

HOLIDAY HUNGER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Overview of an
Evaluation of Children
in Northern Ireland's
Summer Holiday
Provision during 2019.

Children
in Northern
Ireland 



CONTENTS

04	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
07	BRIEF OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS
18	CONCLUSION



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Children in Northern Ireland along with their community partners have been delivering holiday provision since 2016, after an initial pilot project. This evaluation gives a snapshot of four holiday provision clubs during the summer of 2019.

During the school summer holidays, children from low-income families are thought to be at risk from hunger, boredom and social isolation. Moreover, it is considered that the time spent out of school during the summer holidays may contribute to the gap in educational attainment between children from different socio-economic backgrounds. Organisations across the UK have responded to the challenges faced by disadvantaged children and young people during the summer holidays by developing and delivering holiday club provision. Clubs predominantly seek to provide children, young people and families with access to food and enriching activities.

However, research has shown that the benefits of holiday club attendance extend beyond these primary objectives: children and young people are able to socialise and meet and make new friends, engage in learning new skills and increase their engagement in physical activities.

Northumbria University was tasked with conducting an evaluation of the four holiday provision clubs during the summer of 2019. The overarching purpose of the evaluation was to:

1

explore the process that lead to the development of the programme, including the benefits of attendance

2

evaluate whether clubs met their aims and operational characteristics

3

measure the effect of the holiday club attendance on children's nutritional intake.

The findings of this evaluation suggest that strong strategic direction was given to clubs and holiday club leaders who had responsibility for delivering holiday provision. Clubs worked in partnership with a range of organisations to deliver their aims which focused on children’s health and well-being and providing children and young people with opportunities to take part in range of activities to enhance life skills and gain new skills and knowledge. Individual clubs broadly met their stated aims. In particular, children and young children who attended the clubs were provided with at least one meal each day, with two clubs also providing breakfast and one club providing supper. Perhaps one of the most significant finding is that holiday club provision has a positive influence on children’s nutritional intake, demonstrated through children eating fewer unhealthy foods on the days they attended club compared to non-attending days.



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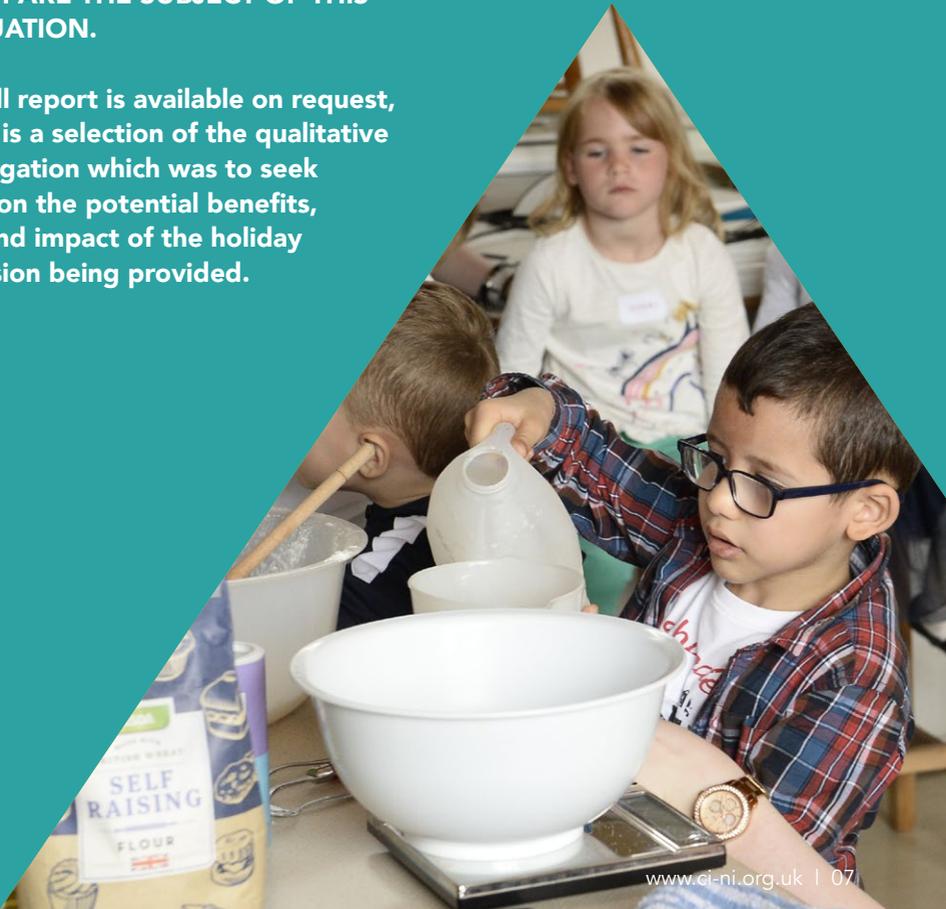


