

Leicester
City Council

SECOND DESPATCH

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

15 JULY 2021

Further to the agenda for the above meeting which has already been circulated, please find attached the following:-

**AOUB1 – Summer Holiday Food Provision
Report
Appendix to the report**

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Briefing on the progress of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021

Background

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme 2021, which is funded by the Department for Education (DfE), was launched in late 2020. It followed a campaign led by the footballer Marcus Rashford when Government made a decision to fund food for children eligible for free school meals (FSM) over holiday periods.

The HAF programme has been piloted in a few LA areas previously but Leicester had not been selected to take part. The funding allocated by Government to fulfil its pledge to fund 'holiday hunger' has been added to the HAF programme and opened out to all LAs in England, with a maximum indicative allocation for Leicester city of £1,590,210. This funding is intended to reach as many of our FSM-eligible children as possible (at end of January 2021 the number eligible was approx. 13,600) and cover sessions of at least, 4 hours per day, 4 days per week and over 6 weeks of the full holiday periods (1 week at Easter, 4 weeks over Summer and 1 week at Christmas). The funding can be 'stretched' to cover all weeks of the holiday periods if LAs choose to do so, and we have indicated that this is our intention in Leicester.

Places should meet the programme standards that are set out in the DfE guidance and must include: healthy meals, enriching activities (including physical activity), nutritional education and signposting/referrals to other support; as well having appropriate policies and procedures in place.

Resources

The funding was originally clearly only to be used for FSM-eligible children but, following representations from LAs across the country, DfE updated their guidance to state:

'The free holiday club places must be targeted at children who are eligible for and receiving benefits-related free school meals. If the local authority can demonstrate that a) it is offering the programme comprehensively across its full geographical area and b) fully meeting demand from free school meal eligible children in its area, then the local authority can seek written approval from the Department to use up to 15% of its funding to provide free or subsidised holiday club places for children who are not in receipt of benefits-related free school meals but who are considered by the local authority as in need of this provision. For example, this may include children assessed as being in need, looked-after children, children with an education, health and care plan (EHC), children assessed as otherwise vulnerable, or children living in areas of high deprivation.'

This guidance provides us with the flexibility to offer places to children that are otherwise vulnerable, but their families may not meet the income criteria for being eligible for FSM. Feeding Britain has also offered £12,500 to add to our funding specifically to meet the need of families living in poverty but not eligible for FSM.

As this report is being compiled, we are looking at whether the latest Covid Local Support Grant might be utilised to support HAF providers that also work with vulnerable families not eligible for FSM, so this may be a route to provide some extra support in communities.

The programme is being coordinated within the Learning and Inclusion division of the council. A part-time Data Coordinator has been recruited and a full-time Project Manager, who is currently working one day per week due to a long notice period but starting full time from 22nd July 2021.

Delivery model

As we have a number of years' experience of delivering holiday food and activities through community-based provision in Leicester, it was decided to build upon this experience and open the offer to community groups to deliver directly to families. Reaching People is a local voluntary sector infrastructure support organisation that had recently successfully coordinated a Covid-related food distribution project. They proposed a model and funding structure to replicate this coordination for the HAF programme, which was agreed. We have provided them with a grant to undertake this work and have agreed the parameters for them to award grants to community organisations to deliver HAF programmes in the most appropriate way for their organisations and the communities they serve.

Other organisations and schools that wish to deliver a HAF programme themselves will have a direct relationship us in terms of being awarded a grant to deliver against an agreed service level agreement. To date we have worked with a private activity club provider with a good track record, as well as directly with an academy trust who wished to deliver a HAF programme in their city schools themselves. The model has been expanded for the summer to work with other organisations to manage and run school-based delivery, as well as other existing activity providers to which we can add a food offer.

Easter delivery

The programme over Easter was delivered in three different ways:

- 1) Our community-based programme was coordinated by Reaching People and consisted of 13 organisations delivering mainly a 'virtual' offer as opposed to face to face delivery of activities. The offer consisted of a bag of food designed to include ingredients for at least 5 meals for one child, given to each family one per child per week over the two weeks of the holiday period. In the first week they were also given an activity bag per child, consisting of a range of different items to enable children to undertake physical activity, arts and crafts, reading, etc. Each organisation sourced their own activity pack contents and worked with FareShare, Samworth Brothers and/or other local food providers to source the food packs.

