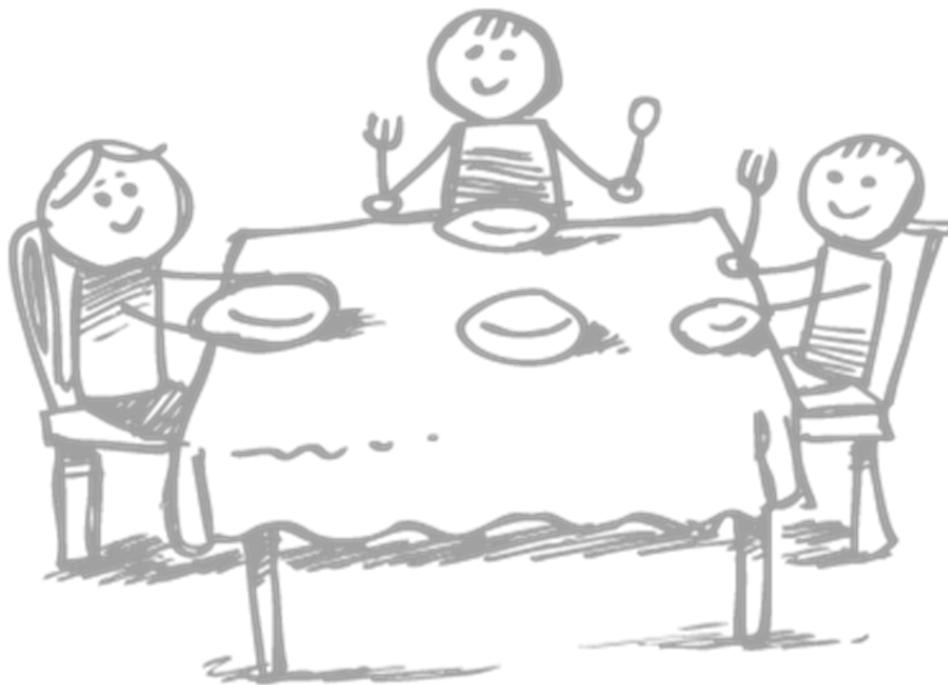


An Evaluation of Children in Northern Ireland's Summer 2019 Holiday Provision



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Executive Summary

During the school summer holidays, children from low-income families are thought to be at risk 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.

Children in Northern Ireland developed and provided funding for a 2019 summer holiday club delivery pilot programme in four areas of Northern Ireland. The Healthy Living Lab at Northumbria University were commissioned to conduct a process evaluation of that programme, utilising mixed methods across five studies. 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 and (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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1.0 Introduction

During the school summer holiday many school children who normally receive free school meals are thought to be at risk of holiday hunger (Forsey, 2017). Holiday hunger has recently been defined by Graham, Crilley, Stretesky et al. (2016) as “the tendency for children to be unable to access an adequate supply of nutritious food during the school holidays” (p.2). A recent report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger estimated that up to three million children from low income families may be at risk of holiday hunger. In response to concerns that so many children may be going hungry during the school holidays, a number of organisations, predominantly from the third sector, but also local authorities and schools, have developed holiday clubs to enable children to access food and activities during the summer holiday period (Mann & Defeyter, 2017). However, this response is often fragmented and without nationwide government funding, many organisations are constantly searching for funding to support their holiday provision (Mann, 2019; Shinwell, 2019). Recently the UK Government announced its intention to provide £1billion of funding for before and after school childcare provision during term time and activities during the school holidays (December 2019). This new funding will enable up to 250,000 disadvantaged children to access holiday provision and follows funding, by the Department for Education (DfE), of £2.1m in 2018 and £9.1m in 2019. Devolved nations have also been instrumental in funding holiday provision. For example, the Welsh Local Government Association provided £500,000 of funding to support holiday clubs based in schools in Wales, which was complemented by a further £100,000 of funding provided by the Welsh Government (McConnon, Morgan, Godwin, et al., 2017; Welsh Government, 2019). In Scotland, the Scottish Government allocated £5m to fund holiday provision, and in Northern Ireland, Children in Northern Ireland provided £50,000 of funding for holiday provision (Doyle, 2019; The Scottish Government, 2019).

1.1 The Challenge of the School Holidays

A typical summer for children from low income families may actually mean six to seven weeks of hunger, inactivity, boredom and social isolation until school resumes after the summer break (Defeyter, Graham, & Prince, 2015; Gill & Sharma, 2004; Graham, Crilley, Stretesky, et al., 2016; Mann, 2019; Shinwell, 2019; Stewart, Watson, & Campbell, 2018). Parents/carers and children attending and staff running summer holiday breakfast clubs in the North West of England said that holiday clubs were needed in their area order to provide a social outlet and reduce social isolation, boredom and inactivity for attendees (Defeyter et al., 2015). Similarly, holiday club staff running community-based holiday clubs in Wales and the South West of England also indicated that holiday clubs were needed to reduce social isolation and boredom. In a survey that investigated how children in Wales spend their summer holidays (Morgan, Melendez-Torres, Bond, et al., 2019) found that children from low-income households were more likely to be lonely and less likely to spend time with their friends during the holidays than children from higher income families. Furthermore, research conducted by the Childhood Trust suggests that more than 50% of children under the age of 11 are likely to be left alone without any adult supervision during their summer holiday (Child Poverty Action Group, 2019; The Childhood Trust, 2018). Availability and affordability of childcare are two of the biggest challenges parents face during the summer. In order to cope with (i) the lack of childcare and (ii) the cost of childcare, parents and carers adopt a range of strategies to enable them to meet their work commitments during the summer holidays. Parenting/caring often takes place in “shifts”, where one parent/carer will work whilst the other uses their annual leave to care for their children. Caring responsibilities are then swapped, meaning that some families are unable to spend quality time together during school holidays. A recent Work and Pensions Select Committee heard that parents who receive Universal Credit have to pay childcare costs upfront and then claim the money back through the benefits system. The committee heard that this is not financially viable for many low-income parents are unable to work during the summer. The Committee concluded that the benefits system hindered rather than supported parents’ ability to work during the summer holidays (House of Commons, 2019b).

Similarly, a recent meeting of the joint Work and Pensions and Education Select Committee heard evidence from parents and carers about the difficulties they face during the summer holidays. Parents reported that the absence of free school meals meant that they had to rely on food aid from food banks

to feed their children (House of Commons, 2019a). This evidence is supported by data from the UK's largest networked provider of food aid, the Trussell Trust. Analysis of their data showed that the demand for emergency three day food parcels for children increases during the summer holidays (Butler, 2019; The Trussell Trust, 2017) and reflects the findings of research in the USA that shows that food insecurity increases amongst low income families with children during the summer holidays (Nord & Romig, 2006). Food insecurity has been defined as "the inability to acquire or consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so" (p.1) (Dowler & O'Connor, 2012). For some, this may mean they are worried about their ability to buy food (mild food insecurity) whilst for others, it may mean they compromise on the quality and quantity of food consumed (moderate food insecurity). Whilst, severe food insecurity occurs when people experience hunger (FAO, 2016).

Experiencing food insecurity is considered to negatively impact on children's lives both physically, cognitively and socially and emotionally. In terms of their physical health, children from food insecure families are more likely to be obese and overweight (Casey, Simpson, Gossett, et al., 2006). When food is available, it is likely to be of a poor nutritional quality and include more fat, sugar and processed food and contain less fruit and fibre than the diets of children from better off families (Nelson, 2000). Benton, (2008) observes that a child's diet may have a negative impact on cognitive development at key stages such as when language skills are being acquired. Research in the USA for example has found that children who experience food insecurity perform less well academically, socially and emotionally than children who are food secure (Jyoti, Frongillo, & Jones, 2005). Furthermore, the more often children experience food insecurity, the greater the negative impact on their educational performance compared to their food secure counterparts (Johnson & Markowitz, 2018). As a result, the consequences of a poor childhood diet can have life-long impacts (Ridge, 2002).

Food insecurity is considered to be a dynamic process and people may move in or out or along the continuum of food insecurity as described above (Jarrett, Sensoy Bahar, & Odoms-Young, 2014). However, research in the USA has shown that food insecurity during the school summer holiday was attenuated amongst families whose children were able to attend the summer nutrition programme (SNP) sites (Nord & Romig, 2006). The SNP was established more than 50 years ago to enable children from low income families to access food during the holidays in lieu of meals they would receive at school (FRAC, 2019). In addition to accessing food, children who attend SNPs are also able to take part in a range of stimulating and engaging activities (Food Research Action Centre, 2018). This is important as, in the USA, it is considered that how children spend their summer holidays contributes to gap in educational attainment between children from different socio-economic backgrounds (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2001; Heyns, 1978). During term time, the "resource faucet" (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2001) of school is available and the learning process is constant and all children learn a similar rate (Downey, von Hippel, & Broh, 2004). However, 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 referred to as summer learning loss, and research has shown that although learning may slow for all children during the summer, some skills and knowledge, most notably maths and spelling, are more susceptible to loss and up to one month of skills and knowledge can be lost (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001, 2007b; Cooper, Nye, Charlton, et al., 1996; Heyns, 1978; Paechter, Luttenberger, Macher, et al., 2015). However, research has also demonstrated that differences in gains and/or losses in skills and knowledge over the summer are stratified by socio-economic status and skill set: all children may lose skills and knowledge in maths and spelling each summer but children from low income families are more likely to lose reading skills and knowledge whereas children from higher income families are more likely to gain skills and knowledge in this domain (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Alexander et al., 2001; Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007a; Cooper et al., 1996).

Some researchers in the USA for example, Alexander et al., (2007) tracked the progress of more than 700 American school children from before they started kindergarten until they reached the age of 22, argue that the gap in attainment is compounded with each summer spent out of school. Unsurprisingly, children from low income families who perform less well academically were less likely to go to college and were more likely to live in poor neighbourhoods and have low paid jobs when they left school. Conversely, some researchers have argued that the summer holiday period contributes less to the gap in attainment between children from different backgrounds than hitherto thought. Moreover, they suggest that the gap in attainment that exists before children start school effectively stays the same throughout children's school journey, perhaps widening in some years but also shrinking in others, (von Hippel & Hamrock, 2018; von Hippel, Workman, & Downey, 2018).

Despite the academic dispute over how the gap in educational attainment is measured a number of studies have suggested that attendance at summer learning or summer enrichment programmes may benefit children and may help to attenuate summer learning loss (Alexander et al., 2001; Cooper et al., 1996; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2001; Gershenson, 2013; Tovar, Lividini, Economos, et al., 2010). Summer learning programmes can focus on a broad range of outcomes including for example health and fitness, life skills and social and emotional well-being (Terzian, Moore, & Hamilton, 2009). Systematic reviews of USA based summer programmes have stressed the importance of acknowledging that summer is a time for fun and a break from school for children. Learning therefore should be fun and incorporate games, projects and field trips. However, the reviews emphasised the need to create and invest in programmes that are well designed with clear objectives, which are of sufficient dosage and are well implemented. The most effective programmes were those that had strong partnerships with a range of stakeholders including schools, community-based organisations and local and state governmental organisations but had also been carefully planned and thoroughly and rigorously evaluated (McCombs, Augustine, Unlu, et al., 2019; National Summer Learning Association, 2019; Terzian et al., 2009).

Using data from several longitudinal studies, researchers in the UK have similarly found that there is a gap in educational attainment between children from different socio-economic backgrounds before children start school. Children from low-income families are already academically behind children from higher income families when they start school and the gap continues to widen as children progress through school. By the time young people leave school at the age of 16, the gap in educational attainment between children from high and low income families can be up to two years, and the gap is getting wider (Hutchinson et al., 2019). Factors that are considered to contribute to the gap include the housing, communities and neighbourhoods where children live as well as the home learning environment, material (or lack of) possessions and the amount of time parents interact and engage in stimulating activities with their children, particularly when children are very young (Chowdry et al., 2010, Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2010). Despite comprehensive analysis of UK data, part of the gap in educational attainment between children from different socio-economic backgrounds in the UK remains unexplained (Chowdry et al., 2010, Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2010). Recent studies undertaken by Shinwell & Defeyter (2017) and Shinwell & Defeyter, (2020) investigated what happened to the spelling, reading and maths computation skills and knowledge of children who live in and attend schools in areas of high deprivation in the UK after a six or seven week school summer holiday. The researchers found that after a seven-week summer holiday, children lost skills and knowledge in word spelling. However, the effect size was small; the researchers therefore suggested that it may be more appropriate to suggest that stagnation in learning occurred in this domain. Skills in word reading were consistent across time.

To summarise, low-income families face a number of challenges during the holidays. For working parents and carers, childcare is scarce and where it is available, can cost twice as much as term time provision. For families who rely on benefits, the requirement to pay for childcare costs up front and then reclaim costs back makes it difficult for them to continue to work during the holidays. In addition, household food bills increase during the summer as parents/carers have to provide lunch for children whom

normally receive free school meals. Children may eat food that is of a low nutritional quality. For some children, possibly up to three million, the summer holidays may mean that they are at risk of experiencing holiday hunger (Forsey, 2017). In the UK, a number of organisations have responded to concerns that children may be going hungry in the holidays and have established programmes to provide children from low-income families with access to food and enrichment activities. Provision is increasing at a rapid rate (Mann & Defeyter, 2017), but in contrast to the more structured approach to summer programmes delivered in the USA, UK programmes are more informal and are primarily delivered by the voluntary and third sector and some local authorities (Mann & Defeyter, 2017). Despite the initial emphasis on helping children who may be hungry access to food, qualitative investigations of summer holiday programmes suggest that programmes deliver multiple benefits. To illustrate, research has shown that holiday programmes often reduce social isolation, ease financial hardship, provide a safe place for children to play, improve community cohesion, and provide access to enrichment activities. It has also been suggested that children attending holiday clubs may continue to learn and it has been speculated, that this may help reduce the gap in attainment between children from different socio-economic backgrounds (Defeyter et al., 2015; Defeyter, Stretesky, Sattar, et al., 2018; Graham et al., 2016; Holley, Mason, & Haycraft, 2019; Mann, 2019; Shinwell, 2019). A number of systematic reviews of holiday provision in the USA suggest that holiday interventions need to be well planned, with a clear purpose and should be thoroughly evaluated using appropriate scientific methods. The purpose of this report is to evaluate a holiday provision pilot programme that was established by the City of London Corporation during summer 2019.

1.2 The Current Evaluation: Local Context

Northern Ireland, like the rest of the UK and many western societies adopts an income-based approach to measuring poverty. Within the UK, a household is considered to be living in poverty if income is less than 60% of the UK median income. Estimates suggest that approximately 290,000 or 16% of people, including 85,000 (16%) of children, in Northern Ireland live in relative poverty (before housing costs). 14% of people in Northern Ireland, including 16% of children live in absolute poverty, meaning their household income was less than 60% of UK median income for 2010 -11 (Department for Communities, 2020). The number of people living in poverty in Northern Ireland is predicted to rise as a consequence of the UK Government's welfare reforms, with the greatest increase in the numbers of those living in poverty likely to be women and children (Hood & Waters, 2017). This is because single parent families and families with more than two children are likely to be the most adversely affected by changes to the welfare benefits system, which include the introduction of Universal Credit and the two child limit which limits child tax and universal credit claims to a maximum of two children per household. Prior to these changes and projected increases in the number of people living poverty, analysis of data contained in the 2013 Poverty and Social Exclusion Northern Ireland report by Tomlinson (2013) found that nearly one third of households in the country sometimes skimp on food or go without food so that others can eat and that 7% of families cannot afford to buy fresh fruit and vegetables. A more recent analysis of data collected in a household survey of residents in the Causeway, Coast a Glens catchment area of Northern Ireland by Furey, Fegan, Burns, et al., (2016) found that 40% of respondents (N=392) could not afford to eat three meals a day and 30% of respondents had to make hard choices between buying food and paying for other household expenses. When money for food is tight, parents will often compromise on the quality of their food so their children can eat (Hendriks, van der Merwe, Ngidi, et al., 2016; Jarrett et al., 2014), but in the 2014/15 Health Survey for Northern Ireland, 1% of parents reported that they had had to cut the portion size of food served to their children (Department for Health, 2016).

1.3 Summer Holiday Provision within Northern Ireland

More than 30% of children in Northern Ireland are entitled to free school meals, and, as in the UK, set against the backdrop of increasing numbers of children living or projected to be living in poverty, concerns have been raised about what happens to these children during the school summer holidays when they are unable to access to free school meals. An important distinction between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK is that the school summer holiday period is nine weeks long, compare to a typical summer break of six to seven weeks in England, Scotland and Wales.

In 2018, Children in Northern Ireland commissioned the Healthy Living Lab of Northumbria University to undertake research regarding the extent of holiday provision for children in Northern Ireland. A total of 126 organisations took part in the research, completing an online survey that asked a number of questions relating to holiday provision, the type of organisation delivering provision (i.e. voluntary/community, local authority, school, church or faith based or other) and the type of food served and activities provided in club settings. The research found that nearly 70% of respondents provided some form of holiday provision and the majority those doing so were from voluntary or community based groups. More than one third of organisations had been running clubs since the year 2000, but between 2016 and 2017, there had been a 25% increase in the number of organisations providing holiday club provision. More than 60% of organisations charged for attendance, with rates ranging between £2.50 (37%) to over £20.00 (3%) per day. Clubs provided a range of physical and other activities for attendees, and more than two thirds of organisations provided food, with snacks being the most commonly provided type of food. When the report was commissioned, two thirds of respondents indicated that lack of funding meant that they would not be able to extend their holiday provision and provided more meals (Mann, Defeyter, & Stretesky, 2018).

2.0 Process Evaluation

Process evaluations explore the way complex interventions are implemented and can offer insight into how well the intervention meets its aims including any adaptations, fidelity (whether programmes were delivered as intended), reach (the extent to which the target audience came into contact with programmes), dose (the quantity of programmes implemented) and quality (Craig et al. 2008). In addition, process evaluations investigate mechanisms of impact including acceptability; unanticipated consequences; perceived impact; perceived barriers and enablers to effective provision; and plans for sustainability (Craig et al. 2008). Exploring the mechanisms through which interventions bring about change is crucial to understanding (1) how the effects of the intervention occurred and (2) how these effects might be replicated by similar future interventions. As a result, the methodology presented below will seek to uncover any important mechanisms that may increase effectiveness.

A framework for conducting the process evaluation was adapted from Moore, Audrey, Barker, et al. (2015) and was used to design and analyse the four studies for this research. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the components of this process evaluation and the data collection methods adopted for this research. The blue boxes are the key components of the process evaluation and indicate the sources and type of data used in this evaluation. Data collection for this process evaluation took place during summer of 2019.

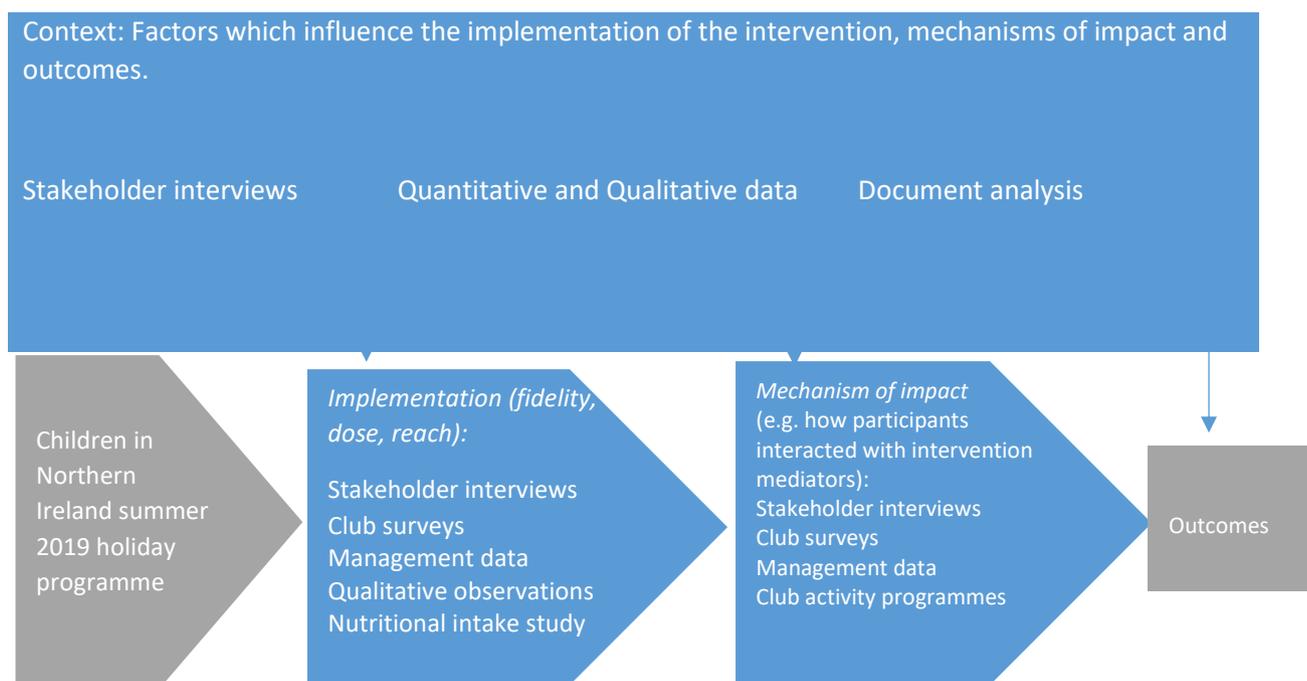


Figure 1. Data collection methods adopted and relationship between components of process evaluation (adapted from Moore, Audrey & Barker (2015))

3.0 Evaluation Aims

The aim of this evaluation was to:

Conduct a process evaluation of the summer 2019 pilot holiday club project established by Children in Northern Ireland.

