

Feast of Fun 2018 Evaluation Report

Executive summary

Background

There have been growing concerns about childhood hunger during school holidays in the UK. Here in Middlesbrough and in Redcar & Cleveland the Feast of Fun programme aims to alleviate some of the challenges faced by local families during the school holidays. This report documents the evaluation of the Feast of Fun programme delivered by 23 groups across Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland during the 2018 summer holidays.

The evaluation aimed to document the programme provided by Feast of Fun, to explore the challenges faced by local families during the summer holidays, and the benefits of participation in the Feast of Fun programme. A mixed methods approach was used, collecting quantitative and qualitative data from 23 groups and conducting interviews with 51 parents and grandparents, 42 children, and 33 volunteers. An inductive thematic analysis was conducted with the interview data.

The key findings of the evaluation are:

- There is a clear need for holiday provision in Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland
- There are additional challenges, as well as childhood hunger, that families face during the school holidays
- There are significant benefits for children and the whole family from Feast of Fun activities
- The local nature of Feast of Fun holiday clubs are a key factor to their success
- The Feast of Fun programme represents excellent value for money
- There is potential for future growth of Feast of Fun

The challenges families face and the need for holiday provision

The evaluation shows that there is a need for holiday provision in Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland. Parents, volunteers and group leaders all reported there was a real need for the provision offered by Feast of Fun and this was supported by the increase in the number of children and adults engaging with the 2018 programme compared to 2017. In 2018, 974 children and 415 adults took part in Feast of Fun, an increase of 22% from 2017.

The summer school holidays present families with many challenges. There is an increased financial burden due to feeding children that receive free school meals during term-time, the cost of finding activities to occupy the children, and for working parents, the cost of childcare. Parents and grandparents also reported that finding free or low-cost ways to occupy their children was a source of stress, and for many families they become isolated during the long summer holidays.

The benefits for children and families from Feast of Fun

The results suggest that there are many benefits from children and families' involvement with the Feast of Fun programme. Families found that Feast of Fun reduced the burden in household finances with the provision of healthy food, often for the whole family. The programme provided both children and parents with opportunities to get out of the house and spend time in a safe environment, reducing the

isolation experienced during the holidays. Volunteers also benefited from involvement with Feast of Fun, for older volunteers it helped to reduce loneliness and isolation.

The Feast of Fun programme provided children and families with new learning opportunities and experiences. This was largely facilitated by partnerships with local businesses and organisations that provided their support free to the programme. There were day trips to the North York Moors National Park Centre at Danby, the Bowes Museum and MIMA (Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art). The National Literacy Trust provided free books for the children. The North East charity Kids Kabin led workshops in woodwork and pottery. Cooking experiences were provided by Quorn Foods and two local chefs, and the smoothie bike from Middlesbrough Environment City provided extra healthy fun and nutrition. The grant funding provided to groups also allowed them to bring in organisations to run workshops including drumming, dance, sports activities and animal experiences. All of these enrichment opportunities helped children from low-income families to enjoy activities they wouldn't otherwise be able to access.

The local nature of Feast of Fun holiday clubs

A key benefit of the Feast of Fun programme was that it is rooted in local communities, making it accessible for local families. The groups delivering the programme are embedded within the community and are made up of staff and volunteers from that community. This means that Feast of Fun is provided for the community, by the community. This local nature of the programme brings people together, strengthening local relationships, and with a shared sense of purpose, builds stronger more cohesive communities.

Value for money

The Feast of Fun programme represents extraordinary value for money. Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland spent £19,267 in grants to Feast of Fun groups and direct delivery costs, but the total value of the programme as delivered was estimated at £93,380. The added value came from staff and volunteer time from Feast of Fun groups, financial and in-kind donations raised by local groups, and partnerships between the Feast of Fun programme and local organisations and businesses. These costs of £93,380 do not include the staff time given by Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland in supporting and developing the Feast of Fun programme.

The potential for future growth of Feast of Fun

The majority of existing Feast of Fun groups reported that they hope to work with more families in the future. This growth in capacity will need to be both in terms of the numbers of children attending the clubs, and the number of sessions provided. The key limiting factor is that groups are run mainly by volunteers, further support with staffing and volunteers will be necessary. There is also clearly a need to increase in the number of Feast of Fun groups delivering the programme, particularly in areas where the levels of Free School Meals are very high. New churches, community groups and schools will need to be identified to grow provision. Currently Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland provide all the development support for Feast of Fun. If holiday provision is to grow, additional resources for staffing to provide this development and support for local groups will be required. It is important that as capacity in the programme grows, the local nature of Feast of Fun and its ethos is not lost, as this is a key strength of the programme.