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The School Holiday Enrichment Programme: an analysis of policy alignment

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The School Holiday Enrichment Programme: an analysis of policy alignment

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Glossary

SHEP

School Holiday Enrichment Programme

PHP

Playworks Holiday Project

WG

Welsh Government

WLGA

Welsh Local Government Association

WCPP

Wales Centre for Public Policy

RTA

Reflexive thematic analysis

ALN

Additional Learning Needs

eFSM

Eligible for free school meals

ASO

Assistant Support Officer

PSA

Play Sufficiency Assessment

PRU

Pupil Referral Unit

UPFSM

Universal primary free school meals

ASO

Assistant Support Officer

CCG

Children and Communities Grant

CIW

Care Inspectorate Wales

1 Introduction

Aims and objectives

- 1.1 The aim of this analysis is to explore the ongoing and potential future alignment of School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) and relevant Welsh Government funded school holiday programmes and policy, and to identify opportunities to maximise collaboration across programmes. This analysis is intended to inform policy direction for SHEP.
- 1.2 This analysis has four objectives:
- **Objective 1:** to explore to what extent the SHEP and the Playworks Holiday Project (PHP) align.
 - **Objective 2:** to identify any areas of overlap or duplication between Welsh Government funded school holiday provision at a national level.
 - **Objective 3:** to identify opportunities to reduce duplication of school holiday provision at a local level.
 - **Objective 4:** to explore how SHEP provision might be aligned to, or impacted by, other areas of policy in Wales (e.g., reform to the school year and the recent ending of holiday free school meal provision).

Background and policy context: School Holiday Enrichment Programme

- 1.3 The SHEP is a school-based scheme that provides healthy meals, food and nutrition education, physical activity and enrichment sessions to learners aged 4-15 years in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. Primarily SHEP aims to reduce the loss of learning for children in deprived areas over the summer holiday which may contribute to widening the attainment gap. It also helps families that struggle to afford or access food that provides a healthy diet during the school holidays.
- 1.4 The provision operates out of school premises and the meals are provided by the canteen staff. The provision is therefore restricted to schools with canteen facilities. The provision is typically provided over a three-week or four-week period (a minimum of 12 days in total) to cohorts of 40 children per unit during the summer holidays. The SHEP is delivered on a full-day or sessional basis.

- 1.5 The SHEP is managed by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), who oversee and manage 22 Council Leads who are responsible for the coordination of the SHEP programme in their local authority. The SHEP was first piloted as a scheme in 2015, where it was rolled out in Cardiff by the Food Cardiff Partnership. At that time, Food and Fun was the first UK example of a multi-agency project providing healthy meals, nutrition education, sports and other physical activities in the summer holidays. The programme was expanded to five local authorities in Wales during 2016 by the WLGA which has since grown steadily. Since 2017, the SHEP has been delivered nationally, administered by WLGA and principally funded by the Welsh Government which match funded until 2019 and fully funded from 2020.
- 1.6 The provision is still known internally in the Welsh Government as SHEP but is promoted externally under the 'Food and Fun' brand. Throughout this report, the term SHEP will exclusively be used to describe the initiative, but 'Food and Fun' does appear in interviewees' accounts at times.
- 1.7 During the 2023 school summer holiday period, approximately 278 cohorts were delivered across 175 schemes which ran across Wales, creating 11,110 places to learners each day that schemes ran (up from nearly 8,000 places in 2022-23). During the 2023 delivery of the SHEP, approximately 44% of children who attended were eligible for free school meals¹.
- 1.8 Welsh Government allocated £4.85m to the SHEP in 2023-24, with a commitment in its Programme for Government to 'support and grow the programme'.
- 1.9 A logic model of the SHEP's core activities and its intended outcomes was initially conceptualised by the Centre for Development, Evaluation, Complexity and Implementation (DECIPHer) in 2016-17. In 2019, the WLGA commissioned Data Cymru to further develop the logic model.²
- 1.10 The revised logic model that was developed identified five broad outcomes for the SHEP:
- improved mental health and emotional wellbeing,

¹ Data taken from: WLGA (2024) [Food and Fun 2023 Evaluation Report](#)

² WLGA (2020) [Evaluation of the School Holiday Enrichment Programme \(SHEP\) 2019](#)

- school engagement and educational attainment,
- improved aspirations,
- improved physical activity,
- improved dietary behaviour.

1.11 During the scoping phase of this current research, several school holiday programmes and policy areas were identified as relevant to the SHEP. These are summarised below.

Background and policy context: Playworks Holiday Project

- 1.12 The Welsh Government provides funding for the PHP, which is a holiday hunger initiative that aims to support access to increased play opportunities for children and young people during the school holidays and provide healthy food / snacks. The PHP is aimed at children between 0 – 17 years old (extended to 25 years old for disabled young people) and can be delivered during all holiday periods.
- 1.13 PHP funding is managed by local authorities who deliver the provision themselves or via third sector providers. It was intended that PHP funding would allow local authorities to use community-based playwork schemes to offer provision to more children than they would otherwise have been able to.
- 1.14 The main aims of the PHP are to provide better play opportunities, which are free at point of access or at a nominal charge, and positive experiences involving socialising, being active, having fun, and learning something new. The project also provides additional benefits by supporting the sustainability of PHP settings and supporting parents, families and communities. In addition, the programme aims to improve outcomes for children in relation to holiday hunger by providing food and snacks to encourage healthier eating and to reduce financial pressure on parents and carers. It is intended that the programme improve outcomes related to children's holiday hunger by complementing the SHEP. The funding for PHP should be focused by local authorities on areas of need and deprivation.

Recovery from the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic

- 1.15 In 2021, the Welsh Government launched the £5m Summer of Fun scheme which provided a range of free leisure, recreational, sporting and cultural activities for children and young people aged 0-25 years in Wales. The activities aimed to provide support for young people's social, emotional and physical wellbeing as part of the Welsh Government response to recovery from the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.³ The Summer of Fun was run again the following year in 2022, with a £7m budget allocation.⁴
- 1.16 Building on the success of the Summer of Fun, Welsh Government launched the Winter of Wellbeing from October 2021 to March 2022 as part of a £20m package to support children and families to ensure that no child is left behind as part of the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.⁵ As part of this, up to £2m was made available for a Trial of Additional Enrichment Sessions to deliver activities and experiences to support children and young people's learning, skills development, and physical and mental wellbeing across learning settings that volunteered during the 2021/22 academic year.⁶
- 1.17 The evaluation of Winter of Wellbeing states that the programme was well received by providers and beneficial to children and families. However, an unintended outcome of the Winter of Wellbeing programme was that it raised expectations among children and families of free-to-access provision being offered in the long term.
- 1.18 Both the Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing programmes have now ceased, meaning that the PHP funding stream is the only funding stream dedicated to the provision of free, open access play provision.

Provision of free school meals

- 1.19 In April 2020, Wales became the first UK nation to guarantee free school meals for eligible families during the school holidays, with meals being provided during the

³ Welsh Government (2021) [Summer of Fun Evaluation](#), Cardiff, Welsh Government.

⁴ Welsh Government (2022) [Written Statement: £7m Summer of Fun 2022](#)

⁵ Welsh Government (2023) [Winter of Wellbeing Evaluation](#), Cardiff, Welsh Government.

⁶ Welsh Government (2023) [Additional Enrichment Sessions Trial Evaluation](#), Cardiff, Welsh Government.

school holidays, supported by an investment of over £100 million. Individual local authorities decided how to administer the free meal provision, either by creating lunches or by providing vouchers or direct payments to families. However, this provision ceased in February 2023.

- 1.20 Moreover, on the 17th December 2021, Welsh Government announced that free school meal entitlement would be extended to all primary school children in Wales by September 2024. The roll-out of universal primary free school meals (UPFSM), was delivered through a phased approach, starting at the beginning of the autumn term (September) 2022 with reception children receiving the first free meals. By September 2023 the offer expanded to include the majority of learners from reception up to years three and four, and by April 2024, reaching years five and six. Where local authorities were able to reach these year groups ahead of these milestones they have been funded to do so.

Reform of the school year

- 1.21 Recent research commissioned by the Welsh Government (2023)⁷ explored the perceptions and experiences of the current school calendar. The research found that in the view of practitioners, parents, and learners, the 6-week break causes learning loss for all learners. There is minimal lasting effect of this loss with recovery reported to happen soon after the start of the autumn term. Staff and parents highlighted that in their opinion, learners with additional learning needs (ALN) are the most affected by the current school calendar. Many respondents suggested that alterations to the school year could improve levels of wellbeing and fatigue in learners and staff and support learner attainment and progression.
- 1.22 The consultation on the reform of the school year was launched to consider the current structure of the school year alongside alternative structures to ensure the provision of a school year that can best help mitigate the impacts of disadvantage, narrow educational inequalities, support learner and staff well-being and align with contemporary patterns of family life and employment.

⁷ Welsh Government (2023). [Reform of the school year: perceptions and experiences of the current school calendar](#) Cardiff, Welsh Government

1.23 The consultation generated over 16,000 responses, which sought views on changing the school calendar to spread school holidays out more evenly across the year. Proposals suggested moving a week from the start of the summer break into the autumn break creating a two-week half term to improve the education experiences of young people especially the most disadvantaged and align more effectively with how families live and work. While a narrow majority of responses were in favour of changing school holidays, the findings from the consultation were equivocal and contradictory. Following this mixed response from the Reform of the School Year consultation (2024)⁸, the Cabinet Secretary for Education confirmed that any decision to change the school calendar would not happen in the Senedd term that was due to end in 2026, but would be a matter for the next Senedd.

⁸ Welsh Government (2024). [Summary of responses: The structure of the school year](#). Cardiff, Welsh Government

2 Methodology

2.1 To address the research questions, this research involved a scoping phase, followed by interviews with key stakeholders.

2.2 The scoping phase of the research involved the following tasks:

- Establishing the aims, objectives, and scope of the analysis following discussions with policy leads for the SHEP.
- Initial scoping interviews with key internal and external stakeholders, including officials from WLGA and SHEP leads from local authorities.
- Review of key evaluation and policy literature.

Interviews with internal and external stakeholders

2.3 Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders. Eight interviews were conducted with ten external stakeholders who were officials from the WLGA or staff from local authorities who deliver SHEP or PHP. Seven interviews were conducted with eight officials from the Welsh Government who lead on policy or research for SHEP or one of the school holiday programmes or policy areas identified in the introduction.

2.4 A privacy notice was developed for interviews with external stakeholders. External stakeholders were identified using a combination of purposive and convenience sampling.

2.5 To recruit internal stakeholders, officials from relevant policy areas were contacted via email and asked who in their team would be best placed to take part. Following a scoping conversation, relevant policy leads were invited to take part in an interview.

2.6 To identify and recruit local authority stakeholders from key 'case study' areas, the coordinators of each programme (WLGA, for SHEP and policy officials from the childcare and play division for PHP) were asked to recommend a list of local authorities who would have an interesting perspective to share regarding the alignment of the two programmes.

- 2.7 All local authority officials recommended by programme leads were invited to take part in an interview following email introductions.
- 2.8 Interview schedules were developed by the research team and were informed by informal scoping conversations with each stakeholder prior to interview. Whilst an individual schedule was drawn up for each interview, all schedules were based on a core set of questions. These are provided at Annex A.
- 2.9 All semi-structured interviews were undertaken virtually and took place via Microsoft Teams. This proved both an efficient approach to undertaking fieldwork over a short period of time and allowed for a wider geographical range of local authorities to be included in the study.
- 2.10 Interviews lasted between 35 – 95 minutes. In total, 825 minutes of interview data were captured and transcribed.
- 2.11 Interviews were first transcribed using the automatic transcription function through Microsoft Teams, and then formatted and checked by the researcher to correct any errors.