The key objectives of the evaluation were to:

1. Explore the process that lead to the development, implementation and delivery of the pilot holiday club project and the potential benefits, uses and impact of holiday club attendance with food for disadvantaged children in Northern Ireland;
2. Identify the aims of holiday clubs and whether clubs met their aims;
3. Explore the operational characteristics of holiday clubs, including attendance, food provision and activities, and
4. Investigate the effect of the holiday club intervention on children’s nutritional intake.

4.0 Research Methods

A mixed methods approach was adopted for this evaluation that comprised of five studies:

- Study 1: A Qualitative investigation of the views of key stakeholders regarding holiday club provision
- Study 2: Holiday club leader survey
- Study 3: Children’s nutritional intake
- Study 4: Holiday club observational study
- Study 5: Holiday club management data

4.1 Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was gained from the Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee at Northumbria University. Individual consent was sought from the participants prior to data collection.

5.0 Study 1: A Qualitative Investigation of the Views of Key Stakeholders Regarding Holiday Club Provision

5.1 Study aims

The aim of the study was to explore the potential benefits, uses and impact of holiday club provision with food for disadvantaged children in Northern Ireland.

5.2 Study design

This study employed a qualitative design. The sample is theoretically based and draws on the range of experiences of the diverse participants directly involved in the initiative (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how a policy intervention operates and is experienced by a variety of stakeholders (Spencer et al., 2003).

5.3 Recruitment

The theoretical sample reflects participants who had a direct role in the development of the club services or spent time at the clubs as a child attendee, staff member or volunteer. The sample also included the parents of children who received services from the club. The holiday clubs operated during summer 2019 as part of the Children in Northern Ireland summer 2019 holiday provision programme. A total of 116 participants agreed to take part in the study. Demographic data on participants are presented in **Appendix 1** of this report.

5.4 Materials

Letters of invitation, research information sheets and consent forms pertaining to the research were developed for each stakeholder group. A semi-structured schedule of questions was prepared to guide interviews with each stakeholder group (see **Appendix 2**). The schedules comprised a series of open-ended questions that enabled participants to talk freely about their experiences relating to the Children in Northern Ireland summer 2019 holiday programme.

5.5 Procedure

Following ethical approval from the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee at Northumbria University the Children in Northern Ireland administration team was asked to disseminate information about the research study to senior stakeholders and holiday club staff. Holiday club delivery partners and senior stakeholders who expressed an interest in taking part were sent a research information pack including a letter of invitation and information leaflet and an opt-in consent form. Once consent was received from senior stakeholders, a date and time for interviews was agreed. Where possible, interviews were conducted face to face. Where this was not possible, interviews were conducted by telephone. The decision to undertake some interviews over the phone was a pragmatic choice due to the geographic spread of participants and participants' work commitments. Once consent was granted from individual club leaders, research information packs (including letters of invitation, research information sheets and opt in consent forms) for parents/carer and holiday club staff were sent to clubs in advance of the researcher visiting the club. Information on conducting children's focus groups was also included in information for parents and carers along with parental consent forms to opt children out of the study. Holiday club leaders were asked to act *in loco parentis* and grant consent for children to take part in the study as participating in the study was similar to activities held in clubs where children were asked to provide feedback on club activities. On the day of data collection in holiday clubs, children who had not been opted out the study and parents and club staff whom had already consented to participate in the study were approached and invited to take part in the study and consent was sought from all participants prior to commencement of interviews. In addition, on

the day of testing., and for adults only, the researchers approached potential participants and invited them to take part in the study.

5.6 Data analysis

Transcripts were read several times in order to gain a thorough overview of the data. All data were uploaded into NVivo 12 for ease of access and organization. Data were coded and analysed in accordance with guidelines on thematic analysis produced by Braun & Clarke (2006). Quotes from each participant were grouped under topic headings and main themes and associated sub themes were identified within the data.

5.7 Findings

Participants reflected on and shared their views on the why holiday club provision was needed, the benefits of holiday club provision and the type of activities and food provided in holiday club settings in Northern Ireland. Five broad themes were identified: 1) why holiday clubs are needed; 2) the benefits of holiday club provision for children; 3) the benefits of holiday club provision for parents; 4) the benefits of holiday club provision for communities and 5) operational characteristics of holiday clubs. A summary of the sub-themes identified under each broad theme by each group of participants and sample quotes are presented below.

5.7.1 Senior stakeholders

A total of eight (N=8) senior stakeholders from Children in Northern Ireland were interviewed.. These senior stakeholders had worked at a strategic level to develop holiday provision and were not involved in the day to delivery of holiday provision. Rather they provided strategic direction which influenced the model of holiday provision at either a national, local or organisational level. This section of the report contains details of the emerging themes and sub-themes that were discussed in interviews with the research team; which are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Sub-themes identified in interviews with senior stakeholders

| Theme | Sub theme |
|---|--|
| Why holiday provision is needed | Background and evolution of holiday provision; influence policy. |
| Operational characteristics of holiday clubs | Funding; referrals process & preventing stigma; monitoring and evaluation. |
| Benefits of holiday provision for children | Learning & personal development; socialisation. |
| Benefits of holiday provision for communities | Community cohesion; sectarianism and reducing anti-social behaviour. |
| Benefits of holiday provision for parents | Reduce stress and food and respite. |

5.7.1.1 Why holiday provision is needed

Sub-themes identified in interviews with senior stakeholders relating to why holiday provision is needed focused on the background and evolution of holiday provision and influencing policy.

A senior stakeholder explained that Children in Northern Ireland (CINI) worked at a very strategic level with others as part of an alliance on child poverty to influence policy in Northern Ireland relating to the welfare of children. The emphasis is on developing policies that will reduce inequalities and enhance children’s lives, but ultimately the organisation is lobbying to ensure that government policies are in place to end child poverty in Northern Ireland and to introduce a “Right to Food” Bill into legislation for Northern Ireland.

Whilst attending a conference in Belfast approximately four years ago, the senior stakeholder had heard a presentation where the issue of holiday hunger had been highlighted and the speaker had posed the question: “What happens to children who are on free school meals during the holidays?”. The senior stakeholder acknowledged that although CINI campaigned to end child poverty, the organisation had not been aware of holiday hunger and resolved to investigate the issue further. Whilst CINI’s remit was to work at a very strategic level to influence policy, a decision was taken to get involved in service delivery by funding holiday provision. Part of the rationale for this departure from policy to funding delivery was, explained the senior stakeholder, because CINI was aware of other holiday provision activity being delivered in Northern Ireland that was effectively providing a “sticking plaster” (SS7) and not addressing the real underlying issues of poverty and poorer life chances of disadvantaged children:

“...with some of the other holiday hunger projects that are happening in (name of place). It's like a sticking plaster, that it's just about feeding kids and that's it. And and you know, it's a bit like food banks, we shouldn't have food banks. We shouldn't have holiday hunger clubs. So that's why we try to do differently, that it wasn't just about feeding children, that it was their future and how do we improve outcomes for them and not just dealing with the this symptom of food poverty” (SS7).

Therefore, a pilot holiday intervention was set up and, as a senior stakeholder explained:

“...the reason we did this service provision, which is not normally what I do, was that we just felt very strongly that we needed to demonstrate some sort of innovative way of tackling child poverty” (SS6).

This had been the organisation’s first venture into (funding) service delivery and, as one senior stakeholder advised, the organisation had to work out how to operate in this new way:

“(this) was the first one that we had ever done and we were a bit, you know in the dark because we weren't we weren't sure what to do” (SS6).

Nonetheless, the experience had been incredibly valuable as a learning opportunity and informed the future direction and delivery of holiday provision by the organisation. Following the pilot project in 2016, the organisation has supported four more holiday projects which are the subject of this evaluation. As one senior stakeholder explained, projects would share some similarities in terms of ethos and for example approaches to recruitment, but they would not be identical:

“...every scheme is not going to be exactly the same because one thing does not fit all, there are communities, there are differences within communities, people are at different levels, they've got different linkages ... so there will be different things going on so it will just be very interesting to see different how it's addressed in those different areas across Northern Ireland” (SS4).

In the longer term, CINI hoped 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:

“we have the the policy angle that we're trying to influence and we are the umbrella organization for the children's sector, then that gives us the platform and the access to politicians, er you know local government as well as MLAs and MPs and we feel that that connection is really important, because if I'm 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” as “...the big, the big for me prize, is that we have government policy which is relevant and makes impact”(SS6).

5.7.1.2 Operational characteristics of holiday club provision

Sub-themes identified in interviews with senior stakeholders relating to the operational characteristics of holiday club focused on funding and partnership working, target audience and preventing stigma and monitoring and evaluation.

A senior stakeholder explained that 2015 Children's Act of Northern Ireland requires all government departments and agencies that have responsibilities for providing services for children and young people to work together. However, stakeholders told researchers that because power sharing in Northern Ireland had collapsed some years ago, there was currently no functioning government in the country. Government services were being administered by civil servants and as a result government spending priorities and policies sometimes felt like they lacked cohesion:

"you know, what is happening over here 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 and you know, they've no strategic vision of what it is that they want to do" (SS7)

Stakeholders also reported that funding levels had been at a standstill despite needs, caused by lack of funding and austerity, rising:

"we're standing still 10 years ago, we're still getting the same budget that we got 10 years ago, costs have gone up but demands are being made" (SS2)

Because of those issues highlighted with regard to government funding and policies, CINI used its influence to bring organisations together with a view to pooling budgets to fund the delivery of holiday provision. Working in this way would enable individual departments and agencies to meet their own organisational objectives. For example, as one senior stakeholder explained, the public health agency has objectives to promote healthy eating and physical activity with vulnerable groups in the community. Thus, by supporting holiday provision, the department would be able to work with communities that they were not presently engaging with. Although at a strategic level, different funders had different funding mechanisms and criteria, another senior stakeholder said that once organisations began collaborating, the funding needed to develop holiday provision had come together:

"you know at the start we had just one little piece and now everything else seems to be coming to make the full picture which is about ending child poverty" (SS7).

However, a senior stakeholder who had responsibility for overseeing delivery of holiday provision within an organisation indicated that it was difficult to access funding for working with younger children:

"It seems a little bit easier to access programme costs for teenagers because you can go after the diversion for antisocial behaviour, mental health-based stuff, good relations, you know, start to get training programmes and qualifications. Kids work is seen as a bit more like, they're not causing us any problems, they're not doing any harm on the streets, they're not stabbing anyone so we'll worry about that when they're 14. That's the feeling that I get, so kids work is generally a little bit harder to find the right funding for" (SS1).

However, the same stakeholder suggested that the private sector seemed amenable to funding holiday provision, and a large, multi-national, but locally based company had made a significant contribution towards the cost of holiday provision. It was hoped that this very welcome support would continue. The same stakeholder was also wary of short term, tokenistic gestures that provided opportunities for some positive public relations by the organisation making a donation, but didn't add real value to meeting the overall aims of holiday provision:

“... we have got a pressing need here. We used to facilitate that type of stuff but, you know giving away a fiver’s worth of fruit in exchange for a photograph and pretending you are doing good work, is not actually helping us at the moment” (SS1).

Those senior stakeholders who were responsible for setting the aims and therefore directing the overall approach to holiday provision within CINI were very clear that the funding should be used to target those in most need. A very structured approach was adopted to ensure that this was achieved, which included analysis of government statistics to identify areas where there was high social deprivation and high entitlement to free school meals. Once an area had been chosen as a potential location for holiday provision, research was undertaken to identify delivery partners:

“So what we would then do is see what organizations are within that area. We would research them, we would go out we would have a chat to them, and sometimes we have had a chat to organizations in the past where we've thought you know, oh we could maybe work together on addressing holiday hunger and it wasn't a good fit. And that's how I, we, approach it. You know, we need to be happy with the organization that were working with and they need to be happy with us. You know, we need to have the same ethos the same view in terms of child poverty and what we want to do to end it and holiday hunger obviously, but sometimes it just doesn't work” (SS6).

Once a delivery partner was identified, they were given what a senior stakeholder described as a tool kit to help them deliver holiday provision. An essential part of the tool kit was to work with family hubs to refer families and children to the holiday clubs. Family hubs, the stakeholder explained, work with and support vulnerable families to prevent intervention by social services. Families may be classed as vulnerable for a number of reasons, including having children with special needs or parents/carers having mental health or other problems. This would ensure that those most in need were supported. However, the referral process was handled sensitively to ensure that families were not stigmatised, as one senior stakeholder explained:

“There are some, there are some families who get intervention from the likes of St Vincent de Paul and now 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 parcelled up as something else, a grant or or some form of support you know, an opportunity, 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 but it doesn't take away from the fact that pride is one thing but the kids shouldn't be suffering as a result of it” (SS2).

Although exact targets had not been set by CINI for instance on the number of children attending holiday club, monitoring and evaluation was an integral part of the process of establishing the holiday provision project. The process for monitoring and evaluation was continually being refined and adapted so that data on the wider benefits of holiday provision, beyond just providing food were captured to prevent holiday provision becoming institutionalised and part of the food poverty landscape. Data were being collected on attendance and the number of meals served and feedback data from parents and children were also collected. One stakeholder for instance, described how they had been shocked that children had reported they had been hungry in previous years. Where CINI had funded delivery partners that had been providing holiday provision in for a number years, it was hoped that the extra funding would enable clubs to extend their provision ,not only by proving food, but also by enhancing the activity provision:

“they've all said it (CINI funding) you know to you know really make their offering a lot better but I think the other side of it is, it's you know they probably don't realise it but it's promoting you know those 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 probably had the OCN leadership in some form but pushing that you know that young children really need to be inspired by learning you know and I think that's what you know the little first aid programmes they do with children, it gets them interested in it and it makes them proud that they've got little certificates and things" (SS6)

5.7.1.3 Benefits of holiday provision for children

Sub-themes identified in interviews with senior stakeholders relating to the benefits of holiday provision for children included learning, personal development and socialisation. The emphasis placed by CINI on holiday club delivery partners to provide opportunities for children to learn was motivated by an awareness of the "huge gap in educational underachievement" (SS6) (between children from different socio-economic backgrounds) and by reading research regarding summer learning loss conducted by Shinwell & Defeyter, (2017). It was acknowledged that it was the school summer holidays so it was considered important to ensure that learning was fun and that children would want to attend. Thus, clubs were encouraged to provide engaging, stimulating activities that promoted learning and personal development that raised aspirations of attendees. Programmes delivered in holiday club settings were therefore structured to provide active learning through physical and other activities. This included for example, cooking sessions where children could learn about healthy eating and through the mini-medics first aid training programme:

"we market it a little more around making sure that (name of place's) next generation can achieve their potential, you know, through health and wellbeing. So that's why we also add the fitness element and we added the educational element. So, it's not like a breakfast club or a lunch club, it's a bit more of a personal development journey which happens to have the meals included" (SS1).

Stakeholders considered that clubs provided older children with a great opportunity to enhance their personal development by becoming volunteer peer mentors and as such were encouraged to obtain Open College Network (OCN) Northern Ireland qualifications in leadership and become future leaders in clubs and potentially the community. OCN Northern Ireland develops and awards vocational qualifications in a range of subjects including life skills and awarded at entry level to level 5. A level 2 qualification is equivalent to a grade B at GCSE. A senior stakeholder in one area recalled how generations of young people had attended the club (which was well established and ran throughout the year) and then returned as volunteers and obtained their OCN:

"we've got girls and boys that come in that have been on placements and things and have come from the local secondary schools and they have become volunteers and worked their way through. We've a number of senior volunteers and part time paid staff who are former members who have come through the system and they would say themselves that they have obtained a lot" (SS 2).

Similarly, a senior stakeholder in another area suggested that young people who volunteered gained a great deal by doing so and that the approach could be replicated elsewhere:

"whether they are the young people as volunteers actually involved in preparing the food and making it, it's giving them a sense of achievement, it's a it's, volunteering we know is good for your health because when you do something for other people you are benefiting yourself so it's a win win--it's a win win situation so I think, my hope would be that it is extended you know across s more communities across a longer period of time" (SS3).

Senior stakeholders also considered that children benefited from attending clubs in other ways. For example, it was suggested that clubs provided a caring, supportive environment that enabled children to be children as the club was helping meet their basic needs:

“well I mean when you when you have your basic needs met you can function properly can't you, you know you can think, you can act, you can sing, you can play games , you know you're not, young people have to have their, those basic needs met and obviously they are getting a lot of love and support from this centre as well” (SS3)

In addition, children were able to interact with other children, thus social isolation was reduced as the alternative for many children would have been spending summer alone in the house. Moreover, children were provided with opportunities to meet children whom they did not know, had different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and the hope was that those friendships would endure once holiday club closed:

“they make new friends is another thing, you know, especially if they're they don't come from the same community or the different ethnic background. So they're mingling and they're making new friends and new connections so that you know, once the club is finished, they're able to go out and play with their new friends” (SS7).

5.7.1.4 Benefits of holiday provision for communities

Some sub-themes identified in interviews with senior stakeholders related to community cohesion, sectarianism and reducing anti-social behaviour.

While children benefited at an individual level by making friends and thus reducing social isolation, it was considered that the benefits of these friendships would ripple out into the community and enhance community cohesion. A senior stakeholder whose organisation did a lot of work with newly arrived communities, considered that this would be particularly beneficial for relationships between people from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures and would enable children to settle into their new communities. The same stakeholder explained that when local people dropped their children off at the holiday club, they would see newly arrived older children volunteering at the club which potentially would be viewed positively by the community and in addition to enhancing the volunteer's feelings of self-worth, could potentially provide them with a sense of belonging. The same stakeholder considered that the work done by the organisation he represented had the potential to promote cross community working and build community cohesion:

“So, we think the ethnic minority issue and integration is very new in Northern Ireland compared to the rest of England and it's only really surfaced here 12 or 13 years ago. Before that, nobody really wanted to come and live here because of our history. So, it's very new to us and we've said it could potentially help solve our issues as I said, it's no longer one side against another. So, our club (name) is centre based, we are very naturally, organically have people working for us from all sides of the town. Most youth clubs are based in a community, in a Northern Ireland community and more than likely segregated communities where they can do cross community work but it's generally a Protestant club or a Catholic club where there's maybe a bit of good work going on but it's maybe not natural, a bit forced. Ours seems to have happened a lot more naturally” (SS1).

Similarly, a senior stakeholder told researchers that the organisation he represented had re-established links with youth centres across the border in the Republic of Ireland to play in a football tournament and this was viewed as a positive step. In addition, and as discussed later, several participants in this study, commented that holiday provision potentially deterred young people from participating in anti-social behaviour. It was considered that holiday provision, and more broadly youth service provision, was an opportunity to provide something positive in young people's lives which also added a sense of vibrancy to the community. Without such provision, another stakeholder commented: *“you're going to end up with a whole degree of negativity that leads to a lot of anti-social issues” (SS2).* The same stakeholder also acknowledged that as children got older, there was a tendency to drift away from this type of provision. A similar sentiment was expressed by young people, as will be discussed later.

5.7.1.5 Benefits of holiday provision for parents

Sub-themes identified in interviews with senior stakeholders relating to the benefits of holiday provision for parents included reducing parental stress and anxiety and providing respite from the demands of the summer holidays because children were occupied and able to access food.

As discussed above, through establishing holiday provision, senior stakeholders were seeking to attenuate the risk of vulnerable children experiencing holiday hunger by providing them with access to food during the holidays. It was hoped that holiday provision would also benefit parents, primarily through reducing the levels of parental stress and anxiety often faced by parents during the nine-week summer break. One stakeholder recalled that a parent had said that she (the parent) faced a stark choice during the summer:

“One parent talked to me about the cost of putting on the cooker during the summer and the electric bill, you know it should be a quiet time but it costs an extra £2 or £3 every time you put on your cooker and when you start to do that 5 or 6 or 7 times a week, the maths just simply does not add up for some people” (SS1).

Parents were therefore able to relax knowing that their children were a) getting a healthy meal and b) were in a safe place. Moreover, the few hours their children were at holiday club meant that parents/carers could have some respite and a break from the pressure of the holidays:

“if you're a single mum on your own with two kids, three kids, even one kid, on your own, no support, no support, no backup, maybe no family close, any kind of, any kind of support that would just take the pressure off at least for an hour or two in a day, or for a day or two, this is a great thing about these schemes. So they give the parents, the mother, or father, a wee break” (SS5).

