

Holiday Activities and food Programme

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Tim Wilson. Children's

Executive Summary:

Walsall Council received investment of £1,799,290 from the Department for Education (DfE) to develop and co-ordinate the Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF). This programme is aiming to provide healthy food and enriching activities during key school holidays to children who receive benefits-related free school meals.

It offers valuable support to families on lower incomes, giving them the opportunity to access rewarding and active activities alongside healthy meals over the school holidays and enhances the holiday provision that has already taken place over the last years.

National research tells us that;

- School holidays can be pressure points for some families because of increased costs and reduced incomes.
- Some children are more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health and
- Some children from lower-income families are less likely to access fun activities

To date Walsall has delivered an activity programme over Easter and Summer and is in the progress of planning a further programme for Christmas holidays in 2021. The programme is aimed all children and young people ages 5 – 16 years who are entitled to free school meals in the local authority (DfE Requirement). In Walsall we have also included young carers and children on an Early Help or Social Care plan as eligible to the programme.

The HAF programme has provided us with a vital opportunity to respond to a range of issues including those relating to poverty, the education gap, exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic as well as the impact that social distancing has had on children's development, mental and emotional health and wellbeing. Strategically we have aligned the HAF programme to our Walsall Right for Children transformation programme and our corporate resilient communities work stream. This has enabled us to strengthen capacity and capability across the voluntary sector locally to better meet the needs of Walsall's diverse community more proactively, redirect demand appropriately and ensure community 'scaffolding' is available to sustain the change achieved for vulnerable families which is crucial to a successful transformation journey and improving outcomes for children and families.

By allowing children to build a relationship with local providers over the summer, we have ensured that many of the 3,000 children engaged with the programme have not only made a positive transition back into education in September but will also remain connected to local support, which will make a significant contribution to improving the lived experiences of children in Walsall.

Reason for scrutiny:

To provide committee members with an overview of the programme to date and the benefits achieved to date.

Recommendations:

For progress and achievements to be endorsed

For the direction of travel for Christmas HAF delivery to be supported

Background papers:**Resource and legal considerations:**

The Local Authority is allocated £ 1,799,290 in grant funding from the Department of Education for the delivery of the HAF programme for 20/21. We are not sure whether there will be further funding beyond March 2021.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

The HAF is part of our 'Right for Children' Transformation and Resilient Communities Programme and contributes to a number of our Council Corporate Plan priorities:

1. People: throughout the programme we have and will continue to work with children, young people and their families to ensure they have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities.
2. Internal Focus: The programme is focussed on a whole system approach with support from colleagues in Public Health, ICT and Economy and Environment.
3. Children: The primary objective of the programme is to ensure that children attending the programme
 - Eat more healthily
 - Be more active
 - Take part in engaging and enriching activities
 - Be safe and not isolated
 - Have greater knowledge of health and nutrition
 - Be more engaged with school and other services
 - Have greater knowledge and awareness of holiday club provision
4. Communities: This programme has enabled us to strengthen capacity and capability across the voluntary/community sector locally to better meet the needs of Walsall's diverse community proactively, redirect demand appropriately and ensure community 'scaffolding' is available to sustain the change achieved for vulnerable families which is crucial to a successful transformation journey.

Citizen impact:

HAF programme evaluation showed a satisfaction rate of:

- Out of the 1006 children who completed the programme evaluation, 99% said they liked the activities they took part in
- Out of the 102 parents who completed the programme evaluations, 78% said the programme had been a big help, with a further 18% saying it helped a bit.

More detail about the benefits of the programme for children and their families are covered in the main body of this report.

Environmental impact:

Not applicable for this report

Performance management:

A HAF multi-agency steering group was established in January 2021 comprising Children Services (Early Help, Social Care, Access and Inclusion), Voluntary Sector, WHG, One Walsall, Money Home Job, Black Country Active, Police, Leisure Services, Public Health, Resilient Communities and Economy and Environment.

The role and responsibility of the steering group is to oversee the effective implementation of the programme, find solutions for any issues or barriers, identify and mitigate against any risks, identify resources & links, add value to the programme, monitor and report on impact. The steering group meets monthly.

The impact of the HAF programme has been reported through to Children's Service Leadership Group, Walsall Together and the Early Help Steering group to ensure that the learning influences future services, service delivery, partnership dynamics and sustainability of key impactful components of the programme beyond the DfE funding period.

Reducing inequalities:

Every individual, family and community has been affected by the pandemic. In Walsall we have been working across our strategic partnerships to understand the disproportionate impact Covid-19 has had on particular groups of children and families in order to inform how we can best target resources as part of our broader reset agenda.