Limitations: selection bias

- 2.12 Whilst a wide range of internal and external stakeholders were spoken to as part of this project, it was not possible to gather the views of some stakeholders.
- 2.13 Internally, the research did not engage with policy officials from Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, and the Whole School Approach to Mental Health. Additionally, whilst officials within Youth Engagement were involved at the scoping stage, these interviews could not go ahead due to researcher ill health.
- 2.14 Externally, it was not possible to speak to partners from the out-of-school childcare sector which is managed by the Cwlwm consortium. Any future work to reshape the SHEP would be strengthened by an engagement with partners from this sector, particularly Clubiau Plant Cymru Kids Club, given these partners may be impacted by any changes to the future delivery of the SHEP.

Limitations: case study area bias

2.15 To identify participating local authorities, the research team relied upon programme coordinators to act as gatekeepers. Additionally, only six local authorities were consulted out of a possible 22. Therefore, there is a potential that these areas may provide a partial and biased picture of the alignment and delivery of the SHEP and PHP.

Analysis and collation of available evidence

2.16 Analysis of interview data broadly followed Braun and Clarke's method of reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). RTA is used as a 'method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and involves six steps. These are: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining/naming themes and writing the report.

2.17 Several themes were constructed from the data in response to each research objective:

- Objective 1: to explore to what extent the SHEP and the PHP align. Emergent themes were: aims; implementation; resources and partnerships; barriers
- Objective 2: to identify any areas of overlap or duplication between Welsh Government funded school holiday provisions. Emergent themes were: SHEP and holiday play provision; SHEP and out of school childcare; SHEP and other non-Welsh Government (WG) funded national programmes; SHEP and the wealth of un-registered, local provision; moving towards national level alignment
- Objective 3: to identify opportunities to increase collaboration of school holiday provision at a local level. Emergent themes were: strategic level alignment; mapping/timetabling provision; effective multi-agency communication; adopting an asset-based approach
- Objective 4: to explore how SHEP provision might be aligned to, and impacted by other areas of policy in Wales. Emergent themes were: Reform

of the School Year; free school meal provision; community focused schools;
youth engagement; child poverty

3 Findings: alignment of the School Holiday Enrichment Programme and the Playworks Holiday Project

- 3.1 The alignment of the SHEP was explored with the PHP across each of the programmes' aims, implementation, resources and partnerships.
- 3.2 A similar exercise was carried out as part of an evaluation of the Holiday Hunger Playworks Pilot 2019, where the aims and costs of the SHEP, PHP and StreetGames programmes were compared (Welsh Government 2019: 34-36).⁹
- 3.3 During the exploration of this objective with internal and external stakeholders, several barriers to the growth, reach and delivery of the SHEP have been identified. Therefore, whilst not part of the original objectives, these are also presented as part of this section.

Aims: School Holiday Enrichment Programme

- 3.4 The SHEP was first developed in 2015 in response to growing concerns about food poverty and summer learning loss among children in Wales.¹⁰
- 3.5 The most recent impact evaluation of the SHEP (published in February 2023), states that the programme aims to promote healthy living, support positive well-being, and improve engagement with education and the school during the summer holidays.¹¹
- 3.6 In 2016, DECIPHer produced a logic model for the SHEP, which was updated in 2019. The five intended outcome areas of the most recent logic model (2019) are as follows¹²:
 - Improved mental health and emotional wellbeing.
 - Educational attainment and school engagement.
 - Improved aspirations.
 - Improved dietary behaviour.

⁹ Welsh Government (2020) [Holiday Hunger Playworks Pilot 2019 Evaluation](#), Cardiff, Welsh Government

¹⁰ WLGA (2024) ['Food and Fun' School Holiday Enrichment Programme](#)

¹¹ Arad Research (2023) [Evaluation of Food and Fun School Improvement Programme: Impact Report](#)

¹² WLGA (2020) [Evaluation of the School Holiday Enrichment Programme \(SHEP\) 2019](#)

- Improved physical activity.

3.7 When engaging with stakeholders of the programme on both a strategic and regional level, it was ascertained that policy leads, national and regional coordinators of the SHEP believe that it has retained its original aims.

3.8 Moreover, many interviewees commented that SHEP now presented benefits beyond those listed in its logic model. At the SHEP national conference, the following list of additional benefits offered by the programme was presented by the WLGA:

- **Safeguarding** - social services staff have been reassured for a minimum of 12 days, vulnerable children were in a safe environment and being fed.
- **Financial worries** – families reported the Bag Bwydd¹³ was ‘a lifesaver’ as food was in short supply in their homes.
- **Respite** – families of learners with additional learning needs (ALN) had a short period of respite and were confident their children were with trusted staff members.
- **Attendance** – one school reported improved rates of attendance during the autumn term of those learners who participated in the scheme. Sporting activity has also increased both in and outside school.
- **Relationships** – the school summer holiday period is a ‘gap’ when relationships which schools have nurtured with families during term time can often drop away. SHEP allows for continued, steady engagement with families.

3.9 Many interviewees outlined how these aims and intended outcomes are even more imperative in the wake of the cost-of-living crisis and rising rates of child poverty, and explained how the programme aligns with the wider priorities and strategic objectives of Welsh Government:

‘[Food and Fun] achieves so many of the pillars of the Well-being of Future Generations Wales Act. [...] Food and Fun can [also] deliver against all the other

¹³ The Bag Bwydd initiative in 2023 aimed to send each attendee of the SHEP home with a bag of pantry staples. The initiative aimed to combat the cost-of-living crisis.

agendas, the 'Healthy weight, Healthy Wales', the 'Whole school approach', the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, [...] the other thing that we heavily underpin is the child poverty [draft] strategy, I feel that Food and Fun has a big part to play in that.'

'All the indicators seem to be implying that child poverty is going up, particularly in Wales, the worst in the UK. And so I think there's even more need [for Food and Fun] now than there was in 2015, by quite a long way'.

- 3.10 Indeed, throughout the interviews, it was noted that tackling inequality, and particularly holiday hunger had become more of a priority aim of the SHEP programme, given the current climate:

'Clearly with the change in the external economic landscape that's happened over the last year or so with the cost-of-living crisis, [...] So many families are really struggling with food issues and provision of care over what can be quite a long, summer holiday period'

- 3.11 Throughout all responses and discussions of the current aims of the SHEP programme, it seems that whilst the programme has many and varied aims and numerous benefits for participants, the two main aims of the programme are tackling holiday hunger and learning loss over the long summer break.

Aims: Playworks Holiday Project

- 3.12 Since its inception, the PHP has undergone many changes in its core aims and delivery. This is in part due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the subsequent availability of recovery funding including the provision of free school meals throughout the school holidays. This project has shifted in aims, direction and development since its inception.
- 3.13 In 2019-20, Welsh Government allocated £100,000 to run the Holiday Hunger Playworks Pilot, which aimed to tackle holiday hunger through play and community-based settings. The evaluation of this pilot states that the pilot built 'on the success of the SHEP. Whilst SHEP is expanding, more needs to be done to tackle holiday

hunger, particularly as this is not the main focus of SHEP.¹⁴ The pilot was successful and funding was originally allocated for the initiative to be delivered in the following year (2020-2021). However, during this same financial year, ministers had also committed to extending free school meals to cover all school holiday periods for the year.

- 3.14 Therefore, due to the availability of free school meals during the holidays, the Holiday Hunger Playworks Project funding was repurposed and allocated to local authorities via the Local Authority Emergency Hardship Fund to enhance childcare and play opportunities.
- 3.15 During the 2021-22 financial year, the Playworks initiative was reprised, now branded the PHP. £1m funding was made available to increase holiday playwork provision in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage. As free school meals during school holidays were still available, local authorities could provide food at their discretion depending on the needs of the region.
- 3.16 In the financial year 2023-24, the main aims of the PHP returned to their original intentions. Indeed, the PHP 2023-24: Guidance for local authorities stated that the two primary aims of the programme are ‘the provision of enriched play opportunities’ and ‘to help reduce holiday hunger by providing healthy food/snacks’ (p2).¹⁵
- 3.17 The interview data collected during this project suggests that on both a strategic and regional level, national and regional coordinators of the PHP believe that the primary aim of the programme is to provide open access play opportunities, and that tackling holiday hunger is a secondary, lesser aim of the initiative. The following quote suggests a variation between the guidance and the perception of officials about the purpose of PHP:

‘If I was comparing both we focused more funding on play provision but we have ensured that some of the funding that we give them is used on healthy snacks. So it's not been a primary factor.’

¹⁴ Welsh Government (2020) [Holiday Hunger Playworks Pilot 2019 Evaluation](#), Cardiff, Welsh Government

¹⁵ Welsh Government (2023) [Playworks Holiday Project 2023 to 2024: guidance for local authorities](#), Cardiff, Welsh Government

3.18 One interviewee explained that providing more open access play opportunities is 'part of the UN Convention of Human Rights', therefore an important strategic aim for Welsh Government.

Comparison of aims

3.19 Overall, policy literature suggests that in their current format, the SHEP programme and PHP have several shared aims, outlined in Table 3.1.

3.20 However, interview data also suggests that the priority aim of each programme does provide a distinct and necessary provision, as SHEP now focuses on tackling holiday hunger as a priority aim, and still strives to deliver on the intended outcomes of the 2019 logic model. However, the PHP appears to focus more on providing free, open access play provision which is not an aim of the SHEP programme.

Table 3.1: Programme aims

Core aim / intended outcome of programme	SHEP	PHP
Improved mental health and emotional well-being	✓	✓
Improving school engagement and educational attainment	✓	
Improved aspirations	✓	✓
Improved physical activity	✓	✓
Improved dietary behaviour	✓	
Tackling holiday hunger	✓	✓
Providing open access play opportunities		✓

Implementation: School Holiday Enrichment Programme

- 3.21 The funding allocation for SHEP is provided on an annual basis from Welsh Government to the WLGA. The WLGA manage and administers the scheme throughout Wales, by overseeing ‘SHEP council leads’ in each of the 22 local authorities, who coordinate the programme regionally. SHEP council leads can be multi-agency professionals including headteachers, youth workers and play workers, but all ultimately report to the Education Directorate of the local authority.
- 3.22 Schools can apply to their local authority to run SHEP, providing that 16% or more of their pupils are eligible for free school meals. This eligibility criterion is set at the school level, and SHEP schemes are open to all pupils on roll at the participating school regardless of whether they are eligible for free school meals (eFSM).
- 3.23 SHEP is delivered in each school according to a prescriptive model developed by the WLGA and partners. There are several, mandatory core elements of the SHEP programme which are set out below:¹⁶
- A school-based programme delivered by school staff and partners.
 - A minimum of 12 days over the school summer holidays.
 - To provide a healthy breakfast and lunch which adhere to the SHEP menu requirements.

¹⁶ WLGA (2023) [Food and Fun 2022 Operational Report](#)

- A minimum of one hour of structured physical activity per day
- All Wales SHEP Food and Nutrition Education sessions
- A family breakfast or lunch offered at least once per week.
- Enrichment sessions provided by school staff and/or partners.

- 3.24 To provide the mandatory Food and Nutrition Education sessions, at least two members of (preferably school) staff per cohort are required to undertake the Agored Cymru accredited Level 2 Community Food and Nutrition Skills training.
- 3.25 The capacity of each SHEP scheme is determined by the number of cohorts applied for. Each cohort is made up of a maximum of 40 pupils. A maximum of £10,000 can be claimed for each cohort.
- 3.26 SHEP is predominantly run in primary schools across Wales. However, in recent years, other models have been added such as schemes run in secondary schools, ALN provision in special schools, the 'hub' model and a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).
- 3.27 Whilst the SHEP model is prescriptive and the core elements are mandatory, there are degrees of flexibility and each scheme has the opportunity to tailor the provision offered. One interviewee explained that schools had some choice about the focus for sessions, and school staff who knew the children well could deliver some activities based on their interests. Additionally, a repository of national partners (e.g. Wales Rugby Union, Table Tennis Wales) is available for schemes to draw upon to deliver enrichment activities.
- 3.28 In addition to the regular provision, in summer 2023, the SHEP programme ran an additional initiative known as 'Bag Bwyd' which provided a bag of pantry staples to every attendee of the SHEP to take home to their family.