5.7.1.6 Summary

Senior stakeholders were very clear that holiday provision should support those in the community who were in most need. This was accomplished by analysing data on social deprivation and free school meal entitlement. Once an area was identified, CINI carefully chose which organisations it worked with to ensure that provision was not simply a question of providing children with access to food but using holiday provision as way to address some of the underlying issues relating to child poverty in the country including under achievement and low educational attainment. The ethos and guiding principles of the holiday provision were therefore to raise aspirations and personal growth of attendees by providing engaging, stimulating activities. Targets were not set on the number of children reached through the holiday provision programme but monitoring and evaluation was considered important and this process was continuing to evolve as the holiday provision evolved. Funding of and influencing service delivery of holiday provision was a departure from CINI's normal activities of influencing government policies relating to child welfare, but it was hoped that getting involved in service delivery and therefore understanding the real needs of vulnerable communities would enhance policy development. In addition to supporting vulnerable children at an individual level, senior stakeholders considered that communities also benefited from holiday provision. Stakeholders thought that holiday clubs brought life to communities. Moreover, given the country's history of troubles, the model and approach of holiday provision adopted of integrating and involving newly arrived people as attendees and volunteers could enhance community relations and understanding of and between people from different cultures and religions. Finally, although holiday clubs sought to work with the most vulnerable families, this was handled in a very sensitive manner, and an additional benefit of provision was that the cost and pressures of the summer holidays were eased for those parents who needed the most support.

5.7.2 Children

A total of 65 children were interviewed in 18 focus groups for this study. The number of children in each focus group varied between two and six children. This section of the report presents a summary of the key

themes and sub-themes identified from the analysis of data from interviews with children which are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Sub-themes identified in interviews with children

| Theme | Sub-themes |
|--|--|
| Why holiday provision is needed | Holiday hunger; family circumstances. |
| Benefits of holiday provision for children | Activities; skills and confidence; fun and friendship; safe place, alternative to holiday club attendance. |
| Benefits of holiday provision for parents | Expense of summer holidays; saving parents money; respite; reduce parental anxiety about food. |
| Benefit of holiday provision for communities | Community cohesion; supporting child immigrants; removing barriers. |
| Operational characteristics of holiday clubs | Feelings about clubs; improvements to holiday club; food provided in clubs. |

5.7.2.1 Why holiday provision is needed

Sub-themes identified in interviews with children on why holiday provision was needed related to holiday hunger and family circumstances.

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” (CFG 3).

However, whilst children were aware of “holiday hunger”, they nonetheless indicated that the issue was complicated and could be hidden within the home as reflected in a discussion in one focus group:

Child 1: *“yeah I think you can really tell just by sitting with the children because holiday hunger can happen at home so like when they come here food is provided, there's like options for them and like make sure that every child eats something so it's not like you can tell anything” (CFG 3)*

Child 2: *“no I also reckon a lot of them don't really realise because you have the ones that obviously may have issues at home, but they will still be picky about what they eat. I think they just don't really realise like their parents are the ones scraping by for them to eat but they don't like they are just kids so they're just living” (CFG 3).*

Children showed a great deal of empathy for children who may be hungry and thought that the provision of food meant that everyone was the same and nobody was left out, as demonstrated in the following exchange between children in one focus group:

Child 1: yeah everyone gets it

Child 2: no one is left out, they make sure everyone gets something

Child 3: even if somebody doesn't like the food that they provide, they still make sure that they would cook something that they like. (CFG 10).

A second child in the same focus group told researchers that she had been aware of children potentially being embarrassed because they had no money and she had then shared her money with them:

"I'd usually just help them like give them money to help them out instead of letting them like sit and struggle if they're really hungry, then I just give them money too" (CFG 10).

Children were also aware that they and others were referred to the holiday club because of their family circumstances, for example, one child explained:

"...me and my sister don't pay the £2 because my mum and my dad are split up and things like that but I think if my mum had to pay that on top of everything else it would be bit stressful and she wouldn't be coming all the days that she does but even I don't think mum would mind paying it because it gets my sister out" (CFG 5).

5.7.2.2 Benefits of holiday provision for children

Sub-themes identified in interviews with children regarding the benefits of holiday club provision for children focused on activities, skills, confidence, fun, friendships, a safe place to play and the alternatives to holiday club attendance.

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. In one club for example, children said they liked taking part in the kitchen activity because they were able to get more involved in making food compared to home, as one child explained:

"well we get to like put in all the ingredients and stuff like the adults and do all the, because my aunty usually puts in the most ingredients because I love baking with my aunty, and I do the least ingredients" (CFG 1).

As a result, many children reported that they were gaining new skills, for example, CPR that might come in useful: *"yeah so then we know better in the future if anything happens then we know what to do" (CFG 1).* Some skills complemented learning that had taken place in school, but for many children, and particularly older children who were volunteering as mentors, there was a strong sense that their confidence had been boosted. This was summed up by one volunteer mentor who said:

"it's definitely helped with, personally it has helped with my confidence because when I was first here I was like "I can't lead a session I can't be talking to people like children, they're not going to listen" but like I've definitely noticed a change in myself where I can like get the kids attention like get things done so" (CFG 3).

Another child reported how taking part in holiday club drama classes had boosted her confidence and helped her 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" (CFG 10).

Friendship and making new friends was an incredibly important aspect of attending holiday club for many children. When children were asked what they would tell other children about holiday club, having fun, seeing friends and making new friends were top of the list for many children:

“we come here and we meet new people, like this is the first time we met (name)” (CFG 4).

In addition, some children also 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” (CFG 10).

When asked what children would be doing if holiday club wasn't on, a lot of children told researchers that they would be sitting at home bored with nothing to do, perhaps watching TV. One child said they didn't have any games at home, whilst older children said they would probably just stay in bed. Some children reported that they would spend time playing in the park with family and friends whilst others said they would be cared for by relatives when the club finished: *“I'm going to granny's , I'll go back to granny's” (CFG 12).*

5.7.2.3 Benefits of holiday provision for parents

In interviews with children regarding the benefits of holiday club provision for parents children reflected on the expense of summer holiday and how holiday club saved parents money, provided an opportunity for their parents to get some respite and reduced their parents anxiety about food.

As well as children benefiting from attending holiday club, children also reported that their parents benefited too. They were aware that the summer holidays were an expensive time of year and *“the best thing about it (holiday club) is it's all free” (CFG 10)*. Furthermore, children also reported that attending holiday club meant that their parents saved time and money; thus reducing their parents' anxieties about feeding their children. One child explained that if her and her brother ate at holiday club, it relieved the stress for their mother of having to cook when they got home:

“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” (CFG 10).

In addition to saving money, holiday club benefited parents in other ways. For example some children told researchers that when step brothers and sisters came to stay with them and it was difficult for a family of seven to go anywhere easily even if they had a car. One young girl said that her and her brother (who had special needs) attended the holiday club, thus her parents got some respite and *“basically they get some peace and quiet” (CFG 14)*. Other children said it meant that parents could tidy the house or spend time alone.

5.7.2.4 Benefits of holiday provision for communities

Sub-themes identified in interviews with children regarding the benefits of holiday club provision for communities related to community cohesion, supporting child immigrants and removing barriers between groups in society.

Children perceived that holiday club provision benefitted communities. For example, children who attended different schools would be able to speak to each other when they saw each other in street. Older children also advised the researcher that once children left primary school in Northern Ireland, secondary schools were separated by gender. Hence, attending holiday club meant that they could mix and meet people of the opposite sex. Some children who attended holiday clubs were newly arrived in Northern Ireland and many

could not speak English. However, because they attended holiday club, they were able to learn some English and interact with other children. One holiday club attendee, speaking via a translator described their experience of arriving in Northern Ireland the previous summer and how they had continued to attend the club:

“it was a very good experience to be a part of [holiday provision] programme from July until the April. It was a good opportunity for us to learn English as that is the month we arrived or the month before we arrived to the country so it gave us a bigger a bigger idea of the area that we are living in so we did we got to learn some English” (CFG 7).

Children also spoke of the benefits of mixing in with children from different countries and learning about new cultures: *“it gives them more experience because we all come from different backgrounds, it's better to know how to treat others that aren't just the same as you” (CFG 8).* A child in another focus group described how without holiday club, children would just mix with people of similar backgrounds:

“I think it's good, it's important because you're you and your family are one religion and one culture and if you're only going to stick with that you're not going to meet any other religion but then if you come here and meet another religion, then they learn about it and that, so that's another culture and they learn more about that instead of just knowing the one and sticking to the one, they know more about different ones and they can choose basically” (CFG 5).

Children recognised the importance of encouraging children from different religious backgrounds to mix together and break down barriers and firmly believed that different religious backgrounds did not matter. A child mentor commented:

“even going outside and playing, it gives the kids there won't be more of like a tension because sometimes there's like a religious tension sort of thing over here in (name of place) between protestants and Catholics there's sort of that barrier but I think with this because if you don't really get to know who is protestant and who's catholic and then there's some other religious and I think they just go over that barrier and just mix together” (CFG 4).

5.7.2.5 Operational characteristics of holiday clubs

Sub-themes identified in interviews with children regarding operational characteristics of holiday clubs focused on children's feelings about their holiday club, whether they thought any improvements could be made to holiday clubs and what they thought about food provided in clubs.

It was clear that children had strong, positive feelings about their holiday clubs and how it made them feel, with children saying that compared to previous summers, attending holiday club made them feel *“more happier” (CFG 1)* and that *“it makes it (summer) a bit better” (CFG 1)*. When children were asked if there was anything that could be done to improve holiday club children indicated that by and large they were extremely happy with their holiday club. Where improvements were suggested these included having more breaks and more free play, more out of centre activities including better trips and the opportunity for residential and more sessions. One child for example said that they would have preferred it if the club had been on for the whole week instead of just three days. Overall however, children expressed sadness at the thought of the club ending.

When children were asked what they thought of the food that was provided in holiday club, this elicited the greatest number of responses to any question asked. It was acknowledged that food was provided for children with special diets such as halal foods or being vegetarian, for instance, a child said:

“and it's hard for like the Syrians just coming in and they can't eat the same like ham as all of us and then if say, if say and all the one that they eat is gone, but then as (name of

person) always said, that they make sure that everyone gets some so they would make more for them” (CFG 10).

Older children who were volunteer mentors were aware that in previous years, some of the food provided in the holiday club had been donated from foodbanks, thus had to be non-perishable. This had, however led to repetition in the type of food served: *“yeah previous (club name) have been like pasta, then like a different type of pasta” (CFG 3).* They were aware that a lot of work had been done to improve the food provided: *“but I think they have built up the variety now” (CFG 3),* but added: *“the kids were still complaining” (CFG 3).* This was reflected in interviews with younger children in the same club who said they did not like the food that was provided. On the day a researcher attended the club, two types of home-made soup with bread had been served for lunch. However, a number of the children reported that they had just eaten the bread: *“nope, I had loads of bread because I didn't like it but I had all the dessert” (CFG 1).* When asked what could be done to improve the food, children said that they would have like more choice:

“maybe they could like make wee menus with like three or four options and then you could like pick and then at the bottom, it would at the bottom of the menu, it could say if you really didn't actually like any of those you could get like ham sandwiches or something like that” (CFG 2).

When asked what kind of food they would like to have for lunch, some children said that they wanted more meat or that the food they got at home was better, or they would have preferred pizza. In contrast, in clubs where snacks had been served, children were effusive in their praise of the ham and cheese toasties and sausage roll and chips: *“the toasties are just amazing, ham and cheese oh man, that's all I can say” (CFG 10)*

5.7.2.6 Summary

Children showed high levels of awareness that holiday provision supported children who may be at risk of going hungry during the summer holidays. They also demonstrated awareness within their social groupings of children who had experienced hunger during the holidays and expressed empathy and concern and sought to support them by sharing money and sweets with them. Children reported that they thoroughly enjoyed the range of activities they were able to take part in at holiday club and did not appear to regard their experiences as formal learning that may take place in a classroom environment but that activities were fun. They spoke about how their confidence had improved as a result of attending holiday club, which suggests that the approach of providing opportunities to learn new skills and grow and develop as individuals. Children reported that they had made friends and socialised with other children and exhibited awareness of the benefits of this for improving community cohesion. Children also showed a high level of shrewdness and knowledge of sectarian divides in communities and spoke positively about how different religious or cultural backgrounds did not matter in terms of meeting and making new friends. Some children were aware that they were referred to holiday club because of their family circumstances and spoke openly about this in focus groups and were therefore aware that because they attended holiday club, pressures and stresses around providing them with food were eased. The ease with which children spoke about these issues suggests that they did not feel stigmatised, which suggests that the policy of being sensitive in how clubs were marketed worked. When asked about how holiday club could be improved, children had very little to say other than a desire for clubs to be on for longer. However, the question of what children thought about food elicited the most responses with a lot of children reporting that they did not like the food or would have preferred more choice. However, in a club where snack type foods including pizzas, sausage rolls and chips were provided, children were fulsome in their praise about the food served. This suggests that further work may need to be done with regard to food provided in holiday club settings and that a careful balance needs to be made between providing healthy, nutritious food and providing food that children will eat.

5.7.3 Parents/carers

A total of 27 parents were interviewed across the four clubs. Three parents were interviewed on a one to one basis and the remaining 24 parents participated in focus groups that ranged in size from 3 to 6 parents. This section of the report details the key emerging issues that were discussed with the researchers in relating to the five broad themes outlined in paragraph 5.7. The associated sub themes are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Sub-themes identified in interviews with parents

| Theme | Sub-themes |
|--|---|
| Why holiday provision is needed | Cost of the summer holidays; costs of alternative provision/childcare; increase in food shopping bills. |
| Benefits of holiday provision for children | Activities; friendship and socialisation; confidence building and learning new skills; routine and structure. |
| Benefits of holiday provision for parents | Respite; catching up on household chores; quality time with children or with other children not attending holiday club. |
| Benefit of holiday provision for communities | Anti-social behaviour; child volunteer mentors as role models; sectarianism. |
| Operational characteristics of holiday clubs | How parents find out about holiday club; demand/supply of holiday provision; travel to club; food provision; how to improve club. |

5.7.3.1 Why holiday provision is needed

Sub-themes identified in interviews with parents/carer relating to why holiday provision was needed focused on the cost of the summer holidays and the costs of alternative provision/childcare and how food and shopping bills increased over the summer.

Parents considered that the school summer holiday period was an expensive time of year, particularly as the summer break in Northern Ireland is nine weeks long and, as one parent said: *“it costs you a fortune”* (PC FG 3). Similar sentiments were expressed by another parent who said *“yeah I think because its (holiday provision) funded it definitely helps because it is a long summer, a long nine weeks”* (PC FG 3). A parent with more than one child commented on the expense of trying to do things as a family and welcomed the fact that her children were able to take part in activities and trips:

“...summer is very expensive. if you have more than one child that's the problem but it's been, this one has been so reasonable and 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” (P/C FG 5).

One parent recalled how she faced a stark choice between keeping her children entertained or buying food:

“it's you want to go the cinema or you don't eat the morrow or this week because it's that expensive now” (P/C FG 5).

Parents commented that they wanted the summer to be an enjoyable time for their children and they would like to make it so by taking their children on trips. However, what they referred to as a “normal day” during the summer holidays was expensive enough, without incurring the extra cost and stress of a trip to somewhere like a theme park. Hence, sending their children to a free holiday club was a great help and it meant that children were not missing out:

“you just want them to sort of not to miss out, especially when you hear about people going on holiday you know like proper holidays and they're getting all their wee bits and pieces together and you're like ‘that would be lovely’ but you have to plan for these things because it's just so expensive to take a family away” (P/C FG 5).

Three of the clubs charged for attendance, but parents/carers considered that the £1 or £2 charge was manageable, particularly when compared to the cost of alternative holiday provision, which could as much as £60 per child per week:

“the local leisure centre, their summer scheme is something like £60 a week, so it's quite, that's quite expensive especially if you have more than one kid, it just gets really expensive” (P/C FG 4).

5.7.3.2 Benefits of holiday provision for children

Sub-themes identified in interviews with parents/carers regarding the benefits of holiday club provision for children focused on activities, friendship and socialisation, the impact of attendance at holiday club on building their children's confidence and children learning new skills. A final sub-theme related to and routine and structure during the holidays.

Parents were firmly of the opinion that the range of activities on offer in club settings was a huge benefit to their children who then had opportunities to do things that parents were unable to provide. Examples cited included simple things like access to a wider variety of arts and crafts materials compared to home, to taking children on trips to leisure complexes and theme parks. One father said:

“there is not much happening in the house apart from you know in the back garden playing on the trampoline you know, this is an opportunity for them to learn new things, meet new friends, socialise you know so I think this is excellent yeah you know it's good.” (P/C 1).

Moreover, parents considered that summer holiday club attendance meant that their children were physically active and learning new skills. A parent recalled how her child had told her about the activities in the club and then practiced her newly gained CPR skills when they got home:

“yeah they've been they've been talking about the snake and then yesterday my daughter put me in the recovery position at home so that was good to see that they had picked it up” (P/C 2).

Parents of children who had recently arrived in Northern Ireland welcomed the fact that their children were enjoying being at the club, but were also learning English:

“the girls is too happy they love being here and they like getting along with the children, and this holiday they have like a little bit English at this holiday thing, learnt English at this club” (PC FG 1).

However, many parents said that the one of the best things about holiday club was that their children had the opportunity to make friends and socialise and the social and emotional support children gained from that:

“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” (P/C 3).

While most parents also considered that attendance at holiday club helped their children maintain routine and structure to their day, some parents commented that the summer was about having fun and welcomed the later start time of their child's club:

"I think the summer is all about not having a routine" (P/C FG 5).

Accordingly, mornings were less rushed and more relaxed during the holidays compared to term time. Furthermore, parents were afforded an opportunity for some respite, and because older children were at holiday club, parents were able to spend quality time with younger children or because some holiday clubs were only on for three days, it meant that they could spend quality time with their children for the remainder of the week:

"well just the sort of, not that I'm using it for a childcare service but it has sort of, it lets me then prepare so that on other days that they're not here that we can do activities and it has saved me some money too because to try and entertain them seven days in the week can put a, it's difficult to find something that's cheap so it has sort of helped me that way so it has" (PC 2).

5.7.3.3 Benefits of holiday provision for parents

Parents welcomed the opportunity for some respite during the summer and used it as an opportunity to catch up on household chores such as tidying up or doing the food shopping when their children were at holiday club. The latter activity meant that children were unable to pester parents and ask them to buy toys and other extras, thus saving parents money:

"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" (P/C FG 5).

5.7.3.4 Benefits of holiday provision for communities

Sub-themes identified in interviews with parents/carers regarding the benefits of holiday club provision for communities related to how holiday clubs may reduce and provide a distraction from anti-social behaviour; the impact of older children who worked as volunteer peer mentors as positive role models and sectarianism.

Parents acknowledged that anti-social behaviour was a feature of most towns because children and young people were bored and had nothing to do and nowhere to go and the alternative to holiday club would perhaps mean children would hang around on street corners:

"there can be (anti-social behaviour) but you know show me a town that doesn't have that but I think it would be worse if somewhere like this didn't exist you know, I think it actually provides that that place for young people to go and hang out I suppose" (P/C FG 4).

Therefore, holiday provision meant that children and young people had somewhere safe to go and thus were less likely to see acts of vandalism and anti-social behaviour taking place. Moreover, young children attending holiday club saw older children, who were volunteer mentors, as role models, thus reinforcing positive behaviour traits, as one parent explained:

"(older children) are role models for the younger children and you know, sometimes you feel that they are you know, they are there to help them and they are always there and helping them and they're playing with the kids and, you know teaching them, it's amazing, that is brilliant, so it's good to see that young people are so committed and you know. they are willing there to help and learning new things and experiences, this is a lot of experience for them, it is its absolutely, I am really proud of these young people, they are giving their

free time you know, they are giving their time for this sort of vital help for our community” (P/C 1).

Furthermore, children at holiday club mixed with children from different schools, cultures, backgrounds and religions. Hence, being exposed to different people from different cultures from a young age may encourage tolerance and understanding and this would ultimately benefit communities :

“I think it will benefit them when they're older that they're not so judgemental on different cultures and they might view people differently which is very important because there's a lot of hate crimes that go on everywhere so I think starting them this young is very good” (P/C FG 3).

5.7.3.5 Operational aspects of holiday club provision

Sub-themes identified in interviews with parents/carers regarding operational characteristics of holiday clubs focused on how parents found out about holiday club and the demand/supply of holiday provision. Additional sub-themes related to how children travelled to the club, food provision and how to improve clubs.

Several parents reported that their children were referred to their respective holiday club because they had connections with the organisations delivering holiday clubs because of their family circumstances such as a child with special needs: *“it's not open to everyone it's usually through referral so it's not open to every child you know” (P/C FG 3).* Other parents spoke of how they found out about provision through community champions or word of mouth. This seemed to work well for more vulnerable community groups who were newly arrived in Northern Ireland, as demonstrated in a discussion in one focus group:

“Parent 1: I know a man named [name] who sent a message to all of my friends

Parent 2: he sent a message to all the numbers by phone

Parent 3: yes tell all other people around” (P/C FG 1).

