

## Families, Food and Lots of Fun!

Family Action's Holiday Hub project supports families in the school holidays by providing meals and opportunities for family bonding through eating, learning and playing together. As well as taking part in a wide range of fun activities and enjoying quality time together, families learn about nutrition and keeping fit and healthy. Isabel, one of the charity's food services volunteers, interviewed our Holiday Hub lead in Stockton about her role and the impact Holiday Hub sessions are having on local families.

"I am a mum of three and have been working at Family Action since November 2020. My job title is Volunteer & Community Engagement practitioner, and my main tasks include supporting and recruiting volunteers within our Stockton services. I also organise a range of food initiatives, such as our popular grab and go breakfasts, hot lunches and takeaway teas, and our Holiday Hub project. Holiday Hub usually runs during summer holidays, over four weeks, out of four Family Hubs in Stockton. Last summer we supported in total 40 families, roughly 10 families per hub.

We offer a wide range of family-friendly activities during sessions at the Family Hubs, often themed, like the Halloween-Special Holiday Hub sessions we ran this autumn. There were activities such as bingo, Scattergories, quizzes, free tombola, giant pumpkin pick, workouts (with each letter of the word "Halloween" standing for a different workout exercise), engagement games (where the participants express expectations and "rules" for the day) and a story-telling twist on "tell us about yourself". Lunches were provided - and families enjoyed making the dessert themselves, with recipes and all the ingredients provided by the staff. As well as the food and other activities, families also enjoy trips out – for every three days at a Family Hub we try to include a trip out in the local area.

We regularly ask for feedback from families on Holiday Hub and we always receive a lot of positive comments. Many families say they enjoy meeting others on a regular basis, getting to try new things - and the children in particular enjoy the different games and crafting activities we offer. They tell us they find the sessions very educational. For example, children get to try new foods and do activities that they maybe don't do at home (e.g. painting). Parents also find sessions educational as they able to learn new recipes in a group and then get to make the recipes at home again afterwards. A lot of parents also find that their wellbeing improves through activities at the Holiday Hub sessions, for example, through doing colouring-in activities for adults.

I have learnt a lot from fellow staff and volunteers, for example, the engagement game I mentioned was a suggestion from another volunteer. Some of the volunteers and staff have a background in teaching and I have learnt a lot from them, for instance, about suitable activities. I have also learnt a great deal from the families themselves, for example, about different cultural beliefs, different foods and diets. And I have learnt to be creative and to think on my feet at sessions!

I am already busy planning the next sessions – which will have an "all around the world" theme, with different foods from all around the world. We will also be making new and different crafts from all over the world, such as Chinese lanterns. Alongside new foods and crafts, the team is planning a trip to Kirkleatham Museum, which has nice gardens and offers more crafting activities. I am sure that there will be great food and lots of fun for families!"