Implementation: Playworks Holiday Project

- 3.29 In contrast to the SHEP initiative, the PHP is not a set programme with a prescriptive format.
- 3.30 Projects funded using the PHP funding are hugely varied across Wales ranging from large scale, open access provision with thousands of attendees in a park, to

one-to-one specialist ALN play provision. Some provision is made in a mobile, peripatetic manner using a play van, known as a 'play ranger' model.

- 3.31 Projects funded using the PHP funding can be delivered in any school holiday period throughout the school year or even on weekends during the school term.
- 3.32 To apply for a portion of the PHP funding, local authorities must submit a proposal form to the Play Policy Team at Welsh Government outlining how they plan to use the funding. These proposals are tailored to local need, based on any gaps identified by the Play Sufficiency Assessment of each local authority (PSA). As such, the PHP funded provision will very likely be in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage.
- 3.33 An important theme throughout the data was that the flexibility of the PHP funding was a valued aspect of the initiative at the local and national level, as it allows for the provision to be tailored to the needs of individual communities.
- 3.34 For each financial year, priority areas are outlined with guidelines on how the funding might be used as a priority – however, these are neither mandatory options, nor an exhaustive list of examples. In the 2023-24 guidance¹⁷, there are five priority areas outlined as follows:
- Priority 1. Extend the hours or days of existing playwork provision.
 - Priority 2. Local Authorities should look at the gaps in play provision in areas of need and where gaps are identified, they can use funding to support establishment/re-establishment of playwork settings.
 - Priority 3. Add food to existing community, open access play or out of school childcare provision.
 - Priority 4. Consider funding the addition of food to youth settings.
 - Priority 5. Consider funding places in childcare or out of school settings for children at risk of holiday hunger where other provision does not exist or the

¹⁷ Priorities listed in the guidance document: Welsh Government (2023) Playworks Holiday Project 2023 to 2024: guidance for local authorities, Cardiff, Welsh Government (Annex C)

additional benefits of childcare and play will make a significant impact on the child.

3.35 Food provision funded by PHP tends to be restricted to healthy snacks and drinks rather than hot meals. There are clear guidelines set out in the guidance for local authorities around the food which can be provided so that it is used for the distribution of healthy foods only. Additionally, it is set out in the guidance that the offer of food must be for all participants not just the vulnerable, to avoid any stigmatisation.

3.36 However, many participants explained during interviews that they find it difficult to provide food at open access play provision with the small amount of funding that PHP provides:

‘Not all provision provides healthy snacks because there just isn’t the funding. Its £1,000,000 split between 22 local authorities [...] Do you spend all the money on the food and then only limited number of children benefit or do you try and spread it out?’

Implementation: comparison

3.37 Overall, the implementation of the PHP funding is very different to that of the SHEP. The SHEP programme is a set, prescriptive scheme delivered in school settings during the summer school holidays. The programme is based on set criteria with centralised training and is delivered consistently across Wales.

3.38 PHP funding, by contrast, is flexible grant funding available to extend existing provision of, or fund new open access play provision. The implementation is dependent on local need which is ascertained by local authorities’ play sufficiency assessment.

3.39 More information about the specific implementation criteria of each programme can be found in the SHEP Application Form at Annex B and the PHP: guidance: guidance for local authorities, at Annex C.¹⁸

¹⁸ Welsh Government (2023) Playworks Holiday Project 2023 to 2024: guidance for local authorities, Cardiff, Welsh Government (Annex C)

Table 3.2: Core implementation criteria of the School Holiday Enrichment Programme compared to the Playworks Holiday Project

Core implementation criteria of the programme	School Holiday Enrichment Programme	Playworks Holiday Project
Coordinated by	Coordinated nationally by the WLGA, regionally by Food and Fun Council Leads	Coordinated Nationally by Welsh Government, regionally by Play leads
Location	Schools only	Any location (e.g. parks, community hubs, doorstep play etc.)
Eligibility	School must have 16% free school meal eligibility	No eligibility criteria, but run in areas of need, identified by the Play Sufficiency Assessment
Activities	Enrichment, physical activity, nutrition education	Open access play
Meals provided	Breakfast and hot lunch on each day of provision in line with menu requirements	Mostly healthy snacks, some provision provides packed lunches or even hot meals
Period of operation	Summer only	Any holiday period, after school or weekends
Number of hours per session	(up to) a full day	Unless provision is registered with CIW (most are not), up to 1hr 59 per session

Resources: School Holiday Enrichment Programme

- 3.40 As the specific, scheme-level resources necessary to facilitate the SHEP and PHP initiatives are many and varied depending upon the mode of delivery and needs of the region, the following section presents an exploration of the main resources necessary to facilitate each scheme. This is not an exhaustive list.
- 3.41 Welsh Government allocated £4.85m to SHEP in 2023-24, with a commitment in its Programme for Government to ‘support and grow the programme’.
- 3.42 SHEP is currently in the second of three years of indicative funding, and WLGA officials noted concerns about plans for beyond this period. One interviewee indicated that having an ongoing funding commitment would grant partners and coordinators of the scheme security, confidence and enable schools to write the SHEP into their plans.
- 3.43 Additionally, it was noted by an interviewee that receiving the funds on an annual basis has not allowed for any longitudinal evaluation to be commissioned, therefore the long-term outcomes of attending the SHEP have not been researched.
- 3.44 In terms of the necessary resources at scheme venues, the SHEP application form states that only schools ‘able to provide hot and cold meals, a suitably sized dining space, indoor play area and outside space, accessible toilets and classrooms’ may be used. These requirements may leave a school unable to host the SHEP if they are undergoing any refurbishment or building works during the summer holidays.
- 3.45 Most interviewees reflected that delivering the SHEP on school sites is a benefit of the programme, particularly as this may be a familiar space where children feel comfortable and safe. However, after struggling to secure a venue for one of their SHEP schemes in 2023, an interviewee suggested that if a school is unavailable for any reason, it would be beneficial to operate a degree of flexibility around the venue.
- 3.46 The SHEP programme requires a team of staff to run the provision in each school. Some local authorities such as local authority 6 hire a central team of staff who deliver all the provision in the borough, whereas in other areas, the school will

allocate roles to staff. The minimum staffing requirements for the SHEP are as follows:

- Council Lead and programme lead
- School SHEP Coordinator (1 per school)
- School Food and Fun Assistants (1 per 20 children minimum)
- Caretaker
- Cook

3.47 For more information please see the application form at Annex B.

3.48 Two members of staff per cohort must have completed the mandatory training in Nutritional Skills 4 Life.

3.49 In many local authorities, the SHEP is delivered by school staff including teaching staff and teaching assistants. However, this is not a requirement of the programme, and staff from many different remits can deliver the SHEP.

3.50 Additionally, many local authorities maximise their use of the voluntary workforce to aid the staffing of the SHEP. For example, one local authority has been developing their volunteer model for several years. They work closely with local sixth forms to recruit a volunteer workforce to deliver their holiday provision:

‘It’s about giving the young people opportunities to give something back to their community. They can use for their Welsh Baccalaureate, they can use it for work experience. They can use it just for doing something within that heart of the community, but then you train them, you empower them to be part of that team.’

3.51 A lot of background administrative work is necessary to facilitate the SHEP including onboarding schools and completing paperwork. Local authorities pointed out that it was important to start the planning process early enough to make any necessary changes. Therefore, to support with the central administration and planning of the SHEP, schemes can draw down up to £1,000 per cohort.

3.52 Alternatively, each local authority has the option to recruit an Assistant Support Officer (ASO), who works (part time) on the SHEP, 52 weeks a year. One interviewee explained that the ASO role is invaluable and has helped not only to

reduce the administrative burden of the SHEP on local authorities, but also to aid its growth and reach across Wales, by meeting with various stakeholders and schools to tell them about the benefits of running the SHEP.

Resources: Playworks Holiday Project

- 3.53 PHP received £1million in 2022-2023. The funding was distributed among the 22 local authorities via the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant. The amount of funding allocated to each local authority is based on the sum of the three main schools' Indicator Based Assessments from the local government settlement funding formula.
- 3.54 However, two interviewees suggested that this grant is planned to be combined with the Children and Communities Grant (CCG). They explained that this decision has been taken to make the application process less bureaucratic and to provide more autonomy over any underspend.
- 3.55 PHP funded projects do not have to be conducted in a specific venue. However, there are eligibility criteria which must be satisfied to run PHP including relevant safeguarding checks, training and a risk assessment.
- 3.56 Additionally, open access play provision cannot run for longer than 1.59hr without being registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). Many interviewees involved with the PHP project raised concerns during the interview that registering with CIW was not possible due to staff training requirements and low levels of funding received.
- 3.57 As the projects which PHP helps to fund are so varied, the specific requirements of PHP staff are very dependent on what sort of provision is running, the required ratios for each age group and type of activity. However, the PHP workforce usually consists of play workers, sports leaders and volunteers.

Partnerships: School Holiday Enrichment Programme

- 3.58 The number of individual partners necessary to facilitate the SHEP is vast and includes play, sports, children's services, local authorities, school leaders, community groups, public health, community focused school staff, NHS dietetics,

third sector and catering. However, the following discussion concentrates on the main partners outlined by participants during the interviews.

- 3.59 Many interviewees indicated that schools were the most important partner in facilitating the SHEP, and that establishing a solid rapport and channels of open communication with schools was central to its success.
- 3.60 In local authorities who ran a 'hub' model of the SHEP, officials explained how they work with head teachers and staff to identify children who would most benefit from an invitation to attend the SHEP and to ensure that scheme coordinators had all the information necessary to meet the needs of each child.
- 3.61 Additionally, almost all interviewees outlined how Community-Focused Schools had been a particularly helpful partner in planning and facilitating the SHEP.

Partnerships: Playworks Holiday Project

- 3.62 As the projects which PHP helps to fund are so varied, the partnerships involved in enabling PHP can be vast, and dependent on what sort of provision is running. However, the following discussion concentrates on the main partners outlined by participants during the interviews.
- 3.63 In the facilitation of PHP funded projects, many interviewees explained that they relied upon external partners to help them provide the food at their schemes. For example, one interviewee explained that a supermarket had acted as a partner, providing biscuits, fruit, crisps and drinks. In summer 2023, a local authority partnered with the youth service and the community focused schools coordinator who provided food and drinks out of their service van.
- 3.64 After the provision had taken place, many interviewees described how partners would be called upon to help them to distribute any left-over food and donate it to those most in need. For example, one interviewee explained how the early years' service workers took left-over food to homeless women in mother and baby units in the borough. Similarly, on another occasion, a social worker collected the food and made sure it was taken to families in need.

3.65 Several interviewees outlined how they had invited community partners such as financial advice charity, the youth service and parent network to attend their larger 'Play in the Park' style events as

'it was an opportunity for them to sort of say to parents there is support out there, come along to our groups, you know me now and then it just builds up those links, builds up those relationships, and then they're more likely to go along and attend because they've met the staff and they know that they're not going to be judged and they're going to be welcomed'

Barriers: School Holiday Enrichment Programme

3.66 Whilst not part of the original research objectives, several barriers to the growth, facilitation and delivery of the SHEP have been identified through the interview data. Therefore, this section will explore the three main barriers identified; securing staff, securing buy-in from schools and Nutrition Skills training.

3.67 Many interviewees identified staffing as the main barrier to facilitating the SHEP initiative. A difficulty experienced by many interviewees has been the securing of catering staff who are available to work in the holidays:

'In some cases some of our staff who we knew had Level 3 and food hygiene had to go and cover in some of the kitchens just to be able to get the food out because we couldn't get enough catering staff that would be willing to work in the holidays.'

3.68 Similarly, a huge barrier to the expansion of the SHEP is obtaining buy-in from schools. One interviewee explained that there are about 750 eligible schools that had not applied for SHEP and whilst they were unsure of the specific reasons why this may be, likely reasons are: planned building work at schools during the summer holidays, a lack of staff capacity to take on additional work and/or staff not wanting to lose time off work.

3.69 Some interviewees explained the steps taken to combat the issue of staff and school-level reticence to the SHEP. For instance one interviewee explained that WLGA re-designed the school application form to be more 'more user friendly' and 'more relevant'.