THE FULL EVALUATION IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

FOLLOWING THE PILOT PROJECT IN 2016, CHILDREN IN NORTHERN IRELAND HAS SUPPORTED FOUR HOLIDAY PROJECTS WHICH ARE THE SUBJECT OF THIS EVALUATION.

The full report is available on request, below is a selection of the qualitative investigation which was to seek views on the potential benefits, uses and impact of the holiday provision being provided.



**SENIOR
STAKEHOLDERS
HIGHLIGHTED
THE FOLLOWING
BENEFITS OF
THE HOLIDAY
PROVISION:**



**Tailored to meet the need of
children, young people and
families within each area:**

"...every scheme is not going to be exactly the same because one size does not fit all, these are individual communities, there are differences within communities, people are at different levels, they are at different stages of community development ... so there will be different things going on."





Ability to use lived experience to influence Government policy relating to the eradication of child poverty, and that the combination of working at a strategic, policy level but also getting involved in delivery of holiday provision would have greater impact and improve policy:

“In terms of policy, we’re trying to influence and we are the umbrella organization for the children’s sector, that gives us the platform and the access to politicians, at central level but also at local council level, we feel that connection is really important, because if we are not involved or we’re not involved in the delivery, then we don’t know what the emerging needs are and then we don’t know how we can influence policy. For me the big prize is that we have government policy which is relevant and makes impact.”



Ability for government departments and agencies to pool budgets to address a real need through the partnership approach of the CiNI delivery model:

“You know, what is happening over here is because we don’t have a functioning government, everything’s very haphazard and you know they’re throwing bits of money here and bits of money there and it’s piecemeal, they’ve no strategic vision of what it is that they want to do.”



Support vulnerable families who are in greatest need in a non-stigmatising way:

“There are some families who get intervention from the likes of St Vincent de Paul and you have to be very sensitive to things like that because the people are proud and they don’t necessarily want charity or to be seen to be getting charity, but it’s not parcelled as charity, it’s packaged in a certain way that it’s not seen as people being dependent on charitable handouts, because you know people have their pride as well.”



Make a positive impact on communities:

Being at holiday club, younger children would not see older children causing trouble, and given the sectarian history of a particular area, many see the club as a bridge between divided communities:

“it’s basically, we’re, in the area that we are in, it’s between two estates and sometimes there can be violence against each other, one is (name of place) we are in and the other one is (name of place), very much a Republican area, there’ll probably be a lot of issues with behaviour in this area, so we’re based here obviously to try and take the young people out of the estates because if we don’t, going they’re going to be out there firing stones at cars, setting things alight which has happened already, so our club then hopefully provides for those two areas.”





Addresses the issue of learning loss:

“During the summer holidays, school is no longer a factor in children’s lives and their spheres of influence are their home environment and the neighbourhood and communities where they live. As a result, it is considered that all children are at risk of losing skills and knowledge across the summer. This is often called learning loss, and research has shown that those from disadvantaged areas are more susceptible to learning loss. Which is why we made the conscious effort to include learning as part of the holiday provision.”



Opportunity to enhance personal development through accredited qualifications:

“They’ve all said it, how the CiNI programme has made a difference and how it’s promoting the ideas of healthy eating that maybe they haven’t thought about a lot beforehand, and pushing accreditation with young people, I don’t think a lot of them would have done that before, they wouldn’t have had the OCN leadership. And pushing it also inspires young children when they see others learning. They also get the little first aid programmes, which gets them interested in learning and it makes them proud that they’ve got little certificates and things.”



CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE NOTED THE FOLLOWING BENEFITS OF HOLIDAY PROVISION:



Some children told the researchers that they were aware that holiday clubs were needed because children, particularly those who normally received free school meals were going hungry in the holidays and to give children something to do, as one young person explained:

"well, the whole point of (name of club) is to give kids that get free school dinners, well mostly it's to make sure that they eat during the holiday period but also to give them something they can do and learn how they can take better care of themselves and stay healthy and all that and also like it just gives them something to do over the holidays."