On the other hand, for clubs which were open to all members of the community, parents found out about clubs by word of mouth or received a leaflet through school and then actively sought further information by visiting club premises or searching online. Thus, some considered that more could have been done to advertise provision. However, parents acknowledged that lack of funding meant that provision had to be restricted. Some parents spoke of demand outstripping supply where premises had to limit the maximum number of children allowed on site.

“they're probably limited with money and things, there's only a certain amount of money and insurance and space” (P/C FG 3).

Where holiday club provision was available on a first come first served basis, parents recalled that they arrived early at the club make sure their child could attend. While most parents were happy with how clubs operated and welcomed the fact that clubs were operating, some parents indicated that they would have preferred holiday clubs to be open for more weeks of the summer holidays and for more days. However, it was acknowledged that staff needed a break themselves. Some parents also indicated that they would have liked the age restriction to be lowered so that nursery school aged children could attend. A parent spoke of a younger child getting upset because they could not attend the club with their older siblings:

“yeah it would be great you know, I mean she she's attends the nursery and she is now going to go to primary 1 and then she is disappointed that she is not able to attend and they, all the others go at nine o'clock in the morning and then come back around three and they are talking about what happened and all that and she feels that she missed out” (P/C 1).

In one area, parents welcomed the fact that free buses were provided to enable their children to get to holiday club. However, some parents would have preferred to have holiday clubs operating closer to their homes.

When asked what they thought about holiday clubs providing food, some parents reported that it meant they weren't worried about their children going hungry and everybody attending holiday club was the same. Moreover, because food was provided, it meant children weren't buying sweets and fizzy drinks from the tuck shop:

"I don't need to worry too much if they're going to get something to eat down there in the centre. I think that's good and I think that actually for this age group, it's good that it's a healthy snack because you know I wouldn't want them coming in and having the full tuck shop experience with fizzy drinks and you know and that" (P/C 1).

While some parents acknowledged the difficulties that clubs faced in providing lunch for children; many of whom had different food preferences, it was acknowledged that the food provided was generally healthy, and some parents appreciated that food met dietary requirements. However, some parents said the food could be improved. For example, one parent commented that the previous summer, she had thought that the food could have been better, and it had not changed this year. In addition, one parent explained that because her children were getting access to food at lunch time at the holiday club, she was less stressed as there had been times when she could not afford to provide food herself:

"definitely, definitely, I mean the kids, it means then that the kids are all getting lunch, and they're getting the same things, and it's not, parents aren't, like to be honest, where I'm not having to stand and make a lunch and think like what do I need to think of, and plus too there's some days where you wouldn't have the money to pay for it so it is very good" (P/C 3).

5.7.3.6 Summary

This section explored parents/carers views regarding holiday club provision in Northern Ireland. Parents/carers reported that the nine-week summer holiday period was an expensive time of year and they faced difficulties meeting the increased cost of food and entertaining their children. For some parents, the choice was stark: either pay to do something or eat. This therefore suggests that clubs were reaching the families who needed support. Where clubs charged, the £1 or £2 fee was thought to represent good value for money, particularly when compared to the cost of alternative provision. Some parents were however aware that their children had been referred to holiday club due to their family circumstances and being in need of support. However, there was no indication from parents that suggested that they felt stigmatised by this approach, suggesting that the sensitive approach to marketing the club to prevent stigmatisation worked. Parents/carers reported that their children enjoyed holiday club and were able to take part in a range of activities that were not available at home. Many parents reported that their children were gaining skills and knowledge and growing in confidence, suggesting that, although not measured quantitatively, the approach of integrating activities that supported learning and personal development worked.

5.7.4 Holiday club staff

A total of 14 staff were interviewed across all four clubs. This section of the report outlines themes identified following analysis of data from interviews with holiday club leaders and holiday club staff, which are summarised in Table 4. This is followed by a short discussion of issues raised in each of the themes and sub-themes with example quotes and a short summary of issues raised.

Table 4. Sub-themes identified in interviews with holiday club staff

| Theme | Sub theme |
|--|--|
| Why holiday provision is needed | Poverty; food poverty; evolution of holiday provision. |
| Benefits of holiday provision for children | Food; emotional support; learning new skills, friendship and socialising. |
| Benefits of holiday provision for parents | Providing food; poverty; respite, safe place. |
| Benefit of holiday provision for the community | Distraction from anti-social behaviour; community cohesion; sectarianism; racism |
| Operational characteristics of holiday clubs | Food; how people access provision; charging policy; stigma and avoiding stigma |

5.7.4.1 Why holiday provision is needed

Sub-themes identified in interviews with holiday club staff relating to why holiday provision was needed focused on poverty and food poverty and the evolution of holiday provision.

Many staff, particularly those who were charged with the delivery of holiday club provision were of the opinion that poverty was one of the main reasons for the establishment of holiday clubs. Many communities were still feeling the effect of the 2008 recession, which had been intensified as a result of austerity measures. In one area, a club leader explained that the public sector had been a big employer but jobs had disappeared and had not been replaced:

“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 thatsuddenly people who were in very well paid jobs have no work, er 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” (HCS 12).

Similarly, a holiday club leader in a rural town explained that factories in the area had closed, people were therefore unemployed, and this had led to problems with drug and alcohol dependency as families who were once well off struggled to cope:

“so like all areas at the minute we've employment issues, drugs and alcohol issues, reliance, and dependence on, prescription drugs, as a result if you like of all of this, all of the unemployment, and the shock to systems in term s of how people find themselves living now, as opposed to when they would sustain and support their family in the past” (HCS 13).

A member of staff in a club that worked with people who were newly arrived in Northern Ireland explained that families had very little when they arrived and were either not entitled to work or were looking for work if they had settled status, or employed in low paid jobs in the food processing sector. Thus, holiday provision was needed to help children from immigrant populations to access food during the summer:

“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 kind of have your you know financial situation in place and stuff erm and so to just make sure that they have something to eat and something healthy too” (HCS 3).

Some holiday clubs were well established and had been providing activities during the summer for a number of years. However, staff reported that they were aware that hunger during the school summer holiday period was very real for some children and that it had been increasing in recent years. Their summer programmes had evolved and providing food was now a new or relatively new feature of their summer provision, introduced in response to concerns about rising levels of poverty:

“So I’m kind of overseeing those type of clubs but it’s just mostly generic summer provision. Over the past 3 years we’ve had more of a need on the issue of actual hunger of kids and the issues they are facing and poverty” (HCS 1).

In the past, one club had provided tea and toast for children during the summer, but a member of staff reported that that children attending the holiday club this year were hungry and were asking when food was going to be provided:

“I can tell, I’ve seen the kids, I’ve never realised before but I can see that some of the kids you are very very hungry that are here, and they’ll be asking when is the food going to come out, I think it will be a good help to the families as well who maybes couldn’t afford the food” (HCS5).

5.7.4.2 Benefits of holiday provision for children

Sub-themes identified in interviews with holiday club staff regarding the benefits of holiday club provision for children related to the food and emotional support provided in holiday clubs and how children learnt new skills, made friends and were able to socialise.

Staff considered that children benefited in multiple ways by attending holiday club, and, following on from issues raised above regarding the need for holiday provision, accessing food was highlighted as one of the most important benefits:

“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 er and kids are starting to eat a more diverse diet and that that’s what the funding has done, it has made a huge impact plus parents have realised our children are getting food” (HCS 11).

The same member of staff recalled how one young person was particularly benefiting from being able to access food at the holiday club:

“...one particular teenager, (name) he doesn’t have any food, he never gets fed, he’s always starving, he he’s found a home here and he’s eating well now err now that we’ve fed him” (HCS11).

Holiday club staff also perceived that children may have chaotic home lives and that their emotional well-being was supported through holiday clubs:

“...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” (HCS 2).

A member of staff who was employed in a holiday club that worked with child refugees and children from families who were newly arrived in Northern Ireland recalled how, as a child she had moved to Northern Ireland and had been unable to speak the language. She had felt very alone and frightened but had found out about the holiday club and had volunteered at the club and was now a paid member of staff. She was able to empathise with and support children who were facing the same challenges she had faced when she first arrived in Northern Ireland and she knew that that made a difference to children who were attending the club now:

"...I can totally I totally understand how they feel, I know how stressful it is how like you are just confused most of the time, you know if anything you are kind of scared you don't know what's happening, there's people talking to you you and you know so unless you know the language like it is quite difficult I am not going to lie" (HCS 3).

The same member of staff said that attending the club had helped her improve her English and she knew from first-hand experience that it helped children learn English, as it had helped her when she first came to Northern Ireland.

Building and supporting children's personal development was an important feature of one long established club's aims. A senior holiday club leader in the club advised how holiday club helped support that. She explained that youth service provision in Northern Ireland is funded through the education service and is linked to the national curriculum. Providers have aims and targets to meet and their provision is regularly monitored to ensure standards are met and to obtain further funding. In addition to enabling children to participate in initiatives such as the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, young people were able to take an OCN in youth work. Young people were able to volunteer and work as mentors in holiday clubs, and as well as building confidence and skills, it was also hoped that supportive environment would raise young people's aspirations:

"...for those aspiring to go to university, they're going to want the same programmes to look good then when they're filling in their forms for university so young people come with their own agenda, when we get them we give them the opportunities that they can have a go through here, and then we build up the relationships because everything we do, the focus is built on relationships, it's about engaging number one the adult with the child, building that rapport and through that rapport, using that to develop the child" (HCS 12).

Younger children were also able to learn new skills at holiday club and the mini-medics programme, which teaches children about first aid, featured in programmes delivered in two of the clubs. One club leader recalled that the summer mini medics programme had been adapted to build on work that had taken place earlier in the year supporting children in learning to deal with mental health issues and their emotions:

"...so that's around addressing the feelings and what they can do with them, so this has just dovetailed so beautifully with that whole programme, so we've done that whole if you like, neurobiology piece with the children, now we're doing the nutritional piece, and the physical activity piece. and it's all coming together over so many days" (HCS 13).

Children's social well-being was also supported because attendance at holiday club meant that they could make friends and socialise. Staff considered that without holiday club, children would have spent the summer alone at home engaging in sedentary activities. However, because one club was now able to provide food during the summer, the opportunity was also taken to use food and sharing a meal together as an opportunity to engage and interact with each other and with staff:

"yeah like in the evenings with young people, we sometimes, we'll sit, have a room as a space where you can sit around the table and you can eat and have table talk which is great because it seems like when kids eat they talk more, they don't they're not behind a phone,

they're not distracted, they actually talk to us and it puts everyone on an equal footing" (HCS 11).

The same member of staff commented that this was particularly useful in breaking down barriers and explained how sharing a meal had helped Syrian child refugees bond with other children in the club:

"food always creates, food all over the world is used as, to break down barriers err, we have Syrian refugees so we have catered for them and they have been able to eat with us and their culture is built around food so that has been important and they have started to eat the food which is good ... but they have realised that we are catering for them and it creates a family atmosphere, a hospitable atmosphere and I think the parents have noticed that and seen that and appreciated that" (HCS 11).

5.7.4.3 Benefits of holiday provision for parents

Holiday club staff highlighted a number of ways in which they perceived that parents may benefit as a result of their children attending holiday club. Sub-themes identified related to sub-themes of providing food and lack of money which were the main reasons staff believed holiday clubs were needed in the first place:

"I also think that they are being fed now, it's going to be a big thing you know I think some people do struggle if they have their school meals and they are having their school meals paid and they are getting that everyday and I think I think that is another big thing you know lay out of money because they have to provide their midday meal you know" (HCS 9).

Therefore, for families in that situation, if children were at holiday club and were being given food, then parents would be able to relax knowing that their children had had something to eat:

"I think, I think it's a good help giving the food for the parents because they know that their kids are still getting something to eat, they are still going to get something to eat when they're here so I think it's a good a good help for the parents" (HCS 5).

A member of staff in the same club suggested that some children were hungry and may not have had anything to eat before attending holiday club. It may have been because food was not available or that children may not have eaten before attending club simply because they had just woken up:

"I think some of them do, some of them are genuinely hungry but it may have been the were just woken up and were saying they were going to the club and that it, and were just sent on their way and were maybe not given their breakfast until they get something there, yeah but I don't know what it would be like afterwards" (HCS 4).

Holiday club staff also thought that parents benefited in other ways because their children were at holiday club. For instance, parents may work so holiday club helped provided childcare or if a child had special needs, parents may benefit by having some respite.

"...we found a lot of parents want the respite or need the respite or may have other siblings at home who are too young or too old not too old too young to attend because again maybe some parents work or or again they've got other siblings all day just need the respite you know if the kids have additional needs and stuff that they mightn't be able to do you know especially if the kids aren't at school and are not in a routine" (HCS 1)

One member of holiday club staff told the researchers about a parent who had two children with special needs who had tried to find somewhere for her children to go during the summer but had been turned away from other clubs. Knowing her children were safe was a huge relief but it also meant the mum was able to go to work and catch up on household chores:

“she just says that just having those couple of hours that he is here and is somewhere safe and well taken care of like she can just either go to work or take care of the house , you know things like that, which you know, she says she barely ever has time when she has both of them at home” (HCS 3)

Safety and knowing their children were in a safe environment and having fun was also considered an important benefit for parents. This was an important issue for a number of reasons and staff said that clubs were “cross-community” spaces where children from different backgrounds could mix together in a safe place and not be hanging around the streets:

“ it's a safe place for them to be off the you know off the street” (HCS 7).

5.7.4.4 Benefits of holiday provision for communities

Sub-themes identified in interviews with holiday club staff regarding the benefits of holiday club provision for communities related to how holiday clubs were a distraction from anti-social behaviour, how clubs could enhanced community cohesion and prevent sectarianism and racism.

As discussed above, holiday club staff considered holiday club was a safe space where children could play during the summer. This was, as parents had similarly acknowledged, because anti-social behaviour was an issue in a number of places and staff saw the provision of holiday club as a diversion from anti-social behaviour. Staff in one club for example, hoped that by welcoming young children into the club from end of their first year at school would mean that once school resumed after the summer break, the children would continue to attend through-out the year and in following years. As they got older, it was hoped that early involvement with the club would divert them away from anti-social behaviour. The same club also stayed open until 10.00pm for older children and purposefully provided food later in the evening to prevent children from going into town and visiting takeaways to buy food:

“we provide a cooked supper on a Friday night or on a Saturday night so that they went home directly form here at 11 o'clock or 10 o'clock at night not needing to go in to the town centre to go for the chippy or to go for the Chinese (takeaway), but being happy that they got food here so it's diversion that's how it started off, it was diversionary” (HCS 12).

For another club, which was located in an area of high deprivation, a member of staff explained that by being at holiday club, younger children would not see older children causing trouble, and given the sectarian history of the area, saw 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” (HCS7).

Bringing children together from different communities and promoting cohesion were important for a lot of club staff who felt that something positive was needed to bring communities together. Moreover, one member of staff reported that whilst there were issues relating to sectarianism, but that racism was now more of an issue in some communities:

“we have a lot of the majority of our young people are from a different culture so they have had that impact on a community that may be that has been you know this area has been

conflict for many years and now it's coming into instead of sectarianism it's now racism is now involved as well because of the new Communities as well" (HCS 1).

Therefore, bringing children from different backgrounds and cultures into one place was viewed as positive step:

"most definitely because as I say I think a lot of these different kids, all these kids are coming from , maybe they are within their respective communities and working with the single community groups, or maybe some of them aren't even working with their community groups, you know maybe out of fear, or children here within their community be in there and stuff, so it's good we can bring them outside their community" (HCS 14).

5.7.4.5 Operational characteristics of holiday clubs

Sub-themes identified in interviews with holiday club staff regarding the operational characteristics of holiday clubs included food and how people access provision, clubs' charging policies and stigma and how to avoid it.

As discussed above, holiday club provision with food was deemed to be a very important issue by holiday club staff as they firmly believed that children in their communities were going hungry during the summer holidays. However, even for long established clubs, it was the first time they had provided food, thus food provision was limited to a certain extent. Issues relating primarily to staff and premises had hindered the provision of food. Where food was provided in house, beyond having basic food hygiene training, staff providing food were not formally qualified to do so. One club had planned to employ a qualified chef for the duration of the summer but that had not happened, so a member of staff was asked to provide food:

"I was brought in because the guy, we had a chef in, well he worked as a chef and then he took off, so we actually it was just me thrown in at the deep end but och we are, we are getting on ok I think" (HCS 4)

Despite this, the food provided seemed to be well received by children who praised the toasties and pizzas, which were provided alongside other snack items such as pancakes, toast and fresh fruit and food was also provided that met Halal dietary requirements. The club leader in this club acknowledged that the club may not be providing food that met nutritional (school food) standards, but explained that the food provision in the club would be developed in future years:

"we're not keeping to nutrition standards but I make no apologies for that because I am thinking first of all at this phase of the project in feeding young people and giving them what they like, we're giving them healthy options as well as far as we can do it, but if we are to develop this project then we will be developing it along the lines of health, nutrition and then looking at that, not only as what you prepare but the education side of it as well" (HCS12)

In a second club where food was also provided in house, although the member of staff was not formally qualified, she nonetheless had experience of working in a similar capacity at summer camps elsewhere. She advised that she took cues on the type of food children liked from her own children. In one club, despite there being a kitchen on the premises, the club was unable to access it and resorted to having a toaster on a trolley in the sports hall. Food was brought to the club from its sister site, but on the whole, catering facilities were unsatisfactory and limited provision:

"we don't have access, especially during the summer, to the kitchen area, we have to just use a corner in the room and we've got socket and a toaster so everything has to be carted and ready model and brought up and they bring up and do toast and stuff, and again (the

)youth room has that kitchen facility over in the corner so it does and there's like a wee coffee bar if you want to call it, but we just have to use what we have got" (HCS 7).

Similarly, another club did not own the premises where their holiday provision took place and could not access the kitchens without insurance provision. Thus, cold packed lunches were provided for children because it was simply a question of being pragmatic. In future, the club would consider providing hot food should they be able to find appropriate premises:

"well to be honest with you it wasn't even , it was more a practical thing, we work closely with (name of shop) and the food's really good, so we brought fruit, water, and a wee bar through (name of shop) who supported the project, so they were able to provide that element of it, and then the sandwiches were a decision that it's more practical, cause this venue of the leisure centre, if you're starting to make hot food and stuff there's insurance issues and things like that, so that was mainly the reason behind that. So if we were maybe hosting it in another venue or, we could possibly look into getting a hot meal or whatever. that's the only real reason behind it, it was just more practical to get the sandwiches from our point of view organising it" (HCS 14).

Some club leaders were of the opinion that the provision of food had resulted in greater numbers of attendees at holiday club:

"I will be totally honest with you, this is the first time I've had 85 kids at our scheme normally last year I would go maybe for 40/45 tops and I don't know if that's (food) what's brought part of the numbers" (HCS 7),

A member of staff in another club also thought attendee numbers had increased because food was provided this year:

"I think it (the food) has been fantastic, it's been busy, it's been fantastic, the kids, the numbers have increased I think because of the food and stuff" (HCS 11).

However, one club leader was sure that attendance rates were the same:

"no there is about the same numbers of children actually I would say, it's very similar, the pattern is very similar so it is, but certainly the parents are very appreciative of the fact that they are getting the level of food that they're getting, they really are very appreciative of that" (HCS 12).

Staff also told researchers that if more funding was available, more children would be able to access holiday provision and that demand outstripped supply. One member of holiday club staff for instance, indicated that they had limited the age range to restrict the numbers, and in another club, a member of staff had indicated that they *"constantly get phone calls like, do you have any spaces left do you have any spaces left, which is obviously there's only so much we can do and only so many people we can accommodate"*(HCS 3). One club operated a referral system to ensure that those who were most in need were able to access provision. Some clubs operated a mixed system where they were open to the wider community and charged £1-£2 for attendance. However, they had practices and procedures in place to ensure that children who had been referred did not have to pay. The clubs operated a code system so that children who did not have to pay were not seen to be stigmatised because they had been referred. Where clubs charged, staff expressed mixed views on whether this would serve as a barrier to some children being able to attend. In one club, the admission charge covered the cost of food, and it was considered that requiring a payment meant that the service would be more valued than if it were free. However, it was also thought that if a family had more than one child, children might not be able to attend every day:

“I don't know, well I don't know, maybe if the parents have a few, a couple of children maybe £2 per day maybe say if you have 2 or 3 children that maybe and then providing them with money if they want drinks or something but I suppose maybe just you need maybe something needs to be paid so maybe or maybe they mightn't come maybe every day but they will come as often as they as they can for it” (HCS 10).

When researchers asked holiday club staff if they would change anything about the way they provided holiday provision, staff indicated that the provision of food had been challenging and they would seek to improve that in the future, but they would also continue things that had worked well. One club for example had started a female football team and were keen to see it expand. Clubs were keen to provide holiday provision at other times of the year as they thought it was badly needed in their communities. Other considerations were more practical. One club that had bused attendees to the club indicated that they may consider setting up a club closer to where people lived as transport had been a significant cost in the model of holiday club provision they had delivered this year. Nonetheless, staff said that it was a learning process and they learnt each year they ran holiday provision. A member of staff in one club indicated that the more they provided holiday clubs, the more they learnt and each time, they got closer to making contact with families who were even harder to engage with than the families they currently worked with:

“so we will always do our best to try and reach those that are hardest to reach, and we, you know that's along with this programme as well. we learn from it, we learn every time we run this, we get really excited and say you know what we could do next time, or who we should include next time, and with every partner agency we include next time, we get closer and closer to those that are hard to reach” (HCS 13).