- 3.70 Another interviewee outlined how the new Assistant Support Officer role could help to overcome these challenges by going into schools and having conversations very early in the year about what the SHEP entails and how it could be run.
- 3.71 The WLGA have created a 'Food and Fun national conference' and have invited prospective adopters of the project along to listen to reflections, insights, successes and a video from the schemes.
- 3.72 Another issue cited by the majority of interviewees which presented a barrier to willingness to participate in the SHEP is the Nutrition Skills for Life training. This training enables the educational aspect of the programme as staff receive accredited training and gain a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2 in Nutrition Skills which enables them to deliver the core nutritional sessions of the SHEP. One interviewee explained that it was too much of a commitment for schools to release staff to take part in those training sessions. Many interviewees suggested that in-house, or virtual training might be more appropriate.
- 3.73 Due to the issues with this commitment, the WLGA have introduced a degree of flexibility to this requirement. One interviewee explains that now, the scheme can run with only one qualified staff member who is now permitted to deliver the training to groups of up to 20 children at a time. Additionally, the local authority may decide it is more effective to provide a 'mobile trainer' who can deliver the nutritional aspect to all of their schemes.

4 Findings: Overlap between school holiday provision

- 4.1 To address the second research objective, internal stakeholders and WLGA officials were asked to identify and outline areas of potential overlap or duplication between Welsh Government funded holiday provision.
- 4.2 Five themes emerged from the data:
- PHP and the SHEP
 - The SHEP and the Welsh Government out-of-school childcare sector
 - The SHEP and other non-Welsh Government funded national schemes
 - Overlap with the wealth of smaller scale local provision
 - Moving towards national alignment
- 4.3 The first four themes represent the broad areas of overlap perceived by stakeholders and the fifth theme, 'moving towards national alignment', explores the mechanisms which stakeholders identified could encourage alignment of school holiday provision at a national level.

The SHEP and holiday play provision

- 4.4 Some interviewees suggested that the biggest area of overlap in school holiday provision is the thematic overlap in the SHEP and PHP. One interviewee indicated that the programmes should become more aligned in the future 'to provide a coherent offer with a coherent reason' rather than duplicating efforts.
- 4.5 Additionally, some interviewees agreed that alignment of SHEP and holiday play provision had been further complicated by the introduction of Covid-19 recovery funding streams. In 2021-2022, the Summer of Fun, Winter of Wellbeing and PHP were all running at the same time as the SHEP provision, in addition to the holiday provision of free school meals for eligible families. During this time, 'double funding' was avoided by removing food provision at play sessions. These different streams of funding with overlapping aims caused confusion for local authority coordinators making it difficult to plan how to use the funding.

4.6 However, moving forward, this policy landscape already presents much less opportunity for overlapping provision as Covid-19 recovery funding has now come to an end. The holiday provision of free school meals ended in April 2023, and neither the Summer of Fun nor Winter of Wellbeing are now funded.

The SHEP and the out of school childcare sector

4.7 Several interview respondents stated a concern that SHEP was not only in competition with other school holiday enrichment or play provisions, but was also potentially at risk of presenting competition to the out of school childcare sector, particularly the national, privately funded provision, Clubiau Plant Cymru Kids Club.

4.8 Clubiau Plant Cymru Kids club receive funding from Welsh Government to provide out of school childcare – often on school sites – after school and during holiday periods. Therefore, if the SHEP were to continue along its current trajectory and expand into more schools, to run in other holiday periods, then it may be operating in direct competition with this paid childcare provision.

4.9 It is noted in the limitations section of this report that the out-of-school childcare sector was not interviewed as part of this research. Any future work on the alignment of holiday provision would be enhanced by an engagement with these partners.

The SHEP and other external, national schemes

4.10 The data revealed that there are other national holiday provisions that are not funded by Welsh Government which present a crucial area of overlap with SHEP. The largest and most aligned of these organisations is StreetGames.

4.11 StreetGames run a national programme in many local authorities across Wales called 'Fit and Fed', which aims to tackle holiday hunger, and provide free sporting activities in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage in Wales¹⁹. Its model is very similar to that of SHEP and PHP. Many stakeholders highlighted concerns about this possible overlap.

¹⁹ StreetGames (2022) [Wales Fit and Fed Report 2022](#)

4.12 However, as one interviewee described, there was also a feeling among stakeholders that these programmes were of benefit to children, and helped to satisfy a demand that could not be met by one programme alone.

4.13 Another concern presented by these external initiatives offering similar national provisions was that often, their messaging contrasts with that of the SHEP. For example, until 2022, the Wales Rugby Union ran Fit, Fed and Fun camps which aimed to tackle holiday hunger but were not providing healthy food for children. A WLGA official explained the importance of ‘every child deserving equal access to good, nutritious food’ and as a result have collaborated with the WRU and onboarded them as a National Partner of the SHEP programme in order to reduce the overlap, and align the messaging and aims of the two programmes. As a result of this collaboration, a virtual catalogue, the National Partners Toolkit, was developed by partners able to deliver nationally. One example is Table Tennis Wales, who would be provided to schemes to work collaboratively, aiming to give all children equal opportunities:

‘We would signpost children from Food and Fun to their Fit, Fed and Fun camps that would be running locally, either in schools or in rugby clubs to try and re-energize rugby with the children at the local level. The caveat to that was that any food that they provided on those premises as part of that signposting would also underpin our nutritional messaging so there was no mixed messaging going on.’

The SHEP and unregistered provision

4.14 Many stakeholders acknowledged that the full picture of school holiday provision and the potential duplication which exists will never be fully understood, given the breadth of schemes on a local and national scale running school holiday provision throughout Wales on an unregistered basis. One interviewee explained that if a provision runs outside of National Minimum Standards criteria then they do not have to register with Care Inspectorate Wales and therefore local authorities cannot easily map their provision to prevent duplication with the SHEP and PHP.

Moving towards national-level alignment

- 4.15 Whilst exploring these areas of overlap, stakeholders offered suggestions as to how Welsh Government could ensure that school holiday provision becomes more aligned in the future.
- 4.16 The first suggestion was to gain a clearer picture of exactly what provision is available in the school holidays. There was an acknowledgment from stakeholders that holiday provision is currently managed within silos and that if one team had responsibility of oversight of all school holiday provision in Wales, this may facilitate more strategic oversight 'to ensure the needs of children at community level are being met'.
- 4.17 A further suggestion to facilitate this strategic alignment was to undertake a mapping exercise of all existing holiday provision. This would help identify gaps, duplication and aims across the different programmes:
- 'I don't think we have in Welsh government a good map of all provision available to children in the unregistered sector really. I think we're only sighted on the ones registered. Local authorities would have more detail on it but I don't know whether we routinely collect that. So that would be helpful.'
- 4.18 Lastly, some interviewees suggested that more could be done to facilitate information sharing at a national level within Welsh Government to encourage multi-agency collaboration of school holiday provision at the local authority level. For example, one interviewee explained that, given that play leads are in different departments, they may not necessarily know who the relevant SHEP leads are. Therefore, a brokering of connections between SHEP leads and play leads could encourage local collaboration.
- 4.19 Similarly, another interviewee suggests that routinely linking the WLGA with Community Focused Schools networks may facilitate useful information sharing.

5 Findings: opportunities to reduce duplication for the School Holiday Enrichment Programme

- 5.1 To address this research objective (to identify opportunities to reduce duplication of school holiday provision at a local level), the research team engaged with regional coordinators of the SHEP and/or PHP initiatives at six of the 22 local authority areas across Wales. These ‘case study’ areas were selected as they were identified by either the WLGA or the Play policy team as having an interesting and valuable perspective on the alignment between these two programmes and other school holiday provision.
- 5.2 A brief pen picture of each local authority ‘case study’ area, the initiatives they run and the perspectives they provided on the alignment of the SHEP and PHP is provided below.
- 5.3 Following this, is an analysis of the mechanisms these local authorities used to facilitate collaboration across school holiday provision. This has been conceptualised into four broad themes of:
- Strategic level alignment
 - Mapping/timetabling provision
 - Effective multi-agency communication
 - Adoption of an asset-based approach

5.4 A pen picture

Six local authority 'case study' areas

Local authority 1. In 2022-23, this local authority area offered the SHEP programme in <10 primary schools across the borough. The PHP funding was mainly used to part fund the provision of large open access play sessions in parks and outdoor spaces in areas of greatest need. The play sufficiency officer and the SHEP coordinator in this local authority were noted to have built a fantastic rapport, and work together very closely to align their school holiday provision strategically and operationally. They do this by utilising their respective schemes in the most appropriate way to respond to local need and therefore maximising their offer to children and families.

Local authority 2. In 2022-23, this local authority area saw exponential growth in their SHEP scheme. As the duplication of holiday provision had not previously been of concern (due to the modest size of the SHEP offer), it only became apparent after the delivery of the summer holiday provision 2023 that provision had indeed overlapped. Additionally, this region has observed duplication by other holiday initiatives including StreetGames, who operate a large provision in the borough. Representatives from this local authority shared their reflections on this and how they plan to manage the collaboration of holiday provision more effectively in the future through mapping, multi-agency communication and ensuring that the play lead and SHEP lead sit on appropriate local steering groups.

Local authority 3. In 2022-23, SHEP was run in <5 schools across this borough. The PHP funding provides extra sessions of open access play provision and one-to-one ALN support on provision, but they are unable to provide food from that funding so they rely on external partners such as the youth service to provide snacks. In this borough, SHEP and PHP projects often run simultaneously in the same geographic location, but this is not seen as detrimental as each scheme attracts a different demographic of children and families.

Local authority 4. This local authority has seen considerable growth in their SHEP provision over the past three years and provide several different models including primary, secondary, Welsh medium and a special school. In this local authority, SHEP, PHP funded initiatives and other holiday provision are meticulously mapped and timetabled to prevent overlap. This is facilitated by close partnership working with the youth service and schools which facilitates strategic and operational alignment between the holiday schemes.

Local authority 5. In this local authority, the same individual is responsible for the coordination of both the SHEP and the PHP initiatives and therefore they are closely aligned. The schemes are run using an asset-based approach whereby local need is assessed and both initiatives are used in the most appropriate way to serve the community. A successful ‘super hub’ model is run where one host school invites vulnerable pupils from surrounding local schools to attend SHEP. Additionally, some open access play sessions funded by PHP are purposefully run at the same time and location as SHEP for children attending other schools who aren’t running SHEP. In this way, representatives from local authority 5 explained that all children throughout the local area are eligible to holiday provision on a given day, regardless of whether their school has a minimum of 16% free school meal eligibility.

Local authority 6. This local authority runs a very large SHEP provision at >10 schools and a large amount of open access play provision. They run a mixture of primary, secondary transitional, hub models and both English and Welsh medium provision. SHEP exceeds the minimum criteria of 12 days and is run in this borough throughout the entire summer school holidays. The SHEP and PHP initiatives are coordinated by the same individual and this ensures that schemes are run completely collaboratively and there is no duplication. Assets and resources are shared between the programmes, including kitchens, resources, venues and staff.

Strategic level alignment

- 5.5 During interviews with local authority stakeholders within each case study area, there was acknowledgment that one of the main ways of ensuring continuity of provision and preventing duplication is to ensure that there is strategic level alignment among all providers.
- 5.6 Moreover, it was ascertained that there had been a particularly tangible overlap in provision this year in local authority 2, between SHEP, PHP, Fit and Fed [funded by StreetGames] and other local initiatives. An interviewee from local authority 2 reflected how these initiatives were attempting to deliver on the same aims and that more strategic level alignment of these programmes would prevent future duplication.
- 5.7 Additionally, an interviewee from local authority 2 reiterated the concerns raised on a national scale in objective 2 that this duplication created contradictory messaging throughout holiday provision:
- ‘There is very different criteria, and with Fit and Fed, to be honest, they tend to concentrate on the physical side of it and maybe not putting those nutritional messages out there. They feed the children, but maybe not necessarily with the

forethought of 'is this healthy and nutritious? Are they better options?'. I think there's work going on to make that better, but I don't think we're there quite yet.'