The HAF programme has provided us with a vital opportunity to respond to a range of issues including those relating to poverty, the education gap, exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic as well as the impact that social distancing has had on children's development and their mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

Consultation:

In the development of the HAF programme there has been consultation with children, young people and their families and partners.

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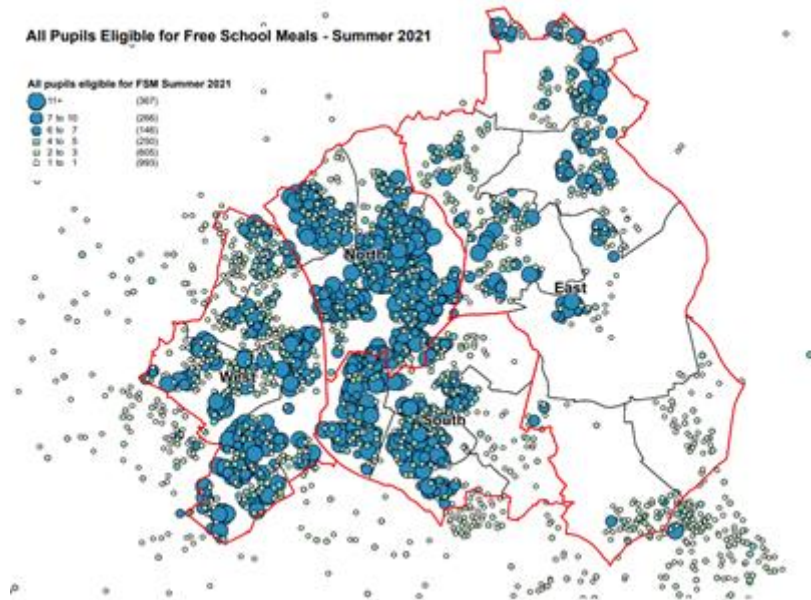
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Report

1. What do we know about Walsall children and Free School meals

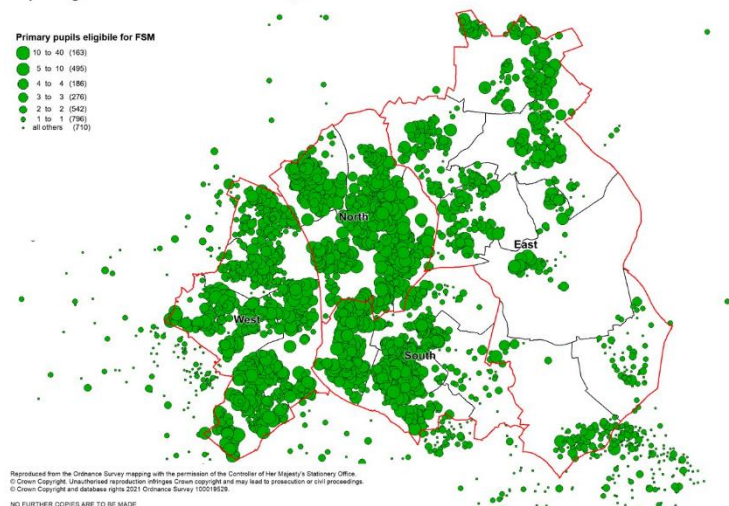
In Walsall we have 14,197 children who are on roll in Walsall schools, whose parents claim free school meals. Of these 13,592 live in Walsall.

We have undertaken a mapping exercise to understand where children entitled to FSM live to ensure we have sufficient provision based on need.



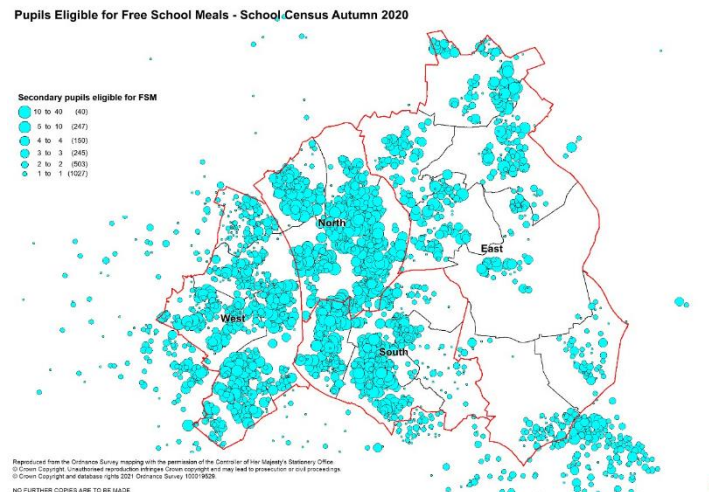
Primary aged Children signed up for FSM on roll in a Walsall School