An important issue that resonated throughout the interviews with holiday club staff was the amount of respect and high regard those organisations that were delivering holiday club provision were regarded by the communities they worked with. This was manifested in the way that many of the young people who were staff or volunteers mentors had actually attended the holiday club themselves. In one club which supported refugees and newly arrived people in Northern Ireland, staff spoke of people wanting to come back to the club and volunteer:

“yeah but again I suppose like the way we do things like in here must work because people just want to work with us, they want to stay and even we have like junior volunteers who used to be participants who used to be young people and they stay with us and they want to train and they go for training and they get their OCNs and you know peer mentoring and stuff like that and they just kind of continue that as volunteers and then give their time”(HCS3).

In another club, several members of staff recalled that the parents of attendees had attended the club and had attended the club themselves:

“like when I was younger, I'm from the town when I was younger I came to them like I played football for the youth club and stuff, I did all that that sort of stuff so it's kind of its nice to see it kind of still happening 10, 10, 15 years later, but like an advantage like a lot of them will be sort of related (the volunteers) to the children or have an association with the children already so it's nice to see that wee bond that they have already because it kind of makes” (HCS 6).

5.7.4.6 Summary

Holiday club staff firmly believed that holiday provision was needed because rates of poverty had increased as a result of large-scale job losses in the public and private sectors, leading to high rates of unemployment. Some holiday club staff spoke of the devastating effect this had had on individuals and communities and said

that attendance rates at their club had increased compared to previous years because food was provided, which would indirectly support hard pressed families because children were getting access to food. Providing food was a new addition to most holiday clubs. Thus, it is not surprising that clubs seemed to encounter issues with this in some way, shape or form. Two clubs had access to kitchens, but staff providing food were not formally qualified and two clubs did not have access to kitchen facilities because they were either prohibited from using them or did not have the funds to meet insurance costs to use kitchen facilities, so both chose to provide cold packed lunches. All clubs acknowledged that food provision had presented some difficulties, and this has already been reflected in data reported earlier in this study, but clubs hoped to improve on this in future years.

Clubs were encouraged to provide engaging stimulating activities that promote learning and personal development and the data collected from holiday club staff suggests that clubs were helping children in this regard through OCN qualifications and mini-medics. In addition, data collected for this study suggests that clubs also offered a nurturing and supportive environment to attendees. Moreover, it was hoped that engaging children in such a positive way at a very young age would have a number of positive benefits including distracting them from anti-social behaviour but would also build bridges between children from different religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

5.8 Discussion

During the summer holidays, low income families face increased financial pressures: food shopping bills increase; the cost of keeping children entertained is prohibitive; and for working parents, the cost of childcare can be up to three times as much as during term time (Campbell, Watson, & Watters, 2015; Cottell & Fiaferana, 2018; Stewart, Watson, & Campbell, 2018). The findings of Study 1 reflect findings of prior qualitative research that indicates that the school summer holiday period is a challenging time for families but that holiday provision benefits families, children and communities in multiple ways beyond just providing access to food (Crilley, Sattar, & Defeyter, 2018; Defeyter et al., 2015; Graham et al., 2016; Mann, 2019; Shinwell, 2019). In the current study, parents similarly acknowledged that the summer holidays are an expensive time of year and that for some, hard choices had to be made between undertaking activities that would keep children entertained or buying food. Other stakeholders spoke of the need for holiday provision because of hardship following large scale job losses in some communities. Some children spoke candidly of being aware of members their friendship groups potentially experiencing holiday hunger, and some recalled previous summers when they had had no money to buy food from the tuck shop in the club. Holiday club therefore made everybody equal. All stakeholders spoke positively about the benefits of holiday club for children, not only because they were able to access food but because they were able to take part in a range of activities and trips that they would not have been able to do without holiday club. As a result, they gained skills and confidence. All stakeholders reported that communities benefited from holiday club provision as children were occupied and thus not hanging around on street corners, and one club specifically opened late into the evening and provided a late supper so that children did not have to go into town to buy takeaways. Participants in the current study also offered a unique insight into the benefits of holiday provision as a way to break down barriers between different communities. This was important given the country's history and sectarian divisions, but was also applicable in the context of newly arrived immigrant populations in Northern Ireland. Stakeholders spoke positively about the way clubs operated, and children found it hard to make recommendations on how holiday clubs could be improved, with the exception in some instance relating to food and that clubs were on for longer. However, funding and practicalities relating to staff being able to take their own holidays prevented clubs from operating for more of the nine-week holidays.

6.0 Study 2: Holiday Club Leader Survey

6.1 Study Aims

The aim of this study was to gather information about the characteristics of club operations for those clubs funded by Children in Northern Ireland, including:

- (a) Aims of the clubs and self-reported data on how well aims were met;
- (b) Operational characteristics of holiday clubs;
- (c) Food and activity provision, and
- (d) Value of working in partnership with CINI and others to deliver holiday club provision.

6.2 Materials and Method

6.2.1 Materials

A bespoke survey with open and closed ended questions was designed by the Healthy Living Lab to capture data on club aims, club characteristics, food and activity provision and information on the benefits of working in partnership to deliver holiday club provision.

6.2.2 Participants

Holiday club leaders in each of the four holiday clubs were invited to complete the survey that asked for information about their clubs. All club leaders agreed to take part.

6.2.3 Procedure

Following receipt of ethical approval by the Faculty of Life Sciences Ethics Committee at Northumbria University, the administration team at Children in Northern Ireland was asked to disseminate information about the study to club leaders. Club leaders who expressed an interest in taking part were sent a letter of invitation and a research information sheet and were asked to give their consent to taking part in the study. A copy of the survey was emailed to each club leader with instructions on how to complete the survey. Club leaders were asked to return completed surveys to the research team by email.

6.3 Results

6.3.1 Aims and success of achieving aims

Club leaders were asked to rank the top five aims of their clubs and how successfully they achieved them from a list of twelve possible aims. Some clubs chose to rank more than just their top five aims and ranked their success of delivering some aspects of their holiday club delivery that were not originally ranked as an aim. The results are presented by club in

Table 5, Table 6, Table 7, and Table 8. The results suggest that clubs placed a high priority on enabling children to access healthy food and encouraging children to have fun, gain new life skills and reduce social isolation. Club leaders indicated that they very successfully or successfully met their stated aims.

Table 5. Aims and success of achieving aims for club 1

| | Rank of aim (1= highest priority -5 = lowest priority) | Success of delivering aim (5 = very successful – 1 =not successful) |
|--|--|---|
| To provide food to children who would otherwise be hungry / miss a meal | 1 | 5 |
| To provide healthy food for children | | 5 |
| To lessen children's loneliness and social isolation | 2 | 5 |
| To encourage healthier eating behaviours in children (e.g. try new foods) | 3 | 4 |
| To encourage engagement of children in physical activity (play or sport) | 4 | 5 |
| To provide children with opportunities to develop life skills (e.g. teamwork, social skills) | 5 | 5 |
| To encourage children to have fun and enjoy themselves | NR | 5 |
| To provide a safe place for children to play | NR | 5 |
| To provide an advisory service for parents | NR | 4 |
| To improve children's nutritional knowledge | NR | 4 |
| To support children's educational attainment | NR | 4 |
| To encourage children to develop cooking or food preparation skills | NR | 3 |
| NR = Not ranked | | |
| Other aims: | | |
| To provide children an opportunity to engage with others from a different culture or background. | | |
| To support peer mentors to volunteer and deliver a engaging, educational and fun programme for children. | | |

Table 6. Aims and success of achieving aims for club 2

| | Rank of aim (1= highest priority -5 = lowest priority) | Success of delivering aim (5 = very successful – 1 =not successful) |
|---|--|---|
| To provide food to children who would otherwise be hungry / miss a meal | 1 | 5 |
| To encourage healthier eating behaviours in children (e.g. try new foods) | 2 | 5 |
| To improve children's nutritional knowledge | 3 | |
| To encourage children to develop cooking or food preparation skills | 4 | 5 |
| To encourage children to have fun and enjoy themselves | 5 | 5 |
| To encourage engagement of children in physical activity (play or sport) | | 5 |
| Other: | | |
| To provide a quality youth service for children and young people during the holiday | | |

Table 7. Aims and success of achieving aims for club 3

| | Rank of aim (1= highest priority -5 = lowest priority) | Success of delivering aim (5 = very successful – 1 =not successful) |
|--|--|---|
| To lessen children's loneliness and social isolation | 1 | 4 |
| To provide a safe place for children to play | 1 | 4 |
| To provide food to children who would otherwise be hungry / miss a meal | 1 | 4 |
| To encourage engagement of children in physical activity (play or sport) | 2 | 4 |
| To encourage children to have fun and enjoy themselves | 2 | 4 |
| To provide children with opportunities to develop life skills (e.g. teamwork, social skills) | 2 | 5 |
| To provide healthy food for children | 3 | 4 |
| To encourage healthier eating behaviours in children (e.g. try new foods) | 3 | 4 |
| To improve children's nutritional knowledge | 3 | 4 |
| To support children's educational attainment | 3 | 3 |
| To provide an advisory service for parents | 4 | 3 |
| To encourage children to develop cooking or food preparation skills | 4 | 3 |

Table 8. Aims and success of achieving aims for club 4

| | Rank of aim (1= highest priority -5 = lowest priority) | Success of delivering aim (5 = very successful – 1 =not successful) |
|--|--|---|
| To provide food to children who would otherwise be hungry / miss a meal | 1 | 4 |
| To provide healthy food for children | 1 | 4 |
| To encourage healthier eating behaviours in children (e.g. try new foods) | 1 | 4 |
| To encourage engagement of children in physical activity (play or sport) | 1 | 4 |
| To lessen children's loneliness and social isolation | 1 | 4 |
| To encourage children to have fun and enjoy themselves | 1 | 4 |
| To provide children with opportunities to develop life skills (e.g. teamwork, social skills) | 1 | 5 |
| To provide a safe place for children to play | 1 | 4 |
| To provide an advisory service for parents | 2 | 3 |
| To improve children's nutritional knowledge | 3 | 4 |
| To encourage children to develop cooking or food preparation skills | 3 | 3 |
| To support children's educational attainment | 3 | 3 |

Overall, club aims were varied but all clubs aimed to provide children with access to healthy food and activities that supported their health and well-being. Club leaders indicated that they agreed or strong agreed that they met their aims.6.4 Operational characteristics of clubs

6.3.2 Operational characteristics of holiday clubs

The club leader survey also examined a number of issues relating to the operational characteristics of clubs including location of clubs, frequency and duration of club sessions, recruitment and cost of attendance, type of meals served, networks and partnerships, benefits of working with Children in Northern Ireland and future plans for holiday provision.

6.3.2.1 Location of clubs

Club leaders were asked to provide the postcode of where their holiday club took place. Postcodes were entered into the Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation 2017 (NIDM2017) which provides information on levels of deprivation in Northern Ireland and ranks areas in order of the most deprived (1) to least deprived (890). Each holiday club's ranking in the NIDM is presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Holiday club delivery site rankings in the Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation

| *Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation 2017 | |
|---|-----|
| Club 1 | 412 |
| Club 2 | 115 |
| Club 3 | 536 |
| Club 4 | 127 |

*Information from the Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivations (Rank: 1-890). All 890 small areas in Northern Ireland have been ranked according to a range of indicators including income, employment, health, crime, housing, education and access, with the most deprived having a rank of 1 and the least deprived a rank of 890.

As noted above, two clubs (2 and 4) were situated in areas that were listed among the most deprived in Northern Ireland while two clubs (1 and 3) were located in areas that are ranked as average in terms of deprivation. Importantly, all areas of Northern Ireland are likely to be confronted with pockets of poverty and childhood food insecurity.

Club leaders were asked to indicate how far children had to travel to the club. Three clubs were located within one to three miles of where attendees lived, and club leaders indicated that children would walk short distances (up to one mile) to the club, and for distances of between one and three miles, children were usually dropped off at clubs by parents. One club provided free transport for children who lived 5-16 miles from where the club was held. In one club, although the club was held in premises that were within three miles of where attendees lived, club staff nonetheless picked children up and dropped them off at home after the club.

6.3.2.2 Frequency and duration of club sessions

The frequency and duration of holiday provision offered by clubs varied as each club operated a different model of holiday provision, details of which are summarised in Table 10.

One club operated for five hours, three days a week from a school site which they hired (at a favourable rate) for three weeks during July. One club operated from two sites, a main, purpose-built club which it owned, which was open for up to 10 – 12 hours a day for four weeks in July. Holiday provision was also delivered from a second site located in a local authority community centre. Provision in the main site was structured so that children of different ages had their own discrete time when they were able to attend and take part in activities: children aged 4-7 were able to attend from 10.00 am until 12 noon three days a week, whilst children aged 8+ were able to attend from 1.00pm until 4.00pm, five days a week for three weeks during the month of July. A teen club was available three evenings per week from 7pm until 10pm for four weeks during July. Holiday provision at the second sister site was available for children aged seven plus from 12 noon until 3.00 pm, five days a week, between 1st and 19th July. Both sites also provided a range of day and evening trips, including swimming, ice skating and ten pin bowling. Evening trips were available for older children. Club 3, a newly established club, was operational for five hours for two days in the first week of August. Club 4 was open for five weeks during July and August, for four to six hours per day, with operational hours linked to activities provided. Trips were included in the five-week programme of activities to museums, parks and bowling.

Table 10. Operational hours of clubs

| | Hours | Days | No of weeks |
|--------|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Club 1 | 9.30 am – 2.30 pm | Mon, Tue, Wed | 3 |
| Club 2 | 10.00 am – 10.00 pm | Mon-Friday | 3-4 |
| Club 3 | 10.00 am – 3.00pm | Thurs &Friday | 1 |
| Club 4 | 9.30 am - 3.00 pm | Mon- Friday | 4-5 |

Club leaders were asked to explain the reasons for the frequency and duration of their holiday provision. The ability of the organisation to manage provision or ensuring as much provision as possible for as many weeks of the summer and doing so before staff took their own summer holidays were reasons cited by club leaders for their chosen holiday club model. Funding was an issue for one newly established club, which limited the amount of provision the club could deliver.

6.3.2.3 Recruitment and attendance

Holiday club leaders were asked if they targeted provision. One club targeted all children aged 4+ but had a referral procedure in place to support disadvantaged children. One club targeted disadvantaged children aged 8-11 years. The decision to only target disadvantaged children in this age range was due to funding constraints. Two clubs specifically targeted children who were in receipt of free school meals or families who were on a low income or had been identified as disadvantaged. Referrals for all clubs were made through the Family Hub and/or other organisations.

6.3.2.4 Cost of attendance

Holiday club leaders were asked if there was charge for attending club. Two clubs did not charge for attendance (clubs 1 and 3). Club 2 charged £1-2 per session but children who were referred to the club did not have to pay. Charges at club 4 were variable: families were charged £1 per family for family activities and £1.50 a day per child for other activities. An additional charge of £3 was payable for trips provided by the club. Club leaders reported that charges helped meet the cost of program content and maintenance and energy bills for club premises.

6.3.2.5 Networks and partnerships

Respondents reported that their clubs work with other organisations, service providers and agents to deliver activities, food and services to their users. Clubs engaged with a range of organisations from different sectors demonstrating that they rely on networks and partnerships with organisations from across a range of sectors to help deliver holiday provision. The networks and partnerships of organisations, which support holiday provision, are detailed in Table 11.

Table 11. List of organisations supporting holiday club provision

| Public Sector | Third Sector Organisations | Other Organisations |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council | Northern Ireland Youth Forum | Pathways |
| Children in Northern Ireland Education Authority | Salvation Army | Supermarkets: ASDA, Tesco |
| | St Vincent de Paul | Euro Spar |
| | YMCA/PAKT | Transport partner |
| | Youth Link | |
| | Family Health Initiative | |

6.3.2.6 Type of meals served

A range of meals were provided by clubs, all respondents (N=4) served lunch at their club. Clubs 1, 2 and 4 also provided breakfast. In addition to providing breakfast and lunch, club 2 also provided supper. Club 3 only provided lunch. Food was prepared and cooked on site in clubs 1 and 2. Food was provided by outside organisations in clubs 3 and 4.

6.3.2.7 Club Leader experiences of delivering food and activities

Club leaders were asked about their experiences of providing food and activities over the summer. Respondents indicated that they felt that activities had been well planned and that organisations had worked well together to deliver holiday provision. Negative issues highlighted by respondents included costs incurred to hire premises and lack of funding which limited provision.

6.3.2.8 Participation in the Children in Northern Ireland holiday provision programme

The final section of the survey examined club leaders' views and experiences of participation in the Children in Northern Ireland summer holiday programme. One club leader reported that there was a need for summer holiday provision as partner organisations had advised them that children were going without food during the holidays. Club leaders indicated that they welcomed the support, advice and guidance that Children in Northern Ireland had provided which enabled them to provide and/or enhance their summer programmes, particularly in relation to funding and securing support from other organisations. The funding provided through Children in Northern Ireland had been used in a variety of ways including: meeting the cost of providing food; venue hire and facilitation costs for training courses for young people including first aid and leadership programmes.

6.3.2.9 Future plans for Holiday Provision

All respondents (N=4) indicated that they intended or would like run similar holiday provision programmes during future school holidays. One club indicated that it would continue to work with Children in Northern Ireland to develop its' term time after school and evening classes.

6.4 Discussion

The aim of this study was to gather information about the characteristics of the Children in Northern Ireland funded holiday clubs including club location, aims and how well clubs considered they met their aims, recruitment of attendees, food provision and the value of partnership working to deliver holiday provision. Overall, club aims were varied but focused predominantly on providing children with access to healthy food and supporting their health and well-being in a safe place. One club (club 3), ranked socialisation and safety higher than provision of food. This may have been the case because the club was only open for two days. Clubs also indicated that they aimed to provide opportunities for children to gain life skills. Supporting educational attainment was ranked as a medium priority by two clubs and not ranked as a priority by two clubs. Club leaders indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they met their aims. With regard to the operational characteristics of clubs, most clubs were within walking distance or a short car journey from where attendees lived, and prior research has indicated that it is important to make it easy to get to club, as the cost of travel may deter attendance (Shinwell, 2019). Some clubs charged for attendance and club leaders advised that this was to cover the cost of food and activities, as well as building and maintenance or insurance costs. Where clubs charged, clubs had systems in place to ensure that children who were referred to the club did not have to pay. All clubs provided lunch for attendees, with two clubs providing breakfast and one club providing supper for older children who attended the club in the evening. Clubs worked with a range of partners to deliver their provision and all clubs welcomed the advice, guidance and support they had received from Children in Northern Ireland. Funding provided by Children in Northern Ireland was predominantly used to meet the cost of providing food and programme provision, for example leadership and first aid training programmes for children. All clubs indicated that they planned to deliver holiday

provision in the future and one club hoped to continue to work with Children in Northern Ireland to develop its' term time after school programme and evening classes

7.0 Study 3: Nutritional intake of child holiday club attendees

7.1 Study aims

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of holiday club attendance on children's nutritional intake and whether holiday clubs can support the nutritional needs of children during the summer holidays. More specifically, the objectives of this study were:

- a) To investigate the effect of holiday club attendance on the total number of times children consumed core and non-core items of food, fruit, vegetables, water and sugar sweetened beverages across an entire day that children attended holiday club and a day they did not attend holiday club, and
- b) To investigate the effect of holiday club attendance on the total number of times core and non-core items of food were consumed by meal on a day that children attended and a day they children did not attend holiday club.

7.2 Materials and Methods

7.2.1 Study design

This study employed a 2 x 3 mixed factorial design. The first factor, attendance, was a within-subjects factor which had two levels: non-holiday club attendance vs. holiday club attendance. The second factor, club, was a between subjects factor, which had three levels: club 1, club 2 and club 4. The dependent measures were the number of times core and non-core food items, fruit, vegetables, water and sugar sweetened beverages were consumed across an entire day and the total number of core and non-core food items consumed by meal.

7.2.2 Participants

Non-probability purposive sampling was used to recruit participants to this study. Non-probability sampling refers to the process of recruiting participants to a study who meet certain practical criteria, and purposive sampling refers to the process of recruiting participants who are well placed and knowledgeable about the subject matter being investigated (Etikan, 2016; Lavrakas, 2008; Tongco, 2007). Participants were children who attended holiday clubs that were part of the Children in Northern Ireland holiday programme during summer 2019. Data collection took place in three of the four clubs (Clubs 1,2 and 4). Data were not collected in club 3 as attendees only attended the club on one occasion, thus follow up testing was not possible.

7.2.3 Demographic measures

Data on participants' age and gender were self-reported by children.

7.2.4 Materials

Data on children's nutritional intake was collected using the "Day in the Life Questionnaire" (DILQ) developed by Edmunds & Ziebland, (2002) and later adapted by (Moore, Tapper, Murphy, et al., 2007). The DILQ is a validated tool used to collect data on nutritional intake by children.