- 5.8 Having reflected upon this prior duplication of provision, one local authority have developed a plan to prevent this in the future. This involves brokering connections between their SHEP team and Play team by maximising the use of local authority steering groups and mapping play provision to understand local availability.
- 5.9 One interviewee explained that they have been a member of the SHEP national steering group since its inception and indicated that the steering group does not consider there to be enough representation of play leads on SHEP steering groups across Wales. Given how beneficial this appears to be for several local authorities, it would be helpful for each local authority SHEP steering group to invite the local authority Play lead to become a member.

Mapping/timetabling holiday provision

- 5.10 The second mechanism that local authorities have used to manage the potential overlap between school holiday provision is mapping the landscape of provision in the region. However, many interviewees suggested it was a resource-intensive burden to coordinate:

'It is the key thing again of all the partners knowing from the very start, in this period now it's crucial between September and December that everybody knows these are the dates that [Food and Fun] is going to be running, these are the expectations, this is what we're going to be doing.

- 5.11 Additionally, local authority interviewees indicated that mapping can also facilitate a better understanding of the needs of the region and therefore services can make sure each provision is utilised effectively to meet those needs. One interviewee explained how the local authority has established what is being offered by the Food and Fun programme (education, food, play and sports), and then the local authority uses the PHP funding to 'plug the gaps' to ensure there are opportunities for all children.
- 5.12 An important part of this mapping process was to communicate the timetable with parents and families. This was done via social media and school online platforms.

For example, staff in one local authority have used social media channels and the Dewis Cymru repository²⁰ to facilitate information sharing.

Effective multi-agency communication

- 5.13 Another major mechanism for facilitating collaboration of provision has been the coordination of effective channels of communication with multi-agency partners – particularly between the SHEP and play leads. Additionally, one interviewee encouraged all local authorities to maximise their use of partnership working – particularly with play teams - to reduce the burden on individuals and as an invaluable mechanism for running school holiday provision. They encouraged reaching out to, for example, development leads, community focused officers, play development leads and sports development leads to ease the intensity of the job.
- 5.14 In two local authority areas, the Play lead and SHEP lead are the same person. One interviewee felt that this model was very successful and that every local authority should have one individual or team responsible for holiday provision.
- 5.15 Another interviewee described how partnership working at a local authority level had potentially been hampered in recent years due to Covid-19 and the activities associated with the recovery funding increasing the workload for services:

As much as we want to do joined-up collaborative working with the grants that are out there, the grants don't cover the additional human resource anymore. [...] So, I think it's a case of it's usually put on someone else's desk on top of a pile. So as much as the ambition is there and the need and the drive, sometimes capacity takes over. [...] So potentially those relationships need to be strengthened a little bit.

Adopting an asset-based approach

- 5.16 Finally, the last mechanism which has been used by local authorities to increase the collaboration of holiday provision is to adopt an asset-based approach. This involves the consideration of funding streams and initiatives not as competitor

²⁰ Dewis Wales (2024) [Dewis Cymru](#)

programmes, but as community assets to provide the best possible provision and breadth of offer for the children and families:

‘We have a moral imperative as professionals, we want to deliver the best we can for our families.’

- 5.17 Some local authorities share and pool the catering resources of each initiative to increase the quality and breadth of the offer. In one local authority, active play sessions are run in the same schools as SHEP, at the same time. This ensures that food can be provided as part of the PHP project as it is prepared in the SHEP kitchens. Whilst this initially appears to be an obvious area of duplication of provision, an interviewee suggested that it allows all children to access provision regardless of if their school is eligible for the SHEP.
- 5.18 However, another interviewee noted that whilst methods of SHEP and PHP pooling catering resources in this way might work for an inner-city area, it may not be feasible for rural locations with a limited number of SHEP schemes.
- 5.19 This purposeful simultaneous provision was also carried out in other local authorities. One interviewee felt that the SHEP programme alone could not fulfil the needs of the region due to eligibility or restrictions on capacity:
- ‘At the end of the day, like you said, food and fun can only take in limited numbers which means the rest of the school needs somewhere to go in the summer holidays and I actually I think things can be run side by side’.
- 5.20 Additionally, in another local authority, SHEP was only run until 1:30pm, so opportunities were created for children to receive ‘wrap around’ provision by attending another local provision in the afternoon.
- 5.21 A similar model of PHP was run in another local authority where children had the option of attending one open access play provision in the morning, have lunch, and then would be walked to a neighbouring open access provision in the afternoon by play staff in order to make a full day of provision which can be most useful to parents. The reason for this model was due to restrictions on the open access play provision necessitating its operating hours to 1hr59 per session.

5.22 These examples suggest that, rather than understanding these provisions as potentially a duplication of services, these different holiday settings can coexist thematically. The range of sites may offer different opportunities and meet the needs of diverse groups of children. The key to preventing duplication of initiative is therefore ensuring that all stakeholders and coordinators are informed about the breadth and map of provision and that there is effective multi-agency communication at the local level.

6 Findings: further policy areas that may impact on the School Holiday Enrichment Programme

- 6.1 The final objective of this study (objective 4) aimed to explore the alignment of the SHEP to other areas of policy in Wales. This objective was explored in two directions.
- 6.2 The first considered any areas of current policy reform which may impact upon the future delivery of the SHEP. The second considered any policy areas which are aligned with the SHEP in terms of their aims and intended outcomes, in order to identify any potential duplication and to explore the necessity of the SHEP in the current policy landscape.

Impact

- 6.3 This study explored areas of current policy reform which may impact upon the future delivery of the SHEP. The two areas are the proposed reform to the school year and the recent changes to free school meal holiday provision.
- 6.4 The Consultation on the School Year commenced on 21 November 2023 and closed on 12 February 2024. This consultation asked what options could work better for learners, school staff and parents. Many of the reasons behind the proposed changes to the school year align with the aims of the SHEP, including the prevention of learning loss, the tackling of educational disadvantage and child poverty.²¹ The results of this consultation were published in May 2024.²²
- 6.5 At the time this research on SHEP was being conducted, the consultation was open. As part of this research on SHEP, interviewees reflected on the proposed changes to the school year, and many indicated that if the school summer holidays reduce to four or five weeks, SHEP would nonetheless remain a necessity. Interviewees almost unanimously conveyed that this reform would impact on the future delivery of the SHEP in two main ways. First, concerns were raised that a shorter summer holiday period might exacerbate the current struggle to recruit staff to run the SHEP:

²¹ Welsh Government (2023). [Reform of the school year: perceptions and experiences of the current school calendar](#) Cardiff, Welsh Government

²² Welsh Government (2024). [Summary of responses: The structure of the school year](#). Cardiff, Welsh Government

‘if the school calendar is changed, I think asking them to give up 12 days of what might only be 4 weeks, you know, or whatever it turns out to be, would be would be a difficult ask’.

- 6.6 Secondly, it was felt that a shorter summer break may reduce the availability of school buildings to be used as venues for the SHEP, given that necessary refurbishments are usually reserved for the summer holidays.
- 6.7 In 2020, Wales became the first UK nation to guarantee free school meals for eligible families during the school holidays.²³ However, this holiday provision of free school meals during school holidays ceased in April 2023, with the decision being made a matter of weeks before delivery of SHEP 2023.
- 6.8 In interviews, it was explained that when the decision was taken to end this provision, communications conveying this decision cited the SHEP as an alternative provision which could help tackle holiday hunger. However, interviewees noted that as the SHEP is not an open access provision and many schemes were already planned to run at full capacity when the decision was taken, the SHEP was not able to immediately address that loss of provision. Some interviewees suggested it was difficult to manage the large number of parents seeking a place for their children on SHEP. For some local authorities, council leads were able to increase their cohorts, however given the awareness of the programme, the WLGA are predicting more pressure on councils due to this loss of holiday provision and the corresponding increase in uptake in summer 2024.
- 6.9 Interviewees suggested that the changes to the free school meals during the holidays has increased the necessity to provide food during school holiday provision as a core aim:

‘I think we've always seen the provision of healthy foods and meals being provided as a really important part of the programme. And I think the ending of holiday free school meal payments has just strengthened that view of it being an important element of the programme.’

²³ Welsh Government (2023) [Free school meals extended for April and May holidays](#)

6.10 However, it is important to consider that given SHEP was operating 175 schemes across Wales in summer 2023, the SHEP will not be able to reach all children in Wales impacted by this free school meal holiday funding reform.

Alignment

6.11 This study has explored areas of current policy work which may be aligned with the aims and future delivery of the SHEP. One interviewee outlined the importance of understanding how different policy areas align, in order to overcome multi-disciplinary challenges and to discourage silo working.

6.12 The areas of policy alignment examined here were community focused schools and child poverty. Developing community-focused schools has been a long-term ambition of Welsh Government. As an interviewee explained, a community focused school:

‘removes and acknowledges any barriers to learning, and looks to understand the whole context of the child, the whole context of the family and the community. With a view to then removing anything that may be preventing that child flourishing in terms of the learning environment and their well-being with the ultimate aim that we're obviously looking to tackle the impact of poverty on educational attainment’.

6.13 Therefore, the aims of the community focused schools agenda completely align with the aims of the SHEP. Focusing on enriched learning that is outside of the traditional setup of the school to give children purposeful opportunities to interact with each other during the holidays:

‘So to me they completely align, absolutely. I would say if we can encourage more schools to offer this, then that's going to be really, really positive thing.’

6.14 However, another interviewee asserted that even if the community focused schools agenda closely aligns with the aims of the SHEP, there remains a crucial need for the SHEP programme. Indeed, the two initiatives can support the advancement of one another and take forward a joint agenda of tackling inequality within education.

6.15 Moreover, the community focused schools agenda presents two main mechanisms through which to support the SHEP and school holiday provision more broadly. The first is the role of the Family Engagement Officer, which, as previously discussed, is

one of the main partners who help to facilitate the SHEP. The second mechanism is the initiative of utilising school buildings and grounds outside of the school day. Both mechanisms are explored below by interviewees:

‘That is where community focused schools really can support the School Holiday Enrichment Programme in its work around family engagement and schools developing strong engagement approaches with their families and knowing their families. So they know, perhaps those children that would most benefit from attending and because they've developed a relationship with those families, they may be able to have that conversation to let them know about the program.’

‘Community focused schools, they have now got workers linked to schools and basically what their role is to bridge that gap with those that are disengaged with school. And there's been lots of areas of collaboration where now playwork provision is actually running on school site.’

6.16 In January 2024, Welsh Government published an updated Child Poverty Strategy for Wales 2023. The five objectives of this strategy are as follows:

- Objective 1: to reduce costs and maximise the incomes of families.
- Objective 2: to create pathways out of poverty so that children and young people and their families have opportunities to realise their potential.
- Objective 3: to support child and family wellbeing and make sure that work across Welsh Government delivers for children living in poverty, including those with protected characteristics, so that they can enjoy their rights and have better outcomes.
- Objective 4: to ensure children, young people and their families are treated with dignity and respect by the people and services who interact with and support them and to challenge the stigma of poverty.
- Objective 5: to ensure that effective cross-government working at the national level enables strong collaboration at the regional and local level.

- 6.17 These objectives all appear to be highly aligned with the aims of the SHEP initiative. Considering the aims and intended outcomes of the SHEP, it is well placed to be used as a vessel through which to support these objectives and help to tackle child poverty.
- 6.18 Moreover, many of the responses received from children, young people and families across Wales as part of engagement work regarding the consultation of the Draft Child Poverty Strategy for Wales 2023²⁴ implied that SHEP and other free holiday provisions are initiatives that are essential for families and communities living in poverty.
- 6.19 In this research, for example, one interviewee explained that through some engagement work they completed, children and young people talked about the financial inaccessibility of activities including play and sports because of costs, and the inequality of accessing these activities in the same way as their peers.
- 6.20 The impacts of food poverty on children and young people were also clear to see in the engagement feedback. The SHEP and other free school holiday initiatives are essential for young people impacted by food poverty, as well as poverty of experience and aspiration. The messages from young people through this engagement work discussed by interviewees should be considered alongside any future development of the SHEP programme to ensure that the tackling of child poverty remains a core aim of the initiative.