Part of the agreement with Reaching People to administrate the programme is the cost for them to commission an independent report at the end of each holiday period. The Easter report can be found in the appendix to this briefing.

Reaching People were given some data on the school-based delivery to include in their report. However, all the qualitative data and photographs in their report are from the community-based delivery.

- 2) We worked with Premier Education, a provider of sport and physical activity to primary schools across the country, to set up multi-activity 'camps' (not all sport) running from 4 primary schools across the city. Two of these operated in just the first week of the holidays and the other two ran across both weeks. We brokered a partnership between Premier Education and Samworth Brothers to provide a lunch bag for each child each day the camp ran.

As Reaching People is only reporting the qualitative data from their community projects, we have sourced some photographs of the Premier Education provision that can be seen below.



Photographs and comments from children and parents attending Premier Education's Easter HAF camps

"The food has been amazing - my child has loved the pastas and potato salads. What a real treat not to have to make a packed lunch!"



"My son loved every minute of it. The staff are excellent and very good with the children. My son had an award for 'the most respectable active kid' which really boosted his confidence"
Parent

"Holiday club was fun! I did loads of activities including tag, musical chairs, drawing and the blindfold game. Thanks for all the help you gave!"
Rishi & Aaradyha, Participants

3) The Discovery Schools Academy Trust approached us to request to run their own HAF programme at the three primary schools they manage in the city. They ran face to face activities and provided their own food for children to create healthy lunches on each day that they attended, during the first week of the holiday period.

As Reaching People is only reporting on the qualitative data from the community projects, we have sourced some photographs of the Discovery Schools' provision that can be seen below.

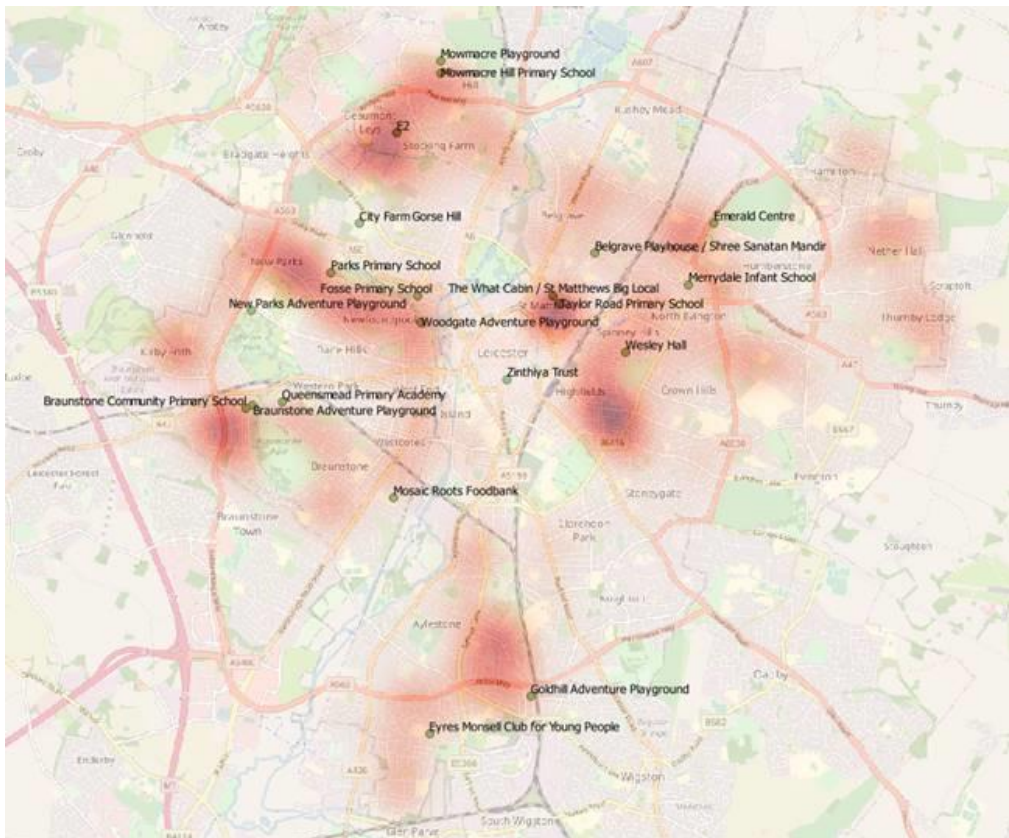




Photographs of activities taking place at Discovery Schools Academy Trust's Easter HAF provision



The delivery over Easter was fairly well geographically spaced across the city, with emphasis on the areas of highest deprivation and where the highest concentration of children in receipt of FSM live, as seen in the map below.