Pupils Eligible for Free School Meals - School Census Autumn 2020



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Secondary aged Children signed up for FSM on roll in a Walsall School



2. COLLABORATION DRIVING FORWARD EFFECTIVE AND TIMELY DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME

2.1 Our HAF partnership steering group

The HAF programme has provided us with a vital opportunity to respond to a range of issues including those relating to poverty, the education gap, exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic as well as the impact that social distancing has had on children's development and their mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

Strategically we have aligned the HAF programme to our Walsall Right for Children transformation programme and our corporate resilient communities work stream. This has enabled us to strengthen capacity and capability across the voluntary sector locally to better meet the needs of Walsall's diverse community proactively, redirect demand appropriately and ensure community 'scaffolding' is available to sustain the change achieved for vulnerable families which is crucial to a successful transformation journey.. This mature partnership provided the right foundations to develop the HAF steering group from.

The steering group, established in January 2021 comprised Children Services (Early Help, Social Care, Access and Inclusion), Voluntary Sector, WHG, One Walsall, Money Home Job, Black Country Active, Police, Leisure Services, Public Health, Resilient Communities and Economy and Environment,

The role and responsibility of the steering group is to oversee the effective implementation of the programme, find solutions for any issues or barriers, identify and mitigate against any risks, identify resources & links, add value to the programme, monitor and report on impact. The steering group meets monthly.

The impact of the HAF programme has been reported through to the Children's Service Leadership Group, Walsall Together and the Early Help Steering group to ensure that the learning influences future services, service delivery, partnership dynamics and sustainability of key impactful components of the programme beyond the DfE funding period.

2.2 Our HAF project team

A HAF project team with responsibility for taking forward the operational actions as part of the delivery plan was established. This project team is made up of 'in kind' resources from across the partnership as well as a dedicated project coordinator and two apprentices funded through the DfE grant.

The project team has met weekly to ensure the implementation plan was kept on track.

We also created a central portal for schools to enable them to support children registration on the programme and see who in their school had taken up the offer.

Map of provision in Walsall over the summer:



Our delivery of HAF shifted from a focus on virtual activities, due to COVID restrictions in place during Easter 2021, to a face to face provision over the Summer 2021. The HAF programme provided children with a wide range of opportunities within **3 miles of where they lived** and activities which were **inclusive and non-stigmatising**.

Children and young people were able to access:

- **A choice of 140 different holiday face-to-face provision** providing a range of activities throughout the day for children to engage with, mainly targeted at primary school children (aged 5 to 11) for at least four hours, four days per week per child, for four weeks in the summer.
- **36 different courses** to provide children with **specific skills** including, dance, music, swimming, sports coaching, youth work training, fishing, mentoring
- **117 different pick and mix offer** targeted at young people aged 13 + providing a daily offer of activities they could engage with
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The provision was targeted at communities with high need and provided by local providers to ensure we develop relationships and opportunities that sustain beyond the holiday period.

By allowing children to build a relationship with local providers over the summer we are confident that many of the 3,000 children engaged with the programme will not only make a positive transition back into education in September but will also remain connected to local support, which will make a significant contribution to improving the lived experiences of children in Walsall. We are currently tracking children attendance to be able to evidence this.

4. MAKING EVERY CONTACT COUNT APPROACH

The DfE guidelines set out that organisations delivering HAF must be able to provide information, signposting or referrals to other services and support that would benefit the children who attend their provision and their families.

This provided a key opportunity to develop our locality offer and to build capacity across our delivery partners to meet preventative and early help demand from children and young people across each locality without the need for statutory Children's Services involvement:

We built in signposting opportunities through:

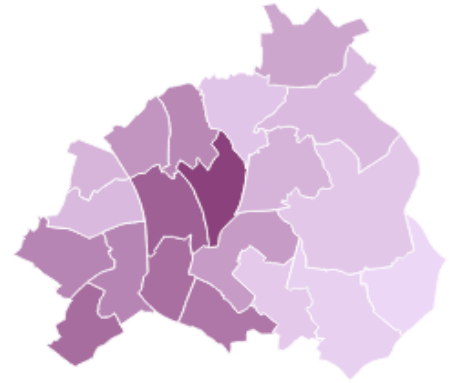
1. Registration process – all parent carers were asked if they would like to receive information about free services which may help them including parenting courses, finance information, nutrition information. 795 families indicated that they wanted to receive more information and as a result they will all receive an email with information on
 - Early Help Parenting information - free range of online parenting courses targeted at different stages of your child's age. Courses can be completed in your own time.
 - Free Family Learning - Walsall College -
 - Citizens Advice
 - Healthy Start
 - Kooth
 - Walsall School nurses provide support and advice on a range of health issues, They work with children and young people in full time school up to the age of 19 years old
 - COVID-19 - supporting children and families
 - Walsall Families Information Service (FIS)
2. Information linked to the HAF booking website
3. We have also delivered a signposting training session to all providers. This included:
 - Intro to Right Help Right Time
 - Intro to Early Help locality and partnership managers
 - Intro to neglect
 - Overview of helpful resources to promote with families
4. School Nurses and Street Teams visited sites across the HAF programme to provide drop in services for families.