²⁴ Welsh Government (2023) [Draft Child Poverty Strategy for Wales 2023](#) Cardiff, Welsh Government

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The SHEP began as an educational programme and whilst that still remains a core aim, with the cost-of-living crisis and other financial pressures, tackling holiday hunger has become a priority aim.
- 7.2 Moreover, the SHEP only seems more necessary in the current policy landscape than when it was initially developed. Currently, there are even higher levels of child poverty, the provision of free school meal holiday payments has ceased, and programmes associated with Covid-19 recovery funding – Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing, ended by spring 2022.
- 7.3 At a national level, the interview data collected from internal and external stakeholders suggests that there is a high level of alignment between the SHEP and projects funded by the PHP. The programmes share many aims, intended outcomes, resources and partnerships.
- 7.4 However, the SHEP and projects funded by the PHP differ in many elements of their delivery, which means that they are often used to provide complementary provision that benefits different groups of children and young people. In particular, the implementation of the PHP funding is very different to that of the SHEP. The latter is a set, prescriptive scheme delivered in school settings during the summer school holidays, based on set criteria with centralised training and is delivered consistently across Wales. By contrast, PHP funding is flexible grant funding available to extend existing provision of, or fund new, open access play provision. Its implementation is dependent on local need which is ascertained by local authorities' play sufficiency assessment.
- 7.5 Several barriers to the growth and delivery of the SHEP have been identified including issues with gaining buy-in from schools where eligible schools have not applied for SHEP funding. The reasons for this are not known. Another barrier is a lack of flexibility around the venue for SHEP, especially in situations where a school is unavailable for any reason. Other challenges include ensuring staff recruitment, staff capacity to complete mandatory training and a lack of networks or connections between the SHEP council leads and the local authority Play Lead. Having an ongoing funding commitment would grant partners and coordinators of the scheme

security and confidence to write the SHEP into their plans. It may also facilitate evaluation of the longer-term impacts of SHEP.

- 7.6 The WLGA have worked to find solutions to some of these problems. These solutions have included the creation of an Assistant Support Officer role, the introduction of some flexibility into the programme and a re-design of the school application form to be more concise and user-friendly.
- 7.7 At a national level, the SHEP presents similarities with other programmes that are not funded by Welsh Government, such as StreetGames and WRU Fit, Fed and Fun camps. The WLGA have endeavoured to address this issue of duplication by onboarding WRU as a National partner of the SHEP, although the StreetGames 'Fit and Fed' initiative still provides an area of potential overlap.
- 7.8 Additionally, whilst out of scope of this project, it has been identified that the SHEP may need to consider its impact on the out of school childcare sector – mainly childcare provision which is delivered in school settings during the school holidays, Clubiau Plant Cymru Kids. Whilst this is a paid-for provision, it does receive funding from Welsh Government due to its inclusion in the Cwlwm Consortium. This area of alignment will be a more important consideration if the SHEP continues to grow and expand across Wales. It is a limitation of this report that the out-of-school childcare sector was not interviewed as part of this research. Any future work on the alignment of holiday provision would be enhanced by an engagement with these partners.
- 7.9 At a local level, from the case study areas explored during this study, it would seem there is potential for provisions run as part of the PHP and the SHEP to be duplicative: to overlap thematically, geographically and at the same time. Mapping school holiday provision is a key component that local authorities use to gain a greater understanding of provision. Due to the differences in the SHEP and PHP funded provisions, these two programmes are often used to provide complementary provision that benefits different groups of children and young people (e.g. in terms of age, gender or ethnic group) often in different geographical locations, and/or at different sites within a locality. Therefore, whilst these programmes may overlap in aim, that does not necessarily mean that they are at risk of duplication. Moreover,

the mechanisms through which local authorities ensure collaboration of these programmes are strategic alignment, mapping, multi-agency working and adopting an asset-based approach.

- 7.10 This project has explored two areas of current policy reform which may impact on the future delivery of the programme. These are the consultation on the reform to the school year and free school meal provision. The responses as part of the consultation on the reform of the school year highlighted that proposed reforms might impact the future delivery of the SHEP due to staff recruitment. In terms of the free school meal provision during school holidays, it is crucial to understand that the SHEP cannot reach all children in Wales impacted by the changes to the free school meal provision. These changes have only increased the necessity for SHEP to provide food. Developments in both areas should be carefully considered when re-evaluating the future delivery of the SHEP.
- 7.11 This project has explored areas of policy whose aims are aligned to those of the SHEP including community focused schools and child poverty. Whilst these areas of policy aim to address similar issues that affect disadvantaged children and young people in Wales, they do not present an area of duplication and one does not negate the necessity of the other. On the contrary, these aligned areas of policy have a symbiotic relationship with the SHEP programme, wherein aspects of these aligned policies can help to facilitate the SHEP initiative, and the SHEP initiative may be used as a vessel to further the implementation and impact of the policy areas for children and families across Wales.

8 Recommendations

- 8.1 **Recommendation 1:** The WLGA should consider making it an essential requirement for local authorities to map school holiday provision when completing the SHEP application form. This would help to prevent duplication of provision.
- 8.2 **Recommendation 2:** In the local authorities' assessment of possible duplication, to consider an assessment which examines not only the aims and outcomes of each provision in a local area, but also other components of each provision such as beneficiary demographics and the site location.
- 8.3 **Recommendation 3:** Considering the challenges to staff participation in the Nutrition Skills for Life course, WLGA has recently introduced flexibility within this requirement. Where resources allow, the monitoring of any ongoing barriers to staff participation and action to mitigate these is recommended.
- 8.4 **Recommendation 4:** Further research to explore SHEP models from the other UK nations as well as internationally, where the school year presents a different structure to that of Wales. One proposed method would be to analyse different local authority models, including case studies and examples of best practice.

9 References

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10 Annexes

Annex A: Interview guide

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research interview as part of our work to explore the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP).

The aim of this research is to review the ongoing and potential future alignment of the SHEP and other Welsh Government funded school holiday provision, such as the Playworks Holiday Project (Playworks). This research will inform policy direction for school holiday provision, with a view to looking at further integration or alignment - particularly opportunities to maximise collaboration across school holiday provision.

Additionally, this research aims to explore how SHEP provision may be impacted by proposed or potential areas of policy reform including the reform of the school year and the ending of holiday provision of free school meal payment.

The following topic guide outlines the specific questions which will be discussed during the interview and how they relate to each of the research objectives.

The summaries underneath each set of questions are based on information provided at pre-interview meetings and represent my current understanding. They are intended to maximise our time and to steer the conversation, however, please feel free to correct these prompts or to expand upon the points made throughout the interview.

Objective 1: to explore to what extent the SHEP and the Playworks Holiday project align.

The following questions should be addressed to policy leads for SHEP and Playworks and research officers involved in the research/evaluation of SHEP and Playworks. The research questions will be further tailored for specific individuals but will be based around the following questions:

1. What were the initial aims of the SHEP/Playworks initiatives? How have these initial aims evolved, if at all, over time?
2. Which of these aims are the most important, or priority areas for Welsh Government, moving forward?
3. How are the SHEP/Playworks initiatives implemented in Wales?
4. What resources are necessary to run the SHEP/Playworks initiatives?
5. What partnerships are necessary to run the SHEP/Playworks initiatives?

The following questions should be addressed to WLGA coordinators and local authority leads of the SHEP/Playworks:

1. What are the aims of the SHEP/Playworks initiative? How have these aims evolved over time?
2. Which of these aims do you think are most important/relevant.

3. Which aims are more difficult to meet (if any) and why?
4. What aspects of the SHEP are particularly successful and in what way?
5. Were there any barriers to running the SHEP/Playworks programme in your area?
6. What enablers assist the running the SHEP/Playworks programme in your area? (e.g. partnerships etc.)
7. How is the SHEP/Playworks initiative implemented in Wales/your LA?
8. What resources are necessary to run the SHEP/Playworks in Wales/your LA?
9. What partnerships are harnessed in order to run the SHEP/Playworks in Wales/your LA?
10. How would you describe the level of participation and engagement with the scheme?
11. How would you describe the level of reach of the scheme?

Objective 2: to identify any areas of overlap or duplication between Welsh Government funded school holiday provisions.

The following questions should be addressed to national coordinators of SHEP/Playworks, policy leads for SHEP and Playworks and research officers involved in the research/evaluation of SHEP and Playworks:

1. In your experience, are there areas of overlap between the SHEP and the Playworks Holiday Project? If so, where are these areas of overlap?
2. What recommendations would you make in order to provide more continuity of school holiday provision in Wales and to avoid duplication?

The following questions should be addressed to local authority leads of the SHEP/Playworks:

1. In your LA, are there areas of overlap between the SHEP and the Playworks Holiday Project? If so, where are these areas of overlap?
2. What other local programmes are you aware of in your area that provide school holiday provision?
3. Have these areas of overlap caused any issues with the running of school holiday provision?

The following questions should be addressed to policy leads across the following areas – youth work, child poverty, education, health/mental health, reform of the school year. The research questions will be further tailored for specific individuals but will be based around the following questions:

1. In your area of work, what policies/initiatives are in place to support disadvantaged learners over the school holiday periods?
2. How do these initiatives align with the School Holiday Enrichment Programme? Do they overlap in any way?

Objective 3: to identify opportunities to increase collaboration of school holiday provision at a local level, i.e. within and across local authorities and/or by provision providers.

The following questions should be addressed to national coordinators of SHEP/Playworks, policy leads for SHEP and Playworks and research officers involved in the research/evaluation of SHEP and Playworks:

1. What recommendations would you make in order to provide more continuity of school holiday provision in Wales and to avoid duplication?
2. Are you aware of any schemes in Wales who are collaborating with other schemes in their area?

The following questions should be addressed to local authority leads of the SHEP/Playworks in selected case study areas where SHEP and Playworks schemes are collaborating in order to minimise overlap:

1. What recommendations would you make in order to provide more continuity of school holiday provision in Wales and to avoid duplication?
2. Are you aware of any schemes in your LA who are collaborating with other schemes in their area?
3. What strategies (if any) did they use to collaborate with other schemes?
4. How successful were these strategies? Were there any issues?

Objective 4: how might SHEP provision be impacted by other areas of policy in Wales e.g. reform to the school year and the recent ending of holiday free school meal provision?

The following questions should be addressed to policy leads and research officers involved in work to reform the school year:

1. What are the proposed changes to the school calendar in Wales?
2. How might the necessity and capacity for the SHEP be impacted by the proposed changes the school year?
3. How might any future national implementation of the educational enrichment trial impact the necessity and capacity for the SHEP?

The following questions should be addressed to policy leads and research officers involved in the reform of the free school meals holiday provision.

1. How might the necessity and capacity for the SHEP be impacted by the recent cessation of free school meal provision in the summer school holiday?
2. How many students and families were reached by the free school meal provision in the summer school holiday? (Compare this via desk research with the number of young people who are fed via the SHEP scheme.

The following question should be addressed to policy leads across the following areas – youth work, childcare and play, child poverty, education, health/mental health. The research

question will be further tailored for specific individuals but will be based around the following questions: In your area of work, are there any other areas of policy reform that may have any implications for the School Holiday Enrichment Programme?

The following questions should be addressed to national and local authority coordinators of SHEP/Playworks, policy leads for SHEP and Playworks:

1. How might the necessity and capacity for the SHEP be impacted by the proposed changes the school year?
2. How might the necessity and capacity for the SHEP be impacted by the recent cessation of free school meal provision in the summer school holiday?

Annex B: Food and Fun 2023 application form

Food and Fun is fully funded by Welsh Government. To receive retrospective funding, a Local Steering Groups must:

- Deliver the core elements of Food and Fun using approved branding. Schemes can be staffed using suitably qualified personnel from the school or local authority service areas, delivery partners or agency as well as volunteers. Ensure adequate safeguarding process is in place.
- Only target schools with a FSM of 16% or more and able to provide hot and cold meals, a suitably sized dining space, indoor play area and outside space, accessible toilets, and classrooms. Schools may work in clusters where practical or to address issues arising from planned maintenance at school sites.
- Ensure School Leadership Teams are involved in the planning and delivery of Food and Fun in their school or cluster/hub
- Implement the Food and Fun Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), which audits compliance with the essential criteria (Appendix 1).
- Undertake evaluation of each scheme (further information to follow).

