



## **Holiday Food & Fun Report**

**March 2019**

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## Holiday Food & Fun Programme Report 2019

The Summer Food & Fun project pilot was launched in the summer break of 2017 to build on current provision within the play, youth & community services in Portsmouth, and to meet the following objectives:

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

The outcome of this pilot was reported to the Cabinet on 13 March 2017, which received positive feedback with an agreed allocation of £4000 from the play & youth service budget to allow continuation of the project and longevity of a developed programme. (Appendix A)

This report will outline the natural developments of the pilot project according to the needs of the families accessing the service, whilst outlining our plans for the wider programme, which will focus on more than just the summer holidays. It is also important to highlight that the programme also meets some of the objectives set out in several strategic documents that contribute towards our local public health and social care agendas:

- Give every child the best start in life (Fair Society, Healthy Lives policy, *Marmot Review 2010*)
- Childhood obesity is everyone's business (*House of Commons, Health Committee 2018*)
- Healthy lives strategy for people in the UK (*Health Foundation, 2017*)
- Keeping our children safe, healthy and positive about their futures (*Portsmouth City Council priorities, 2018*)

Initiatives which have taken place with the allocated budget set for 2018 are described below, followed by recommendations for moving forward with the programme in to 2019.

### **Summer 2018 activity**

During the school holidays, we ran our Summer Food & Fun programme for the second year, which ensures that throughout the 6 week holiday each of our 10 locations has access to a range of foods to offer those who may be hungry, whilst spending time on site playing and interacting with other children, young people and families. This year, we recorded approximately 7000 healthy snacks or meals that were provided to those accessing our Play, Youth & Community (PYC) services, which highlights the potential reach and impact we can have in the city. Last year this figure was around 4500.

Feedback from children and parents has been positive, whereby families have appreciated this extra food provision over the holidays. We evaluated our programme after the initial pilot in summer 2017 whereby parents acknowledged the food provision as essential support to families who may be going without, and potentially skipping breakfast. A quote from one parent states: "*Yes my kids have tried fruits that I probably wouldn't buy. Like kiwi and grapefruits.*"

The Summer Food & Fun programme has gone from strength to strength with our teams working hard to support local children and families to make more informed health-related choices. With a robust training model in place and an annual themed plan, the service has grown to provide a safe and healthy environment for the future generations.

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## **1. Reducing hunger**

Children accessing the adventure playgrounds enjoy the provision and tend to stay on site for long hours, particularly during the holidays. By providing healthy snacks and meals, the service contributes towards uninterrupted play by creating a 'home away from home'. By providing a holistic service, children are able to play all day, eat well and enjoy physical activity in a safe space and at times with their parents/carers.

Initially the approach was to focus on tackling 'holiday hunger'; however, after working with Northumbria University who has carried out extensive research on this topic, it was highlighted that it is not about children staying hungry during the holidays, but that they often have access to more unhealthy foods which in turn affects their health and wellbeing. As a result, our approach has then been to focus on the additional themes outlined below, which have been developed over the year to empower children and families to be more physically active, adopt healthy attitudes towards eating and make more informed food choices.

## **2. Reducing pressure on family budgets**

- 2.1 Through the cookery programme, families are encouraged to join in and also take home cooked food to sample. We also encourage our sites to cook family meals on a budget - dishes that can be created with minimal fuss that are still healthy and purse-friendly.
- 2.2 We recognise that it can be a challenge for parents with children receiving free school meals to provide additional meals during the holidays that they normally would not budget for. Our food provision can alleviate these challenges and help families deal with the pressures of spending more on food during these times.
- 2.3 Our food worker has been creating an itinerary of kitchen food cupboard contents on each of our sites. The aim is to provide each site with a healthier version of what they have in their cupboards/fridges for them to try. The aim is also to produce veg boxes for each site to cook with children and families and then to have these on offer in the local community centres for families to purchase for a small cost (see recommendations).

## **3 Education**

Our food worker has been focusing on delivering healthy eating messages with a multi-faceted approach:

- 3.1 Working closely with the sites in upskilling staff to improve cookery skills for sustainability as well as building confidence to independently deliver cookery sessions that include healthy messages. This also includes continuing to provide Level 2 Food Safety training where needed.
- 3.2 Level 2 Food Hygiene training is continuously provided to new staff joining the service to ensure all have the relevant knowledge in food prep.
- 3.3 Delivering cookery sessions with children to build on cookery skills as well as healthy eating education by encouraging them to try a wider range of foods that they may otherwise not eat at home.

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- 3.4 Working with parents focusing on using key nutrients for specific dietary needs and relevant health conditions, such as diabetes.
- 3.5 Families can be said to be in poverty when they lack resources to obtain the type of diet and participate in activities which are required to support a healthy lifestyle. Our annual themed plan strengthens our approach to support learning for both children and adults where useful information is shared widely to promote and enhance knowledge around options available to families in the city.
- 3.6 The annual themed plan takes into account transition for year 6 children for their move to secondary schools through receiving support via the playgrounds and youth clubs in a joint effort to ensure that children and young people are adequately supported.

