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Holiday Hunger Playworks Pilot 2019 Evaluation: Summary

Introduction

Feeding children over the school holidays, when breakfast clubs and free school meals are not available is a challenge for some families¹. In 2019-20 the Welsh Government allocated £100,000 to a pilot project to test the feasibility of tackling holiday hunger through play and community based settings.

This report presents findings from an internal evaluation designed to assess the effectiveness of the pilot, and inform future policy and delivery decisions to address holiday hunger in the short-term.

Background

This pilot builds on the success of the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP); an education programme which also provides meals to children at risk of holiday hunger. Whilst SHEP is expanding, more needs to be done to tackle holiday hunger, particularly as this is not the main focus of SHEP.

The pilot was run over the Summer and October half term school holidays in 2019. Suitable settings were identified and approached by working with Mentrau Iaith and two umbrella organisations for play; Play Wales and Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs.

¹ Children's Commissioner for Wales (2019~) [A Charter for Change: Protecting Welsh Children from the impact of poverty](#). Accessed 16/12/2019

The playwork sector has good access to children in deprived areas and good local knowledge of families and their situations. Playwork settings are already well established and well placed to distribute healthy meals to children at risk of holiday hunger.

Pilot Evaluation

Different models of provision were tested in the pilot. In some cases food was added to existing provision, in others food was improved. Some settings ordered in food, others purchased equipment and prepared their own. Out of school clubs provided additional spaces to children who would not otherwise have been able to attend.

The findings presented here are based on the Welsh Government analysis of 38 setting monitoring forms and feedback from 753 children, 346 parents and 38 settings, which grant recipients were required to collect and return on our behalf.

Overview of Findings: Pilot inputs, outputs and indicative outcomes



**92 Open Access Play Sites,
received £67K in total**

**6 Out of
School Sites,
received £31K
in total**



98 sites, across 16 local authorities

**11,300 places or sessions
reaching children:
- 3,650 during Summer
- 450 during October
half term**



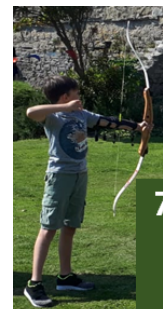
Supported healthy eating



Majority ate less sweets on days they attended the pilots



Encouraged positive behaviours



**57%
exercised
more**

Financially supported families

**More than a third
of parents said
helped with costs,
and specifically
with the cost of
food**



**60% of settings saw signs
of hunger, and 10% felt
they had helped tackle this**

- Additional benefits identified:**
- Having fun/being happier
 - Socialising over meals
 - Being involved in food preparation
 - Drinking more water
 - A 'safe' place to go away from conflict at home
 - Increased sense of community/local support
 - An enhanced service(s) and supporting sustainability of sites

Conclusions and recommendations

Funding the addition, extension or improvement of food to existing funded free at point of access playwork provision to children at risk of holiday hunger appears to be a cost effective approach to tackling holiday hunger. The approach complements and supplements other approaches taken.

Funding places at paid provision, usually out of school clubs, is a more expensive approach but might still be a useful tool that can be used to tackle holiday hunger. It gives children who are not normally able to attend these settings opportunities to access food, education about healthy eating and rich play opportunities. It also supports the sustainability of out of school childcare and holiday provision.

Adding food to existing provision that does not normally include food provides the added benefits of involving children in food preparation, teaching about healthy eating, encouraging healthy habits like trying new foods, sitting to eat in a sociable environment and therefore enhances the overall provision.

In general providing food to playwork settings has encouraged healthier eating in children although there are some examples of unhealthy food related activities and children reporting eating sweets and treats. More could be done to encourage healthy eating through the settings' eligibility information, guidance and training to settings.

For any future funding the process of selecting settings, allocating and distributing funding, ensuring healthy provision and evaluation should be built on the learning from the pilot. Further research is needed to fully understand impacts.

Author(s):

Kirsten Geary, Childcare and Play Senior Policy Manager, Welsh Government

Catrin Awoyemi, Head of Play Policy, Welsh Government

Faye Gracey, Research and Evidence Lead, Childcare, Play and Early Years, Welsh Government

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Available at: <https://gov.wales/holiday-hunger-playworks-pilot>

Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

For further information please contact:

Childcare, Play and Early Years Division

Welsh Government, Cathays Park

Cardiff, CF10 3NQ

Email: PlayOpportunities@gov.wales

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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