If you encounter any problems or issues in meeting any of the essential criteria, please get in contact using the below email address. Applications for funding of schemes in schools not meeting the eligibility criteria will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

For GDPR purposes please ensure that email addresses supplied have permission from the owner. Email contacts will be used by the WLGA to communicate with council and local health board personnel and share information regarding Food and Fun 2023.

Section 1 - Local Steering Group Sign-Up

Question	Answer
How many cohorts of 40 children can your Local Steering Group commit to offer Food and Fun to in 2023? (Welsh Government will fund up to a maximum of £11,000 per cohort of 40, and additional funding towards council coordination costs and ALN/SEBD costs). ALN costs are for extra delivery staff for days that Food and Fun run only.	
How many schemes will this be? Please note that a scheme is the school setting where Food and Fun takes place and can be any number of cohorts of 40 children at one school.	

Essential member of Local Steering Group	Name and job title	Email Address
Council/school catering representative		
Council/school physical activity/sport representative		
Local health board public health dietetics representative		
Local Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Scheme representative		
Council/school education representative		
Council representative responsible for holiday provision (if applicable)		

Section 2 – School Sign-Up

This section must be completed by the Council Food and Fun Programme Lead and indicate the person in each school responsible for Food and Fun planning and delivery arrangements, with the commitment to deliver the core elements of Food and Fun according to the essential criteria and recommendations. School Food and Fun Coordinators should be recruited prior to 10th March 2023 to allow adequate time for training. Please duplicate this page if more schemes are to be included.

School name, phone number and post code	Number of days (minimum of 12 days)	Welsh/English/Dual medium ? Y/N	Number of target children	School Type (Primary/secondary/Middle or Special)	% FSM	Name and email of person in each school responsible for Food and Fun planning and delivery arrangements

Appendix 1 – Essential Criteria and Recommendations for Schemes

The following essential criteria and recommendations have been established to maintain the integrity of the Food and Fun ethos and core elements.

Welsh Government funding for delivering Food and Fun is a maximum of £11,000 per cohort of 40 children (flexibility is available for further cohorts/half cohorts).

In addition, Local Authorities can opt for one of the following to support local authority admin costs:

1. A contribution of up to £1,000 per cohort for local authority costs of administration and coordination, or
2. Councils can apply for funding of an admin and support officer post to work with council leads. The hours and funding of the post is dependent on the number of eligible schools within that authority as per the table below. Further advice and guidance will be made available from the WLGA.

Weekly hours	Salary+ on costs (30%)	Salary
37	£34,533.33	£26,564.10
22.5	£21,000.00	£16,153.85
10	£9,333.33	£7,179.49

Schemes can also claim for additional funding for ALN/SEBD costs for extra delivery staff for days that Food and Fun runs only. Any further costs incurred must be funded or provided 'in kind' by local authorities, local health boards, programme schools and/or partner agencies.

Essential criteria – (core elements identified in red)

1	Ensure a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team is involved in the planning and delivery arrangements of Food and Fun in their school or cluster/hub.
2	Provide Food and Fun for no fewer than 12 days over at least 3 consecutive weeks of the school summer holidays. The same cohort of 40 children should be encouraged to attend each day. Depending on demand, extra days may be funded on a pro rata basis with potential for provision over the whole summer.

3	The recruitment of school staff to the roles of School Food and Fun Coordinator and Assistant(s) is encouraged in the first instance, agreeing roles and responsibilities. An additional Safeguarding role is advised to deal with pastoral matters and potential disclosures. Schemes may employ partners to support school staff in the delivery of Food and Fun with the proviso that the school has 'ownership' of the scheme.
4	Organise the Timetable of Activities for each scheme ensuring all core elements are included and considering the 5 Ways to Well-being throughout. Submit the Timetable of Activities to your council lead or the WLGA by 23 rd June 2023. A 'National Partners' toolkit is available on knowledge hub with details of offers and local contacts.
5	Provide a breakfast and lunch every day the scheme is running. Prepare the 12 Day Lunch Menu in line with the Food and Fun Menu Requirements and Food Policy. These will be made available to you and can be accessed via the Knowledge Hub. Menu to be submitted to the WLGA by 23 rd June 2023 for approval.
6	Communicate consistent health messages, ensuring all staff and partners are aware of, and do not undermine, the 'ethos' of Food and Fun. Resources or rewards such as food and drinks high in sugar, fat or salt must not be used (including manufacturers' branding promoting these products). Do not permit packed lunches to be brought in from home.
7	Food and Fun schemes must use the Bwyd a Hwyl/Food and Fun name and logo, in line with Food and Fun Brand Guidelines. A link to The Food & Fun animated film 2022, as well as reports from previous years are available on our website (link below)
8	Compile a School Food and Fun Folder, which should contain copies of relevant policies, procedures, and staff training certificates. A Food and Fun Folder Guidelines document is available. The Food and Fun Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) may be used as a checklist for schools and Local Steering Groups to aid the planning process.
9	Offer a 'family meal activity' to parents/carers and siblings at least once per week. Further guidance and examples available from the WLGA.
10	Deliver age appropriate All Wales Food and Fun Nutrition Education Sessions that have been developed specifically for the programme, including extension activities that practice literacy, oracy, and numeracy skills. These must be delivered by Food and Fun staff with accreditation in Nutrition Skills for Life

	Level 2 Community Food and Nutrition Skills. Training, which can be accessed all year round for a maximum of 2 staff per cohort, support, and resources are provided by Public Health Dietitians. Schemes can consider utilizing a 'mobile' trainer to deliver Nutrition sessions to clusters of up to 4 schools in rotation over the duration of the programme. Contact WLGA for further guidance if you want to use this option. Please consider contingency planning in the event of sickness or absence.
11	Provide a minimum of one hour per day of age appropriate and structured physical activity with signposting to further opportunities locally.
12	Provide age-appropriate enrichment activities that provide children and families with opportunities to engage in activities that are fun, social, and educational.
13	Follow the school's ethos, policies, and procedures as per term time. Ensure relevant insurances are in place regarding provision outside of term time and for external agencies providing services and activities.
14	Submit scheme records of Food and Fun costs as soon as possible after the summer to your Council Food & Fun Programme Lead. Include all actual costs incurred in the planning, delivery and evaluation of Food and Fun. Be mindful of potential double-funding of staffing costs (e.g a claim for contracted hours already funded by Welsh Government).
15	Undertake and submit attendance data, comply with your local authority quality assurance, and follow instructions pertaining to the national evaluation of the programme.

Resources and other documents to assist

National Partners Toolkit	A directory of partners who can provide physical activity or enrichment sessions nationwide.
Leaflet (for parents)	A leaflet explaining what Food and Fun is, schemes can edit this with their own contact details.
Template	An A4 template (available in portrait or landscape) with Food and Fun branding for creating documents
Quality Assurance Framework	The quality assurance framework acts as a checklist which covers all the essential criteria.
Menu Requirements	The standards for all food served at Food and Fun

Food policy	The policy around other food that is provided at Food and Fun by deliverers or partners.
Branding Guidelines	Guidelines around Food and Fun branding and tips on social media usage.
Folder Guidelines	Guidelines for creating Food and Fun folders.

Recommendations

#	Recommendations Council Coordinator	Recommendations for Schemes
1		Recruit children and families to Food and Fun well in advance of the school summer holidays, targeting a particular Year or Key Stage and avoiding overtly targeting particular children and families. If you are considering multiple Key Stages, this may add to the resource and staffing costs. Please be aware that the scheme is not restricted to pupils who are eligible for FSM. The Healthy Eating in Schools Measure (Wales) 2009 places a duty on the local authority and governing body to protect the identity of pupils receiving Free School Meals.
2	Map local 'holiday provisions' to potentially share resources and avoid duplication. Check your council's Family Information Service website for information about children's leisure activities and childcare provision	
3	Schools with FSM eligibility (for pupils aged 5 to 15 years) of 16% or greater should be targeted. It is the responsibility of the local steering group to engage schools in greatest need. LSGs may need to evidence	

	<p>their reasoning for engaging schools other than those with the highest FSM%. A list of eligible schools based on information from the Pupil Level Annual School Census 2022 data and number of eligible schools per local authority will be provided by WLGA.</p>	
4	<p>We encourage schemes to operate for as many days as possible over the summer holidays</p>	
5	<p>Coordinators can Consider hosting a local Food and Fun partner event for partner agencies to offer their services and for School Food and Fun Coordinators to draft their timetables. There is potential for neighbouring local authorities to arrange a joint event which the WLGA can assist with.</p> <p>Involve a wide range of suitable partner agencies from the public, private and voluntary sectors and ensure that they adhere to essential criteria</p>	
6	<p>Support schemes with any transport issues</p>	<p>Consider transport issues to and from the programme school (e.g. mini bus, crossing patrol, 'walking bus's for pupils living locally).</p>
7	<p>Consider offering separate activities to parents and siblings (e.g. cooking skills, exercise classes, adult education) with signposting to further opportunities locally. Evidence curriculum links to the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience in the Curriculum for Wales.</p>	
8	<p>Engage with the wider development of Food and Fun across Wales through attending 1 to 1 meetings, regional meetings and sharing best practice.</p>	
9	<p>Support other extension plans/activities where practicable, to maximise the reach of the programme.</p>	

10	<p>Nutrition Skills for Life compliance. Where a cohort only has one qualified member of staff, nutrition sessions should be planned on a carousel of no more than 20 children at a time, and a support plan in place to cover sickness absence.</p> <p>Where schemes are struggling to provide a NS4L trainer, an approach of a ‘mobile trainer’ across schemes (where logistically possible) could be considered to facilitate the nutrition training element and maintain the integrity of the programme.</p>
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Appendix 2 – suggested roles and responsibilities

Local Authorities should give due consideration to any disparity between rates of pay for Food and Fun Staff.

Role	Who?	Responsibilities
Council Food and Fun Programme Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Officer • Education Catering Manager/Assistant Manager • Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes Practitioner • Local Health Board representative • Experienced school Food and Fun Coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage Local Steering Group meetings. • Act as main liaison between the WLGA, Local Steering Groups and programme schools. • Gather and check information for the Food and Fun 2023 Funding Application Form (Sections 1 and 2), and Record of Food and Fun Costs Form and submit to the WLGA. • Gather schemes’ Timetable of Activities, 12 Day Lunch Menu and Attendance Forms and submit to the WLGA. • Undertake evaluations of each scheme. More information will be provided by the WLGA. • Implement the Quality Assurance Framework as an audit for each scheme and submit a QAF Audit Summary to the WLGA.
Named person responsible for Food and Fun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head Teacher • Member of Senior Leadership Team • Chair of Governors • Governor 	<p>An example School Agreement is available from the WLGA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise recruitment of School Food and Fun Coordinator, Assistants and safeguarding staff (if applicable).

Role	Who?	Responsibilities
Fun in each school		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise cover for the School Food and Fun Coordinator (and Assistant if possible/required) so that they can attend Nutrition Skills for Life Training (20 hours) and other relevant training. • Provide guidance to, and monitor the progress of, the School Food and Fun Coordinator. • Organise the provision of caretaking duties. • Organise the provision of cleaning duties (e.g. 1 hour at the end of each food and Fun day). • Organise waste collection duties. • Ensure appropriate safeguarding and first aid arrangements are in place. • Be available to contact during the programme.
School Food and Fun Coordinator (1 per school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • Teaching Assistant • Other suitably qualified staff such as Youth worker/play worker/school liaison officer 	<p>An example Job Description is available from the WLGA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, coordinate, and deliver Food and Fun in a school. • Work under the guidance of the Head Teacher, and within an agreed system of supervision, to develop and implement agreed work programmes with individuals/groups, in the school and with partner agencies. • Ensure all support staff and partners are aware of, and do not undermine the “ethos” of Food and Fun. • Create a nurturing, fun and safe environment to ensure children are safe and engaged. • Liaise with local health board’s dietetics service to undertake Nutrition Skills for Life Training and deliver the All-Wales Food and Fun Nutrition Education Sessions.

