.; Donkin A. & Pillas, D. (2013) *Measuring what matters: A guide for children's centres*. UCL Institute of Health Equity: www.instituteofhealthequity.org

The 'Theory of Change' should be regarded as an overview of the outcomes which it is anticipated that some (not necessarily all) stakeholders may experience to some extent across the delivery venues. Outcomes for strategic stakeholders, including programme sponsors and related statutory services have not been included within this evaluation as they are deemed beyond the scope of this study. The social impact of Holiday Kitchen for these services should, nevertheless, be considered in relation to the report conclusions. Similarly, the longer term outcomes, due to the amount of time it may take for these to be achieved, have not been measured within this report. They have, however, been included within the 'Theory of Change' model, in order to provide a holistic understanding of the programme scope.

The evaluation team

The evaluation team consisted of representatives from Ashrammoseley (as leaders of the Holiday Kitchen programme), the Planning for Real Unit (part of the Accord Group), Birmingham City University, Family Action as a valuable evaluation sponsors and delivery partner, and all the programme practitioners on the ground that facilitated the capturing of parent/carer and children's views. Setting up an evaluation team with representatives from a number of organisations has added to the strength of the evaluation programme as it has drawn on a greater breadth of knowledge and expertise. Details of the lead partners who have been involved in the design and delivery of the evaluation of the Holiday Kitchen programme can be found at the end of the report.

Report overview

In what follows, the report will consider Holiday Kitchen activities in relation to its core principles and within the wider context of current operating environments of deprived urban areas. The methodology for the evaluation of Holiday Kitchen 2014 activities will then be outlined before turning attention to the findings of this study. The report will conclude with the social impact case for Holiday Kitchen as a child poverty intervention, alongside operational and policy recommendations. Included at the end of the report are two case studies of Holiday Kitchen projects that ran over summer 2014. Appendix B provides a preliminary Social Return on Investment (SROI) case study, and Appendix C explores the application of Holiday Kitchen to a youth centre setting.

Chapter 2: Holiday Kitchen - The Programme

This chapter provides an overview of principles informing Holiday Kitchen's goals, activities, and target audience. It also positively responds to the question 'did the programme sufficiently reach families who need it most?'

Holiday Kitchen recognises that a nutritious diet and continued learning opportunities are cornerstones upon which wider education and wellbeing outcomes are built. On this basis it provides positive family-focused learning, food and play activities during school holidays that aim to improve children's wellbeing, educational opportunities and life-chances. More explicitly it is committed to pursuing positive outcomes in three key objective areas:

1. **Improved social inclusion and aspiration** - related outcomes include improved school readiness and reduced opportunity gaps for social participation.
2. **Improved family nutrition and wellbeing** - related outcomes include reduced food poverty, obesity and poor mental health.
3. **Reduced financial and emotional strain** - related outcomes include reduced debt, social services referrals and safeguarding risks.

Delivery using the New Economic Foundation (NEF) Five Ways to Wellbeing Framework

To achieve these objectives, Holiday Kitchen has drawn upon the NEF Five Ways to Wellbeing Framework²⁶ to inform activities and programme design.

The concept of well-being comprises of two main elements: feeling good and functioning well. Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity and engagement are characteristics of someone who has a positive experience of their life. Equally important for well-being is our functioning in the world. Experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one's life and having a sense of purpose are all important attributes of wellbeing. (NEF, 2009)

Research shows that we achieve wellbeing through five key actions: giving; learning; connecting; taking notice; and being active. (NEF Five Ways to Wellbeing Framework)

For Holiday Kitchen purposes the Five Ways to Wellbeing were integrated into each day's activities to support family wellbeing in the following ways:

09:30	Breakfast & Be Active morning play
10:00	Keep Learning & Take Notice Activities
11:15	Give Back : Family evaluation (Children & parents/carers read/ write/ colour/draw/stick)
11:30	Free Be Active play and parent consultations & support (as required)
12:00	Midday community lunch - Connecting with other families

²⁶ Aked, J; Marks, N.;Cordon C. & Thompson, S. (2009) *Five Ways to Wellbeing: A report presented to the Foresight Project on communicating the evidence base for improving people's well-being*. New Economics Foundation, London.

The content of the Keep Learning & Take Notice Activities varied every day according to the activity programme which can be viewed on a programme flyer on the next page. These activities were chosen based on their value in supporting Holiday Kitchen's three core objectives. An emphasis was put on delivering as many activities outside²⁷ as possible given the wider health benefits of outdoor activity.

Children in the most deprived communities have rates of excess weight and obesity twice that of the most affluent. We know only 16% of girls and 21% of boys (aged 5-15 years, HSE 2012)²⁸ are meeting the Chief Medical Officer's recommendation of 60 active minutes a day. The natural environment offers children a variety of places, close to where they live, that gives them the space to be active through play, exploration and discovery of the natural world.

(Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive Designate of Public Health England)²⁹

The ability of different delivery centres to do this was based on their access to local facilities. In addition to training and an induction into the programme, each centre was given a resource pack to support their delivery of activities over the eight day programme.

Delivery – who, where, when

Holiday Kitchen operates through existing local infrastructure and is delivered in community sites by partners who work directly with low-income and vulnerable families, children and young people. It is premised on a flexible and responsive community delivery ethos that meets the cultural, demographic and socio-geographical nuances of its client group. This study was by its nature action research in character, and has supported practitioners to make appropriate adjustments to activities to better meet the needs of their local communities as required.

Findings presented here are based on delivery that took place over the summer holidays of 2014 across six children's centres; one domestic violence refuge; one youth centre; one community pod; and two jointly delivered across a children's centre and nearby community centre. In total Holiday Kitchen delivered 2300 days of activities and food to almost 300 participant families.

The programme required families to register and commit to eight half-days of Holiday Kitchen activities spread across two to four weeks of the summer holidays (2014) in a local participating centre. Most were delivered between 9:30-12:30 in the morning, but two were delivered in the afternoon and one youth programme delivered between 9am and 8pm due to the nature of their client group. Breakfasts were all based around Kellogg's cereal, milk, and fruit juice – with some centres offering additional items. Lunch catering varied from buffet style catering by educational caterers to packed lunches from sandwich shops, with two centres offering make & taste self-catering where families and young people made their own lunches using core ingredients and basic recipes provided by the centres. In East Birmingham a decision was taken that no programme should start before Eid as many families would be fasting during Ramadan.

A core commitment of Holiday Kitchen is to deliver to families who need it most. Within this context, the evaluation data gathered from a sample of programme participants shows:

- Parent/carer ages ranged from 20 to 41, and most had two or three children.

²⁷ See Allen, J & Balfour, R. (2014) *Natural Solutions to Tackling Health Inequalities*. UCL Institute of Health Equity, UK.

²⁸ Health Service for England (2012) *Annual Report 2012*. www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogues/PUB13218

²⁹ As quoted in Allen, J & Balfour, R. (2014) *ibid*.

- All the participants were unemployed apart from one mum who worked part-time.
- All but one were receiving at least one type of state benefit (generally Job Seeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit and/or Child Tax Credits).
- 45 percent of participants came from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- 67 percent of respondents said that their child/ren access free school meals (note that families with younger children did not always identify with this category).
- 34 percent said their family had accessed food bank support in the last 12 months.
- 36 percent reported that they or their children were currently receiving additional support through education, health or social services. This was used as a proxy for vulnerability. Delivery centre staff reported that a significant minority of children had either Child in Need or Child Protection Plans in place.
- 30 percent live in social housing or supported accommodation (Domestic Violence Refuge), 27 percent owned their own home, with the remainder living in private rented accommodation.



Figure 1 Marketing flyer delivery partners circulated to targeted parents and referral agencies

Delivery was geographically and socially targeted to disadvantaged families in low income neighbourhoods, and inclusive of families in extremely deprived neighbourhoods. Some centres took referrals primarily from Family Support Teams, others drew on a combination of referral routes including self-referral. This can be partially gleaned from the table below of delivery venues referenced against Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)³⁰ scores for Lower Super Output Areas. Rankings of neighbourhoods start with 1 being the most deprived neighbourhood in England and Wales and 32482 being the most affluent. Within and across these

³⁰ IMD Rank: Index of Multiple Deprivation is a combination of the English Indices of Deprivation 2010. More information can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6871/1871208.pdf

neighbourhoods there is a high degree of diversity, from largely white working class areas to super-diverse inner city neighbourhoods with high BME populations from predominantly Muslim backgrounds. Based on this profile and the evaluation data already referenced, it was felt that the programme sufficiently met the criteria 'for families who need it most'.

Holiday Kitchen Venue	LSOA Level	IMD Rank, out of 32482 LSOA's	IMD Rank, as a % of all LSOA's	Referral system
North Solihull Children's Centre & Community Centre	Solihull 006A	8398	26%	Multiple routes
North West Birmingham Children's Centre	Birmingham 034A	5855	18%	Family Support Teams/NASS
Central Birmingham Children's Centre	Birmingham 071D	25	0.07 %	Centre targeted families
East Birmingham Children's Centre	Birmingham 048E	631	2%	Open
East Birmingham Children's Centre	Birmingham 048E	631	2%	Open
Sandwell Children's Centre	Sandwell 037D	4724	14 %	Family Support Teams
Sandwell Children's Centre	Sandwell 004D	754	2%	Family Support Teams
Sandwell Children's Centre & Community Centre	Sandwell 025A	3693	11 %	Family Support Teams
Birmingham DV Refuge	Birmingham	3203	10%	Open to all refuge families
East Birmingham Community Pod	Birmingham 058D	2126	7%	Women's group
East Birmingham Youth & Comm. Centre	Birmingham 048E	631	2%	Multiple – including police

Table 1 IMD ranking of Holiday Kitchen venues

The following chapter describes and rationalises the Methodology used to evaluate Holiday Kitchen in relation to the key stakeholders and the core objectives of the programme.

Chapter 3 – Evaluation Methodology

Holiday Kitchen is based on the 'Theory of Change' model which demonstrates how the three key objectives of the programme are mapped onto all the programme activities in relation to each stakeholder group (see appendix A). This chapter explains the evaluation materials used to measure the achievement of outcomes for the different stakeholder groups and describes the indicator identification process which informed their design. Methods of data collection employed, and issues around consent and participation are also discussed in relation to each group.

Identifying indicators

The 'Theory of Change' model presents the short, medium and long term outcomes for different stakeholder groups in relation to the three key objectives, and this provides the framework for the entire evaluation programme and for the design of the evaluation materials. The tabular representation of inputs, outputs, activities, outcomes with indicators formed the evaluation framework for the programme. For every outcome, an indicator, or set of indicators, was identified which would provide evidence as to whether and to what extent that outcome was being achieved. Good practice is to achieve a balance of subjective and objective indicators for each outcome.

Desk based research was carried out into recent guidance on indicators³¹ and techniques for measuring health and well-being for children³² and adults. The *'Measuring what matters: A guide for children's centres'*³³ was particularly useful as it presented the outcomes framework (and indicators) for children's centres, local authorities, health and employment services to implement to improve outcomes for children. There are clear links between Holiday Kitchen outcomes for children and those for children's centres which presents opportunities to align with the recommendations and measures in this document.

Drawing on knowledge and experience from within the evaluation team, the next stage was to identify suitable indicators for all outcomes (and all stakeholders). This involved considering each outcome in turn, identifying a set of indicators and then planning when and how to gather data. As part of this process a bespoke set of evaluation tools and materials was designed to enable relevant, robust and reliable data to be gathered from the key stakeholder groups. Considerable attention was given to enabling children's voices to be strongly heard throughout.

Planning how to gather the data

Given the number of outcomes identified in the 'Theory of Change' and the relatively short time period for which participants were at the Holiday Kitchen, the most efficient method was to gather evaluation data relating to different outcomes on different days based on where outcomes aligned most closely with the daily activities.

For example on the Make & Taste and Field to Fork Days, the aim was to focus the evaluation activities on the 'improve family knowledge of nutrition' outcome. One of the indicators identified for this outcome was 'Increased numbers of children show preference for and are offered healthier diet'. Across the evaluation activities there was therefore a focus on understanding what children 'usually' eat in the holidays and gathering data on firstly whether they were eating more healthily whilst attending the Holiday Kitchen and secondly whether they anticipated that there would be any ongoing change after having completed the programme. In order to fully

³¹ Children and Young People's Health and Benchmarking Tool, *Child and Maternal Health Intelligence Network*, 2014.

³² A guide to measuring children's well-being; Backing the future: practical guide 2, *Action for Children & NEF*, 2009.

³³ Measuring what matters: A guide for children's centres, *Ibid*, 2013.

understand the level of impact, analysis of evaluation data from both the child and adult voice was necessary. The same process was followed for all outcomes - working through what indicators would provide evidence of whether the outcome was being achieved and how across the variety of evaluation tools and opportunities that information would be gathered.

Multi-stakeholder approach

In order to understand the full extent of the impact of Holiday Kitchen it was crucial to use a multi-stakeholder approach for the evaluation. Key stakeholder groups were identified who would need to be engaged with in order to understand how Holiday Kitchen had, and potentially continues to have, an impact.

The key stakeholder groups identified were:

- Children who attended the Holiday Kitchen programme
- Parents/carers who attended the Holiday Kitchen programme
- Frontline delivery staff and their managers
- Volunteers who supported the delivery of the programme
- Commissioners / funders and sponsors

Through a wide range of stakeholder engagement activities the evaluation aimed to verify the accuracy of the 'Theory of Change' and, most importantly, to gather a large amount of robust data to provide valid evidence of the impact of the Holiday Kitchen programme. This approach effectively supports data triangulation.

