

'Summer Food & Fun' Project in Portsmouth

Holiday Hunger brief report 2017



**The Property & Housing Health
Development Team**

**Holly Easlick &
Marshada Chowdhury**

October 2017

1: Project background

Throughout the long summer break from school, many families face financial difficulties with extra meals to prepare, children to entertain and no free school meals. The health of people in Portsmouth is generally worse than the England average and deprivation is higher than average with about 22% of all dependent children under the age of 20 years living in poverty, which is above the England average. (JSNA Annual Summary 2016)

Our youth and play services are based within the most deprived areas of Portsmouth (Paulsgrove, Buckland, Somerstown, Portsea, Stamshaw, and Landport) and focus on supporting the resilience of children and young people aged from 6 - 24.

We (The Health Development Team) scoped the youth and play service to identify health & wellbeing needs and found that the issue around holiday hunger was prevalent; staff reported children coming to the settings hungry, and with some not having eaten enough, or being given money to buy dinner from the local shop. Behaviour issues were also identified as a result of poor diet consisting of high sugar content foods as well as irregular eating habits.

Food Portsmouth are an independent organisation working towards reducing food inequality and have historically supported our adventure playgrounds (APGs) during school holidays by providing some lunchtime provision in the form of beans on toast meals for children attending the sites based within deprived areas last year. These meals have often been sourced from the local food banks that may have had an oversupply of beans or bread products. Since we have been in post from February, we were keen to partner with Food Portsmouth and others in order to join forces and increase our offer to both the local APGs and youth clubs across the city.

2: Aims of the Project

The project was designed and implemented to build on the current provision within youth and play services in Portsmouth through the delivery of breakfast and lunch sessions by providing healthier and varied options in a happy and welcoming environment where all children are valued:

- To reduce social isolation and raise aspiration
- To improve family nutrition and wellbeing
- To reduce financial and emotional strain

3: Summer 2017 activity

The pilot project was titled 'Summer Food & Fun' with the aim of addressing food poverty in Portsmouth by providing our local children, young people, and their families with access to free food, in the form of healthy breakfasts and lunches over the 6 week summer holiday period. Further objectives included improving social inclusion, family nutrition and wellbeing, reducing financial burden and emotional distress, and demonstrating healthier food options to families.

"Can I have some beans on toast? Your beans taste better than my mum's"

-Young person attending youth club

After having successfully applied online via the product donation and corporate responsibility pages, Warburton's kindly donated over 1,200 different bread products to our various play and youth sites during the summer. This was made even easier by arranging for the products to be delivered to and collected from our local supermarkets and offering the flexibility of changing the order amount each week according to need.

Food Portsmouth then contributed up to 600 cans of beans and fruit for the lunches, along with linking up some of their regular volunteers with the sites,

"Can we come back from football and have some food as I have not had anything to eat"

-Young person attending youth club

who were a great asset in helping with the food provision and cooking at some of the APGs. This also added an intergenerational aspect to the project as children related well to these older volunteers who wanted to support the young people to access food when needed. In addition to this, the volunteers were able to connect with the children and encourage social skills as well as the development of soft skills, such as how to use a knife and fork, reinforcing table manners etc. Local parents who were known to engage with the sites were also

involved in supporting the meals where possible, which brought another dimension to the sessions by bringing families and communities together.

Tesco also donated some further products in the form of butter, tea, coffee, and more beans; alongside, acting as 'hubs' for us to collect regular weekly Fareshare donations (surplus food destined for waste) and the fresh Warburton's orders, which together enabled us to provide a range of meals and snacks. The crumpets, teacakes, and toast proved most popular with some children explaining that they had never eaten a crumpet before but it was their new favourite thing!



Breakfast sessions typically ran from 10am at least twice a week (or more according to demand) and lunch sessions were from 12pm at least once a week across each APG; the delivery at our youth clubs were in the form of small meals/snacks on an informal needs basis rather than structured sessions due to the staggered opening times and planned activities over the summer holidays. Data monitoring forms were also collected across all of the ten sites,

which revealed that nearly 3200 meals were provided at the APGs and also 1300 at the youth clubs, totalling around **4500 meals** over the summer holiday period! This would not have been possible without the support of Warburtons and Food Portsmouth as their products formed the main source for each breakfast, lunch, and snack provided. We also calculated nearly 20,000 visits to our playgrounds over this period, which just goes to show how popular it was with the local young residents.

Area	APGs	Youth clubs	TOTALS
Portsea	371	499	870
Somerstown	661	171	832
Landport	1401	n/a	1401
Buckland	213	269	482
Stamshaw	304	n/a	304
Paulsgrove	248	397	645
TOTALS	3198	1336	4534



4: Evaluation

As the structured breakfast and lunch project was a new addition to our youth and play service, it was imperative to explore the impact to help us effectively plan and develop delivery again for subsequent holiday periods.