The attendance at each of the providers over Easter can be seen in the table below. The FSM status of children had to be checked retrospectively due to the short timescale we had to set up the registration processes. The proportion of children that were eligible for FSM varied widely from provider to provider, but the average across all provision was 69%. This has been reported to DfE and not been flagged as an issue at this time. Some of the 'non-eligible' children have already been identified as vulnerable in other ways, and most will likely meet the criteria of living in an area of high deprivation. 8.7% of the children who received HAF provision over Easter were identified by parents or the school as having a Special Educational Need or Disability.

Community Provider	Places available	Number attended	Number FSM-eligible	% FSM-eligible	Number SEND	% SEND
Belgrave Playhouse / Shree Sanatan Mandir	300	223	73	33%	10	4.5
Braunstone Adventure Playground	40	42	17	40%	0	0.0
City Farm Gorse Hill	150	102	84	82%	16	15.7
E2	300	72	66	92%	12	16.7
Emerald Centre	140	160	145	91%	18	11.3
Eyres Monsell Club for Young People	300	203	128	63%	28	13.8
Goldhill Adventure Playground	200	170	122	72%	22	12.9
Mosaic	150	98	51	52%	4	4.1
Mowmacre Playground	200	214	158	74%	16	7.5
New Parks Adventure Playground	300	192	160	83%	26	13.5
What Cabin / St Matthews Big Local	200	208	110	53%	8	3.8
Wesley Hall	400	648	179	28%	8	1.2
Woodgate Adventure Playground	150	96	88	92%	9	9.4
Zinthiya Trust	150	25	23	92%	4	16.0
School-based provision						
Braunstone Primary (DSAT)	56	53	40	75%	13	24.5
Merrydale Primary School (DSAT)	23	23	23	100%	7	30.4
Mowmacre Hill Primary School (DSAT)	63	63	53	84%	24	38.1
Fosse Primary School (Premier)	60	60	35	58%	10	16.7
Parks Primary School (Premier)	120	44	35	80%	5	11.4
Queensmead Primary School (Premier)	60	36	26	72%	4	11.1
Taylor Road Primary School (Premier)	120	61	16	26%	0	0.0
Totals:	3,482	2,793	1632	69%	244	8.7%

Planning for Summer

For Summer 2021 we planned to build on the three types of delivery as set out above, as well as add to the delivery using new providers and more venues.

- 1) Community provision working through Reaching People. They are planning to work with more providers (around 20) as well as adding activities to provision that has limited capacity to deliver directly through voluntary sector arts-specialist organisations.

- 2) Primary school-based provision through Premier Education in partnership with Samworth Brothers – currently have 1800 places planned across 6 schools over various weeks. However, more schools are in discussion and this may increase over coming days/weeks.
- 3) Discovery Schools Academy Trust – approximately 145 places in their 3 schools over a 4-week period (total approx. 580 places)
- 4) School Sports and Physical Activity Network (SSPAN) – Secondary school-based provision (including year 6 and above to support transition) providing places across 6 schools over four weeks of the holiday period.
- 5) Work with providers who have contacted us, or we know offer their own Summer holiday provision e.g. professional sports clubs), to broker a partnership and provide a grant to offer places for FSM-eligible children.

We are using the recommendations from the Reaching People report and feedback from providers directly to improve our registration processes for the Summer. We also intend to pre-register all children and check FSM eligibility prior to each programme commencing, which should reduce the number of ineligible children accessing provision significantly.

Summer 2021 delivery plan

The following providers and number of places have been secured and families are currently registering to attend the programmes over the summer.