Evaluation programme

The evaluation programme for the 2014 Holiday Kitchen was, effectively, an action research pilot. The process of designing, developing and delivering the evaluation programme, in addition to the findings from the evaluation, provides a wealth of learning from which the evaluation methods and approach can be refined and improved in the future.

The evaluation used a mixed-method approach which aimed to draw out both the child voice of its primary beneficiaries and the adult voice of families, staff, volunteers and commissioners/funders.

The evaluation programme included child-centric visual activities, parent/carer questionnaires and 1:1 guided interviews, focus groups for staff, semi-structured interviews with volunteers involved in the delivery of the programme, telephone interviews with centre managers and feedback sessions with commissioners/funders.

Achieving an appropriate balance of evaluation and activity was a challenge and feedback from participants (both children and adults) was that there was too much evaluation, particularly on the first day. This is something which would need to be addressed as although gathering evidence of impact is crucial, it needs to be proportionate and not distract from the programme itself. Pitching the evaluation resources for children across the 0-8 age range was also difficult and some of the materials developed were most suited to the older children in this age range. Exploring what would be more suitable for the younger children would be useful for future programmes.

The table below shows the range of evaluation activities that took place and the quantity of data gathered. At all times consent to participate was gained and the right to withdraw was reiterated to participants.

Table 2 Holiday Kitchen evaluation activities and quantity of data gathered

Stakeholder group	Engagement methods / activities	Who should be engaged?	How many were engaged?	When?
Children	Tree of Hope	All children	Evaluation data received from eight centres from a sample of interested children	Day 1
	Washing Line	All children	Evaluation data received from eight centres from a sample of interested children	Day 1
	Thought and speech bubbles	All children	Evaluation data received from 10 centres from a sample of interested children	Daily (8 days)
	Weather map	All children	Evaluation data received from 10 centres from a sample of interested children	Daily (8 days)
	Food evaluation	All children	Evaluation data received from six centres from a sample of interested children	Daily (8 days)
Young People (11-16yr olds)	End of programme questionnaire	Programme participants.	Sample of consenting participants from one centre	End of programme
Parents / carers	Registration forms	All parents/carers	38 registration forms received from five centres from a sample of consenting parents/carers	Prior to programme or Day 1
	Tree of Hope	All parents/carers	Evaluation data received from eight centres from a sample of consenting parents/carers	Day 1
	End of programme questionnaire	All parents/carers	32 end of programme questionnaires from five centres from a sample of consenting parents/carers	Day 8
	1:1 guided questionnaire	Aim of two or three parents per centre	16 questionnaires from four centres from a sample of consenting parents/carers	Day 8
Staff	Focus groups	Aim for at least one staff member from each centre. Staff were asked to bring feedback from colleagues.	16 staff attended workshops: primarily frontline delivery staff (12) with four centre managers	Post delivery (2, 9, 17 and 25 September 2014)

Stakeholder group	Engagement methods / activities	Who should be engaged?	How many were engaged?	When?
Volunteers/ Interns	Semi-structured interviews	Interested volunteers	Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with one volunteer (delivery centre based) and one intern (Ashram head office based).	Post delivery - September 2014
Centre managers	Telephone interviews	All centre managers	Interviews conducted with seven centre managers: five from Children's Centres, one Youth Centre and one Domestic Violence Refuge	Post delivery - September 2014
Commissioners / funders	Feedback session as part of Delivery Board meeting	Representatives on Holiday Kitchen Delivery Board	Four commissioner / funders representatives gave feedback and participated in tree of hope activity at Delivery Board meeting	9 Sep 2014

Table 3 Continued Holiday Kitchen evaluation activities and quantity of data gathered

Prior to the delivery of the Holiday Kitchen programme frontline staff from each of the delivery venues were invited to attend a two hour training session introducing them to the evaluation programme and the tools and materials which had been developed. Where delivery staff did attend this session, the evaluation activities seem to have run more smoothly and importantly the staff seem to have had greater confidence in adapting the activities and the timing of them to suit the number and age range of participants.

Across the delivery venues there was variation in participation levels across the evaluation activities. Some centres were much more rigorous in administering the evaluations with participant families than others. One centre used their own evaluation process for daily activities, and one centre, due to the much older age range of the project participants, used a simple questionnaire to gauge young peoples' views of the Holiday Kitchen with space for comments.

Consent, participation and research ethics

All of the evaluation activities were deemed as ethically appropriate by the Faculty Ethics Committee at Birmingham City University.

For the children's evaluation activities, staff were briefed before the start of the programme about the importance of tuning in to the children and recognising and respecting both verbal and non-verbal indicators of their willingness to participate or withdraw consent to participate. Children were regularly reminded of their right to withdraw and staff were asked to be sensitive to children's body language, silences and to not push for verbal responses to the questions.

Each centre was required to read out the following statement at the start of each of the children's evaluation sessions:

We think you guys have some really good ideas and we would love to hear what you think. This will help us understand things better. You can ask a grown-up to help you share your ideas if you want, but you don't have to share your ideas if you don't feel comfortable, it's up to you to join in or not.

Similarly, for adults participating in all the evaluation activities, delivery staff were asked to respect parent/carers' willingness to consent to share information. On all questionnaires it was made clear that all information would be treated as confidential and anonymous, and parents/carers had a right to withdraw their consent to participate at any stage.

In addition to consent, evaluations and the use of evaluation material has had to be sensitive to several other factors. In a significant minority of cases participant children were on 'Child in Need' or 'Child Protection' Plans. Children with statements of Special Educational Need also participated, as did women and children who had been victims of domestic abuse. One of the delivery venues was a Domestic Violence Refuge for Women and Children. This is a confidential address and the identities of all participants at this site needed to be protected.

The level of participation in evaluation activities needs to be recognised within the parameters of these ethical considerations, which sit alongside language constraints, issues related to staff capacity and commitment, and other vulnerabilities affecting some of the participant families.

Below is an explanation of the evaluation approaches used for gathering data from the key stakeholder groups.

Evaluation materials for children

Evaluating the value and the impact of the Holiday Kitchen programme from children's points of views and specifically recording and listening to the 'child voice' was a key focus of the evaluation.

Planning for Real took the lead in designing bespoke evaluation tools and materials to use with the children and families who attended the Holiday Kitchen. The Planning for Real ethos³⁴ is that techniques should be highly visual, tactile, participatory and community-led and this approach underpinned the design of the evaluation activities for the Holiday Kitchen.

Given the age range of children attending (ages 0-8), the intention was to develop clear, effective and fun evaluation materials which could fit into the daily activities as opposed to being time consuming and confusing add-ons. All of the activities were visual, participative and inclusive. The aim was for the older children to be able to engage in the evaluation activities independently, and for younger children to be able to voice their ideas and thoughts and to be supported by an adult to record their views.

The first two activities (tree of hope and washing line) took place at the beginning of the programme and the latter three (thought and speech bubbles, weather map and food evaluation) were daily activities. The reasoning for using the same evaluation tools on a daily basis was that the children and parents/carers would become familiar with the activities and hopefully more confident in expressing their views. It also made the evaluation programme more manageable for the delivery staff.

1. Tree of hope

This activity was designed for both children and parents/carers. At the start of Day 1 all participants were asked to write down their hopes, expectations and views on what they would like to get out of attending the Holiday Kitchen programme. Adults were asked to write their responses on leaves and stick them to the Tree of Hope (a sticky cloth outline of a tree onto

³⁴ <http://www.planningforreal.org.uk/>

which symbols could be stuck). Children were asked to write (or be supported by an adult who could write for them) their responses on fruit symbols and stick them to the tree. The aim of this activity was to provide an insight into what children and parents/carers felt they would gain from the programme. This could then be analysed along with other evaluation material (i.e. end of programme questionnaire) in order to understand whether these expectations were met.

2. Washing line

This activity was designed for children and the aim was to gather their views on what holidays mean to them. All children were asked to write down on 'pants' and 'tops' symbols (or be supported to record their thoughts by a parent/carer or member of staff) their views on what is 'tops' (great) or 'pants' (horrible, not good) about school holidays. All centres were provided with string for the washing line and pegs so the children could hang up the completed symbols on the washing line.

The aim of this activity was to gain a sense of children's views about holidays prior to the Holiday Kitchen programme - what were their 'usual' experiences of holidays.

3. Thought and speech bubbles

For each daily 'keep learning' session the activity leader asked children for their thoughts before and after the activity. The aim was to gain an understanding of what children already knew about each topic before the session began and to gauge whether and what children had learnt during the session. As part of the introduction to the session the activity leader asked for the children's views on the topic, asking, for example: What do you know about making a healthy lunch?

Immediately after the session children were asked: 'What new words and ideas have you learnt today?' Responses at the beginning and end of the session were noted down by children on post-it notes (and parents/carers or staff where support was required) and stuck on to the large speech and thought bubbles displayed on the wall.

4. Weather maps

At the end of each day children were asked to record how they felt about the day by writing on sun or rain weather symbols (or being supported to do so) what aspects they had liked or not liked about the day. They then stuck the symbols on to a cloth map of the UK.

5. Food evaluation

After lunch each day all children were asked to complete a food monitoring form with a smiley or sad face and an area for comments. The aim was to ensure that the food provided was appropriate and positively received, and for centres to be able to respond to any poor feedback or complaints immediately.

6. Photographic data

All participating centres were asked to keep photographic diaries of Holiday Kitchen activities to support other evaluation data gathering. This provided a rich visual ethnography of children's experiences of Holiday Kitchen from the perspective of support staff. Permission to enable this to take place was sought through photographic consent forms which were signed by parents/carers.

Evaluation materials for young people

Young people at the participating youth centre were asked to complete an end of programme questionnaire. This consisted of 11 short multiple choice questions and a page for comments in response to the following two questions: 'What have you found most useful about the Holiday Kitchen and why?'; 'What have you found least useful about the Holiday Kitchen and why?' The questions aimed to explore the ways in which young people felt the Holiday Kitchen had made a difference to them, whether this was in terms of taking part in activities, the provision of

breakfast and lunch, gaining confidence in preparing healthy meals and snacks or any other ways.

Evaluation materials for parents/carers

Four main evaluation methods were developed in order to engage with parents/carers. The aim was to explore how and to what extent the programme was having an impact on parents/carers themselves and also to find out the views of parents/carers on how the programme was having an impact on their children.

1. Registration questionnaire

A detailed registration form was completed by each family registering on to the Holiday Kitchen programme. In addition to fairly standard information fields such as contact details, information about children attending, permission for information sharing and photographs, parents/carers were also asked to complete an 'evaluation data form'. The aim of this form was to try to establish a baseline about the activities and local facilities parents/carers already used in the local area and a baseline around eating habits and knowledge of healthy eating. The form also gathered information on education, working status and benefits.

2. Tree of hope

Parents/carers were invited to participate (alongside the children) in this activity on Day 1, to record their hopes, expectations and views on what they would like to get out of the Holiday Kitchen programme. Adults wrote their responses on leaf symbols and stuck them to the tree and children wrote their response on fruit symbols, thus allowing for the adult and child viewpoints to be analysed separately.

3. End of programme questionnaire

On the final day of the Holiday Kitchen programme all parents/carers were asked to complete an end of programme questionnaire. This aimed to explore the ways in which parents/carers felt the Holiday Kitchen had made a difference to them, whether this was in terms of taking part in activities, the provision of breakfast and lunch, gaining confidence in preparing healthy meals and snacks or any other ways. There was also a space for parents/carers to add their comments on what they had found most and least useful about the Holiday Kitchen and to explain why.

4. Guided 1:1 questionnaire

In addition to the end of programme questionnaire which all parents/carers were asked to complete, each centre was tasked with conducting two or three guided 1:1 questionnaires with individual parents/carers who were willing to participate. The aim was for the session to be an 'informal 1:1 conversation' where the staff member guided the participant through 12 questions. The first seven questions explored the parent/carer's experience of participating in Holiday Kitchen and whether/how the programme had made a difference to them and their children. Participants were advised that they could withdraw from the session at any point and that if there were questions they would prefer not to answer, then that was fine.

The final four questions were 'distance travelled' questions where participants were asked to circle on a scale of 1-10 changes in knowledge, confidence, financial pressure and social contact they had experienced before Holiday Kitchen and now. The aim of these questions was to capture some more robust data about the level of impact /magnitude of change experienced by participants. As only (up to) three parents/carers per centre completed these questionnaires the distance travelled data gathered is not necessarily representative of all participants, although it does give an indication of the level of impact the programme had for this sample of families.

Staff focus group

Once all the centres had completed the delivery of the Holiday Kitchen programme frontline staff were invited to attend a focus group to give their feedback about the programme. The aim was for one representative to attend from each centre and for that individual to gather feedback from their colleagues to bring to the session.

The washing line activity was used as a way of gathering feedback from staff at the focus groups about what they felt had been 'tops' and 'pants' about the programme. As part of the focus group staff were asked for their views about how they felt the programme had benefitted children and parents/carers. This information was then analysed along with the children's and parent/carer evaluation data in order to further increase understanding about the achievement of programme outcomes. Staff were also asked about whether they as individuals had experienced change, or benefitted from their involvement in the programme.

Volunteer/Intern semi-structured interviews

Two Early Years undergraduate students, a graduate media student and a community based volunteer supported the delivery of Holiday Kitchen 2014.

All volunteers were invited to take part in the evaluation of the project from a volunteer's perspective. One undergraduate volunteer and the summer intern participated in semi-structured interviews with BCU and Ashram staff respectively. These interviews offered a unique perspective on the programme in relation to delivery dynamics and their own personal development.