5. Uptake

We increased the uptake from 1866 (13.5% of FSM) children during Easter to 2995 in Summer (21% of FSM). 77% of these were primary school aged children and 23% secondary school aged children. 16% were children with Special Educational need or Disability (SEND).

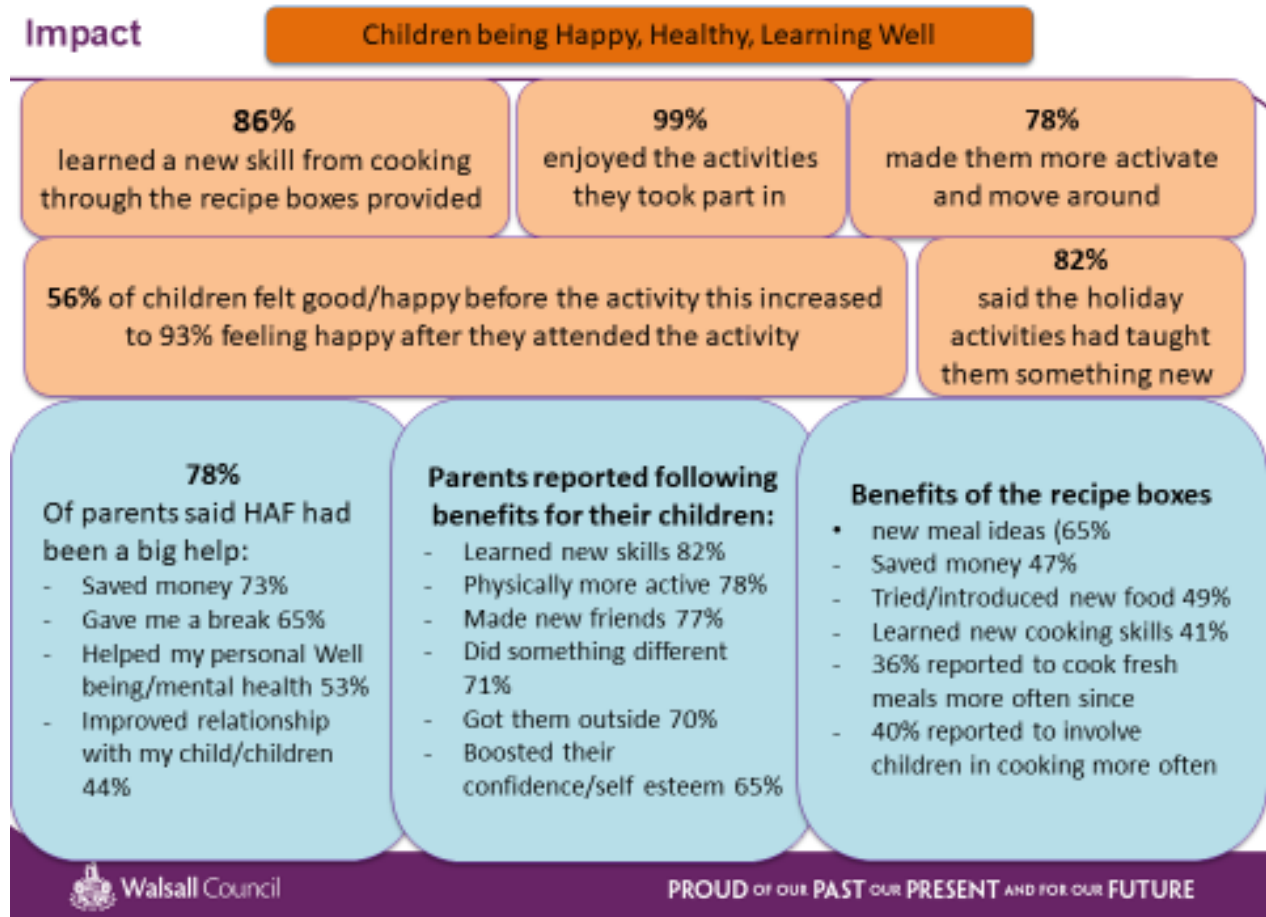
<u>Ward</u>	<u>Eligible</u>	<u>Registered</u>	<u>Percentage Registered by Eligibility</u>
Paddock	255	69	27.06%
Palfrey	1102	189	17.15%
Pleck	1174	220	18.74%
St. Matthews	700	151	21.57%
Aldridge Central and South	270	53	19.63%
Aldridge North and Walsall Wood	397	80	20.15%
Brownhills	615	100	16.26%
Pelsall	292	66	22.60%
Pheasey Park Farm	178	46	25.84%
Rushall-Shelfield	471	87	18.47%
Streetly	106	25	23.58%
Birchills Leamore	1330	228	17.14%
Blakenall	1662	334	20.10%
Bloxwich East	924	151	16.34%
Bloxwich West	790	152	19.24%
Bentley and Darlaston North	955	176	18.43%
Darlaston South	1210	221	18.26%
Short Heath	406	73	17.98%
Willenhall North	447	81	18.12%
Willenhall South	953	185	19.41%