7.2.5 Procedure

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Northumbria University (Ref: 17110). Following receipt of ethical approval, the administration team at Children in Northern Ireland was asked to disseminate information about the study to club leaders. Club leaders who expressed an interest in taking part were sent a letter of invitation, a research information sheet and were asked to grant consent for the research to take place in their club. Following receipt of ethical approval by the Faculty of Life Sciences research and ethics committee, club leaders were also asked to act in loco parentis and grant consent for children to take part in the study. Club leaders who expressed an interest in taking part in the study were contacted by the researcher and a date and time for data

collection was agreed. Data on children’s nutritional intake, covering two 24-hour periods were collected at two time points: time 1 covered a 24-hour period when children did not attend holiday club; time 2 covered a 24-hour period when children had attended holiday club. On each data collection day, the researchers distributed copies of a child friendly research information sheet to children and explained that their holiday club leader had granted consent for the research to take place in the holiday club. The researchers read the information sheet aloud to child holiday club attendees and asked if they were happy to take part in the study. Children who indicated that they were happy to take part were provided with a copy of the DILQ and were given verbal instructions on how to complete the DILQ in addition to the written instructions in the diary. Most children completed the diary independently, but the researcher and members of holiday club staff provided assistance as required. Help provided included discussions with children about what they had done the previous day to help aid their recall. Assistance was also provided to help children spell words. The food diary took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

7.2.5.1 Data coding

Every item of food and drink consumed by each individual child on each day was coded as either a core or non-core item of food. Classification of a food item as either core or non-core is based upon Australian dietary guidelines, which are similar to the UK Eatwell Guide and are considered a simple way of measuring diet quality and have been used to analyse the dietary quality of UK children (Macdiarmid et al., 2009; Rangan, Randall, Hector, Gill, & Webb, 2008; Toumpakari, Haase, & Johnson, 2016). Foods classified as healthy (core) include carbohydrate-based foods, vegetables and fruit and a diet containing only core foods is considered adequate for a healthy lifestyle. Foods classed as non-core include processed meat, baked goods, confectionary and sugar sweetened beverages. These foods are considered as “extra” foods as a diet containing food from the core groups is considered adequate to meet nutritional needs (Rangan et al., 2008). Table 12 details the type of food and drink categorised as core and non-core based on Australian Dietary Guidelines and research undertaken by Grimes, Riddell, & Nowson (2014). Data on the number of core and non-core items consumed by each child at lunch time on each day were entered into an IBM SPSS Statistics (v.25) database. Analyses were conducted to investigate the effect of attendance at holiday club on children’s overall consumption of food and drinks across an entire day and by meal.

Table 12. Examples of food and drinks classified as core and non-core based upon Australian Dietary Guidelines

| Core food and drinks | Non-core food and drinks |
|---|---|
| Bread, breakfast cereal, rice, pasta, noodles, bread or bread rolls, pulses, tinned vegetables, baked beans, 100% freshly squeezed fruit juice, milk, yoghurt, cheese, water. | Bacon, sausages, ham, burger, kebab, fried fish, fish fingers, fried chicken, chicken goujons, sausage rolls, quiche, meat pies, roast potatoes, smiley face potato products, potato waffles, biscuits, buns, cakes, pastries, donuts, pancakes, desserts, chocolate, sweets, popcorn, ice cream, ice lollies, jelly, spreads, fizzy drinks, squash, milkshake, energy drinks, butter, ketchup. |

7.3 Results

7.3.1 Participants

Demographic characteristics of children who participated in this study by club are presented in Table 13. Consent was provided to collect data on the food and drink intake of N = 127 child holiday club attendees from three holiday clubs (Clubs 1, 2 and 4). The youngest child was seven years of age and the oldest child was 17 years of age. Data on five participants were excluded from the study as data were missing from one

or both of their DILQs. Data on a further 74 participants were excluded from the analysis as they did not attend their holiday club on a second occasion to complete the day 2 diary. This resulted in final sample of 48 participants.

Table 13. Participant demographic information for Study 2 by club

| | Club 1 | Club 2 | Club 4 |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Number of children | | | |
| [N/(%)] | 24(50) | 15(31) | 9(19) |
| Mean age | 9.3 | 12.8 | 9.8 |
| Age range | 8-11 | 7-17 | 9-11 |
| Gender [N/(%)] | | | |
| Male | 12(50) | 4(26) | 2(22) |
| Female | 12(50) | 11(74) | 7(78) |

7.3.2 Overall consumption across an entire day

7.3.2.1 Total core food intake as a factor of attendance

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed core food as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in

Table 14.

Table 14. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed core food items as factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 4.7(2.7) | 3.2(1.9) |
| 2 | 3.4(2.5) | 2.4 (1.9) |
| 4 | 6.1(3.4) | 3.0 (1.3) |
| Total mean (SD) | 4.5 (2.9) | 2.9 (1.8) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times core items of food were consumed, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results suggest there was a significant main effect of attendance on the total mean number of times core items of food were consumed by children across an entire day [$F(1,43)= 12.08, p<0.05, \eta_p^2 = .219$]. Children consumed more core items of food ($M = 4.5$) on a day they did not attend holiday club than a day they attended holiday club ($M = 2.9$). The results showed there was no effect of club [$F(2,43)=3.20, p>0.05$], nor an attendance x club interaction [$F(2,43)=1.07, p>0.05$].

7.3.2.2 Total non-core food intake

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed non-core items of food as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 15.

Table 15. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed non-core food items as factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 2.8(1.9) | 2.1(2.0) |
| 2 | 4.3(2.3) | 3.3(2.9) |
| 4 | 5.4(1.0) | 4.4(1.8) |
| Total mean (SD) | 3.7(2.2) | 2.8(2.4) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times non-core food items were consumed, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed there was a significant main effect of attendance on the total mean number of times non-core items of food were consumed by children across an entire day [$F(1,42) = 7.76, p < 0.05, \eta_p^2 = .156$]. Children consumed fewer non-core food items on a day they attended holiday club ($M = 2.8$) compared to a day they did not attend holiday club ($M = 3.7$). There was a significant main effect of club [$F(2,42) = 5.36, p < 0.05, \eta_p^2 = .203$]. There was no attendance by club interaction [$F(2,42) = .100, p > 0.05$]. Post hoc analysis showed that children in club 1 consumed fewer non-core items of food ($M = 5$) than children in club 2 ($M = 8$), ($t(36) = 2.16, p < 0.05$) and club 4 ($t(28) = 3.13, p < 0.05$) ($M = 10$). These findings suggest that overall, children consume non-core food items differently depending on the club they attend.

7.3.2.3 Total vegetable intake across an entire day

The mean and standard deviation for children's vegetable consumption as a factor of holiday club attendance by club are presented in Table 16.

Table 16. Total mean and standard deviation for the number of times children consumed vegetables by attendance and club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.5(1.0) | 0.6(0.5) |
| 2 | 0.3(0.5) | 0.1(0.4) |
| 4 | 1.0(1.0) | 0.6(0.9) |
| Total mean (SD) | 0.5(0.6) | 0.5(0.6) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times vegetables were consumed, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed there was no significant main effect of attendance with regard to the mean total number of times children consumed vegetables across an entire day [$F(1,44) = .91, p > 0.05$]. There was a significant main effect of club [$F(2,44) = 3.82, p < 0.05, \eta_p^2 = .148$]. There was no attendance x club interaction [$F(2,44) = .68, p > 0.05$]. Post hoc analysis showed that children in club 2 consumed fewer vegetables ($M = 0.5$), ($t(37) = 2.55, p < 0.05$) than children in club 1 ($M = 1.2$), ($t(30) = .74, p > 0.05$) and club 4 ($M = 1.6$), ($t(21) = 2.61, p > 0.05$). These findings suggest that overall, children consume vegetables differently depending on the club they attend.

7.3.2.4 Fruit intake across an entire day

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed fruit as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 17.

Table 17. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed fruit as factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.8(1.0) | 0.3(0.6) |
| 2 | 0.2(0.4) | 0.5(0.7) |
| 4 | 0.4(0.5) | 0.7(1.1) |
| Total mean (SD) | 0.5(0.8) | 0.4(0.7) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times fruit was consumed, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed there was no significant main effect of attendance with regard to the mean total number of times children consumed fruit across an entire day [$F(1,45) = .01, p>0.05$]. There was no significant main effect of club [$F(2,45) = .72, p>0.05$]. There was a significant attendance x club interaction [$F(2,45) = 3.65, p>0.05$]. Post hoc analysis showed that children in club 1 consumed more fruit on a day they did not attend holiday club ($M = 0.8$) compared to a day they attended holiday club ($M = 0.2$) ($t(23) = 2.41, p<0.05$).

7.3.2.5 Water intake across an entire day

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children drank water as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in

Table 18.

Table 18. Total mean number and (SD) of times children drank water as factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.6(1.2) | 0.8(1.2) |
| 2 | 0.5(1.1) | 0.5(0.5) |
| 4 | 0.3(0.7) | 0.7(0.9) |
| Total mean (SD) | 0.5(1.0) | 0.6(1.0) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times water was consumed, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed there was no significant main effect of attendance with regard to the total mean number of times children drank water across an entire day [$F(1,44) = 1.0, p>0.05$]. There was no significant main effect of club [$F(2,44) = .207, p>0.05$], nor an attendance x club interaction [$F(2,44) = .52, p>0.05$].

7.3.2.6 Sugar sweetened beverage intake across an entire day

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children drank sugar sweetened beverages as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 19.

Table 19. Total mean number and (SD) of times children drank sugar sweetened beverages as factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.6(0.7) | 0.9(0.9) |
| 2 | 0.9(0.9) | 0.9(1.2) |
| 4 | 1.2(0.6) | 0.6(0.7) |
| Total mean (SD) | 0.8(0.8) | 0.9(1.1) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times sugar sweetened beverages were consumed, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed there was no significant main effect of attendance with regard to the total mean number of times children drank sugar sweetened beverages across an entire day [$F(1,45) = .09, p>0.05$]. There was no significant main effect of club [$F(2,45) = .18, p>0.05$], nor an attendance x club interaction [$F(2,45) = 2.06, p>0.05$].

7.3.3 Food consumption by meal

Analyses were conducted to investigate the effect of attendance at holiday club of children's intake of core and non-core items at each meal, the results of which are reported in the following sub-sections.

7.3.3.1 Breakfast

7.3.3.1.1 Total core food intake for breakfast

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed core food items for breakfast as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 20.

Table 20. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed core food items for breakfast as factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 1.7(1.0) | 0.4(0.5) |
| 2 | 1.1(0.9) | 0.3(0.6) |
| 4 | 2.1(1.2) | 0.3(0.5) |
| Total mean (SD) | 1.6(1.1) | 0.4(0.5) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times core food items were consumed for breakfast, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed was a significant main effect of attendance on the total mean number of times core items of food were consumed by children for breakfast [$F(1,45) = 47.30, p < 0.05, \eta_p^2 = .512$]. Children consumed more core items of food ($M = 1.6$) at breakfast on a day they did not attend holiday club compared to a day they attended holiday club ($M = 0.4$). There was no effect of club [$F(2,45) = 2.34, p > 0.05$] nor an attendance x club interaction [$F(2,45) = 1.93, p > 0.05$].

7.3.3.1.2 Total non-core food intake for breakfast

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed non-core food items for breakfast as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 21.

Table 21. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed non-core food items for breakfast as factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.6(0.7) | 0.2(0.5) |
| 2 | 0.9(0.9) | 0.4(0.6) |
| 4 | 0.5(0.7) | 0.2(0.4) |
| Total mean (SD) | 0.7(0.8) | 0.3(0.5) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times non-core food items were consumed for breakfast, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

There was a significant main effect of attendance on the total mean number of times children consumed non-core items of food for breakfast [$F(1,45) = 9.00, p < 0.05, \eta_p^2 = .167$]. Children consumed fewer non-core items of food at breakfast on a day they attended holiday club ($M = 0.3$) compared to a day they did not attend holiday club ($M = 0.7$). There was no significant main effect of club [$F(2,45) = 1.24, p > 0.05$], nor an attendance x club interaction [$F(2,45) = .15, p > 0.05$].

7.3.3.2 Mid-morning snack

7.3.3.2.1 Total core food intake for a mid-morning snack

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed core food items for a mid-morning snack as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 22.

Table 22. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed core food items for a mid-morning snack as factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.5(0.7) | 0.4(0.5) |
| 2 | 0.1(0.3) | 0.3(0.6) |
| 4 | 0.4(1.0) | 0.3(0.5) |
| Total mean (SD) | 0.4(0.7) | 0.3(0.5) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times core food items were consumed for a mid-morning snack, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed there was no significant main effect of attendance with regard to the total mean number of times children consumed core items of food as a mid-morning snack [$F(1,45) = .06, p > 0.05$]. There was no significant main effect of club [$F(2,42) = 1.34, p > 0.05$]. Thus, it appears that the number of times children consumed healthy items of food for a mid-morning snack was not influenced by the clubs or attendance.

7.3.3.2.2 Total non-core food intake for a mid-morning snack

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed non-core food items for a mid-morning snack as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 23.

Table 23. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed non-core items of food for a mid-morning snack as a factor of attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.5(0.7) | 0.2(0.5) |
| 2 | 0.6(0.6) | 0.4(0.6) |
| 4 | 0.9(0.8) | 0.2(0.4) |
| Total mean (SD) | 0.6(0.7) | 0.3(0.5) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times non-core food items were consumed for a mid-morning snack, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed there was a significant main effect of attendance on the total mean number of times non-core items of food were consumed by children for a mid-morning snack [$F(1,45) = 13.59, p < 0.05, \eta_p^2 = .232$]. Children consumed fewer non-core items of food ($M = 0.3$) for a mid-morning snack on a day they attended holiday club compared to a day they did not attend holiday club ($M = 0.6$). There was no significant main effect of club [$F(2,45) = .46, p > 0.05$], nor an attendance x club interaction [$F(2,45) = 1.29, p > 0.05$].

7.3.3.3 Lunch

7.3.3.3.1 Total core food intake for lunch

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed core food items for lunch as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 24.

Table 24. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed core food items for lunch as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 1.2 (1.3) | 1.3(0.7) |
| 2 | 0.9(0.9) | 0.7(0.6) |
| 4 | 0.7(0.8) | 0.5(0.7) |
| Total mean (SD) | 1.0(1.1) | 1.0(0.7) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times core food items were consumed for lunch, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed there was no significant main effect of attendance with regard to the total mean number of times children consumed core items of food for lunch [$F(1,44) = .167, p > 0.05$]. There was a significant main effect of club [$F(2,44) = 3.8, p < 0.05$]. There was no attendance x club interaction [$F(2,44) = .52, p > 0.05$]. Post hoc analysis showed that children in club 1 ate more healthy items of food for lunch ($M = 2.6$) than children in club 2 ($M = 1.6$) ($t(36) = 2.05, p < 0.05$) and children in club 4 ($M = 1.3$) ($t(30) = 2.20, p < 0.05$).

7.3.3.3.2 Total non-core food intake for lunch

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed non-core food items for lunch as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 25.

Table 25. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed non-core food items for lunch as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.5(0.8) | 0.5(0.7) |
| 2 | 1.1(0.9) | 1.1(1.3) |
| 4 | 2.1(1.0) | 1.4(0.5) |
| Total mean (SD) | 0.9(1.0) | 0.9(0.9) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times non-core food items were consumed for lunch, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed there was no significant main effect of attendance with regard to the total mean number of times children consumed non-core items of food for lunch [$F(1,44) = 1.46, p > 0.05$]. There was a significant main effect of club [$F(2,44) = 10.23, p < 0.05$]. There was no attendance x club interaction [$F(2,44) = 1.66, p > 0.05$]. Post hoc analysis showed that children in club 1 consumed fewer non-core items of food for lunch ($M = 1.1$) than children in club 2 ($M = 3.5$), ($t(37) = 2.56, p < 0.05$) and club 3 ($M = 3.5$), ($t(37) = 2.56, p < 0.05$).

7.3.3.3.4 Mid-afternoon snack

7.3.3.3.4.1 Total core food intake for a mid-afternoon snack

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed core food items for a mid-afternoon snack as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 26.

Table 26. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed core food items for a mid-afternoon snack as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.3(0.5) | 0.3(0.5) |
| 2 | 0.3(0.6) | 0.1(0.3) |
| 4 | 0.4(0.7) | 0.6(0.7) |
| Total mean (SD) | 0.3(0.5) | 0.3(0.5) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times core food items were consumed for a mid-afternoon snack, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed there was no significant main effect of attendance with regard to the total mean number of times children consumed core items of food for an afternoon snack [$F(1,44) = .04, p > 0.05$]. There was no significant main effect of club [$F(2,44) = 1.42, p > 0.05$], nor an attendance x club interaction [$F(2,44) = .72, p > 0.05$]. This means that intake of healthy items of food for a mid-afternoon snack appears not to be influenced by the clubs or club attendance.

7.3.3.4.2 Total non-core intake for a mid-afternoon snack

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed non-core food items for a mid-afternoon snack as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 27.

Table 27. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed non-core food items for a mid-afternoon snack as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.5(0.5) | 0.5(0.7) |
| 2 | 0.6(0.7) | 0.6(0.8) |
| 4 | 0.8(0.7) | 0.7(0.9) |
| Total mean (SD) | 0.5(0.6) | 0.5(0.8) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times non-core food items were consumed for a mid-afternoon snack, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed there was no significant main effect of attendance with regard to the total mean number of times children consumed non-core items of food for a mid-afternoon snack [$F(1,43) = .01, p > 0.05$]. There was no significant main effect of club [$F(2,43) = .02, p > 0.05$], nor an attendance x club interaction [$F(2,40) = .18, p > 0.05$]. There was no three way attendance x gender x club interaction [$F(2,43) = .01, p > 0.05$]. This means that intake of healthy items of food for a mid-afternoon snack appears not to have been influenced by the clubs or club attendance.

7.3.3.5 Evening meal

7.3.3.5.1 Total core food intake for an evening meal

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed core food items for an evening meal as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 28.

Table 28. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed core food items for an evening meal as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.8 (0.9) | 0.6(0.7) |
| 2 | 1.0(1.0) | 0.8(1.0) |
| 4 | 2.0(1.4) | 0.81.2) |
| Total mean (SD) | 1.1(1.1) | 0.8(0.9) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times core food items were consumed for an evening meal, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

There was a significant main effect of attendance on the total mean number of times core items of food were consumed by children for their evening meal [$F(1,45) = 5.94, p < 0.05, \eta_p^2 = .117$], with children consuming more core items of food ($M = 1.1$) for their evening meal on a day they did not attend holiday club compared to a day they attended holiday club ($M = 0.8$). The results showed there was no significant main effect of club [$F(2,45) = 2.52, p > 0.05$], nor an attendance x club interaction [$F(2,45) = 1.79, p > 0.05$].

7.3.3.5.2 Total non-core food intake for an evening meal

Details of the total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed non-core food items for an evening meal as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club are presented in Table 29.

Table 29. Total mean number and (SD) of times children consumed non-core food items for an evening meal as a factor of holiday club attendance and by club

| Club | Day not attending holiday club | Day attending holiday club |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.6(0.8) | 0.7(0.8) |
| 2 | 1.0(0.9) | 0.8(0.7) |
| 4 | 1.1(0.3) | 1.8(0.8) |
| Total mean (SD) | 0.8(0.8) | 0.9(0.9) |

To analyse the effect of attendance on the total mean number of times non-core food items were consumed for an evening meal, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted.

The results showed there was no significant main effect of attendance with regard to the total mean number of times children consumed non-core items of food for their evening meal [$F(1,45) = .82, p > 0.05$]. The results showed there was a significant main effect of club [$F(2,45) = 4.61, p < 0.05, \eta_p^2 = .170$]. There was no attendance x club interaction [$F(2,45) = 1.87, p > 0.05$]. Post hoc analysis showed that children in club 3 consumed more non-core items of food for their evening meal ($M = 1.8$) than children in club 1 ($M = 0.8$), ($t(31) = 2.85, p < 0.05$) and club 2 ($M = 0.8$), ($t(22) = 2.91, p < 0.05$).

7.4 Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of holiday club attendance on children's nutritional intake during the summer holidays. The findings of this study show that children ate more healthy items of food across an entire day they did not attend holiday club compared to a day they attended holiday club, meaning that holiday club attendance had no effect on children's intake of healthy items of food. The results of this study further showed that children consumed fewer unhealthy items of food across an entire day they

attended holiday club compared to a day they did not attend holiday club. When the type of food consumed at each meal was analysed, the results of this study showed that the difference in intake was as a result of children eating fewer unhealthy food items at breakfast time and for their mid-morning snack on a day they attended holiday club. Thus, holiday attendance meant that children consumed fewer unhealthy items of food.