Centre managers telephone interviews

Centre managers were contacted by telephone or via email to agree a mutually convenient time for a telephone interview, all of which were undertaken by members of the BCU research team. Prior to the interview, the interview process and aim of the interview was explained. Nine questions were asked based on the anticipated outcomes of the project and notes were made. After the telephone interview, the notes were typed up and sent to the centre managers for their approval before being included in the evaluation. Three centre managers did not participate in the telephone interviews, although they all gave their feedback in other forums.

Commissioner/funder feedback session

During the Holiday Kitchen Delivery Board meeting and as part of the evaluation process, commissioners and funders were invited to voice their views on how successful or otherwise they felt the Holiday Kitchen programme had been.

In order to provide commissioners/funders with an insight into the evaluation materials used by the centres delivering the programme and to provide a sense of continuity through the evaluation programme, the washing line and tree of hope activities were used to gather this feedback. No steer was provided on whether the feedback should be operational or more strategic.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis

The design of the Holiday Kitchen evaluation programme has drawn on the principles of Social Return on Investment (SROI). SROI is an approach to understanding and managing the value of the social, economic and environmental outcomes created by an activity³⁵. It is a framework to structure thinking and understanding and it produces a story, not purely a number.

³⁵ <http://www.thesroinetwork.org/what-is-sroi>

The 'Theory of Change' model is central to SROI and a detailed impact map is created where inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes are mapped, and where financial proxies are used in order for organisations to put a monetary figure on the value they are creating.

Given staff capacity issues and time constraints it was not possible to conduct a full SROI analysis of the Holiday Kitchen programme. Instead, the aim of this pilot was to produce a general Holiday Kitchen 'Theory of Change' as the starting point for the evaluation framework and to move towards an outcomes focused approach. The aim is that developing this framework will form a strong foundation for evaluating the impact of future Holiday Kitchen programmes.

Although the evaluation approaches used did not engage with a sufficient proportion of stakeholders to enable a full and credible SROI analysis to be completed, there was potential to adopt a 'light touch' approach and to explore the SROI for particular delivery venues in more detail. Therefore, a short case study exploring the SROI of the Holiday Kitchen at Greenacres has been produced as part of this evaluation report in order to highlight how investment in the programme has been returned upon in a specific setting (see appendix B).

Chapter 4: Evaluation Findings

This chapter will present and discuss the findings of the evaluation activities carried out with children, parents, staff, centre managers, commissioners and student volunteers/interns who were all involved in the development and delivery of the Holiday Kitchen programme. A range of innovative and inclusive evaluation methods were employed to gather this data and these are outlined in the Methodology chapter. The first section looks at demographic information regarding the families who attended the programme and the second looks at what the participants hoped to gain from attending Holiday Kitchen. The third section explores the extent to which staff and participants felt that the programme achieved the three key objectives of HK, namely: to improve social inclusion and aspiration; reduce emotional and financial strain; and improve family nutrition and wellbeing. This section will include a reflection on the associated outcomes identified in the initial 'Theory of Change' modelling. The fourth section discusses operational issues which were brought up by staff and parents around the delivery of Holiday Kitchen, and the final section comprises recommendations for improving the programme from frontline staff and centre managers, and summarises feedback received at the post Holiday Kitchen Delivery Board meeting.

Direct quotes are used throughout this analysis to illustrate points and give examples and, as far as possible, the respondents' exact words and spellings have been used.

Staff and student/interns views are based on work with approximately 285³⁶ participants.

1. Demographic/background information on participants from registration forms

The information in this section derives from 38 parental registration forms, 32 anonymous evaluation data forms and 32 'About you' forms from five different centres participating in the Holiday Kitchen programme. All forms were completed by 'mum' apart from two which were completed by 'aunty'. The ages of the mums ranged from 20 to 41 and most had two or three children. All the participants were unemployed apart from one mum who worked part-time and all but one were receiving at least one type of state benefit (generally Job Seeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit and/or Child Tax Credits). Eight had no qualifications, ten had GCSEs and five had qualifications of A-level or above (but below degree). In terms of ethnicity the breakdown is shown in the table below:

White – British	White - Other	Black or black British - Caribbean	Mixed – white and black Caribbean	Mixed - other	Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	Asian or Asian British - Other
17	2	2	2	2	4	1	1

Table 4 Ethnicity of Holiday Kitchen participants

67 percent of respondents said that their child(ren) access free school meals and 34 percent said their family had accessed food bank support in the last 12 months. 36 percent reported that they or their children are currently receiving additional support through education, health or social services. 30 percent live in social housing or a refuge and 27 percent own their own home, with the remainder living in private rented accommodation.

In terms of everyday family life, 75 percent said that their child(ren) had eaten meals with family members in the last week, 87 percent read stories with their child(ren) at least once a week

³⁶ Some centres, such as the youth centre, had a revolving client group. Similarly, not all centres involved babies in their count. This figure hence represents a potential undercount.

(Note parents/carers could choose from the following categories in answering this question: Every day, Most days, Twice a week, Once a week, and Not at all.) 84 percent reported going out with their family to a park or playground once a week or more. 63 percent had been on a day trip with their family in the last six months and 57 percent said they regularly used community facilities like leisure centres and libraries.

In relation to food, 67 percent rated their knowledge of nutrition and a healthy diet as 'good' or 'very good' and 13 percent had been told that at least one of their children were overweight or obese.

2. Hopes for the Holiday Kitchen and previous experiences of summer holidays

The 'tree of hope' evaluation in the first Holiday Kitchen sessions gathered information about what the participants hoped to get out of the programme. For the children the main aims were; to make new friends, do new activities and, above all, to have fun. For the adults the most common hope was to spend quality time with their children, followed by to make friends and have fun. One mum commented that 'I want to take my mind off issues I'm going through at home', indicating the potential of the programme to reduce emotional strain, a key outcome which is further explored in section 3.2 below.

In response to the 'washing line' activity in which participants were asked what is top/pants about school holidays the responses were quite mixed. Some children said they liked holidays because they liked spending time with family and friends, playing with toys and not having to go to school ('I like holidays because I don't have to learn') with others feeling bored and missing school and their friends with nothing to do ('I hate staying home'). Some parents mentioned the positive opportunities of spending time with their children during school holidays, but for most practical concerns overshadowed this pleasure. For example: 'It's too much money to take them anywhere' and 'There's not much to do.' The Holiday Kitchen programme is clearly positioned to address both the lack of activity and focus for children from disadvantaged homes during the holidays, and the practical barriers parents may face in trying to occupy their children during this time. Holiday Kitchen's activities linked to its social inclusion and reduced financial and emotional strain objectives respond directly to these challenges and hopes.

The following section explores how the programme evaluations with children, parents and staff provided information in relation to the three key objectives of the Holiday Kitchen project.

3. Discussion of findings in relation to the three key objectives for Holiday Kitchen

As discussed in the Methodology the 'Theory of Change' model (appendix A) outlines the outcomes for different stakeholder groups in relation to the three key objectives of Holiday Kitchen and provides the framework for the entire evaluation programme. The three key outcomes around improved social inclusion and aspiration, improved nutrition and well-being and reduced financial and emotional strain are based on the New Economics Foundation's Five Ways to Well-being Framework in which well-being is conceptualised as deriving from the following five key actions: 'be active, keep learning, take notice, connect and give' (NEF, 2008: 13) The following findings from the evaluation materials are to be understood as indicators of the extent to which each key objective has been achieved for each key stakeholder group, with a particular focus on the subjective views of children and parents about their experiences, and from the staff and volunteers who worked with them.

3.1 Improve social inclusion & aspiration: related outcomes include improved school readiness and reduced opportunity gaps for social participation.

A key theme to arise from the parental evaluations was the need for social interaction and support, and the ways in which the programme allowed new and existing friendships and social contacts to develop. Comments included:

'I am living in a domestic violence refuge with my 3 children and cant really see any of my family due to distance.'

'It was good to make food and eat with other people. I was new to centre and it helped me get to know people'

Staff commented on how parents bonded with each other during Holiday Kitchen and made arrangements to meet up with each other after the programme.

From the interviews with centre managers it was clear that the project had social benefits for parents by encouraging friendships and mutual support, as the following comments indicate:

'Some families would have been isolated during the holidays, for example one of our families from Afghanistan.'

'Some single parents found having another adult in the same situation to talk to very useful.'

'Parents had an opportunity to meet new parents and access free activities which they may not have been able to do before due to cost implications'.

Results from a question on social activities on the end of programme questionnaire as shown in the table below, indicate that engaging in the Holiday Kitchen led to an increase in social contact reported by the participants, with the average (mean) score raising from 5.7 to 8.

Social activities: Please circle how much social contact you had before and after coming to Holiday Kitchen (1=being no contact in a week/10=being lots of daily contact)

Before HK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of responses		2		2	2	4	1	1	1	1
After HK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of responses					1	1	3	4	2	3

Before Holiday Kitchen average	5.7
After Holiday Kitchen average	8

Table 5 Social activities before and after Holiday Kitchen

Comments explaining these increased scores included the following: 'I have had more contact with other mums' and 'I have made friends with other families'.

For the children as well the Holiday Kitchen was an opportunity to make and consolidate friendships, have different experiences and learn new things, all of which may contribute to their social inclusion and school readiness. Activities that rated particularly highly in the children's evaluations in this regard were Forest School ('I can't believe I've been in a forest!'), Field to Fork ('I learnt how to plant vegetables') and Music & Drama ('I have learnt new words like flute/guitar/jingle bells).

One of the staff who led a music session on the programme commented that: 'Children really loved the music session. They were really interacting with the facilitators and listening to all the instructions. It gave the children an opportunity to improve their listening skills and to use their fine and gross motor skills.' Making and eating food together was also reported as socially beneficial by staff who commented that these activities 'created opportunities for children to create relationships'. Staff also noted that shared meal times gave them the chance 'to get to know families better' and that children sitting together to eat was seen as valuable. Staff commented that parents enjoyed seeing the children sitting together and socialising.

In relation to the young people at the Youth Centre, the manager reported the following benefits:

'Getting the opportunity to sit down and eat with friends and staff. Sociable aspects of eating together. Sense of achievement when one person cooked something that was appreciated by others.'

Another centre manager commented that it was 'Good to see children all sitting down for lunch...Useful for establishing routines and social skills' and recognised the social value of 'Mixing with the other children, making friends with new children, working together'.

Many of the activities were reported by centre managers as being thoroughly enjoyed by the children and their parents. In particular the outings, the vegetable planting and digging (Field to Fork) and the Make & Taste sessions. The wide range of positive outcomes from the shared activities is reflected in the following quote by one of the centre managers:

'Good to provide activities for the older children who often don't have things to do during the holidays. Increased bonding and communication between parents and children, activities involving parents and children provided opportunity for parents to be part of children's learning.'

The student volunteer also noted how Holiday Kitchen seemed to 'fill a gap' for the children 'playing out, being with friends...the children liked having lots of interesting activities to do.'

An important outcome for many parents was that they reported feeling more confident doing activities with their children since coming to Holiday Kitchen, as demonstrated in the table below:

Family Time: Please circle below how confident you feel about doing activities with your child/children since coming to Holiday Kitchen (1=not at all confident/10=feeling totally confident)

Before HK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of responses		1	1	2	2	3	1	2		3
After HK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of responses					1	1	3	4	1	5

Before Holiday Kitchen average	6.9
After Holiday Kitchen average	8.2

Table 6 Confidence doing activities before and after Holiday Kitchen

Explanations for this change included the following: 'I have more ideas and things to do with the children', 'I am more confident now with doing activities with my children' and 'Went certain places that I felt comfortable. Now we go different places because I feel more comfortable.' These changes were also picked up on the guided questionnaires, with one mum explaining how before Holiday Kitchen: 'I was running out of ideas of things to do with my children and children were getting bored' and after Holiday Kitchen: 'I have got loads of ideas from the things we did at Holiday Kitchen which I can do with my children.'

Staff also noted how Holiday Kitchen worked to 'open parents' eyes to local amenities which they didn't know were there' and the student intern noted that parents 'may better recognise that running resourceful activities doesn't have to be at any expense to their children's enjoyment' and that parents were presented with 'alternative (low cost, relatively easy and much more active) ways to keep their children occupied during the holidays' beyond the life of their programme participation.

The following responses from parents who completed the end of programme evaluation (or some parts of it) clearly shows the positive impact Holiday Kitchen had on their and their children's summer holidays, and beyond, in terms of family activities provided.

		Yes	No	Maybe
1	Has Holiday Kitchen helped you feel more positive about doing family activities during these summer holidays? (Linked to wellbeing outcomes)	54	4	2
2	By taking part in Holiday Kitchen have you done more activities with your family out of the home than normal during the holiday period? (Linked to social inclusion outcomes)	15	0	1
3	Do you feel more confident to do activities outside in a park or garden with your children as a result of Holiday Kitchen? (Linked to wellbeing outcomes)	13	2	1

Table 7 Positive impact of Holiday Kitchen

In relation to the impact of the programme on improving school readiness and counteracting the 'summer slide' (Smith, 2012)³⁷ the majority of the centre managers felt that learning did take place and that the children benefitted from the routine of Holiday Kitchen:

'Definitely learning took place and progression for children of all ages'

'Routine good for more challenging kids, would have been harder to go back to school/nursery after a summer of no routine at all'.

'Activities had educational value and developed skills for children of all ages'

³⁷ Smith, L. (2012) Slowing the Summer Slide. *The Resourceful School*, 69(4) pp. 60-63.

3.2. Reduce emotional & financial strain: related outcomes include reduced debt, social services referrals and safeguarding risks.

High levels of emotional stress and strain at home were reported by many of the parents in their evaluations of Holiday Kitchen ('I felt very stressed at home and was struggling') and some offered clear insights into how attending Holiday Kitchen with their children had given them the chance to relax and enjoy some family time. For example:

'I feel very happy now as I am able to have fun with my kids rather than worry about everyday stress. I feel more able to bond with my children and have more fun with them.'