Role	Who?	Responsibilities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake other relevant training as required (e.g. safeguarding, first aid, Make Every Contact Count). • Review the suitability of existing risk assessments and partner agency risk assessments. Undertake additional risk assessments, as required. • Review ALN requirements of children signed up to Food and Fun and make necessary provisions. • Compile a Food and Fun Folder containing copies of relevant policies and ensure School Food and Fun Assistants understand policies. • Provide information to the Council Food and Fun Programme Lead for the Funding Application Form and Record of Food and Fun Costs. • Organise the completion of programme school Timetable of Activities, Attendance Forms and scheme evaluations and submit to the Council Food and Fun Programme Lead.
School Food and Fun Assistants (1 per 20 children minimum, depending on risk assessment and ALN requirements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Assistants • Volunteers • Local authority staff 	<p>An example Job Description is available from the WLGA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work under the direct supervision of the School Food and Fun Coordinator to deliver Food and Fun in the school. • To support access to activities for pupils and provide general support in the management of pupils, including preparation, and routine maintenance of resources/equipment. • Create a nurturing, fun and safe environment to ensure children are safe and engaged.
Caretaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caretaker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open and close school facilities at agreed times.
Cook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook 	<p>An example Job Description is available from the WLGA.</p>

Role	Who?	Responsibilities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide breakfast and lunch following the Food and Fun Menu Principles

Annex C: Playworks Holiday Project: LA guidance 2023-2024

Foreword

In the 2023-24 final budget, £1m was approved for the Playworks Holiday Project (a holiday hunger initiative) to support access to increased play opportunities for children and young people during the school holidays and provide healthy food / snacks.

Feeding children over the school holidays, when breakfast clubs and free school meals are not available, can be a challenge for some families. No child should have to go hungry, and to help support those families, the Welsh Government has allocated £1 million to tackle holiday hunger through playwork settings in 2023-24.

Play is a vital element in children's development and something that can provide a strong protective factor in children's lives. Playing and staffed play provision positively impacts on children and families who are experiencing poverty. Playing can shield children from the negative aspects of poverty, helping them to develop their inner resources and build resilience.

About this guidance

1. This is non-statutory guidance from the Welsh Government to support local authorities to plan their approach to utilising their Playworks Holiday Project funding allocation during the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
2. Further information will follow on the monitoring, review and evaluation measures that will be in place during the period of the grant funding.
3. Queries about this guidance should be directed to:

Childcareandplaymailbox@gov.wales

1. Aims

The main aims of the Playworks Holiday Project are to provide better play opportunities for children in vulnerable communities and to realise the benefits this brings in terms of child development and activity levels. In addition, the programme aims to / improve outcomes for children in relation to holiday hunger by complementing the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) Food and Fun. This should reduce the financial pressure on parents / guardians during school holidays.

Playing and staffed playwork provision positively impacts on children and families. The provision appeals to families who benefit from early preventative systems. Playing helps children to develop their inner resources and build resilience to difficulties and uncertainties in their home and other parts of their lives. Therefore, the focus for 2023-24 will be on staffed playwork provision, which will continue to help children and young people recover from the consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic and promote play opportunities.

Indicative funding for the financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26 has been agreed as part of the Welsh Government budget process. Local authorities should continue re-engaging with the playwork sector where these links have been severed due to the lack of funding. Local authorities should also aim to make available / increase the provision of healthy food / snacks at playwork provision.

Primary aims of the project

The provision of enriched play opportunities, which are free at point of access or at a nominal charge of no more than £1, and positive experiences such as:

- Socialising
- Being active
- Having fun / being happy
- Learning something new

The project also provides additional benefits by supporting the sustainability of playwork settings and supporting parents, families and communities.

To help reduce holiday hunger by providing food / snacks to:

- Encourage healthier eating
- Reduce financial pressure on parents / carers

2. Expected approach for funding

Local authorities should plan their approach based on the staffed playwork services available to them as identified in their Play Sufficiency Assessments. This is to take into account the differing landscape for play across Wales and support the re-establishment or setting up of new playwork provision where it is not currently available and does not negatively impact on existing playwork, childcare or other similar provision.

A Smart Survey proposal form (to follow) must be completed one week before each holiday period. Please email Childcareandplaymailbox@gov.wales to inform the Play Policy team [that you have completed a proposal form.](#)

Prioritised approach to allocating the Playworks Holiday Project Funding 2023-24

Priority 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extend the hours or days of existing playwork provision
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Priority 2	<p>Local authorities should look at the gaps in play provision in areas of need and where gaps are identified, they can use funding to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Re-establishment of playwork settings that have ceased due to lack of funding or expansion of existing settings (preferred approach) or• Establishment of new playwork services. In this case, local authorities must demonstrate that new provision does not negatively impact on existing registered provision or School Holiday Enrichment Programme.• If new provision is required, funding can be used for all set up and running costs, for example insurance, equipment, maintenance, staff, training, management and administration.
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Priority 3 Add food to existing community, open access play or out of school childcare provision, as this is where value can be added at minimum cost. Each local authority must ensure that food / healthy snacks are provided at some provision.

Funding can be used as follows:

- To fund food, healthy snacks and drinks (it does not need to be a hot meal) guidance on healthier food and drinks attached at Annex A
- If there are community groups providing free food for Playworks Holiday Project activities, you are able to provide them with funding to improve the quality and nutrition of the food.
- To fund the purchase of equipment required to provide food, for example refrigeration, cooler boxes, equipment, plates, cutlery, reusable drinking bottles etc;
- To cover the costs of staff to support the provision of food so that food provision does not detract from the play opportunities provided.
- Building the skill base of existing staff with regards to food provision, for example food hygiene training or healthy eating

Note: Meals can also be provided via the Playworks Holiday Project at this time at the discretion of local authorities.

NOTE: The offer of food must be for all participants not just the vulnerable, to avoid any stigmatisation.

Points to consider when making food available:

- Food must be provided by a food provider registered to provide food with their local authority and hold relevant Food Hygiene certificates, or providers must hold such certificates themselves.
- Providers must obtain consent to provide food to children, ideally, as part of their registration process. This consent must include information on allergy risks and treatment plans. Risk assessments relating to food provision must be carried out.

Priority 4

- Consider funding the addition of food to youth settings that have trained playwork staff and provide rich play opportunities.
- This funding cannot be used to fund youth provision.

- This approach supports the cost effectiveness of only funding food and supports the development from playwork to youth work as children grow up

Priority 5 Consider funding places in childcare or out of school settings for children at risk of holiday hunger where other provision does not exist or the additional benefits of childcare and play will make a significant impact on the child.

What else can be funded?

- Up to 10% administration costs
- Staff time – this can be funding for a fixed post or a secondment / part time post. Funding can be claimed from 1 April 2023 until 31 March 2024 in order to enable engagement with playwork provision and finalise claims. Job descriptions or itemised key tasks must be provided as supporting evidence
- Bespoke play packs for families with vulnerable children

This list is not exhaustive, if local authorities have any queries regarding what can be funded email: Childcareandplaymailbox@gov.wales.

All costs relating to provision for example travel, cleaning, costs incurred in order to comply with risk assessments can be claimed from this funding.

What cannot be funded?

- The funding should not be used for junk food, sweets and unhealthy treats, either as part of meals or snacks or as part of activities (for example as prizes for games).
- The funding should not be used to fund childcare or places in out of school holiday provision unless the children are vulnerable, or meet the requirements set out at Priority 5.

3. Settings eligibility

3.1 Only staffed Playwork settings can be funded through this programme.

3.2 Settings do not have to be registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to be eligible for funding, however if they are unregistered they must ensure and demonstrate that they operate within the requirements of the Child Minding and Day Care Exceptions (Wales) Order 2010 (as amended). Open access playwork provision must also confirm that they apply the First Claim; a framework for playwork quality assessment principles. These enable playworkers, and any other adults with an interest in children's play, to analyse, by observation and reflection, the play environments they operate. It gives a framework to assess the quality of what is being

provided and experienced.

- 3.3 All staff working at the setting must have a valid Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- 3.4 All settings must have a safeguarding policy and key staff must have received appropriate training.
- 3.5 Risk-benefit assessments relating to playwork provision are required. Template risk-benefit assessments are available for those who do not already have a system in place.

4. Funding criteria

- 4.1 Funding should not result in any stigmatisation of children. Open access playwork provision should be targeted within vulnerable communities and where vulnerable children are known to live. All children within the community will be able to attend but professionals can target known vulnerable individuals to encourage attendance by those most in need.
- 4.2 Where children are funded to attend paid settings, other children and parents / carers should not be made aware of their funding status.
- 4.3 Local authorities must ensure that any initiatives funded are in line with their 2023-24 Play Sufficiency Action plan. They must consult with colleagues within their local authority as part of their planning, in order to make sure this funding is used in a complementary way and does not unintentionally negatively impact on other related areas of work, in particular:
 - Childcare
 - Education regarding the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP). However, SHEP only operates during the summer months.
 - Those involved in child poverty initiatives.

5. Coverage

- 5.1 The funding can be used for all school holidays in the 2023-24 financial year as required by the local authority:
 - Easter 2023
 - Whitsun half term 2023
 - Summer 2023
 - October half term 2023
 - Christmas holidays 2023
 - February half term 2024
 - The funding can also be used for weekend provision, if there is a need
- 5.2 Funding can be used for settings catering for children from 0 to 17 years (up to the age of 25 for disabled children) with a focus on children of school age.

- 5.3 Local Authorities are asked to consider using the funding with respect to Matter B – providing for diverse needs:
- Children across the age range set out in 5.2
 - Disabled children and those with additional needs
 - Children for whom Welsh is their first language or attend Welsh medium schools
 - Other recorded cultural factors, including other languages and Gypsy Traveller children.

6. Media pack

- 6.1 All creative assets developed to promote your activities should adhere to the [Welsh Language Standards - Communication and Marketing guidelines](#) and be branded The Playworks Holiday Project. A media pack will be distributed to the communications leads of all local authorities to support with the promotion of the Playworks Holiday Project. All documents will be available to you and your communications team via Objective Connect.

7. How funding will be allocated and transferred

- 7.1 The funding will be allocated to the 22 Local Authorities in Wales calculated using the sum of the three main schools Indicator Based Assessments (IBAs) from the local government settlement funding formula. The formula is intended to reflect variations in the need to spend which might be expected if all authorities responded in a similar way to the demand for services in their area. This is the mechanism for distributing Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to unitary authority and police forces. It has also been used by the Welsh Government to allocate other grants. Local Authorities have experience of funding being allocated using this method and are involved in the development of the formula.
- 7.2 Local Authorities will be expected to use local provision and knowledge to allocate the funding to settings or organisations best placed to carry out the programme.

This approach is recommended as local knowledge of provision and areas of need is essential to the success of this programme. As playwork provision is structured and delivered differently across local authorities, this allows them to utilise the funding in the most appropriate way.

- 7.3 The funding will be distributed via the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant (AWPOG).
- 7.4 Local Authorities are expected to make the best use of the funding allocated to maximise the outcomes for children. Local authorities who feel they are not able to spend their full allocation should discuss this with the Welsh Government Play Policy team as soon as possible so that possible solutions can be sought.

8. Areas of need and children at risk

- 8.1 This funding should be focussed in areas where children are at higher risk of being vulnerable.

8.2 Local Authorities will have local knowledge of these areas but the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) was designed to identify the small areas in Wales that are the most deprived. The geographic areas used in the calculation of WIMD are the 1,909 Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Wales. The average population of an LSOA is 1,600. Local Authorities should ensure their funding is accessible to the most income deprived LSOAs in their area.

9. Monitoring, review and evaluation

- 9.1 By receiving funding, local authorities are committing to providing data and information to monitor the impact and inform the evaluation of this programme. Evaluation is key to measuring the effectiveness of the programme and informing any future programmes of this type. However, evaluation must be proportionate and not detract from the rich play opportunities being provided as part of the programme.
- 9.2 Information on monitoring and evaluation will follow.