With regard to fruit and vegetable intake, the results of this study showed that children did not consume the recommended intake levels of five portions of fruit and vegetables on either day, children consumed fruit on average 0.5 times on both days, with a similar pattern (0.5 times on a non-holiday club day and 0.4 times on a holiday club attendance day). Similarly, children did not drink the recommended number of servings of water each day and that they consumed sugar sweetened beverages more often on both days.

The mixed findings of the current study reflect the results of the small number of other studies that have investigated what children consume during the summer holidays on days they attend holiday club and a day they do not attend holiday club. For example in a similar study which investigated the nutritional intake of N=42 children who attended summer holiday clubs in London, Mann, (2019) similarly found that children's fruit and vegetable intake was low, but children were less likely to drink sugar sweetened beverages on a day they attended holiday club. Furthermore, in contrast to the findings of this study, children attending holiday clubs in London did not reduce their intake of unhealthy foods on days they attended holiday club. A further study conducted by Shinwell, (2019) found that children consumed more healthy items of food at holiday club, but that there was no difference in the energy and macronutrient content of the lunches children consumed on a day they attended holiday club and a day they did not attend holiday club. In their analysis of children's food intake on a day they attended holiday club and a non-attending day, Defeyter, Stretesky, Sattar, et al., (2018) found that children ate more healthy items of food club and consumed fewer sugar sweetened beverages on a club day compared to a non-club attendance day.

To conclude, the findings of the current study are mixed but nonetheless suggest that clubs have the potential to have a positive effect on children's nutritional intake during the summer. However, this was not because children were provided with more healthy items of food on days when they attended holiday club, but instead because they ate fewer unhealthy food on those days, as the data showed that children consumed fewer unhealthy items of food for breakfast and their mid-morning snack on days they attended holiday club compared to a day they did not. The results of the current study suggest that clubs and parents may benefit from receiving advice, guidance and support regarding children's nutritional intake and restricting non-core food items that are generally more unhealthy while children are at home.

8.0 Study 4: Observational Study

8.1 Study aims

The aim of Study 5 was to collect observational data on the food served and activities that took place in each of the holiday clubs.

8.2 Materials and Method

8.2.1 Study Design

A non-participant structured observational design was used to collect data for this study.

8.2.3 Setting

Observations took place in Children in Northern Ireland holiday clubs.

8.2.4 Materials

A research observation schedule was designed by the research team to aid observations of holiday club activities. The schedule included a checklist to guide data collection on areas of interest including locations

and timings of activities and meals served at holiday clubs during summer 2018. A copy of the observation schedule is attached as **Appendix 3**.

8.2.3 Procedure

Following the receipt of ethical approval by the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences' Research Ethics Committee at Northumbria University, a letter of invitation, a research information sheet and a consent form was sent to each of the four holiday club leaders who were asked to grant consent for a member of the research team to visit the club. Once consent was granted, a date and time to visit the club was agreed. On the day of the visit, the researcher observed activities and made notes on the observational schedule. Photographs of food served and club facilities were also taken in some club settings. Data recorded in the observational studies were subsequently typed up and entered into a word document for inclusion in this report which took approximately five hours.

8.3 Findings

All four club leaders granted consent for research to take place. The observations are reported for each holiday club separately.

8.3.1 Club 1

Observational data gathered in club 1 are presented in Table 30.

Table 30. Observational data for club 1

| Club 1 | | |
|---|---|--|
|  |  |  |
| About the club: | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The club is operated by a charity that has its own premises which are not big enough to accommodate the summer club hence the club had to hire premises. The club was therefore held in a secondary school. Some participants lived locally, but the majority of attendees travelled to the club from surrounding areas which were up to 16 miles away. The club provided free transport to and from the club.• Timings: 8.30 am - 3.30 pm; three days a week for four weeks in July.• Attendance: Attendees were predominantly primary school aged pupils, but older children were allowed to attend. Children were referred to the holiday programme from the Family Support Hub or other services. Attendance rates varied: attendance rates were higher during the first week when between 65-120 children attended each day. In week 2, average attendance was between 80-100 children per day and in week three, attendance rates were approximately 85 children per day.• Staff: The club employs one full time programme manager and four other paid members of staff. Children are divided into six groups with two team leaders per group who are then | | |

supported by volunteer peer mentors. Up to 50 peer volunteer mentors support holiday club delivery. The majority of peer mentors work with team leaders and work with the same group of children throughout the holiday programme. Some volunteer mentors provide one-to-one support for children who have additional needs.

Activities:

- Registration took place between 8.30 am and 10.00 am each day.
- Children and young people were allocated to a group and took part in a range of structured activities (three per day), including sports (x2 sessions), mini-medics, kitchen, arts and a structured session that covered a range of skills including social skills/interaction, diversity and learning. Two sessions were held before lunch. After lunch, children had one 20-minute free play session which was followed by a third structured session in the afternoon.
- At the end of each day, children, staff and peer mentors took part in an evaluation session where they discussed the food provided and activities and what they did or did not enjoy about the day.

Food provision:

- Breakfast was served each day in the school dining hall between 8 am and 8.30 am following registration. If a holiday club attendee did not eat any breakfast, staff contacted parents to see if children had consumed breakfast at home.
- A range of juice drinks (squash), cereals (pre-served in bowls), toast, fruit and yoghurts were available.
- The club received donations of food from organisations including Fareshare and was not able to pre-order food, so for example, chocolate flavoured cereal was provided, which was not considered ideal but the club did not have the resources to purchase healthier options.
- Lunch (main course and dessert) was prepared and cooked by a member of holiday club staff in the school kitchen. Holiday club staff served lunch between 12 noon and 12.40 each day in the school dining hall. Children queued to collect their lunch and had some choice, for example, on the day the researcher attended, two types of home made soup was served and children could choose which one they wanted. Children sat at long tables with members of their group and group volunteer peer mentors to eat their lunch. Some children brought a pack lunch from home.

8.3.2 Club 2

Observational data gathered in club 1 are presented in Table 31.

Table 31. Observational data for club 2

| Club 2 | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| About the club: | | |

- The main holiday club was held in a purpose- built community/youth centre that is open all year round (after school club and youth club). The club is a well-established part of the community and has been operating for more than 30 years. The club is located near the centre of town. The majority of attendees live within a three mile radius of the club and either walk or are dropped off by parents.
- The club operated a second holiday club in a local authority owned community centre. The second club had been operating as a youth club for more than 20 years.
- Timings: The main holiday club was open from 10.00am until 10pm. Children aged 4-7 years of age were able to take part in the holiday programme between 10.00 am and 12 noon, three days a week (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday). Sessions were held between 1pm and 4 pm five days a week for children aged 8+ and a teen club was held from 7pm until 10pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. The club was open from 1.00pm until 4.00pm Monday -Thursday for three weeks from 1st – 18th July. The second club was open from 12 noon until 3.00pm, five days a week. A maximum number of 65 children aged 7+ could attend each session.
- Activities were set up in separate rooms on the main club site e.g. one room was set up for arts and crafts, another room was set up computer games and music. Physical activities took place in the club's sports hall. A central room had a tuck shop, pool table and seating areas. In the sister site, all activities took place in a sports hall within the community centre. A large net curtain was drawn across the hall to separate physical activities from more sedentary (e.g. arts and crafts) activities.
- Attendance: Attendance was open to the wider community although some children were referred to the programme at both sites from the Family Hub Service and other organisations. There was a charge of £2 per session but the fee was waived for children who were referred. An average of 80 children attended the 10.00 am – 12 noon session, approximately 70 children attended the afternoon session and 50 young people on average attended the evening teen sessions in the main site. An average of 65 children attended the second site, although the number of attendees declined by the third week of operation.
- Staff: The main club had two full time paid members of staff and 13 part time paid members of staff who lead activities. Staff were supported by 15 volunteer peer mentors and two adult volunteers. The sister site had three part-time paid members of staff

Activities:

- Three summer holiday programmes were provided in the main site, depending on the age of attendees.
- Registration took place at the beginning of each session in the main and second site.
- Children under the age of eight were allocated to a small group and throughout the morning, were taken to each of the rooms in the centre by volunteer peer mentor. Each room had a different activity including a variety of arts, crafts, games and cookery sessions. Each activity was led by a member of staff with support the volunteer peer mentors.
- A semi-structured programme of activities was available for older children aged 8+. A different sporting activity was available each hour between 1pm and 3 pm in the main hall of the building. A structured programme of activities including for example arts, crafts, reading/games/puzzles, drama, obstacle courses and pool, x-boxes and TV were available in different rooms in the centre. Older children were free to choose which activity they wanted to do. Activities/rooms were supervised by a member of staff, supported by volunteer peer mentors. A different programme of activities was available each day. A more informal, drop in approach was adopted for the evening teen club sessions. Activities available included pool, tv, x-box, beauty and aromatherapy sessions.
- A semi-structured programme of activities was also available at the club's second site. All activities took place in the main sports hall of the local authority owned community

centre, separated by large net/canvas partitions that were drawn across the hall. Children chose the activities, including sports and crafts, they would like to participate in.

- Daytime and evening trips to ice rinks, bowling alleys, a large indoor adventure complex, country parks and museums were available for children aged 8+.

Food provision:

- Children attending the morning (10.00 am until 12 noon) session were provided with breakfast type snack foods. Staff prepared a tray of toast, toasted pancakes, fresh fruit and juice (squash) and milk which was taken into each room where activities were taking place. Children served themselves and were supervised by staff.
- Staff prepared lunch time snacks for older children. Lunch time snacks included toasties and pizzas which were made in the club. Similar food was also available for older children attending the evening teen club sessions. Food was placed on trays and taken into rooms where activities were taking place and children served themselves. Children were allowed to consume their lunch, supervised by staff, in all areas of the club except the sports hall as it may have caused a slip hazard if food were dropped. Occasionally, particularly for older children, a communal meal was served in one of the rooms which was set up as a dining room and children and staff ate together. Staff reported that there was never any food wastage.
- A tuck shop was also available which sold sugar sweetened beverages, crisps and confectionary. Prices charged were lower than prices for similar products in nearby shops. Staff advised that prices were lower as they were aware that children may not have much money so they charged less than surrounding shops so that children's money went further.
- A small kitchen was available to make and prepare food at the main site. Facilities to make and prepare food were more limited at the second holiday club site. Although there was a kitchen and social area within the local authority owned building where the sister site holiday club provision took place, holiday club staff and attendees were prevented from accessing this space. As an alternative, a microwave and toaster were placed on a trolley in the main hall where activities were held. Lunch (sandwiches, biscuits, toast, pancakes) was prepared at the main site and brought to the second site. Children served themselves and sat on the floor to eat their lunch. Most of the time all of the food served was consumed by children, although staff reported that fruit was sometimes left uneaten.

8.3.3 Club 3

Observational data gathered in club 1 are presented in Table 32.

Table 32. Observational data for club 3

| Club 3 |
|--|
| <p>About the club:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The holiday club was delivered by a local community organisation that had been working in the area for more than 20 years. The holiday programme was held on two days at two different locations including a large community centre. • Timings: The summer holiday programme was held from 10.00 am until 3.00pm on two days during August 2018. • Attendance: Most attendees were referred to the holiday programme by the Family Support Hub although staff reported that they also publicised the holiday club on social media. A maximum of 20 children could take part in each session and it was anticipated that 20 different children would attend each session, although staff welcomed children to both sessions if it was considered that their family was facing hardship. Most attendees lived within walking distance to the club. Fourteen children attended day 1 of the holiday club. Data on attendance rates on the second day were not available. |

| |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing: two club leaders co-ordinated the holiday club programme. External organisations delivered the activity sessions. |
| Activities: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration took place at the start of each session, Activities took place in a large sports hall. Morning activity sessions were held from 10.00 am until 12 noon and included mini-medics which included first aid, nutrition and healthy lifestyle. Afternoon sessions were held from 1.00pm until 3.00pm and included a martial arts/self-defence class where children were taught about the rationale of self-defence and fighting without causing harm. This was followed by a practical session. |
| Food provision: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lunch was served at 12 noon and was set up in the hallway outside of the main sports hall. Food was prepared off-site and was delivered to the holiday club at 11.30 am by a local businesses. A pack lunch was provided for each child in a paper bag which included: a sandwich (children chose their own sandwich: options were chicken, ham or cheese which was served in white bread), a packet of crisps, a piece of fruit and a bottle of water. Leftover fruit was left out for children to take. Holiday club leaders supervised lunch time sessions. Children had 30 minutes to eat their lunch followed by 30 minutes of play/races which were supervised by staff. |

8.3.4 Club 4

Observational data gathered in club 1 are presented in Table 33.

Table 33. Observational data for club 4

| |
|---|
| Club 4 |
| About the club: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timings: The holiday club was on for five weeks. Timings of registration and activities varied according to activities planned for the day, but on average were held between 10 am and 3.00pm. Attendance: Data on attendance rates were not available at the time of data collection Staff: Data on staff numbers and staff roles were not available at the time of data collection. A range of prices for were charged, again depending on activities planned, but a charge of £1 or £1.50 per child was charged for a day at the centre where the club was based, and a charge of £3-£5 was levied for trips. |
| Activities: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive activity programme was provided for attendees. Children were free to choose which activity they took part in but generally rotated around the different rooms where activities were taking place. Activities included dancing, games, x-box, films and sporting activities including table tennis, darts, pool and games. Outdoor activities included a forest mud run and colour run. Trips were undertaken to ice-rinks, parks and museums. |
| Food provision: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lunch was served between 12 noon and 1.00 pm each day and was delivered to the club by a local supplier as there were no cooking facilities within the club setting. On day trips, a pack lunch was provided. On centre-based days, hot food was delivered including stews, burgers, chip and hot dogs. |

- Staff served the lunch to children to ensure that all children had enough to eat. Staff reported that there was never any food wastage. Club staff supervised lunch and older children helped younger children, but staff and children ate together.

Participation in Children in Northern Ireland programme:

- Staff reported that participation in the Children in Northern Ireland programme meant that support was available at the end of the phone which enabled them to serve more than 1440 meals during the summer.

8.4 Discussion

The aim of this study was to observe activities taking place in club settings to enable the research team to triangulate observations with data collected in Studies 2 and 3. Clubs were well attended, though attendance rates in some clubs declined as the summer holidays progressed. Clubs provided a range of activities for children. Some clubs had a more structured approach with a formal timetable of activities, where for example, younger children were allocated to a group and taken to each session by volunteer peer mentors. Other clubs had a more informal approach and children were able to choose the activities they wanted to do. This approach appeared to be influenced by the age of the attendees and by the facilities available in each club. The kitchen facilities available in each club also influenced the type of food served. Club 1 for example, had access to a large professional kitchen and staff were able to prepare meals from scratch. However, the club was sometimes limited in what could be served as it relied on food donations for example for breakfast foods. Club 2 had a small kitchen, similar to a typical, domestic kitchen and space to store food was limited. The amount of space appeared to limit the type of food that could be prepared, with foods simple snack type food that did not require much preparation provided. Clubs 3 and 4 were unable to access kitchen facilities in the premises they used and were therefore unable to prepare food on site and relied on food being delivered to the clubs. Despite limitations on space for activities and kitchens, clubs adapted to their circumstances and appeared to be well-run with the type of activities and food provision influenced by the age of attendees and the facilities available in each club.

Overall, the activities observed by researchers in club settings reflected club aims. Researchers observed food being prepared and eaten at meal and snack times in holiday clubs and saw how some clubs had either limited kitchen facilities or limited access to facilities to prepare and consume food. Researchers observed a wide range of activities that were available in club settings ranging from arts, crafts, computers and x-boxes to physically active games in sports halls. Importantly, children attending holiday clubs appeared to be happy, having fun and socialising and enjoying the activities they were taking part in.

9.0 Discussion

The aim of this research was to conduct an evaluation of the Children in Northern Ireland summer 2019 holiday club provision project. To achieve these aims the research is divided into five studies. The first study explores the process that lead to the development, implementation and delivery of the pilot holiday club project and the potential benefits of holiday club attendance with food for disadvantaged children in Northern Ireland. The second study surveys holiday club leaders to identifying the aims of holiday clubs and whether clubs met their aims and explored the operational characteristics of holiday clubs, including attendance, food provision and activities. Study three examines the effect of holiday club attendance on children's nutritional intake. Finally, study four consisted of researcher observations and visits to the four clubs.

Children in Northern Ireland works collaboratively with other organisations in Northern Ireland to influence Northern Ireland government policy to ensure that children's best interests are represented in all government policy. The organisation is sponsored by the Department for Health, Social Services and Public

Safety and provides advice, guidance and training services to its members to help them develop and deliver policies and practices that support children and young people (Children in Northern Ireland, 2020). In 2016, senior stakeholders within the organisation first became aware of the issue of holiday hunger and the risk that children may be going hungry during the holidays. After commissioning research to investigate what activity was taking place in Northern Ireland to support children who may be going hungry in the holidays, a decision was taken to get involved in service delivery by funding holiday club provision in the country. This course of action was taken as the organisation considered that some of the activity taking place in the country to address holiday hunger may have only provided temporary relief from the food insecurity experienced by children during the summer holidays and therefore may not have addressed some of the issues that Children in Northern Ireland considered are some of the underlying causes of poverty including low levels of educational attainment and low aspirations. A pilot holiday provision project was established, and, following an evaluation was used to inform the establishment of the summer 2019 holiday provision programme.

The first aim of this evaluation was to explore process that lead to the development, implementation and delivery of the pilot holiday club programme and the potential benefits of holiday provision with food for disadvantaged children in Northern Ireland. Data collected in Study 1,3 and 4 supported this aim. At a strategic level, it was apparent that Children in Northern Ireland wanted to make sure that (the limited) resources were directed at those who needed support most. Thus, a referral procedure was established with the Family Hub network, an organisation that supports and works closely with families to prevent intervention by social services. Delivery partners were carefully selected to ensure that their values accorded with those of Children in Northern Ireland. Children in Northern Ireland set clear aims to ensure that holiday provision did not operate as one senior stakeholder described it, as a “sticking plaster” by only providing children with access to food. Nonetheless, enabling children who might otherwise be going hungry during the summer to access healthy food was a central aim of the summer 2019 project. However, organisations were given clear direction to also use funding to provide engaging, stimulating activities (physical and mental) that supported the development of life skills and educational attainment. Given the current political climate in Northern Ireland at the time of data collection of not having a functioning government, stakeholders commented that the lack of cohesion on government policy and funding meant that funding levels had stagnated, despite evidence growing of need. Children in Northern Ireland therefore worked strategically with government agencies and other organisations to pool budgets in a way that enabled all organisations to support the delivery of holiday provision whilst also meeting their own departmental and agency strategic objectives of working with vulnerable populations. At an operational level, club leaders reported that funding provided via Children in Northern Ireland had enhanced their holiday provision by meeting the cost of food and training programmes such as the OCN in leadership for older children and mini-medics first aid and health and nutrition courses for younger children. However, some club leaders reported that it was hard to access funding for children who were not causing anti-social behaviour and lack of funding had limited what one club had been able to deliver during summer 2019.

Prior research has also indicated that the potential benefits of holiday club attendance extend beyond food and fun (Defeyter et al., 2015, 2018; Mann, 2019; Mann & Defeyter, 2017; Shinwell, 2019). Clubs also provide children with safe places to play and as result, communities are considered to benefit as anti-social behaviour is reduced (Defeyter et al., 2015, 2018; Mann, 2019; Shinwell, 2019). The findings of the current evaluation reflect those of prior work regarding the benefits of holiday provision extending beyond just providing food to children who may be going hungry. For example, data gathered in qualitative studies has suggested communities were deemed to benefit potentially because anti-social behaviour was reduced. It is also widely considered that holiday club attendance helped children maintain routine and structure during

the holidays, potentially improving school readiness (structured day hypothesis). However, whilst there was a lot of support for maintaining routine and structure amongst most parents/carers, some parents/carers welcomed the later start time of holiday club because children were on holiday and days were less stressful because they did not have to rush around to get children to holiday club early.