'Holiday Kitchen has helped calm me down and focus on my children. It has also helped my kids make friends.'

The student volunteer also noted how 'parents liked the idea of having some days when they didn't have to worry about things, what to do with the children, what's for lunch.'

The 'local trip' activity received much praise from parents and comments included the following:

'just being relaxed and having fun. It's good to go out and socialise Thanks a lot'

'This trip played effective role in my baby's confidence. She enjoyed a lot. And the staff were very co-operative. And they guided us a lot of times'

The 'Change for Life' activity was also notable for helping parents learn how to better communicate with their children and reduce emotional strain in that way: 'I've learnt how to communicate with the children. Tone of voice, calmness, etc. The importance of listening and talking', 'I learnt to listen more so I understand my child'.

Financial: Evidence came through from a range of evaluation tools that the Holiday Kitchen programme was also effective in addressing, and temporarily reducing, financial strain for the families involved. One of the key ways this was achieved was through sharing ideas of how to entertain children during holidays without spending too much money. One centre manager commented that 'the mums realised they didn't have to spend £100 taking the kids to Alton Towers to have a nice day out'. This was reflected in responses by parents such as: 'I feel like I can take my kids out more often for cheaper prices'. Another way in which Holiday Kitchen helped ease financial strain was by providing breakfasts and lunches every day which parents greatly appreciated, for example: 'The Holiday Kitchen serving breakfast and lunch has been a big help. I have saved money over the last two weeks being here', 'We don't have to bring in packed lunch everyday because there is always food to eat in the Holiday Kitchen which has benefitted me financially'. Some staff also noted that parents were really appreciative of the food and that some parents had commented how the provision of food had lessened the financial pressure on them, at least for the duration of the programme. The student intern commented that the Holiday Kitchen addressed 'in a very proactive way the issue of child poverty' and that the multi-agency approach to the issue of 'holiday hunger' was particularly helpful.

Holiday Kitchen also addressed financial issues by providing a session around finance and budgeting called 'Money, Fun & Games' for the children and their parents. On the whole this was well received, although some felt that the activities were not age appropriate and one parent felt the session was 'very patronising and full of incorrect information'. Parents reported learning much useful information as indicated in the following evaluation quotes:

'I learnt how to save with buying cheaper foods and how much roughly I'll save.'

'I learnt that there is help out there to help with budgeting and money.'

'Massive difference in changing brands when shopping.'

'We have learnt what consequences are linked to which bills and worked out which bills are priority.'

The children as well learnt much from the sessions including the difference between a want and a need: 'Needs and wants are different. Look at what you have then see what you need' and that 'Money is kept safe in a bank' and 'How to spend money better'. Some of the learning activities were taken from the England Illegal Money Lending Team's lesson plans, which are Pfeg approved and aimed at primary age children.

The table below indicates how, overall, attendance at the Holiday Kitchen impacted positively on the level of stress participating parents felt about money with the average (mean) score raising from 5.7 to 7.2

Finance: Please circle below how stressed you felt about money before and after coming to Holiday Kitchen (1=under a great deal of stress/10=under no financial stress) (Table 7)

Before HK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of responses	1		2	1	4	4	1		1	2
After HK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of responses				1	3	3	3	1	1	4

Before Holiday Kitchen average	5.7
After Holiday Kitchen average	7.2

Table 8 Financial stress before and after Holiday Kitchen

Comments explaining the changes included: 'I have saved some money as I have not been buying food during lunch during the Holiday Kitchen period' and 'It's helped me know there is help out there.' One parent whose score stayed at five both before and after the programme regretted that the positive impact of Holiday Kitchen was only temporary: 'Holiday Kitchen helped towards breakfast and lunch but no long term help.'

The finance session received positive reactions from three of the centre managers who found the sessions went very well, although one manager felt that although the finance activity was good for parents they 'didn't do anything for the children they just played with the tills, nothing age appropriate'. Another manager also commented that the money activity was not appropriately tailored to the children. Some staff also did not feel that the money activity worked very well with the age group of children who attended and thought that a more role play based activity would have worked better. There were different providers of this activity. One provider fed back that they were now looking to develop more age appropriate engagement methods. Prior to Holiday Kitchen they had always been focused on adults' financial literacy but realised through involvement in Holiday Kitchen the importance of improving children's financial literacy from an early age. Providing financial confidence learning activities was a condition of the England Illegal Money Lending Team, one of the Holiday Kitchen sponsors.

There were mixed responses to the question as to whether Holiday Kitchen met the objective of reducing financial strain, with four managers feeling that this objective was met and three feeling that it was not. The ones who felt it had been met, focussed on the way the food provided by the project eased the burden of buying food for the families, for example:

‘Families were provided with food for breakfast and lunch which alleviated pressure on families to buy food when children would usually be at school.’

They also spoke of the usefulness of the financial advice sessions, for example:

‘Yes. One mum had a referral for a further session with the finance advisor. Mums benefitted from time with the children away from day to day stresses at home.’

Nevertheless, one manager felt that the finance activity was a missed opportunity to help parents: ‘The money activity did not focus on parents as it was so busy with lots of children. Hope to organise a future session for parents to support with loans/debt advice etc.’ Another felt that the session had not gone down well with parents as it was ‘demoralising’: ‘The exercise with different brands of food did not go well as the parents all liked the more expensive products.’ This was, however, a family learning activity not a money advice session.

During the evaluation discussions, staff also made the point that some of the families did not respond well to the questions about money and finance and did not like the type of questions being asked. The money fun and games sessions were provided by Big Lottery Financial Inclusion programmes who had detailed evaluation forms they were required to complete for all individuals they engaged with.

In relation to the role of Holiday Kitchen in supporting local authority Family Support Teams, and managing safeguarding risks, staff spoke about times where they had observed parents/carers and children and had written reports, for example for child protection. On one occasion the staff wrote a report in support of the parents of one child working well together and demonstrating parenting skills, and in another instance of a family member not appearing to be able to look after the children. This took place within the context of some delivery centres having a high number of children with support plans and in a survey sample, 36 percent of participant families reported they or their children were currently receiving additional support through education, health or social services.

3.3. Improve family nutrition & wellbeing: related outcomes include reduced food poverty, obesity and poor mental health

Food: Many positive comments were made by parents and children about Holiday Kitchen around this outcome. For example parents valued ‘Being together. Eating healthy and trying things’ and ‘Eating together and eating on time’. Staff commented that a lot of the children and parents don’t usually have breakfast, but since attending the programme they said they started having breakfast, ‘Children were getting used to the routine of having breakfast and parents were starting to get into this routine as well’.

The children and young people were pleased that they had the opportunity to cook and try new healthy food as the following comments show:

‘I’ve learnt to make healthy snacks by myself.’

‘I found it useful that we could go in at any time to go into the kitchen and go and make food. I made me feel as if I never had to worry about bringing money and eating takeaway.’

'I have found most things about Holiday Kitchen very useful because it has helped me by eating healthy food and not always eating junk food all the time and I would definitely recommend this Holiday Kitchen to a friend.'

'We get to eat healthy food. Usually, I would eat a lot of junk food, but the Holiday Kitchen provides healthy food.'

'The most useful things was making our own food because I can now do this at home. Also eating healthy food'.

The young people at the Youth Centre appreciated the fact that there was an open door policy in the kitchen during Holiday Kitchen, as explained in the following comment: 'We are always welcome into the kitchen and whenever there is a session on - I come to the centre without have ate because I know there is food available at the centre - Its beneficial because it's healthy and I enjoy making and eating the food we make - Helps save money.' The centre manager also highlighted this as being a popular feature with the young people attending Holiday Kitchen (see Naseby Centre case study, appendix C).

Some of the older children were able to take cooking skills home and share them with their families: 'My mum was happy when I made a pizza at home' and 'I have learnt how to make healthy smoothies'. Again, the Youth Centre manager corroborated this by noting how for some of the young men there was a cultural barrier at home against them being in the kitchen and cooking and that the Holiday Kitchen had helped to break through this and their families enjoyed them coming home and making food for them. The manager also commented that 'Aspirations were raised around cooking, some young people now want to cook for themselves at home' and that 'being at Holiday Kitchen meant less reliance on takeaway food over the holidays.'

As demonstrated below, parental responses to the end of programme questionnaire indicated that both children and parents benefitted from meal provision which drew on the Children's Food Trust guidance for quality standards.

	Yes	No	Maybe
Do you feel you and your children have benefitted from having breakfast at the Holiday Kitchen?	54	2	4
Do you feel you and your children have benefitted from having lunch at the Holiday Kitchen?	51	2	7

Table 9 Perceived food benefits of Holiday Kitchen

The Holiday Kitchen also had a positive impact on the quality of food they fed their families at home as shown in the following table, with the average (mean) score rising from 6.5 before the programme to 7.9 after the programme:

Food: Please circle below (1=not eating healthy food and 10=eating lots of healthy food) how easy you have found it to feed your family healthy meals at home before coming to Holiday Kitchen and since attending.

Before HK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of responses		1	1		3	2	2	4	1	1
After HK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of responses		1				1	1	7	2	3

Before Holiday Kitchen average	6.5
After Holiday Kitchen average	7.9

Table 10 Healthy food consumption before and after Holiday Kitchen

Comments explaining positive changes in scores given by parents included the following: 'The children eat regularly now', 'I learnt about healthy eating and nutrition', 'I have developed ways to make healthy food', 'Just ate different foods, now we cook a lot more and eat healthier', 'I encourage kids to eat more fruit with their dinners', 'More ideas of healthy meals' and, importantly, 'I found out that if the children help make it they will eat it.'

More affirmative information arose from the evaluation questions asking parents their opinions about the food provided at Holiday Kitchen and the impact that participating in the programme may have on their future eating habits. Roughly half of respondents (51 percent) rated the food provided by Holiday Kitchen as more healthy than they usually eat and 81 percent felt more confident making healthy meals/snacks with their children through taking part in HK.

Five out of the seven managers interviewed said that the Holiday Kitchen project met the objective of improving family nutrition in terms of promoting healthy eating and regular home-cooked meals. Some example comments are below:

'Yes. Some children who don't normally have breakfast got into the habit and parents realised the importance of eating breakfast.'

'Routine of meals good, rather than snacking through the day.'

'Make & taste was really well received. They made little pizzas and used vegetables for the toppings. Some children tasted peppers and mushrooms for the first time.'

'Yes. Children ate lots of fruits and vegetables. Children enjoyed and looked forward to the food provided.'

Activities: The evaluations from children and parents in relation to 'Make & Taste', 'Field to Fork' and 'Change for Life' were overwhelmingly positive indicating that these activities worked well in addressing the key outcome around improving family nutrition and well-being. Similarly, some parents/carers found the local trips positively contributing to their sense of wellbeing.

'Kids loved everything about our day out. They let their energy out, and just enjoyed being kids. As a mom, that is the most precious thing and the happiness is priceless. It gave me confidence and security and the will power to go out by ourselves.'

Children involved in the 'Make & Taste' activities reported learning new words such as 'tangerine', 'avocado', 'kiwi', new knowledge such as 'blueberries are different to blackberries' and new skills such as 'how to core and cut a pineapple'. Staff noted that the 'Make & Taste' session was the most popular session.

'Field to Fork' also enabled the children to learn and try new things around food and nutrition including: 'Carrots grow under the ground', 'Tried green beans they nice', 'Some food grows on trees and some in the ground', 'Basil smells minty' and 'You have to plant a seed to get a flower and then it grows into food'

Through the 'Change 4 Life' activities children learnt that: 'Keeping active can help to live a longer life' and 'Exercise is important'. One child commented that 'I enjoyed learning about how to stay fit' and another that 'We learned a lot of good things about sport today'. Parents were impressed too: 'I liked the idea of kids enjoying exercising and having fun while doing it'.

Overall, the food and activities of Holiday Kitchen were well-received by parents and children and this was supported by the feedback from staff and centre managers. As a clear indicator of the success of the programme in response to the question 'Would you recommend Holiday Kitchen to a friend or family member?' 95 percent of parents replied 'Yes'.

In relation to the 'Theory of Change' framework (see appendix A) the evaluations indicate that the three key outcomes of Holiday Kitchen were met and that children and their families experienced enhanced social inclusion and aspiration, improved family nutrition and wellbeing and reduced financial and emotional strain through their involvement with the programme. The attainment of these outcomes was corroborated and supported by the evaluations from staff and volunteers. An overview of how each outcome was achieved in relation to the 'Theory of Change' model is provided in the conclusion.

4. Operational issues

This section will focus on the operational side of Holiday Kitchen and will discuss practical issues which have been identified by staff, volunteers and/or participants as impacting on the success of the programme. The following discussion will encompass a reflection on the different delivery models at different centres, how referrals were made, and how appropriate settings were for delivery. There will also be a consideration of the food that was provided.

4.1 Delivery formats

There were a range of delivery formats and referral methods for Holiday Kitchen. Predominantly delivery was divided into three models:

- Self-catering Make & Taste continuously offered through August
- Catered two days a week offered over four weeks offered from 9:30-12:30
- Catered four days a week offered over two weeks in either the morning or afternoon (one programme offering this used self-catering Make & Taste catering).