#### **4 Healthy eating links with physical activity**

In order to create healthy places where children can thrive, one of the main considerations has been to ensure that we create a positive environment that promotes healthy weight in children:

- 4.1 The playgrounds are a haven where children have the opportunity to be more physically active including gardening and outdoor/indoor play. Through the delivery of cookery sessions and food the service can be more holistic where children can benefit from both a healthy meal and physical activity in one safe place.
- 4.2 Our partners, including Food Portsmouth, continue to donate surplus fresh food to our sites (fruit, vegetables and cupboard staples) which enables the service to cook with children on a regular basis.
- 4.3 Since June 2018, we have subscribed to Fareshare Southern Central, where a small monthly fee is paid in return for a variety of healthy ingredients for all of our sites. We will be looking to continue with this service for the next financial year.
- 4.4 The Wellbeing Service currently deliver 2 weight management groups for our local residents from within 2 of our community centres - one in the north and one in the south. We will be looking to expand this offer and increase the level of participation in this provision through further promotion and incentives.
- 4.5 We joined the Ping! Pompey initiative as part of a national festival supported by Table Tennis England. This involved hosting ping pong tables at 2 of our playgrounds where children and young people could play for free. The festival was so popular that the tables now have been 'adopted' by our sites for continued play.
- 4.6 We are also in the process of applying for funding to start up a swimming satellite club with local partners, in order to provide young people with the opportunity to learn/improve swimming. This will also help to form part of our work in addressing the tombstoning issue experienced locally.

#### **5 Combatting social isolation**

The playgrounds provide valuable social interaction for children and families, who might otherwise be lonely and isolated during the holidays. Parents/carers also have the

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opportunity to volunteer, which helps them feel more involved in their communities and in turn supports building bridges between communities. Cookery sessions also bring families and staff together on common ground to enjoy an activity and encourage open communication to discuss arising topics/concerns.

## **6 Mental health & wellbeing**

Many of the initiatives that form part of this programme contribute towards better mental health and wellbeing of our service users, including eating healthily, taking part in physical activity, and learning new skills.

We have also trained many of the PYC services staff in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), which is a 2-day course that is internationally recognised in training workforces to feel confident and competent in supporting both young people and adults with mental health issues. Working holistically as a service and adopting a social determinants approach means we support our workforce from a health development perspective. This involves encouraging people to adopt healthier lifestyles wherever possible as a way of maintaining good mental health, which also addresses the link between food and mood. We further support our services to do this by also offering Making Every Contact Count (MECC) training, which upskills staff in having healthy conversations before enabling them to signpost to local support services when needed.

## **7 Cultural cooking sessions**

To combat racism and promote community cohesion the programme identified ways to bring communities together through food. These sessions are aimed at encouraging children and young people to cook new dishes, try new flavours and enhance understanding around culture and community. By offering this provision we are able to support our younger generations and their families to be more culturally aware and increase a sense of belonging within our local communities. A number of cultural cooking sessions have already been delivered to date which will also be built upon by offering reciprocal cookery sessions on site that theme around traditional British dishes.

Another idea we would like to develop includes the delivery of a number of cookery sessions from around the world for parents and children to join in with as part of the play passport project. This could form part of the play festival programme and there is potential to continue with Cookery Champion training for parents to enable sustainability.

## **8 Building skills and employability**

8.1 With volunteering for parents and carers on site, opportunities are provided for enhancing knowledge and opening up opportunities for those who are looking to step into employment or try something new.

8.2 We have also been working with the local colleges and the university to offer work experience for students who are looking to work in play, youth or community services.

8.3 Our sites also promote the Resident Development Service which helps people with employment/training opportunities. This is effective as our teams have great relationships with parents/carers and thus are able to signpost families/individuals to relevant services directly.

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8.4 The Youth Offending Team continues to work on our sites delivering small projects such as wood workshops etc. as a way to build on existing talent and increase aspirations.

## **9 Upgrading kitchen equipment**

Our food worker works closely with all the sites to ensure that kitchens are well prepped and equipped to meet Environmental Health standards. With the allocated budget from last year, all kitchens have now been provided with all the relevant cooking equipment to enable staff to prepare a variety of snacks and meals.

## **10 Recommendations:**

The following recommendations briefly highlight the plans to continue developing the wider Holiday Food & Fun programme to allow continuation, growth and longevity of provision:

- i. Partners - to continue working with Fareshare Southern Central, Warburtons and Food Portsmouth to supplement the food offer, whilst additionally working with the Wellbeing Service.
- ii. Fresh produce - to develop gardening projects to encourage growing, cooking and eating healthy foods, including a veg box initiative as part of our cookery programme.
- iii. Homework/breakfast clubs - to support transition into secondary school by providing informal education through a range of community activities.
- iv. Cookery - utilise the current offer to open up opportunities to identify other needs such as budgeting, employability and mental health.
- v. Facilities - to upgrade and develop our facilities to accommodate the above delivery, including kitchen equipment and resources where needed.