"Our economy is not that healthy and being able to give a small something to eat to those in need in our youth club is so rewarding. Our young people do not feel out of place as it is available to all. Some households cannot afford to provide enough food so it's great to have access to food from companies."

Youth club staff member

After looking at various evaluation frameworks we came across The Healthy Living Lab at Northumbria University; a team of experts and researchers in the field of breakfast club evaluations who have been undertaking (inter)national research around holiday hunger clubs. Professor Greta Defeyter, a developmental psychologist leads the team to conduct innovative research in this area and agreed to work in partnership with us to fund a researcher to visit our adventure playgrounds and evaluate the Summer Food and Fun project. This would also inform their wider research and provide us with a robust evaluation report.

Using an existing evaluation framework, an intensive study was carried out to investigate whether children's dietary profiles and emotional wellbeing improve and whether social isolation is reduced when they attend an adventure playground and have access to either a breakfast or lunch provision compared to

when they are at home for the day. Also, whether families have improved wellbeing, resilience and support and whether they take part in more activities from their child attending the play facilities compared to when their child did not attend.

This was carried out through questionnaires, focus groups and 1:1 interviews to find out the views and experiences of the parents, children and staff. Final data sets have now been collated and analysis will take place over the next few months before receiving and sharing final findings.

The research findings will be available by March 2018.

5: Networks & partnerships

The summer Food & Fun Project was supported by:

Warburtons
Food Portsmouth
Fareshare (Tesco)
Local volunteers
Northumbria University

We look forward to continuing these collaborations in future and to recruit more volunteers for sustainability.

"Free, good food, PS4, pool, table tennis, and good people. What's not to like?"

-Young person attending youth club

Our future aims to increase our networks and partnerships will be through;

- extending our partnerships and potential by working more closely with the local schools and family hubs to target children and young people accessing free school meals (FSM) through the potential development of breakfast/homework clubs (including enrichment activities). This will be with a focus to target this group however the service will be open to all. The perceived benefit to children and their families would be improved learning, attendance and behaviour at school, punctuality, healthy eating, social development, and fun through play, which will complement and enhance the delivery of the project in our youth and play settings.
- utilising surplus food from a wide range of places including local supermarkets, restaurants, wholesalers and food banks, and the University of Portsmouth (also for future evaluation purposes). For example, The View Café in PCC currently donates surplus food to our youth clubs and playgrounds.
- Warburton have agreed to continue with their donations for this year following the success of the pilot programme.
- our current Food Worker we will be looking to work with the sites to ensure all food donations are utilised to reduce food waste, upskilling all staff in healthy cooking and ensuring all sites are compliant with environmental health regulations.
- continuing working in partnership with the Tackling Poverty Coordinator to address priorities within the Tackling Poverty Strategy that align with our service.

[This list is not exhaustive]

6: Future plans

We are looking at ways to further this project in the future by accessing funding pots to deliver a more structured and regular food offer, whereby cooking sessions and breakfast/homework clubs will be offered to children and young people in order to upskill where possible and teach about healthy balanced meals. Donations will also be kindly requested again from our generous partners as this initiative would not have been possible without them or their produce. A future programme will also have built in term-time activity as part of the offer because the remit goes beyond hunger and issues being present only within the holidays. This would then involve linking with local school provision and other relevant external activities that may also highlight the pattern of holiday hunger and further wellbeing needs during term-time periods.

We anticipate this scaling-up to reach more children in these deprived areas and to contribute towards a better future for our younger generation. A wider work focus of ours is to also review the use of the Somerstown Central Community Centre, with a particular focus on the food provision and use of café facilities. The holiday hunger agenda will also be considered through this work, in addition to our upcoming plans in the Paulsgrove community whereby we will be assessing specific health & wellbeing needs before taking relevant action from a community development perspective and asset-based approach.

When the full evaluation data is available by the end of March, we will build on this feedback by continuing to develop a service with a strengthened programme offer that holistically supports families to upskill around cooking and associated budgeting, by further involving local parents & carers in such skill pathways. This will also feed in to the work currently being developed within the service around offering a range of work experience opportunities and potential apprenticeships, and supporting people back in to employment through linkages with the Resident Development Service.

One final element to consider is the importance of sustainability whereby a robust volunteering programme would involve local communities taking the lead in tackling holiday hunger from a grass-roots level. This would then involve the need for some initial engagement work and a co-production model that empowers our local communities to take ownership over such activities.

[Appropriate permissions have been granted to use the photos depicted within this document]