Of the 11 delivery centres, six of the settings ran Holiday Kitchen four days a week for two weeks, and four settings ran Holiday Kitchen two days a week for four weeks. Some programmes ran from the start of the summer holidays, while others started from the third or fourth week into the holidays. The Youth centre ran Holiday Kitchen in a slightly different way with an open kitchen for four weeks accompanying their holiday youth programme, which was felt to be more appropriate to the age of the participants in that setting. Details of the delivery models used at each setting are shown in the table below and demonstrates how Holiday Kitchen is flexible and can be adapted to multiple settings:

Delivery Site	Delivery Format (2 days or 4 days)	Catering Format	Dates	Other notes
North Solihull C Children's Centre ran in partnership with local community centre	4 days/week x 2wks x2 programmes am	Make & Taste	4th - 28th August	Had limited referrals from partners, 2-8yr old children
Birmingham R Children's Centre	2 days/week x 4wks am	Educational caterers	28th July - 22nd August	Took NASS asylum seekers & Family Support Team referrals; took all siblings of under 5s. Would like to include more families with babies in future.
Community Pod	2 days/week x 4wks am	Educational caterers	5th - 27th August	Volunteer led women's group
Birmingham S Children's Centre	4 days/week x 2wks am	Educational caterers	12th - 27th August	Over subscribed, operated a waiting list system. Maximum number of service users was always reached
Birmingham A Children's Centre	4 days/week x 2wks pm	Educational caterers	3rd - 14th August	Did not offer breakfasts (HK ran 1-3:30pm) Offered HK as an extended open stay & play type programme but included HK programme activities.
Birmingham H Children's Centre	4 days/week x 2wks pm	Educational caterers	4th - 14th August	Did not offer breakfasts (HK ran 1-3:30pm) Offered HK as an extended open stay & play type programme but included HK programme activities.
Sandwell O Children's Centre	4 days/week x 2wks am	School Caterers	4th - 14th August	Family Support Team referrals, opened to foodbank referrals
Sandwell W Children's Centre	4 days/week x 2wks am	School Caterers	22nd July - 1st August	Family Support Team referrals
Sandwell Community Centre	2 days/week x 4wks am	School Caterers	5th - 22nd August	Family Support Team referrals, opened to foodbank referrals
DV Refuge	2 days/week x 4wks 10am-3pm	Sandwich Shop	21st July - 12th August	Families living in the refuge
Youth Centre	Open kitchen over 4 weeks all day until 8pm	Make & Taste by young people	August	11 -16 year old client group, including police referrals. Young people attended without parents

Table 11 Delivery models of Holiday Kitchen

No children commented on the delivery models, and parental feedback on the subject was minimal with only three parents who attended the two days a week for four weeks mode commenting that they would have liked more days of Holiday Kitchen in each week.

Overall the model of delivery did not appear to impact on the children and parental evaluations in terms of number of responses or positive/negative comments. However, when staff were asked for their views about the best structure for the programme some interesting and conflicting opinions came up. It was generally agreed by staff that delivery later into the holidays was more desirable than at the start of the school holidays. In relation to running Holiday Kitchen four days a week over two weeks the following points were made:

- Some staff felt that the four days over two weeks worked fine and that this didn't put people off attending whereas others felt that parents couldn't commit to such an intense programme.
- Two centres which ran the programme over two weeks (four consecutive days each week) found it tiring for some children, families and staff. They felt this was too intense and would have been better as two days over four weeks. 'More contact over a longer period may have worked better.'
- The expectation of parents committing to four consecutive days over two weeks was felt by some to be too much.
- Another centre commented that they felt the eight day programme (delivered over two weeks) was too intensive and in the future they would be keen to keep the programme as running over a shorter block period but reduce the number of days.

Regarding running Holiday Kitchen two days a week for four weeks some staff felt that if the programme was run over four weeks this would have prolonged the benefits for families in terms of the food and activity provision, the learning, and the engagement with the delivery centres. The benefits would have been spread over a longer period and it would have allowed families to access the delivery centre services during that time. This model of delivery would also have allowed the children's centres to do more of 'their work' with the families.

4.2 Referrals and numbers

Most managers stated that the families who most needed support accessed the project. For example:

'FST (Family Support Teams) identified most needy families. Definitely seemed to be families who needed the support, for example an asylum seeker mum with 4 children and a single mum with 3 children under three. It gave them a respite from looking after children alone, often relatively isolated, and helped financially as food was provided.'

'Yes, it is a low income area so useful that food and drink were provided.'

The system of referrals seemed to vary between centres with the Domestic Violence Refuge inviting all families to attend Holiday Kitchen (no targeting within the refuge was deemed necessary), others using staff to ask selected families known to be 'in need' to attend and another using their Family Support Team to identify families.

However, the Youth Centre used a variety of methods to recruit participants, which seemed to work very well, suggesting that there is not a 'one size fits all' referral method for Holiday Kitchen which will work across every setting: 'Young people were recruited through Facebook, referrals from police and outreach work, Some existing users of the centre, some new. It worked well.'

One manager commented that it was disappointing not to get the numbers expected. This was blamed on insufficient lead in time to engage with referral agencies to market the programme. Another thought that 'a wider range of families would have been nice in some sessions who may not be so financially challenged but who would benefit from support'. Opening sessions to a wider audience would however raise issues regarding the targeting of resources.

Some staff fed back that recruiting families onto Holiday Kitchen should have started earlier in the year and with a greater lead in time they felt they could have increased participation on the programme by visiting schools, working with family liaison officers and ensuring that the message was communicated to the right people. Other centres seemed to be more successful in their recruitment and they felt this was down to a strong relationship with the family support team who gave referrals.

There was significant variation across the staff focus group participants' experience in terms of the number of children and parents who attended the programme and this was corroborated by attendance data collected for the evaluation. Some venues reported that numbers were high and that they had a waiting list for people who wanted to come on to the programme. They felt the free lunches were a big attraction, as were little toys and gifts which they gave out during the programme. Some staff felt that the deposit worked well whereas others thought it was too much and they did not ask families to pay it. One member of staff commented that she felt that asking for a deposit scared people off at the start of the programme. Flexibility was seen as being important as not all families would be able to pay a deposit. The purpose of the deposit was to ensure that families willing to commit were recruited and that expectations were explained to families up front. Deposits have historically been successful in reducing erratic attendance rates.

4.3 Settings and staffing

Six out of the seven managers interviewed felt that their setting was right for future Holiday Kitchen activities. The seventh manager felt that the children's centre would have been better equipped to run the project rather than the community centre where Holiday Kitchen was run. All the managers identified benefits that Holiday Kitchen had for their setting(s). Four out of the seven managers highlighted the increase in numbers or new registrations which the project brought in, for example: 'The Holiday Kitchen has given knowledge of the children's centre to a family who wasn't accessing the centre before and who are now attending' and two managers noted that the food encouraged people to stay longer than they otherwise might have done, for example: 'The young people stayed longer because they were getting fed, so staff could do more targeted work and get to know the young people better'. Other benefits mentioned were in relation to staff development, providing staff with new ideas for activities and showing staff 'how important sessions are to parents'.

Staff also commented on the benefits for children's centre staff of interacting with larger family units during the programme (i.e. older school age siblings as well as under 5s) and gaining a much better understanding of the family dynamics. Having prior knowledge and/or experience with the families who attended really helped in terms of building relationships within the intensive programme. Staff already knew the majority of families who were referred (through family support workers) which they felt helped in establishing relationships, otherwise with 'new families' it could have been much more difficult to encourage them to engage. Overall though, staff felt that children's centres were well placed to deliver this sort of programme and that they had good experience in terms of delivery partners and could deliver a lot of the sessions in-house. It was agreed that, in the view of the staff, children's centres have the resources and experience to deliver this programme

Staff felt that additional volunteers would have helped the programme and mentioned the 'Challenge Network' who offer youngsters to get involved and provide support in structured

activities. It was felt that inadequate staff numbers were suggested in the planning and that realistically four staff plus a volunteer were needed each day, although one manager commented that the expertise of the centre staff made the project successful as it 'would have been hard to run with just volunteers. Staff are more experienced and knew families'.

The student volunteer and intern both reported having gained much in terms of skills and understanding from working on the Holiday Kitchen programme, and commented on the positive impact of the experience in relation to their own personal and professional development.

4.5 Food

All centres were sent information from the Children's Food Trust³⁸ and the Change4Life³⁹ campaign regarding Make & Taste activities and lunches. Participating caterers and delivery centres were also sent guidance from the Children's Food Trust regarding packed lunches. This guidance was expected to inform the range of programme catering offers from School Caterers, local sandwich shops, commercial caterers and self-catering by centres.

Some staff commented on how much the children loved the lunches and the sandwiches and this was reflected in the children's evaluations too. One manager found the 'food fresh, packed beautifully and delivered on time', and another reported the packed lunches were 'good'. It was also reported that the children enjoyed having an element of choice with the food and they looked forward to receiving the bags each day. Some parents would have liked more choice of food and some would have liked more hot food to be provided.

At one centre staff found that the children did not like the catered sandwiches and so opted to cancel the catering and to buy in food each day which the children helped them to prepare. This included blueberry muffins, wraps, and pizzas among other things. This worked out as more cost effective and the activity of preparing and making the food was enjoyed by both children and parents.

The Youth Centre did not use any outside caterers. The manager noted that 'the young people made their lunches themselves, not just sandwiches. They had a greater variety of hot food like lasagne'. Naseby is fortunate in that it has a large catering kitchen which for most of the time remains under-utilised. Holiday Kitchen delivery enabled them to have an 'open kitchen' arrangement. To manage this, however, staff insisted young people learn to take responsibility for other elements of managing the catering, including the washing up.

'They didn't like washing and tidying up, but they need to learn about responsibility. It began less favourably but eventually they got really into it.' (Naseby staff)

For the centre manager, self-catering is by far the most preferable food option. It enabled a significant journey for young people towards taking responsibility for their own food and health.

'The boys made beautiful kebab and experimented with smoothies. Staff were the tasters. These experiments weren't without their disasters – some things did not work, and we learnt you can burn potatoes in the microwave!' (Naseby staff)

'Having core ingredients means that we weren't telling them what to eat. They are able to make choices. It's great to give them the food but we liked this method because they

³⁸ www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/

³⁹ www.change4life.co.uk

were able to make a variety. What we did helped young people grow.’ (Naseby Centre Manager)

5. Reflections on Holiday Kitchen programme and suggestions for improvement

5.1 Suggestions for improvement of Holiday Kitchen programme from staff and centre managers

Flexibility and local ownership was very important – where things were not working staff were able to adapt and change things in order for the programme to suit the families and age range of children participating. Initially staff felt slightly unsure about the programme. They had never done anything like this before, but once into the delivery they were very positive and felt they had gained a lot from the programme. Staff really enjoyed the programme in the end, once they got underway with it and understood it. They felt they had gained a lot professionally from being involved in the delivery of the programme. Staff emphasised the benefits of involving families in planning future programmes in relation to timing, structure and food provided in ensuring that Holiday Kitchen met their needs more directly. Participants at the staff focus group felt that overall Holiday Kitchen was a fantastic idea and they would like to see it run again in the future and extended. They had the following suggestions for future Holiday Kitchen programmes:

- It was made clear in the focus group discussions that staff experience was very important in the effective delivery of Holiday Kitchen and that the success of the programme was down to the experienced frontline delivery staff and their ability to relate to the children and parents. Staff strongly felt that practitioners are the experts and that they should be involved in the planning;
- Have one person coordinating the programme at each venue, and one overall Holiday Kitchen co-ordinator overseeing referrals, recruitment and planning;
- Involve parents in the shaping of future programmes in terms of content, timing, structure and input into the food provided;
- Allow venues to have the flexibility to tailor the programme to take into account their families and draw on their own local knowledge;
- Set up a system whereby knowledge can be shared between different venues about what worked well in terms of recruitment and activities;
- Start planning for the programme early and involve practitioners from the beginning.

All the centre managers agreed that Holiday Kitchen was a successful and worthwhile project overall. The key suggestions they made to improve future programmes were similar to those voiced by the frontline staff and can be summarised as:

- More time needed to organise the project and clearer planning briefs;
- Outside agencies should be organised in advance and activities provided for all age groups;
- Clearer guidance needed on referrals and criteria for selecting families;
- One manager felt that schools should be involved in identifying families and that carrying out the referral process during term time could help with this.
- Another manager felt that referrals needed to be clear and integrate in order to ensure the right families are targeted and that the criteria for selecting families’ needs to be carefully considered. He commented that: ‘The project could be a lifesaver for parents, however the correct referral is paramount.’

- One manager suggested that 'each centre gets given a budget so they can order the food and book the sessions'. This would give centres control to flexibly adapt delivery to meet local need and maximise centre resources. For example, some centres have their own catering kitchens on site enabling self-catering involving participants, where other centres have limited facilities and would be reliant on external catering.

5.2 Feedback from Holiday Kitchen Delivery Board

The Holiday Kitchen Delivery Board comprised key individuals in the delivery and planning of the programme and the post-Holiday Kitchen meeting involved an evaluation discussion in relation to what went well and where there was room for improvement in the Holiday Kitchen programme. Members identified that the following aspects of Holiday Kitchen were positive:

- Engagement of families. It was noted that the Holiday Kitchen context provides a setting for the staff to have a chance to gain an insight into the wider context of the family relationships. It allows children's centres to engage with families as a whole, observe family dynamics and identify broader issues that may be occurring within the family. This may help staff spot signs of neglect.
- Collaboration. Community-led partnerships are seen to be the future.
- Frontline staff. The skill and creativity of support staff at the centres should be capitalised on in future programmes. Frontline staff can offer a huge amount to inform future learning.

The following issues were seen as needing addressing:

- More time is needed in future programmes to ensure that every service provider attends training and that there is sufficient time for referrals. It was suggested that more in-depth training for delivery partners would help them to see the benefits of/ buy into the evaluation.
- It was highlighted that it is important to have a named frontline worker at each location in order to improve communication.
- It was proposed that for future years, venues running Holiday Kitchen should put forward an expression of interest so that it is clear that all delivery sites are fully committed to the programme.

