

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 17 March 2021

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme (Department of Education)



Cllr Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People said,

“This winter the county council has delivered one of the biggest school holiday meal support schemes to thousands of children.

We know from first-hand feedback that this help makes a real difference to people who are challenged by the consequences of the pandemic.

“Now we have ongoing funding to continue support children accessing free school meals during Easter, Summer and Christmas of 2021, supporting children and their families with food and activities to keep children happy and healthy.”

Report Summary:

On Sunday 8th November 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) announced that the National Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme will be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. Since 2018, this Programme has provided enriching activities and healthy food to disadvantaged children and young people (and in some circumstances their families).

The Department for Education is making up to £220 million available to Local Authorities across England to coordinate Holiday Activities and Food Programmes which are administered to promote and develop community resources, spaces and activities locally.

This report of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People sets out the conditions of expenditure and delivery relating to the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme for Easter, Summer and Winter 2021.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Acknowledges the anticipated receipt of £2,231,290, from the Department for Education, in relation to the Holiday Activities and Food Programme.
- b. Acknowledges the conditions of expenditure and delivery relating to the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, as set out by the Department for Education.
- c. Delegates delivery decisions relating to the Holiday Activities and Food Programme to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People in consultation with the

Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 17 March 2021

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme (Department of Education)

Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People:

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- e. Acknowledges the conditions of expenditure and delivery relating to the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, as set out by the Department for Education.
- f. Delegates delivery decisions relating to the Holiday Activities and Food Programme to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities.

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities

Background

1. Families can experience significant pressure points during school holidays with reduced income and increased financial pressures because of the costs of food, childcare and enriching activities. Disadvantaged families are likely to experience “unhealthy holidays” in terms of nutrition and physical health along with exacerbated inequalities relating to social isolation and loneliness. Disadvantaged families are also less likely to access organised out-of-school activities during Easter, Summer and Winter.
2. On Sunday 8th November 2020, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announced the significant expansion of the Department for Education’s Holiday Activities and Food Programme across England.
3. Holiday Activities and Food Programmes have been evidenced to make a significant contribution to the outcomes of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, through the provision of inclusive and accessible enriching activities and healthy meals. Prior to 2021, participation in the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme was restricted with only 17 Local Authorities included in 2020, eleven in 2019 and seven in 2018.
4. The significant extension of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme across England will enable all Local Authorities to provide free healthy meals and enriching

activities to families of children in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) during Easter, Summer, and Winter 2021.

5. The Department of Education's investment of £220 million in the Holiday Activities and Food Programme will be delivered through Grants to Local Authorities. Staffordshire County Council is anticipated to be in receipt of a Grant of £2,231,290, split into payments across 2020/21 and 2021/22. The Programme has received funding for delivery in 2021/22 only.
6. The Department for Education recognises and values the important role that statutory (including schools), community and voluntary sector organisations have played in this Programme since 2018 and encourage all Local Authorities to work with a wide range of partners in the delivery of this Programme.

Programme Requirements:

7. The Holiday Activities and Food Programme invites Local Authorities to provide children and young people in receipt of Free School Meals access to inclusive, enriching activities which provide a free healthy meal during Easter, Summer and Winter 2021. The Programme requires participating Local Authorities to ensure the Holiday Activities and Food Programme is offered to all families of children in receipt of Free School Meals. It is not however anticipated that 100% of families will participate in the Programme.
8. The Holiday Activities and Food Programme is required to provide at least four hours of provision for four days a week during the Summer 2021 with at least four hours of provision being offered for a week in Easter and Winter 2021. The Programme does not include Half-Term holidays.
9. The Programme will require participating Local Authorities to ensure all providers, which form part of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, provide good quality and inclusive enriching activities, physical activities, healthy food and nutritional education which comply with the requirements of both the County Council and the Department for Education. The Local Authority is also required to ensure all providers embrace and comply with appropriate Legislation, Regulations, Standards, Policies, Procedures & Guidance, including those relating to Safeguarding, General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Health, Safety & Wellbeing.

Programme Eligibility

10. The Holiday Activities and Food Programme is available to children (and where appropriate, their families) who receive benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM) who are aged 5-16. Participation in the Programme is optional for eligible children to attend this provision if they wish.
11. Eligibility for Free School Meals is determined by the Department for Education, and is available to families of children who meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - a. Income Support

- b. income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - c. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - d. Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - e. The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
 - f. Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
 - g. Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - h. Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)
 - i. Children of Zambrano carers
 - j. Children of families with no recourse to public funds with a right to remain in the UK on grounds of private and family life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights
 - k. Children of families receiving support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 who are also subject to a no recourse to public funds restriction
12. The eligibility for Free School Meals does not therefore include children in our care, families of children attending an Alternative Education/Provision, those electively home educated, families of children attending Independent Schools/Provision or children within Early Years.
13. The Department for Education will invite Local Authorities, who can evidence they have been able to fully meet the needs of families of children who receive benefits-related Free School Meals, to include additional free places for additional cohorts, funded through the Programme.
14. Providers will also be encouraged to make places available to families of children who do not meet the eligibility but are able to pay through a fee-paying arrangement.
15. The Programme also enables the County Council to adopt a whole family approach with the inclusion of parents in appropriate activities delivered through the Programme. This will enable the County Council to align the Programme to activities across the wider Children & Families System.