Registration by Locality/Ward



6. Impact

We received 1010 completed evaluations from children and young people who attended holiday clubs, pick n mix sessions, activity packs, virtual sessions, courses. 102 parents completed the post evaluation programme. We are also tracking childrens attendance and will be able to report on this at the end of December 2021, the end of the first term following engagement of the programme.



7. Lessons learned and planning for Christmas:

Success of summer delivery:

- We will continue the collaborative approach between a wide range of partners to ensure we bring variety to the programme, are able to build sustainable local relationships for children and families and develop capacity for further preventative locality work.
- The range of activities over summer delivery for children and young people.
- Relationship of children and young people within the community
- Central website which includes a central registration and booking system and gives providers direct access so they can manage their own bookings.
- Additional expert support to providers through pulling on our short break buddying pool so they can deliver more inclusively to children and young people with complex special educational needs and medical needs.
- Complimentary healthy recipe boxes and the activity packs into the provision to encourage family time and healthy eating beyond the activity programme.

New developments we want to implement in summer

- Christmas we would want to build on to the programme and include more holiday clubs, family activities, courses, virtual sessions and activity packs
- We will seek to recruit more volunteers from within the community to help us with uptake and engagement of children
- To improve Special Education needs and Disability (SEND) provision, we will work with our local groups and parents / carers and children to develop a larger offer for children and young people with SEND.

We are keen to provide an offer, which is inclusive of children with special educational needs, and extra funding continues to be available to support providers to build an inclusive offer.

- We will be very clear in the booklet and when families book, to show them which is SEND specific / inclusive or neither.
- In addition to building inclusivity, we are also keen to build our specialist offer for children with more complex learning needs or disabilities to enable us to meet all children's needs
- We are also developing the registration form when a parents 'click yes' to additional needs where we will ask more in-depth questions
- We are consulting with families and collaborating with parents to do produce the offer – we started to meet in September to develop this offer

We are working in a collaborative approach with parents to develop our inclusive programme

We consulted to date with 80+ parents who have children with SEND and this is what they told us so far that they would like to see following support in place to meet the needs of their children:

Smaller group

Same buddy as we have for school

Online sessions

Music volume

Sensory toy availability

Activities adapted

Trips outside mostly.

SEN provision kids playgroup or 1:1 worker allocation

Close to home

Wheelchair availability

Family activities

The type of activities they would like to see are:



Christmas HAF provision on following dates: **Monday 20th - Thursday 23rd December and 29th, 30th and 31st December 2021**

We would like to provide a wide range of opportunities for children and young people to engage in a Christmas offer that is within walking distance of where they live, and is a combination of:

Week 1 Monday 20 December to Thursday 23 December 2021

- A traditional holiday face-to-face provision (a holiday club) providing a range of activities throughout the day for children to engage with – mainly targeted at primary school children (aged 5 to 11) for at least four hours for four days a week per child with a healthy meal. We are also asking if you are delivering cooking activity to budget in your application for children to also take home ingredients or a activity pack
- Virtual sessions and activity packs aimed at children who find face to face provision difficult to access
- A pick and mix offer targeted at young people aged 13 + to provide them with a choice of activities they can engage with opportunities to provide children with specific skills. These could be courses in, for example, dance, music, swimming, sports coaching, youth work training, fishing, mentoring
- Complimentary healthy recipe boxes will be delivered to children and young people's homes for Christmas delivery

Week 2 - Wednesday 29 December - Friday 31 December

- Pick and Mix Family Activities / sessions