Further discussions took place around the topic of 'Nutritional requirements' and various operational issues in relation to the delivery of Holiday Kitchen. In terms of 'Nutritional requirements' there was a general consensus that eating healthily is a process, therefore Holiday Kitchen shouldn't impose too tight dietary restrictions and that allowing Holiday Kitchen venues a degree of flexibility over food is important. However, too much flexibility runs the risk of making Holiday Kitchen 'just another service' with ordinary food that is not markedly healthy. A discussion also took place over the benefit of allowing families to make their own lunches. It was pointed out that this kind of learning is transferable, as it demonstrates the ease of making low cost meals at home. Conversely, lunches provided by external caterers would be an unrealistic demonstration of healthy eating as it wouldn't be affordable to end-users in everyday life.

There was no obvious preference as to whether Holiday Kitchen should be accessed universally or via referrals. It was suggested that targeting a particular group would make it easier to measure outcomes; end-users are at a common, very clear starting point. However, it was agreed that targeting could exclude children who are in need but don't fit under the obvious

categories. It was noted that the core objective of Holiday Kitchen is to tackle food poverty, so in that sense Holiday Kitchen is not a universal programme. It was also noted that parents are less keen to take part in a programme which deals with 'problems', i.e. in which end-users are portrayed as in need of support.

Discussions took place around what parameters Holiday Kitchen would set for the programme. There was a general consensus that adopting a flexible approach is preferable, as it is important that partners feel like owners of what they are doing. It was added that the provision of food coupled with an activity is the most important part of the programme. As long as those grounds are covered, flexibility would be possible.

It was noted that the evaluation had not revealed a clear format over which structure is best (two days per week over four weeks or four days per week over two weeks). It was suggested that spanning the programme over a longer period would prolong engagement and may result in better outcomes, allowing families more time to implement their learning into home life during the course of the programme.

The following, final chapter will reflect on the findings of the evaluation in relation to the wider aims of the project in relation to the 'Theory of Change' framework. Key recommendations for future Holiday Kitchen programmes will also be outlined.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Holiday Kitchen 2014 aimed to provide *Holiday learning, food and play for families who need it most*. Through doing so, it worked to complement term-time investments in schools, nurseries and children's centres to address child poverty. This chapter explores the extent to which this aim was achieved, most notably in relation to the social value of Holiday Kitchen outcomes. It goes on to make policy and operational recommendations to support future investment in holiday provision for low-income and vulnerable families.

The three core objectives of the Holiday Kitchen were to: improve social inclusion & aspiration; reduce emotional & financial strain and improve family nutrition & wellbeing for vulnerable families. In order to achieve these objectives the Holiday Kitchen programme provided nutritious breakfasts and lunches and a range of activities (based on the NEF 5 Ways to Wellbeing) over eight days of the summer holidays in 11 settings in the West Midlands. Drawing on primary evidence obtained from participating children, parents, staff and volunteers, the findings chapter demonstrated how these key outcomes were met by Holiday Kitchen.

As discussed in the introduction, the Holiday Kitchen programme was further grounded in a 'Theory of Change' logic model which identified specific outcomes for children, adults and venues based on the activities and resources delivered in the settings and the inputs contributed by stakeholders (see appendix A). The following section will give an overview of the extent to which the short, medium and long term projected outcomes were met in relation to each group according to the evaluation findings for the programme.

It should be noted that Holiday Kitchen 2014 was not a universal service, but aimed at low-income and vulnerable families in an inclusive manner that accommodated self-referrals. Chapter two discussed how through geographical targeting, partnership work with Family Support Teams and related referral networks the programme successfully ensured 'families who need it most' benefitted from the programme. This was clearly validated by data obtained from programme registration forms alongside qualitative evaluation material.

Achievement of Holiday Kitchen aims in relation to children, parents and venues

In light of the findings from the evaluation materials it is clear that Holiday Kitchen met the following short term aims for children:

- Reduced opportunity gap;
- Increased physical activity;
- Improved opportunities for family bonding and learning outside the home;
- Improved nutrition.

There is also evidence that the short term aim of 'Increased exposure to reading and language development' was partially met through the vocabulary building aspects of activities, and that the 'Money, fun and games' sessions may have led to an 'Increased awareness of illegal money lending'.

Evidence from the children's voices, parents and staff, indicate that the medium term goals for children of 'Improved well-being' and 'Raised aspirations (through diversity of experience)' were achieved, particularly through the outdoor activities and the local trip. The medium term aim of 'Safeguarding – avoidance of crisis point / increased safety of children' was harder to evaluate, although there was strong evidence that Holiday Kitchen helped to reduce parent stress during the holidays.

In relation to the longer term goals of 'Reduced obesity amongst children', 'Reduced health and education inequalities' and 'Improved educational outcomes', evidence from the evaluation is certainly positive, particularly in terms of children's reported learning about healthy food, exercise and the enriching and stimulating activities in which they engaged.

For the parents there is strong evidence from the evaluations that the short term aims of 'Improved opportunities for family bonding and learning outside the home' and 'Improved social inclusion' were achieved, specifically through the shared meal times and the opportunities for meeting and talking to other families. There is also clear evidence that the short term aims of 'Reduced financial strain' and 'Reduced family indebtedness' were realised through the provision of breakfast, lunch and the free activities for the children. The achievement of longer term goals around reduced debt, illegal money lending and increased financial knowledge and confidence however are harder to ascertain, although there were reports of parents engaging further with financial support organisations they learned about at Holiday Kitchen. From the evaluations it is clear that further opportunities to take part in future Holiday Kitchens would also alleviate financial strain, albeit in the short term again. Given holiday periods, particularly summer and Christmas holiday periods, are particular points in the year low-income families experience acute financial pressure, alleviating financial strain at these points may have longer term benefits.

There was evidence that the medium term goal for parents of 'Improved family knowledge of nutrition/fitness/well-being' was met through the focus on healthy food and activities. Similarly 'Improved parental mental well-being' was frequently alluded to in the adults' evaluations. The long term aim for parents of 'Raised aspirations - widening horizons – health, wellbeing' is certainly in line with the evaluation feedback received from the vast majority of parents who viewed Holiday Kitchen as a positive experience for themselves and their families.

A key overriding aim for families was to 'Reduce food poverty', and there can be little doubt that this was achieved through Holiday Kitchen, at least in the short term. 90 percent of the research sample of parents/carers felt they and their children benefitted from Holiday Kitchen breakfasts; and 85 percent of the same sample reported they and their children benefitted from Holiday Kitchen lunches. Parents/carers also reported an on average 15 percent improvement on their ability to provide healthy meals at home during this time.

In terms of the venues, the short term aim was to 'Progress towards achievement of targets related to health & well-being, and school readiness'. Holiday Kitchen was reported to have fitted well within this remit by the centre managers and staff. Several managers and staff also commented on how Holiday Kitchen engendered an 'Increased reach and uptake of services' which was the medium term goal. In relation to the long term goal of 'Increased profile/reputation of Holiday Kitchen venues', time will tell, but staff and managers undoubtedly understood the value and importance of the programme and were willing, if given the opportunity, to run future Holiday Kitchens. This was reinforced by the fact 95 percent of the parents/carers sample said they would recommend Holiday Kitchen to friends and family.

As previously stated, the longer term outcome of reduced child poverty has not been directly measured by this study. It was, however, included in the 'Theory of Change' model to provide a holistic understanding of the programme scope. It is clear that the outcomes that have been demonstrated may notably contribute toward goals set out in the Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2017⁴⁰ - with a particular focus on improving living standards and educational achievement. (See appendix D for a table detailing the achievement of anticipated outcomes of Holiday Kitchen for children and families)

⁴⁰ HM Government (June 2014). *Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17*. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to section 9 of the Child Poverty Act 2010.

Policy & research recommendations

At present there is a clear policy gap in relation to providing additional support to low-income and vulnerable families during holiday periods when Free School Meals are not available, and the opportunities to access learning, play and additional support substantially retreat.

According to the UK Parliamentary publication Lords Hansard 'The Government has made no specific assessment of the effects on child nutrition in low income households during school holidays' (17 Nov 2014)⁴¹. The All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food has, however, previously stated that 'addressing hunger in school aged children is a collective responsibility of 'children's service providers', communities and families and should be a key part of the government's ongoing commitment to end child poverty by 2020. Local Authorities are required by the Child Poverty Act to assess the need of children in poverty in their areas and produce strategies to tackle the issues identified. This need will include food poverty and hunger.'⁴²

Graham (2014) has recently called for the UK government to 'address the social policy gap in this area by supporting child meal provision and enrichment programmes targeted to areas with high percentages of 40% or more free school meals' (p4)⁴³. This call has been bolstered by the Feeding Britain (2014) recommendation that 'the Government begins costing the extension of free school meal provision during school holidays'(p50).

It has been demonstrated here that the multiple risks that holiday periods pose for low-income and vulnerable families in relation to debt, household stress and poor wellbeing, social isolation and growing opportunity gaps may be addressed through the provision of *holiday learning, food and play for families that need it most*. This may arguably be a cost effective child poverty intervention that maximises existing investments and infrastructure if blended financial and resource packages are developed with multiple stakeholders. On this, basis Holiday Kitchen's potential to contribute toward goals set out in the Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2017⁴⁴ - with a particular focus on improving living standards and educational achievement - needs further consideration from both a policy and research perspective.

More specifically, further research is required to ascertain the scale, cost and causal relationships between multiple holiday risk factors, and how using a systems approach, holiday investment in supported learning, food and play may lead to longer term cross-departmental savings in relation to child poverty. Coupled with the delivery of more extensive Holiday Kitchen type interventions, there is a clear need for a longitudinal operational and social impact study which can inform further policy work in this area.

Operational conclusions

It was agreed at the Holiday Kitchen Round Table in April 2014 that the most effective use of resources within the current climate would be for Holiday Kitchen activities to be delivered within existing settings that are equipped and require limited 'top up' resources. This approach was adopted for operations in 2014. Using this approach we delivered Holiday Kitchen through existing infrastructure and staff resources. In so doing much was learnt about the need for

⁴¹ Lords Hansard, 17 Nov 2014.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201415/ldhansrd/text/141117w0001.htm>

⁴² All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food (March 2014). *Filling the holiday hunger gap*. Secretariat Association for Public Service Excellence, Manchester.

⁴³ Graham, L. (2014) *170 Days: Innovation in Community Projects that address School Holiday Child Hunger*. Winston Churchill Memorial Trust & The Rank Foundation, UK.

⁴⁴ HM Government (June 2014). *Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17*. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to section 9 of the Child Poverty Act 2010.

effective central co-ordination of activities, additional resource requirements, training needs, quality standards, monitoring and evaluation, sponsorship and communication with media, commissioners and policy makers.

At the same time, the importance of local ownership was reiterated. This needs to be based on a clear expression of interest, and understanding of and commitment to meeting local need. It is clear that people delivering frontline services are best placed to tailor a programme to meet the cultural, social, diet, health, educational and linguistic needs and priorities of local participants. Local providers are also best placed to liaise with their community networks and existing referral partners to ensure a programme appropriately reaches ‘families who need it most’. This conclusion mirrors Graham’s (2014) findings for summer feeding programmes in USA:

Programmes that drew upon and built upon existing community partnerships were able to achieve successful outcomes and higher levels of community engagement particularly where a common vision was shared by all partners (Graham,2014: 4)⁴⁵.

From both our work and international learning, it is evident that successful local delivery is more likely when supported by a local strategic sponsor who can manage local strategic relationships and champion the programme to related services or settings, referral partners, potential sponsors and the media. Through this relationship, programmes are also more likely to benefit from having a relationship with adjunct services – such as with the money and debt advice services.

Informed by this learning, the below Delivery Framework has been developed as a recommended basis for effective future programme delivery.

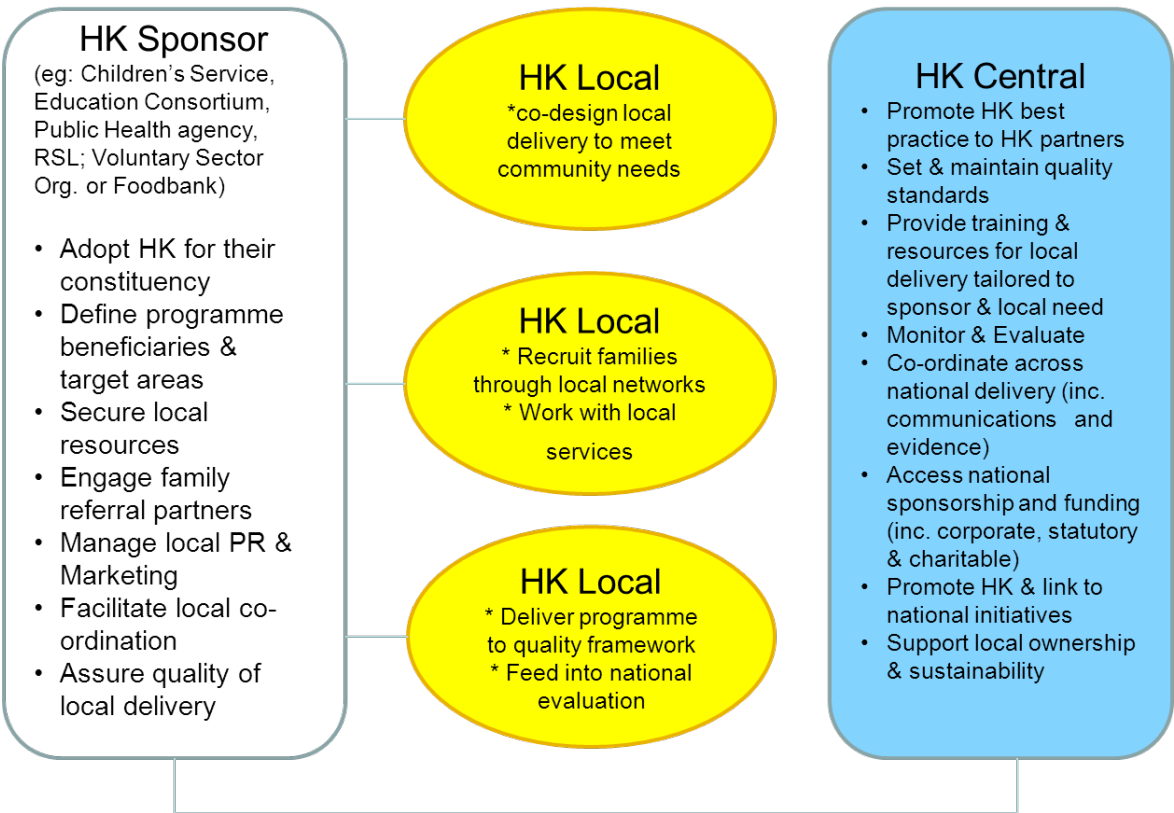


Figure 2 Recommended delivery framework for future Holiday Kitchens

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Funding

This year Holiday Kitchen benefited from a mixture of funding streams drawn from statutory, charitable, corporate and social housing sources. In terms of funding Holiday Kitchen activities in the future, it is clear that this will need to draw upon a similarly diverse range of funds. Where possible, the active involvement of statutory agencies to support this process would be welcomed and would help ensure that existing statutory investments and infrastructure is effectively maximise.