Programme Delivery:

16. Local Authorities are able to determine the delivery model for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme within the parameters of the Terms & Conditions, set out by the Department for Education. This ensures the Programme is administered to promote and develop community resources, spaces and activities.
17. The Local Authority is required to:
- a. Facilitate a Programme Steering Group, which includes representatives of the statutory (including Schools), community and voluntary sector;
 - b. Undertake an extensive mapping of holiday activity provision in Staffordshire, ensuring provision exists and is supporting the areas of greatest need;
 - c. Develop a local Holiday Activities and Food Programme Plan which is reflective of supply and demand;

- d. Ensure that sufficient, adequate provision is available across Staffordshire for children with SEND/additional needs;
 - e. Award funding to facilitate the Holiday Activities and Food Programme in Staffordshire;
 - f. Ensure all providers embrace and comply with appropriate Quality Standards, Legislation, Regulations, Standards, Policies, Procedures & Guidance, including those relating to Safeguarding, General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Health, Safety & Wellbeing;
 - g. Facilitate the Programme to reduce dependency by providing nutritional education for children and educating families around purchasing and preparing healthy meals on a sustainable basis;
 - h. Promote and advertise provision by working with statutory (including Schools), community and voluntary sector organisations to encourage the most at need children to attend;
 - i. Working with other local services or agencies to ensure a joined-up and efficient approach (e.g. signposting, sharing resources);
 - j. Building local partnerships and sharing learning and good practice among local partners.
18. The Department for Education acknowledges that COVID-19 will have a significant impact on the delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, acknowledging the Programme will be significantly smaller and may be virtual during Easter 2021.
19. In order to deliver the Programme during Easter 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) is encouraging Local Authorities to consider innovative approaches which are unpinned by the core principles of the Programme, whilst continuing to comply with the Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020.
20. The virtual scheme for Easter 2021 is anticipated to include delivery of Recipe Boxes with food supplies for up to a week along with Family Hub Activity Kits which will include a range of practical resources relating to the Five Ways to Wellbeing (i.e. Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Learn and Give). These kits will include a selection of learning materials which have a focus on physical activities, healthy food and nutritional education. It is anticipated that a small number of families will be invited to participate in the Scheme during Easter 2021 with a significant expansion over Summer and Christmas 2021.
21. Throughout Easter 2021, It is anticipated that Families will also be invited to engage in a range of physical activities and nutritional education live through YouTube.
22. In addition, on Tuesday 2nd March 2021, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announced an extension of the COVID-19 Winter Fund with an additional allocation of £772,271, enabling Staffordshire County Council (SCC) to continue to provide extra targeted financial support for those in need during the pandemic. In consideration to this announcement, it is anticipated that Staffordshire County Council (SCC) will continue the arrangements to provide families of children entitled to benefit related free school meals and other targeted groups with eVouchers to access food and essential supplies during Easter 2021. This approach will enable the County Council to embed a phased introduction of the

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme over Easter, Summer and Christmas.

23. It is proposed that Staffordshire County Council (SCC) will develop the Summer and Winter 2021 scheme together with partners across the statutory (including Schools), private, community and voluntary sector to ensure a wide range of enriching activities form part of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme.
24. It is anticipated that the Programme provides the opportunity to support children and young people to catch up lost time educationally after school closures during 2020/21 due to COVID-19.

Legal Implications

25. The Local Authority will be required to enter a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department for Education which will define the parameters and expectations of the programme.
26. In order to deliver the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, the County Council will need to enter contractual arrangements with organisations across the statutory, private, community and voluntary sector. Decisions relating to contractual arrangements will be taken by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, in compliance with the County Council's Scheme of Delegation and Procurement Regulations.
27. Recognising the time constraints, and the COVID-19 implications, to delivering the Holiday Activities and Food Programme for Easter 2021, the County Council may need to agree contractual arrangements through an Exception to the Procurement Regulations.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

28. The Department for Education is anticipated to provide this funding to the County Council under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. The first payment will be made in March 2021, upon satisfactory receipt of a delivery plan from the Authority, setting out the intended scale and reach of their programme for Easter 2021.
29. Delivery and expenditure through the Holiday Activities and Food Programme will continue to be monitored by the Department for Education. The County Council will be required to report and manage spend in relation to both the conditions set out above, which may be subject to a future external audit.
30. To enable the County Council to deliver the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, additional capacity and infrastructure will be required. This will include additional officer, digital development, marketing resource and market management and quality assurance capacity. A maximum of 10% of the Grant will be utilised for the administration and facilitation of the Programme.
31. Outlined below is an anticipated forecast for the Programme in Staffordshire:

- a. Programme Facilitation & Administration: £223,129
 - b. Programme (Activity) Delivery: £2,008,161
32. Any underspend in expenditure against the Holiday Activities and Food Programme on the 31/03/2022 will be required to be returned to the Department for Education.
33. Funding for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme is for delivery during the financial year 2021/22 only. The Department of Education will however be making a payment to Staffordshire County Council of £224,390 in March 2021 to support the preparation of the Easter 2021 Programme.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Executive Summary

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