The second study aimed to identify the aims of holiday club provision and whether they were met. Data gathered across all studies supported this aim. Data gathered in in Study 2 suggested that the overarching principles established by Children in Northern Ireland of providing access to food and providing stimulating and engaging activities to support the development of life-skills and learning were translated into the operational activity of holiday clubs. However, supporting educational attainment was a lower priority for all clubs compared to promoting life skill development. This may have been because it was the summer holidays, and children may not have attended if activities had been too formal and reminiscent of classroom-based learning. The finding in Study 2 that holiday club leaders considered that they had met their aims of providing stimulating activities and opportunities to support life skills was also reflected in feedback from children and parents in Study 1. Although this evaluation did not investigate the effect of holiday club attendance on children's educational attainment, children for example reported that they enjoyed the activities and that they had gained new skills and knowledge, for example innutrition and first aid. Moreover, many children also reported that they had grown in confidence as a result of attending the holiday club. Parents similarly reported that children were returning home and putting new skills and knowledge into practice, were growing in confidence and becoming more independent. One parent reported for example, that her daughter was going to perform in an end of the club show and that her daughter would not have done anything like that prior to attending holiday club. Future evaluations of the summer programme could potentially investigate the effect of holiday club attendance on children's well-being and personal development. Parents of children who were newly arrived in Northern Ireland also highlighted that attending the club had provided their children with an excellent opportunity to learn English. The positive effect this had had on children was reflected in interviews with holiday club staff who reported that newly arrived children, after initially hesitating to join in with activities, but after a few days, were keen to attend club and meet their new friends. It was widely by club leaders that they had met their aims of providing healthy food in holiday clubs. However, the issue of food elicited a great deal of discussion amongst attendees and some parents. Children indicated that they would have liked more choice and, in some instances, reported that they did not like the food that was provided so did not eat it. However, the findings of Study 3 in the current evaluation should be welcomed as it showed that holiday club attendance has the potential to have a positive effect on children's nutritional intake. However, this was not because children were provided with more healthy items of food on days when they attended holiday club, but instead because they ate fewer unhealthy food on those days. This therefore suggests that clubs and possibly parents, may benefit from receiving advice and guidance on identifying and restricting non-core food items while children are at home. This finding and recommendation is consistent with research by Shinwell, (2019) in an evaluation of children's nutritional intake in club settings. Shinwell recommended that clubs and parents would benefit from receiving advice on children's nutrition with an emphasis on reduction on non-core items. It must be noted that clubs faced a number of limitations in the food they were able to offer and this may have resulted in some of the null findings. Firstly, where clubs had access to a kitchen, staff providing food did not have any formal catering qualifications, and secondly, lack of appropriate kitchen facilities limited provision. The kitchen facilities in one club were no bigger than a domestic kitchen and lacked storage space and some clubs did not have access to any kitchen facilities, thus limiting the opportunity to cook and prepare food. Hence, club staff in these situations relied on cold, packed lunches being brought to the clubs.

The third aim of this evaluation was to explore the operational characteristics of holiday clubs, including attendance, food provision and activities and cost of holiday club provision. Data collected in studies 2, 4 and 5 supported this aim. The clubs were delivered by carefully selected delivery partners, but it was clear that they worked in partnership with a range of other organisations to provide food and activities. Prior evaluations of holiday club provision have similarly found that working with a variety of organisations enhances provision but that it takes time for organisations who are perhaps working together for the first time to clarify roles and objectives amongst stakeholders (Defeyter et al., 2018; Graham et al., 2016; Morgan, McConnon, Van Godwin, et al., 2019; Shinwell, 2019). Research has also shown that club leaders often report that they would have liked more time to plan the delivery of their holiday club, (Defeyter et al., 2018; Graham et al., 2016; Shinwell, 2019). However, club leaders in this evaluation did not indicate that they needed more time to plan. Moreover, they welcomed the advice, guidance and support they received from Children in Northern Ireland to delivery their holiday provision. Similarly, prior research has also indicated that club leaders would have welcomed more time to market provision (Defeyter et al., 2018; Graham et al., 2016; Shinwell, 2019). However, this was not the case in the current evaluation as the referral procedure seems to have worked well, and importantly, although families and children attending clubs knew that they had been referred to the club, it appears to have been handled sensitively to prevent stigmatisation. This is an important point that should be emphasised because parents and children often note that stigma is one important barrier to club attendance (Graham et al., 2016). Prior research has suggested that the cost of traveling to holiday clubs may present a barrier to participation, and where this is the case, clubs provide additional support to make it easier for people to get to clubs (Shinwell, 2019). Similarly, some clubs in the current evaluation provided transport to help children get to clubs. However, parents whose children had to travel by bus indicated that they would have preferred it if clubs had been nearer home. Club leaders at that club did acknowledge that travel and the cost of providing buses was an issue and said they may consider replicating the holiday club delivery model but on a smaller scale and close to where attendees lived.

The final aim of the evaluation was to investigate the effect of the holiday club intervention on children's nutritional intake. As discussed above, the findings of Study 3 in this evaluation demonstrated that there was a significant main effect of attendance on the number of times children consumed unhealthy items of food. That is, children ate fewer unhealthy items of food for breakfast and their mid-morning snack when they attended holiday club. This finding should therefore be welcomed because it appears that holiday clubs reduce the unhealthy food consumption among children, perhaps impacting trends in factors such as children's obesity and other food insecurity problems. However, because there was no effect of attendance on children's intake of healthy food, food provision in club settings requires further attention. However, it is important to emphasise that lack of formal catering qualifications and limited or no access to kitchen facilities hampered provision.

10.0 Conclusion and recommendations

To conclude, this evaluation will now offer recommendations for consideration in developing plans for any future holiday provision in Northern Ireland. First, however, the Children in Northern Ireland summer holiday programme needs to be set in the context of the general landscape of holiday provision in the UK. In particular, clubs are being established in response to concerns that up to three million children may be going hungry in the holidays and are now form part of a number of measures that seek to support food insecure individuals and families to access food aid (Forsey, 2017; Lambie-Mumford & Sims, 2018). Holiday club provision is increasing at a rapid rate throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Mann & Defeyter, 2017). Although there has been a rapid increase in the number of organisations developing holiday provision, the sector is unregulated and guidance and support for coordinating these organisations at a

national level is lacking. Hence, a variety of approaches and models are in operation. As yet, there is no best practice guide on what works best in holiday club settings (Mann, 2019).

In terms of the fidelity of Children in Northern Ireland holiday programmes, the results of this evaluation suggest firstly that it is important to set clear aims for holiday provision programmes and that these are communicated to all involved in developing, implementing and delivering programmes. Children in Northern Ireland set clear aims regarding the purpose of holiday provision and this was reflected in the type of programmes holiday clubs put in place. Reports of their effectiveness were provided in Study 1 by children and parents who said children gained new knowledge and life skills. However, although supporting educational attainment was a priority for Children in Northern Ireland, this evaluation did not investigate the effect of holiday club attendance on children's educational attainment. Conducting such a study is difficult in community-based clubs as children need to be tested several times and follow up testing is difficult in community venues. With regard to the dose of club provision, children commented that they would be sad when holiday club ended. However, club leaders reported that sheer practicalities of staff needing to take holidays themselves meant that hosting holiday clubs for more of the nine-week summer holiday was impractical. One newly established club did however indicate that lack of funding limited their ability to deliver more. Finally, with regard to the reach of the summer holiday programme, the data collected for this evaluation suggests that the aim of reaching those in most need was achieved. This was however handled sensitively and attendees and parents who were targeted did not appear to feel stigmatised. Moreover, arrangements were put in place, for example where clubs charged for attendance, to ensure that attention was not drawn to any children whose place was funded.

In conclusion, holiday provision is complex and involves multiple stakeholders. The results of this evaluation suggest that funding from Children in Northern Ireland 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. Hopefully, the findings of this report will provide examples of good practice to other organisations planning to implement holiday club provision in their communities as well as support the future development of holiday provision in Northern Ireland.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Appendix 1. Demographic profiles of participants in Study 1

Table 34. Demographic information for child participants for study 1

| Demographic | Response Option | Number and (%) of children |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Sex | Male | 21(32) |
| | Female | 44 (67) |
| Age range | 4-17 | 65 |
| Mean age (SD) | 10.8 (4.5) | |
| Club (N/%) | 1 | 15 (23) |
| | 2 | 46 (71) |
| | 3 | 4 (6) |

Table 35. Demographic information for parents/carers for study 1

| Demographic | Response options | Number and (%) of parents |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Sex | Male | 7 (26) |
| | Female | 20 (74) |
| Age | 18-25 | 1 (4) |
| | 26-35 | 13 (48) |
| | >35 | 13 (48) |
| Relationship status | Single | 7 (26) |
| | Married | 15 (56) |
| | Widowed | 1 (4) |
| | Living with partner | 3 (8) |
| | Not stated | 2 (8) |
| Ethnicity | White British | 9 (33) |
| | White Irish | 12 (44) |
| | Syrian | 5 (18) |
| | Other | 1(4) |
| Employment status | Full time | 7(25) |
| | Part time | 3 (11) |
| | Self employed | 1(4) |
| | Unemployed | 11 (41) |
| | Not stated | 5 (19) |
| Benefit recipient | Yes | 17 (63) |
| | No | 8 (30) |

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------|
| | Not stated | 2 (8) |
| Household income | <£15,000 | 9 (33) |
| | £15,001 - £24,999 | 8 (30) |
| | £25,000 - £34,999 | 2 (7) |
| | >£35,000 | 1 (4) |
| | Not stated | 7 (26) |
| Holiday club | 1 | 16 (60) |
| | 2 | 9 (33) |
| | 3 | 2 (7) |
| Level of Education | GCSE | 2 (8) |
| | A Level | 2 (6) |
| | NVQ1-4 | 3 (11) |
| | Degree | 3 (11) |
| | Post-grad | 1 (4) |
| | Not stated | 16 (59) |

Table 36. Demographic information for holiday club staff

| Demographic | Response options | Number and (%) of holiday club staff |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sex | Male | 5 (31) |
| | Female | 11 (16) |
| Age | 18-25 | 1 (6) |
| | 26-35 | 5 (69) |
| | >35 | 10 *63) |
| Ethnicity | White British | 6 (38) |
| | White Irish | 7 (44) |
| | Other | 3 (19) |
| Employment status | Full time | 9 (56) |
| | Part time | 4 (25) |
| | Retired | 1 (6) |
| | Not stated | 2 (13) |
| Holiday club | 1 | 4 (25) |
| | 2 | 11 (68) |
| | 3 | 1 (6) |
| Level of Education | GCSE | 3 (19) |
| | A Level | 1 (6) |
| | NVQ1-4 | 3 (19) |
| | Degree | 5 (31) |
| | Post-grad | 3 (19) |
| | Not stated | 1 (6) |

Table 37. Demographic information for senior stakeholders

| Demographic | Response options | Number and (%) of holiday club staff |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sex | Male | 2 (14) |
| | Female | 6 (85) |
| Age | 26-35 | 1 (14) |
| | >35 | 6 (71) |
| Ethnicity | White British | 3 (43) |
| | White Irish | 4 (57) |
| | Other | |
| Employment status | Full time | 5 (72) |
| | Retired | 2 (28) |
| | Not stated | |
| Level of Education | Degree | 4 (57) |
| | Not stated | 3 (42) |

Appendix 2. Schedule of questions used in interviews and focus groups

Staff/Volunteers:

| |
|--|
| Checklist questions (recorded answers). |
| How many days does your holiday clubrun for? |
| How many weeks does the clubrun for? |
| What times does the clubrun for? |
| Capacity limit of people accessing the club? |
| How many days do you attend? |
| Do you know who set up the clubinitially? |

So now I would like to go into more detail and find out a bit about you and your thoughts on the hub. Can you tell me how you became involved in the holiday club and what your main roles and responsibilities are at the club?

What training is required to work/volunteer at the holiday hub, if any and do you think any/any other training should be provided, if so what?

Is food hygiene training required if you are involved with the food element and are you involved in the food?

Why did the clubs initially become set up and do you think there is a need for holiday clubs? What other issues is the club trying to address, if any?

Did the club run last year? Have any changes been made to the holiday clubs since then? If so, what and why?

Why did your club choose to run during this holiday period and does it run during any others and why?

Could you tell me a bit about what you think the community needs are in terms of what you think the families hope to get out of attending the holiday club?

How is the club viewed in the community? Do you think it is viewed positively or negatively and why? If negative, do you think anything can be done to change this and if positively, why?

Does your club target a specific group of people within the community and if so, what target group was this and did it reach the intended target group within the community? If not, why not?

How do people find out about the holiday club?

What factors affect take up by eligible families?

Do you live within this community where the holiday club is located and if so/if not do you think that this helps/ would help you engage any differently with families and why?

Do you think there are any/ has previously been any barriers for attending holiday clubs for families and if so, what and how could these/ have these been overcome?

Do you think the location of the club is suitable and accessible for children and their parents/carers?

Tell me a bit about what you think the reasons are for the children and their parents/carers attending the club?

Activities

If any, what activities are offered to parents/carers and why did your club decide to involve parents? Should they be involved?

Do parents/carers choose any of the activities? Should why/ why do they?

What activities are offered to children at your holiday club? Why were these activities chosen for children and parents (if any)?

Do children choose any of the activities? Should they/ why do they?

Do you think the activities have made a difference to children and their parents/carers over the holiday and if so, how?

Do you think there are any other activities your club could implement? If so, what activities could your club implement and why would they be beneficial?

What do you think children and their parents/carers gain from the activities at the holiday club?

Do you think staff/ volunteers gain anything from the club and if yes, what?

What do you think the benefits are of the holiday clubs being available for children and parents/carers?

Food

What food/drink is served at your club and what do you think of the food served?

Do you know who plans menus and where the food is stored (if yes, who and where?) and cooked (cooked in kitchen facilities or brought by external source? What works best?)

Is there any food waste and if so, what is done with this?

Do children self-serve the food or do staff serve the food? What works best?

Do you think hot, cold or both meal types are most preferred or beneficial to serve and what meal type does your club serve? What works best?

Do you think the food has made a difference to children and their parents/carers over the holiday and if so, how? Do you think the food is an important element of the club and do you think families would face any challenges without this in the holidays and if yes, what challenges? What difference do you think the club makes to people's nutritional skills and knowledge?

Do parents/carers or children have any input into what food is served? Should they/ why do they?

Do families ever take any food home? If yes, how is it determined who receives the food and why was the decision made to do this? Do you think it is/ would be beneficial to provide families with food to take home and why?

Overall, what difference has the club made to the children and their parents/carers and how?

Do you think the club is successful and why?

Are there any improvements and future developments which could be made to the club?

What do you think about making sure clubs should continue? How do you think this can be done?

Is there anything else you would like to mention which we have not covered

Parent/carer Focus groups:

| |
|--|
| Checklist questions (recorded answers). |
| Do you know how many days/times and weeks does the club run for? |
| How many days does your child attend? |
| Do you/could you attend the holiday club? How often, if you do attend? |

Parent/carer interview questions.

So now I would like to go into more detail and find out a bit about you and your thoughts on the hub. How did you find out about the clubs and why did you and your child decide to attend the holiday club?

How was it advertised/how would you have preferred it to have been advertised?

What holiday periods does the club run during? Should the club run during other holiday periods and why?

Are there any barriers for yourself, your child or anyone you may know for attending the holiday club which may prevent attendance and if so what are these barriers?

Is the location easily accessible? If no, what other location is more suited? Is this the best venue? Why/ what venue is preferred?

If you get to attend the club with your child, what activities do you take part in at the holiday club?

Could you tell me a bit about the activities that your child does at the holiday club?

Who chooses the activities? Who should choose activities?

Do you think they could have done any other activities at the club? and if yes, what activities and why do you think these would be beneficial?

What activities would you and your child do during the holidays if they did not attend the holiday club and are the activities at the holiday club different to what they would do if they did not attend? If so, can you give any example to demonstrate how and explain why?

What do you think about the activities at the club? Do you think the activities at the club have made a difference to your holidays? If so, how?

Do you think the activities bring any benefits to yourself or your child during the holidays? If so, what benefits?

What food is being served at the holiday club and what do you think about this food?

Who chooses food served? Who should choose? Hot or cold food? Preferred food?

What food do you and your child/children usually consume at home and does this change in the holidays in any way and are the food and drinks served at the club any different to what you would serve at home, if so how and why?

Has the food served at the holiday club made a difference to your holidays? If so, how?

Overall, has the the holiday club made a difference to you and your child/children's summer holiday?

What does your child gain from attending the holiday club?

What do you gain from the holiday club being available?

Can you think of any other benefits that you and your child gain from attending the holiday club?

How do you think the club is viewed within the community? Positively or negatively and why? If negative, do you think anything could be done to change this?

What do you think are the benefits to the community having the holiday club available?

How would your summer be different without the holiday club, thinking back to previous years? Why would it be different if the holiday club was not available?

If you had to think of the challenges that yourself or other parents who attend the club may have faced last summer or a summer when they did not have a club to attend, what are these challenges and how does this compare to this summer when they have a holiday club to attend? Has the club helped remove any of these challenges experienced by yourself or other families in previous summer holidays?

Could any changes be made to the food, activities or running of the holiday club?

Can you think of anything else which could be done to improve the holiday club? What future developments could be made?

Is there anything else you would like to mention which we have not covered?

Strategic Stakeholder Interview Schedule of questions

Views on Holiday Club provision

1. What is your role and how does this fit in with summer holiday club provision?
2. What are your views on summer holiday club provision?
3. How does the summer 2019 scheme fit in with other past, present or forthcoming public health initiatives relating to holiday club provision?
4. What do you believe to be the impacts of the holiday club provision at a local Council level?/ National Irish Government Level?
5. What do you consider the effect of summer holiday club provision is at a community level, i.e. in more and/ or less deprived communities?
6. How does summer holiday club provision fit in with initiatives and schemes at a community level, i.e. local food banks, children's centres, walking bus etc.? What purpose are they serving in relation to what has been referred to as Holiday Hunger?
7. What do you perceive the effect of summer holiday club provision will be at a local level?
8. Are you aware of any issues faced in the implementation, delivery and/ or sustainability of the holiday club scheme?
9. Are you aware of any issues with the implementation and delivery of the holiday club provision? Are there any differences regarding different settings for your holiday clubs?

10. What do you believe the impact of summer holiday club provision has been/will be for parents/ carers and families?
11. How do you think the summer holiday club scheme benefits families?
12. Do you think there are any disadvantages of the holiday club scheme to parents/ carers and families?
13. Have there been any issues with parents/ carers and families in the implementation and delivery of the scheme, and if so how have these issues been resolved?
14. How are key aspects of the summer holiday club scheme and/ or any changes communicated to parents/ carers?
15. What do you consider the effects of the summer holiday club scheme have been on children?
16. How do you think the scheme benefits children?
17. Do you think there are any disadvantages of the summer holiday club scheme that may affect children?
18. Are there any plans for changes to the summer holiday club scheme?
19. How do you see the long term future of the summer holiday club scheme?
20. Is there anything that you would like to see change, or done differently, with regard to the summer holiday club programme?

Children's focus group schedule.

1. Why did you decide to come to the holiday club?
2. What do you do at the holiday club?
3. Could you tell me more about what activities you do at the club?
4. Who decides what activities you do at the club, do you get to pick?
5. What do you think about the activities at the holiday club? Do you enjoy the activities you do at the club? Have you learnt anything from attending the clubs?
6. What is your favourite activity that you do at the club?
7. What food and drinks do you have at the holiday club?
8. Who decides what food and drink you have at the club, can you pick?
9. Do you enjoy the food and drinks served at the holiday club?
10. What is your favourite food and drink at the holiday club? Do you enjoy getting to eat and drink at the holiday club, if so, what do you enjoy about it?
11. Overall, what do you like best about coming to the holiday club?
12. If you had to tell another child about the holiday club who had never been before, what would you tell them?
13. How does the holiday club make you feel?

14. How would you feel if you did not have the holiday club to attend during the summer?
15. Have you made any new friends from attending the holiday club?
16. Do you see any friends you already had more during the holidays from attending the holiday club?
17. Is the holiday club easy for you to get to? Do you enjoy having the holiday club here or do you think it should be at a different place? If so, why do you like having club here? If not, where and why?
18. Do your parents have the opportunity to attend the holiday club? If yes, why do they come along and what do they do at the club? If no, would you like it if they were able to come along?
19. What do your family think about the holiday club? Do you think the holiday club makes any difference to your family in the holidays? If so, why and how?
20. What activities would you do if you did not come to the holiday club? Are these activities different to what you do at the holiday club, if so, how?
21. What kind of food would you eat if you did not attend the holiday club? Is this food any different to what you have at the holiday club, if so how? Do you eat any new or different food at the clubs?
22. What is your favourite meal at home and what kinds of meals do you eat most at home? Do you eat three meals a day at home (breakfast, dinner and tea)?
23. What kinds of meals do you eat most at the holiday club?
24. What do you not enjoy about the holiday club? If anything, what do you think would prevent you from coming along to the club?
25. What improvements could be made to the holiday club to make the club even better?
26. Would you make any changes to the meals or activities at the holiday club? If so, what and why?
27. Is there anything else you would like to mention which we have not covered?

Appendix 3. Researcher Observation schedule

Date:

Start and end time:

Holiday hub name:

Number of staff:

Staff roles:

Number of volunteers:

Number of children in attendance:

Is both breakfast and lunch served?

Where is breakfast/lunch served?

What time is breakfast/lunch served?

What food and drink is served for breakfast/lunch?

Delivery model for food for breakfast/lunch?

Food consumption location for breakfast/lunch?

Hub layout and facilities for breakfast/lunch?

Who served food for breakfast/lunch? Are children self-served or do staff-serve for breakfast/lunch?

Who and where is food cooked for breakfast/lunch?

Who collects food and drink at the end for breakfast/lunch?

Is there any food waste for breakfast/lunch?

Who delivers food for breakfast/lunch?

When is food delivered for breakfast/lunch?

Where is food stored for breakfast/lunch?

How long do children consume breakfast/lunch for?

Do children assist in any way with breakfast/lunch?

Do children eat together and do staff join in for breakfast/lunch?

What activities do children take part in for breakfast/lunch?

What times are activities running?

Is there any free play or structured activities?

Do all children take part in the same activities or do they have a choice?

Photographs of food

Photographs of environment

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