Next steps

Over the last two years Holiday Kitchen has been positively received by Public Health Services, children's services, child poverty practitioners, community activists, diverse media channels⁴⁶ and local families. The programme has been presented to the Deputy Prime Minister, national directors of Public Health England, the West Minister Social Policy Forum and political leaders across Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull. Building on the learning developed during this period, a core partnership team for Holiday Kitchen are now developing the infrastructure to scale up and replicate delivery in deprived neighbourhoods across multiple locations in England.

Through the development of different delivery support packages and positive partnering which maximises local resources and infrastructure, we aim to provide a nationally recognised model of holiday learning, food and play. This will directly address support gaps during the 25 percent of the year schools and related services are least accessible to low-income and vulnerable families. In so doing we will seek diverse funding to support delivery, the further development of social impact metrics and learning exchanges with European partners engaged in similar activities.

⁴⁶ The programme has received prime time regional and national news coverage on BBC, ITV, 5 Live, Free Radio, Russia Today, Birmingham Post and The Guardian.

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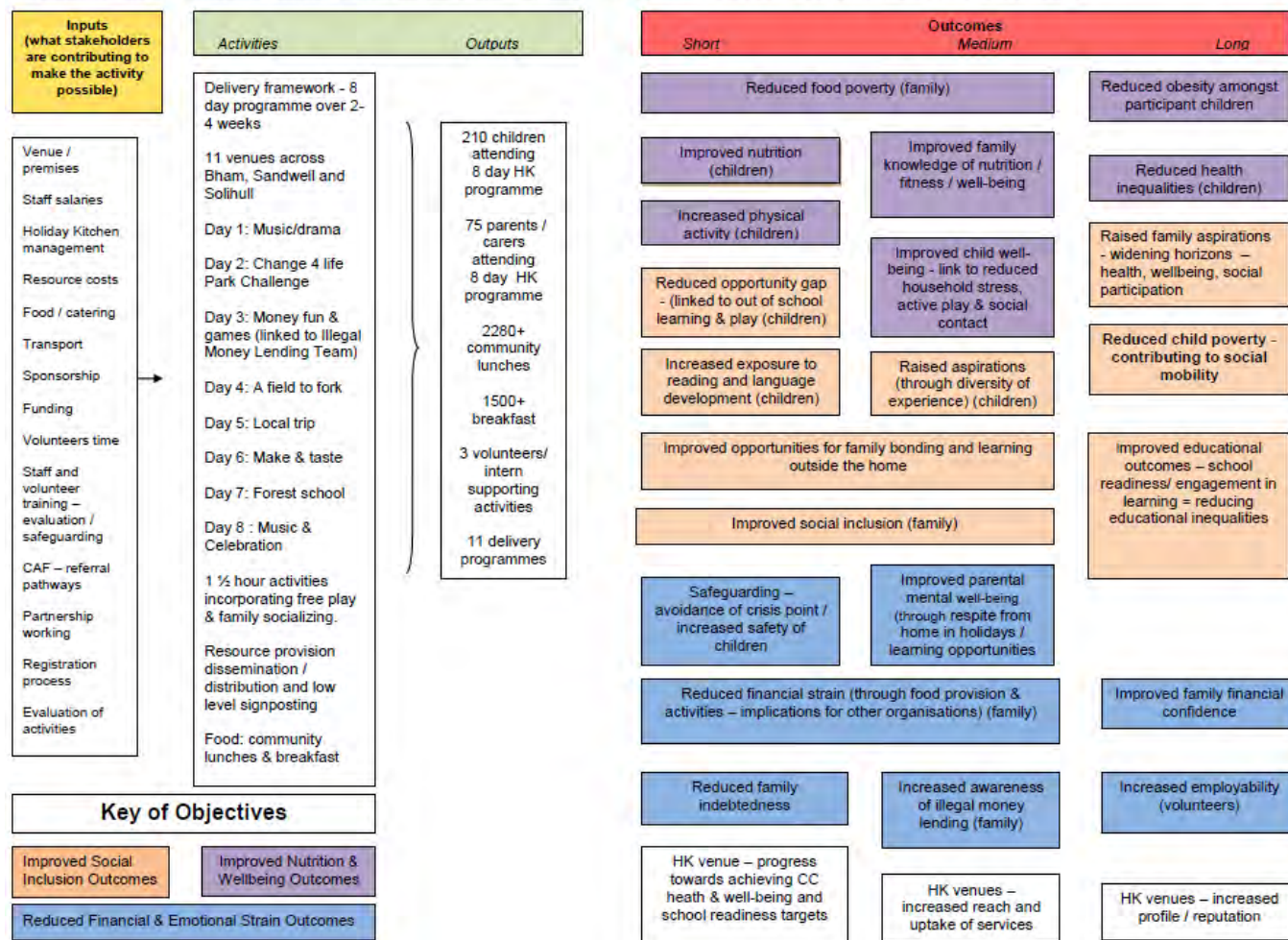
Appendix A

The Holiday Kitchen 'Theory of Change' model 2014

Programme: Holiday Kitchen Theory of Change 2014

Rationale: Families on low incomes who are entitled to free school meals during term time often experience high levels of stress during school holidays (25% of the year) when demands are placed on them to provide children with additional meals and activities. Holiday Kitchen operates through existing local organisations and partnerships which work directly with the children, families and young people using infrastructure.

Service Aim: Holiday learning, food and play for families who need it most. Through family learning we aim to co-deliver age appropriate food and enrichment activities that improve children's wellbeing, educational opportunities and life-chances while addressing wider community health inequality and family tensions in a way that complements the Child Poverty Strategy.



SROI case study – Green Acres Children’s Centre, Oldbury

The Holiday Kitchen evaluation framework is based on a Theory of Change and draws on the principles of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology. This case study considers the evaluation data gathered from the Green Acres Children’s Centre in Sandwell and explores how, drawing on this information, a detailed SROI analysis could be carried out to fully understand and communicate the impact of the programme for an individual delivery venue. This case study provides an insight into the evaluation material gathered at Green Acres and presents the key outcomes which seem to have been experienced. It provides an indication of the type and level of information which would be required in order to carry out a full and credible SROI analysis.

Green Acres Children's Centre is part of the Oldbury Cluster of Children's Centres in Sandwell and is managed by Family Action on behalf of Health for Living. The sections below work through the different columns of the Theory of Change (Appendix A) which tells the story of why activities take place and how the investment affects key stakeholders.



Inputs

Inputs have not been costed for this case study but they would include: Sandwell Council funding (£240) for food provision, salary costs (delivery staff and Holiday Kitchen management), volunteer time (if applicable), costs of activities, resources and premises. Inputs would need to be calculated based on discussions with the centre manager to ensure clarity around the allocation of resources at service level and with the Holiday Kitchen management team to accurately reflect their involvement in the programme.

Activities

An eight day activity programme was delivered over two weeks (Monday - Thursday in the weeks commencing the 4th and 11th August). Food was provided (lunches and breakfast), all activities incorporated free play and family socializing with resources and low level signposting were offered throughout.

Outputs

Eleven parents/carers and 23 children attended the Green Acres Holiday Kitchen although not all attended every day. Two parents/carers and five children registered to attend but cancelled (one family before attending and one family after attending the first day).

Outcomes

Outcomes are the results or effects of the activities of the service. A mix of both qualitative and quantitative data on outcomes was gathered through children's and parent/carers daily evaluation activities, registration questionnaires, end of programme questionnaires, delivery staff focus groups and centre manager telephone interviews.

A Theory of Change was produced prior to the delivery of the 2014 programme identifying multiple short, medium and long term outcomes across the three key objective areas (improved social inclusion, improved nutrition and wellbeing and reduced financial and emotional strain) which it was anticipated would be achieved. Not all of the outcomes will have been achieved across all venues.

The Green Acres parents/carers who provided feedback identified three key outcomes of the programme:

- It has helped me financially - 3 (60 percent)
- It has reduced me feeling stressed about what to do with the children this summer - 3 (60 percent)
- It has helped my family have fun together - 5 (100 percent)

No unintended outcomes were identified by parents/carers or staff. The above outcomes are very much in line with the reduced financial strain and improved opportunities for family bonding and learning outside the home included in the original Theory of Change. These outcomes were confirmed by comments from parents/carers such as:

'The Holiday Kitchen serving breakfast and lunch has been a big help. I have saved money over the last two weeks by being here.'

'I feel more positive that the kids have been able to get out of the house everyday and have had activities to do daily.'

'They have (the) opportunity to have contact with other kids so they calm down in home. They start to help in home.'

'When they are home and they are playing I tend to be doing housework so don't really play/get involved but being at the centre I have been able to enjoy and join their play with them.'

Feedback from parents/carers also suggested that improved social inclusion was a relevant outcome:

"Only involved myself with certain people but now we get out and meet new people"

"My mum is not going out so that was for her very good experience"

"Coming out and meeting other parents and children"(in response to be asked what was the most useful part of the programme).

In relation to food provision, 40 percent of parents who completed the end of programme questionnaire felt that the food was 'more healthy than we usually eat' and 60 percent opted for 'about the same as we usually eat', suggesting that for some parents/carers the improved family knowledge of nutrition outcome will have been achieved. One parent commented that they:

'just ate different foods, now we cook a lot more and eat healthier'

For children the verification of outcomes was through a combination of the feedback from parent/carers and staff as well as anecdotal conversations with children. Evidence of the achievement of outcomes was gathered through the daily evaluation activities and backed up by staff and parent/carer reporting.



The key short term outcomes seem to have been improved nutrition and increased physical activity. There is also evidence of progress against the increased exposure to reading and language development outcome and ultimately it is hoped that this programme would have the longer term impact of improved educational outcomes. Effective measurement of this would require ongoing evaluation with participants beyond the duration of the programme, which has not been possible within the scope of this evaluation programme.

In relation to the food provision and the food related activities comments included:

'I really liked that breakfast this morning'

'I liked eating my healthy pizza'

'I liked making our own pizzas and our fresh fruit yoghurt dessert'

Other comments which supported the physical activity outcome were:

'The kids loved the mini fitness equipment, kept them entertained for the whole time'

'Good for children to play outside as (our) garden isn't very child friendly.'

'Enjoyed exercising and playing with cars.'

'I like sport today.'



Measuring outcomes

For each outcome appropriate indicators were identified and bespoke evaluation materials were developed. The table below shows the key outcomes as reported by participants at the Green Acres Holiday Kitchen programme and the rationale behind how to measure change and understand the extent of change that took place. Other outcomes may also have been experienced, but the list tabled on the next page includes the outcomes which were most strongly reported by the stakeholders who were engaged through the evaluation programme.

Magnitude of change

Evidence of the achievement of outcomes relates not only to the numbers of parents/carers and children who experienced change, but also to the magnitude of change i.e. how much change and the extent to which the Holiday Kitchen has made a difference to stakeholders in relation to the above outcomes.

Although on a small scale (four detailed end of programme evaluation questionnaires were received from parents/carers), an indication of the distance travelled in relation to some of the outcomes has been captured. This would not be a sufficient sample on which to base a full SROI analysis but it does provide an initial indication of the level of change reported by some of the families.

Improved family knowledge of nutrition - 50 percent of respondents felt that by attending Holiday Kitchen they were able to feed their family more healthy meals at home, with an average of a 15 percent improvement.

Reduced financial strain - 75 percent of respondents felt that attending the Holiday Kitchen had helped them in terms of their financial situation and how stressed they felt about money before and after the programme. The average reduction in stress levels was 32 percent.

Improved social inclusion - 75 percent of respondents felt that through the Holiday Kitchen they had more positive social contact with people outside their family, with an average increase of 40 percent.