Children told researchers that they enjoyed attending holiday club because they could take part in a range of activities and do things that they wouldn't be able to do or allowed to take part in at home:

"Well we get to put in all the ingredients and stuff like the adults do, I love baking."



Many children reported that they were gaining new skills. On learning CPR one young person said:

"Yeah so then we know better in the future if anything happens then we know what to do."



Children also reported how taking part in holiday club drama classes had helped to make new friends:

"Yeah because I used to be really scared to make new friends and this club really help you make new friends and now, I'm more confident to make new friends."

"We come here and we meet new people, like this is the first time we met (name)."



Children reported that holiday club was a safe place to be where they would not be bullied. For instance, one child said:

"for me I was like I wasn't confident enough to leave the house sometimes, I was always, I would always get bullied and be called speckky and all so I would and here no one is like that, they're all really nice people."

PARENTS AND CARERS TALKED ABOUT THE FOLLOWING BENEFITS OF HOLIDAY PROVISION:



The expense of summer holidays and how the holiday club saved parents money:

"...summer is very expensive. if you have more than one child that's the problem, they've got a wee variety of activities that they can do, so and the trips as, well whereas it would be expensive as a family to go and do some of these things, at least you know that they are getting out and getting the benefit of it."



Ability for parents to have some respite during the long summer holidays:

"well I like to go and get the food shop because if you bring them in to (name of shop) with you it's a nightmare, they're always wanting toys and then there is melt down if you don't so it gives you that wee bit of quiet you know a wee bit of fresh air."



Providing an opportunity for their children to meet others and make friends:

"definitely friendship, emotional support, and mental and physical support, em, and just generally social activities, you know more sociable and more coming out of herself, she wouldn't really have spoken much whereas now she's grand, she's really come out of herself."



Reduce parents' anxiety about food:

"The best thing about it (holiday club) is it's all free"



it's you want to go the cinema or you don't eat tomorrow or this week because it's that expensive now."

"I like it because it doesn't stress mummy us coming home from club and mummy having to go and make dinner so with them providing us with food that means me and brother don't have to go home and say we're hungry, she doesn't have to cook dinner 'til like 7 or 8 o'clock and the toasties as XX was saying, the pizza is amazing it's just really good that they provide us with food."

**HOLIDAY
PROVISION STAFF
HIGHLIGHTED
THE FOLLOWING
BENEFITS
OF HOLIDAY
PROVISION:**



**Addresses the issues
of poverty:**

“If you look at this town here when I came to work in it, public sector would have been a big employer, we had three hospitals, we had a psychiatric, a general, a maternity, now we have one general hospital with reduced services so you can imagine that nearly every family at one point would have had somebody employed in the hospital and they don’t have that....suddenly people who were in very well paid jobs have no work, parents were frequently out of work, some were to move out of town, some were commuting to Dublin maybe during the week, commuting to England for work, and then that was leaving families behind, so we had increased unemployment, increased poverty and with that, increased need and obviously fundamentally providing food for a family can be very expensive.”





Newcomers are able to access support:

"A lot of families we work with are from disadvantaged backgrounds or just starting up in a different country so obviously it takes a while to know what you are entitled to so it's good the holiday provision makes sure families have something to eat and somewhere to go."



Gives some stability to an otherwise chaotic home life:

"....and actually volunteers who really care about them as well probably makes a difference to them because we don't know what kind of homes they come from as well, and that comes from any background as well, so it's nice to be able to show them care and attention."



Children receive food and emotional support in the holiday clubs and learn new skills, make friends and were able to socialise:

"I think the difference it's made, one is the hidden hunger has been addressed amongst children, the kids are starting to eat healthy and access food they wouldn't access before and kids are starting to eat a more diverse diet and that's what the funding has done, it has made a huge impact."



CONCLUSION

The results of the full evaluation suggest that the Children in Northern Ireland holiday provision has made a positive difference in the lives of children attending the clubs through the support, advice and guidance provided to clubs, club leaders, staff and volunteers.

Activities providing opportunities to develop life skills were of a high standard as data gathered from a variety of different stakeholders and observational studies confirmed.

Food provision in club settings was limited potentially due to lack of formal qualifications of staff charged with delivering food and inadequate or complete lack of kitchen facilities but the clubs were able to reduce the amount of unhealthy food children consumed during the summer.

Future holiday club provision should therefore incorporate providing advice, guidance and support to holiday club staff on food to be provided in holiday club settings and supporting clubs to access kitchen facilities.



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