Stakeholder	Outcome	Indicator	Rationale
Parents/carers	Reduced financial strain	Number of families reporting reduced financial strain / stress through Holiday Kitchen provision	Guided parent questionnaire (including specific distance travelled question)
Parents/carers	Increased opportunities for family bonding outside the home	More opportunities to access family learning / play activities	Looking to understand if through Holiday Kitchen families are accessing more learning and play activities - what might they otherwise be doing? Findings from daily children evaluation and interviews with parents/carers and staff
Parents/carers	Improved social inclusion	Number of families reporting improved social inclusion	Understanding whether families using Holiday Kitchen feel socially isolated and to what extent this has changed as a result of the programme. Findings from end of programme parent/carer questionnaire
Parents/carers	Improved family knowledge of nutrition / fitness / wellbeing	Reporting of families of improved knowledge and life style changes they would like to make in the future i.e. fitness, nutrition	Guided parent questionnaire - understanding to what extent knowledge has increased and whether parents anticipate future lifestyle changes?
Children	Improved nutrition	Increased numbers of children show preference for and are offered healthier diet	Evaluation day -Make & Taste and Field to Fork days. Also through interviews with staff and families, and evidence that children developed more regular eating patterns, especially with regards to eating breakfast, along with trying and developing a taste for healthier foods.
Children	Increased physical activity	More opportunities to be physically active	Understand what children usually do and whether this is more / less through Holiday Kitchen. Change for life - get active day, daily family evaluation, Findings from interviews with staff and parents/carers feedback
Children	Increased exposure to reading and language development (School readiness)	Number of children reporting learning / new words through activities	Daily feedback through thought and speech bubbles, reporting by staff and parents/carers



Quantitative data on the children's outcomes was more difficult to gather. The thought and speech bubbles in particular provided an insight into whether the increased exposure to reading and language development outcome (and to some extent the reduced opportunity gap and raised aspirations outcomes on the Theory of Change) were being achieved by children and this information was supported by feedback from delivery staff. Data capturing the child's voice was gathered in relation to all key outcome areas and each activity. The comments below indicate what children said about some of the activities and their new experiences:

'I can't believe I have been in a forest.'

'We liked gardening and planting seeds and trying the food.'

'We need to wash our hands now before we taste the food.'

'I have learnt that frogs drink through their skin.'

'I haven't played with tyres before.'

One little boy said he wants to be a baker when he grows up.

For each outcome the incidence should be calculated (the number of stakeholders who experienced the outcome) and wherever the possible the extent of change also should be measured. This is more straightforward where distance travelled indicators as opposed to binary indicators have been used.

Financial proxies

Assigning values to outcomes is a challenging part of the SROI analysis as there is much debate around whether certain types of 'intangible' benefits can and should be assigned monetary values. However, these benefits are certainly of value to society. Transparency and a conservative approach to assigning values are vital.

For the purposes of this case study, below is an indication of the types of financial proxies which could be used for a selection of Holiday Kitchen outcomes. The values below have been

used in other recent SROI analyses of children's centre services⁴⁷⁴⁸⁴⁹. For researching proxies, the Global Value Exchange database <http://www.globalvaluexchange.org/> is a good starting point. It is an open source database of values, outcomes, indicators and stakeholders which provides a platform for information to be shared enabling greater consistency and transparency in measuring social and environmental values. Stakeholders should also be involved in the selection and verification of financial proxies in order to avoid over-claiming.

Stakeholder	Outcome	Indicator	Financial proxy	Explanation	Source of proxy
Parent/carer	Improved social inclusion	Number of families reporting improved social inclusion	£520	Average expenditure on social activities per family per annum	Expenditure and Food Survey taken from WikiVOIS database
Children	Improved nutrition	Increased numbers of children show preference for and are offered healthier diet	£348	Average spend by families on fresh fruit and vegetables per year	Family Spending Survey www.ons.gov.uk/ons
Children	Increased physical activity	More opportunities to be physically active	£144	Estimate of the value of one additional active person per annum	PWC (2010)

Once financial proxies have been identified, a proportion of each proxy should be used (to account for the magnitude of change) along with the outcome incidence (the number of stakeholders reporting that outcome) in order to calculate the value of each outcome.

For example, for the improved social inclusion outcome - if the 75 percent of parents/carers reporting improved social inclusion is scaled up across the programme, this would produce an outcome incidence of 8.25 individuals. The average improvement reported was 40 percent and this needs to be reflected in the proxy level, reducing it to 40 percent of £520 which is £208. The calculation for the value of the improved social inclusion would therefore be $8.25 \times £208 = £1716$.

Similar calculations would need to be done for each outcome for all key stakeholders to produce a total figure for the value of outcomes, or all 'benefits'. The next stage would be to factor in the duration of the outcomes and the attribution (how much of the outcome can be attributed to the Holiday Kitchen programme), deadweight and displacement. The drop off, or extent to which outcomes are sustained over time, is also considered. Once these deductions and calculations are factored in, a final figure for the value of the outcomes is produced. This is

⁴⁷ The Value of Early Intervention - Identifying the social return of Barnardo's Children's Centre services, July 2012, ICF GHK in partnership with Barnardo's

⁴⁸ PACT Witney Children's Centre SROI Evaluation, 2011, Baker Tilly, Cass Business School and PACT

⁴⁹ The economic and social return of Action for Children's Wheatley Children's Centre, Doncaster, September 2009, nef and Action for Children.

then divided by the input figure to generate the final SROI ratio. The ratio is expressed as the value of the activity in relation to every £1 of input, the monetary value for each pound that is invested. It is important that ratios are not viewed in isolation. Rather, they should be considered alongside other evaluative evidence and the narrative or 'story' of the intervention or activity.

Conclusion

This case study provides an indication of how an SROI analysis could be carried out focusing on individual Holiday Kitchen delivery venues.

The evaluation material gathered strongly suggests the achievement of multiple outcomes for different stakeholder groups. Here we have focused on outcomes for participating parents/carers and children. There are also potential outcomes for delivery venues themselves, staff and the state which could contribute to the overall impact of the programme.



Naseby Youth Centre Case Study

Naseby Youth Centre is a dynamic council run hub of activity for 11-16 year olds in the super-diverse neighbourhood of Washwood Heath in East Birmingham. Based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, this neighbourhood is in the top 2 percent most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.

Naseby is funded to take police referrals and do targeted outreach work during the summer holiday, but is also open to all neighbourhood young people. This summer 35 young people on average accessed the centre each day. Naseby ran an active and diverse programme of daily youth activities through this period which young people could access for free following a £5 registration. Following the successful delivery of Holiday Kitchen in summer 2013 Naseby's manager agreed they would once again be a delivery partner this year.



With a limited project budget for Holiday Kitchen activities, secured by the England Illegal Money Lending Team from Birmingham Proceeds of Crime funding, Naseby's centre manager proposed adapting and innovating the previous packed lunch format. To maximise the budget and opportunity to upskill youth people it was decided that Naseby would use the project budget to buy fresh healthy ingredients direct from discount supermarkets and run 8 Make-and-Taste lunch sessions over 4 weeks alongside Kellogg's sponsored breakfasts. The idea was that this would enable young people to learn how to make their own lunches with budget ingredients and develop transferable cooking skills in the process.

The outcome of this decision was: lunch provision became a youth club activity in its own right which took young people on nutrition and catering journeys. To start with young people were surprised and slightly taken aback by 'self-catering'. With a stock of basic ingredients, including fruit and vegetables, young people were given the freedom to choose, experiment and adapt the content of their meals. In the process they learnt to make a diverse range of lunches from smoothies, to pizzas, lasagne, fruit kebabs, and jacket potatoes.

Over time, Naseby staff realised it cost significantly less to cater for these activities than they had expected. At the same time, the value this format of Holiday Kitchen held for both young people as beneficiaries, and the centre in terms of its attractiveness to service users became increasingly evident.

'Young people stayed for longer because they were getting fed, so staff could do more targeted work and get to know them better.' (Naseby Centre Manager)



'Getting opportunity to sit down and eat with their friends and staff is so valuable - the sociable aspects of eating together, the sense of achievement when one person cooked something that was appreciated by others.' (Naseby staff)

Part-way through August, the centre thus took the decision to make food available for service users in the kitchen on a daily basis.

'We stopped having set days, times to make things in the kitchen. We put all the ingredients out and the young people could then choose themselves what they wanted to eat and create, and when. Perhaps they ate less than if we had served them at set times, but they all knew the food was there if they got hungry. If someone came out with something nice, then they all wanted to go and have a try or get something for themselves.' (Naseby staff)

'I found it useful that we could go in at any time to go into the kitchen and go and make food. I made me feel as if never had to worry about bringing money and eating takeaway.' (young person)

'It helped me realise eating regularly is important.' (young person)

Naseby is fortunate in that it has a large catering kitchen which for most of the time remains under-utilised. Holiday Kitchen delivery enabled them to have an 'open kitchen' arrangement. To manage this, however, staff insisted young people learn to take responsibility for other elements of managing the catering, including the washing up.

'They didn't like washing and tidying up, but they need to learn about responsibility. It began less favourably but eventually they got really into it.' (Naseby staff)

For some boys, this was their first time to go into a kitchen setting. This had always been the domain of their mothers, grandmothers and sisters. Challenging this cultural stereotype in a safe environment over the summer gave some of these boys the confidence to go home and make things they had learnt during their sessions at Naseby.

'The food they provide in the kitchen is healthy. Smoothies I made at home and it was for my family and they really liked it.' (young person)

'My mum was happy when I made a pizza at home.' (young person)

For the centre manager this was a significant journey for these individuals towards taking responsibility for their own food and health.

'The boys made beautiful kebab and experimented with smoothies. Staff were the tasters. These experiments weren't without their disasters – some things did not work, and we learnt you can burn potatoes in the microwave!' (Naseby staff)

In conclusion

'Having core ingredients mean that we weren't telling them what to eat. They are able to make choices. It's great to give them the food but we liked this method because they were able to make a variety. Only did packed lunch the days we went out. Their movement of knowing there was food available was a massive journey. Sandwiches are take-aways, they don't change the mind-set. What we did helped young people grow. (Naseby Centre Manager)

'Having activities and food provided has helped my family budget. It's a long six weeks holiday and it's good to have activities and food for my son. I know he is safe and eating well. Excellent project.' (parent).



Achievement of Anticipated Outcomes for Children & Families: Reflections on Holiday Kitchen's Theory of Change

<i>Objective and Outcome</i>	<i>Short, Medium or Long term</i>	<i>Achievement of outcome</i>
Objective: Improved Nutrition & Wellbeing Outcomes		
Reduced food poverty	Short/medium	Yes , particularly short-term. Average 15% increase reported in being able to provide healthy family meals at home during the HK programme
Improved nutrition	Short	Yes . 90% of sample parents/carers felt they & their children benefitted from HK breakfasts; & 85 % of sample parents/carers felt they & their children benefitted from HK lunches
Increased physical activity	Short	Yes .
Improved family knowledge of nutrition / fitness / well-being	Medium	Partial .
Improved child well-being - link to reduced household stress, active play & social contact	Medium	Partial . 81 % of sample parents/carers felt more confident to do outdoor activities with their children
Reduced obesity amongst participant children	Long	Expected to contribute but beyond programme scope to assess
Reduced health inequalities	Long	Expected to contribute but beyond programme scope to assess
Improved Social Inclusion Outcomes		
Reduced opportunity gap (linked to out of school learning and play)	Short	Yes . 94 % of sample families reported more activities out of the home than normal during holiday periods
Increased exposure to reading and language development	Short	Yes, partial
Improved opportunities for family bonding and learning outside the home	Short/medium	Yes . 90% parents/carers felt more positive about doing family activities during the summer holidays
Improved social inclusion	Short/medium	Yes, partial . Average increase of 23% in positive social contact reported (guided questionnaires)
Raised aspirations (through diversity of experience) - children	Medium	Yes, partial
Raised family aspirations - widening horizons – health, wellbeing, social participation	Long	Yes, partial .
Improved educational outcomes reducing educational inequalities	Long	Expected to contribute but beyond programme scope to assess
Reduce child poverty - contributing to social mobility	Long	Expected to contribute but beyond programme scope to assess
Reduced Financial & Emotional Strain Outcomes		
Safeguarding – avoidance of crisis point / increased safety of children	Short	Partial , beyond scope of this programme to definitively assess
Reduced family indebtedness	Short	Partial , beyond scope of this programme to definitively assess
Reduced financial strain	Short/medium	Yes . Average 15% reduction of financial stress reported (guided questionnaires).
Improved parental mental well-being	Medium	Yes, partial
Increased awareness of illegal money lending	Medium	Partial
Improved family financial confidence	Long	Expected to contribute but beyond programme scope to assess
Increased employability (volunteers)	Long	Yes



Holiday **learning, food and play** for families who need it most

Holiday Kitchen Evaluation Team

The Accord Group consists of a group of dynamic, innovative and ambitious housing, health and social care organisations which provide services across the Midlands to over 80,000 people. We are a values-led social business motivated by adding social and economic value to the communities where we work.

Holiday Kitchen has been pioneered by **Ashrammoseley Housing Association**, which is part of the Accord Group. As an agency committed to social inclusion and social impact we co-develop collaborative partnerships and creative projects with a diversity of local residents to meet community needs. This work notably focuses on addressing poverty and social exclusion through excellent service and social innovation. Holiday Kitchen forms part of our work to address child poverty. For more information, please visit accordgroup.org.uk

Planning for Real is an expert community engagement unit which develops specialist visual, participative and inclusive materials for a wide range of audiences. We have an in-house accredited Social Return on Investment (SROI) practitioner who supported this evaluation programme. For more information, please visit planningforreal.org.uk

Family Action is a charity committed to building stronger families by delivering innovative and effective services and support that reaches out to many of the UK's most vulnerable people. We seek to empower people and communities through practical, financial and emotional help. We provide effective and innovative services that have a positive impact on people's lives. Our work is wide-ranging and includes help for parents-to-be, the provision of many Children's Centres in local communities, intensive family support, emotional health and well-being services, counselling, mediation and therapies, support in schools and financial grants programmes. For more information, please visit family-action.org.uk

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