No.	Community Provider	Places per week	No. of weeks	Total places available	Days open	Dates open
10	B-Inspired	34	4	136	MTWT 10-3	26/07/21 - 19/08/21
12	Christ the King Church	80	6	480	MTWTF 10-3	12/07/21 - 20/08/21
36	Christ the King St Luke's	80	6	480	MTWTF 10-3	12/07/21 - 20/08/22
15	Emerald Centre / Northfields Playbarn	15	4	60	TWTF 12-4	27/07/21 - 20/08/21
14	E2	199	6	1,194	MTWTF 10-2.30	12/07/21 - 20/08/21
16	GNR8 Academy - New College	36	4	144	MTWT 10-2	19/07/21 - 13/08/21
17	Goldhill Adventure Playground	200	4	800	MTWTF 11.30-4	12/07/21 - 06/08/21
13	Gorse Hill City Farm	25	4	100	TWTF 10.30-3	03/08/21 - 27/08/21
18	Highfields Centre	60	4	240	MTWT 10.30-3.30	12/07/21 - 05/08/21
19	Leicester City in the Community	50	4	200	MTWT 9.30-1.30	12/07/21 - 06/08/21
20	Mowmacre Playground	40	5	200	MTWTF 10-2	19/07/21 - 20/08/21
21	New Parks Adventure Playground	20	5	100	MTWTF 12-4	12/07/21 - 13/08/21
11	Shree Sanatan Mandir / Belgrave Playhouse	50	5	250	MTWT 9-1	19/07/21 - 19/08/21
	Somali Community Parents Association	36	4	144	MTWT 9.30-2.30	12/07/21 - 04/08/21

37	St Matthews Big Local	50	4	200	MTWT 12-4	26/07/21 - 13/08/21
22	St Matthews What Cabin	60	5	300	MTWTF 12-3	12/07/21 - 14/08/21
23	Wesley Hall	75	4	300	TWTF 9.30-1.30	20/07/21 - 13/08/21
24	Woodgate Adventure Playground	50	6	300	MTWTF 1-5	12/07/21 - 20/08/21
	School-based provision					
1	Braunstone Primary (DSAT)	55	4	220	MTWT 9-1	19/7/21 - 12/8/21
3	Merrydale Primary School (DSAT)	25	4	100	MTWT 9-1	19/7/21 - 12/8/21
2	Mowmacre Hill Primary School (DSAT)	65	4	260	MTWT 9-1	19/7/21 - 12/8/21
6	Fosse Primary School (Premier)	60	3	180	MTWTF 9-3	12/7/21 - 30/7/21
5	Parks Primary School (Premier)	60	4	240	MTWTF 9-3	19/7/21 - 13/8/21
9	Queensmead Primary School (Premier)	60	3	180	MTWTF 9-3	12/7/21 - 30/7/21
4	Taylor Road Primary School (Premier)	120	4	480	MTWTF 9-3	12/7/21 - 6/8/21
7	St Mary's Fields Primary School (Premier)	120	4	480	MTWTF 9-3	12/7/21 - 6/8/21
8	Holy Cross Primary School (Premier)	60	4	240	MTWTF 9-3	26/7/21 - 20/8/21
25	Soar Valley Community College (SSPAN)	60	2	120	MTWTF 9.30-2.30	w/c 12/7/21 & w/c 26/7/21
26	Crown Hills Community College (SSPAN)	120	1	120	MTWTF 9.30-2.30	19/7/21 - 23/7/21 x 2 groups
27	Lancaster Academy (SSPAN)	60	1	60	MTWTF 9.30-2.30	2/8/21 - 6/8/21
28	Babington Academy (SSPAN)	60	1	60	MTWTF 9.30-2.30	9/8/21 - 13/8/21
29	Fullhurst Community College (Aimstrong Sport)	50	4	200	MTWTF 10-3	19/7/21 - 13/8/21
38	Judgemeadow Community College (SFK Multisports)	30	3	90	MTWTF 10-3	w/c 26/7, 2/8 & 16/8
35	Stokes Wood Primary School (direct delivery)	41	2	82	MTWTF 10-3	12/7/21 - 23/7/21
	Other community provision					
34	Leicester City Hockey Club	30	4	120	MTTF 9.30-2.30	w/c 19/7, 26/7, 9/8 & 16/8
30	Kiddycare Little Willows (Thurnby Lodge)	40	4	160	MTWTF 10-2	26/7/21 - 20/8/21
31	Kiddycare Parkview (Highfields/N. Evington)	40	4	160	MTWTF 10-2	26/7/21 - 20/8/21
32	Kiddycare Melton Rd (Belgrave/Rushey Mead)	48	4	192	MTWTF 10-2	26/7/21 - 20/8/21
33	Kiddycare Angels (St Matts/St Marks)	35	4	140	MTWTF 10-2	26/7/21 - 20/8/21
			Total places:	9,512		

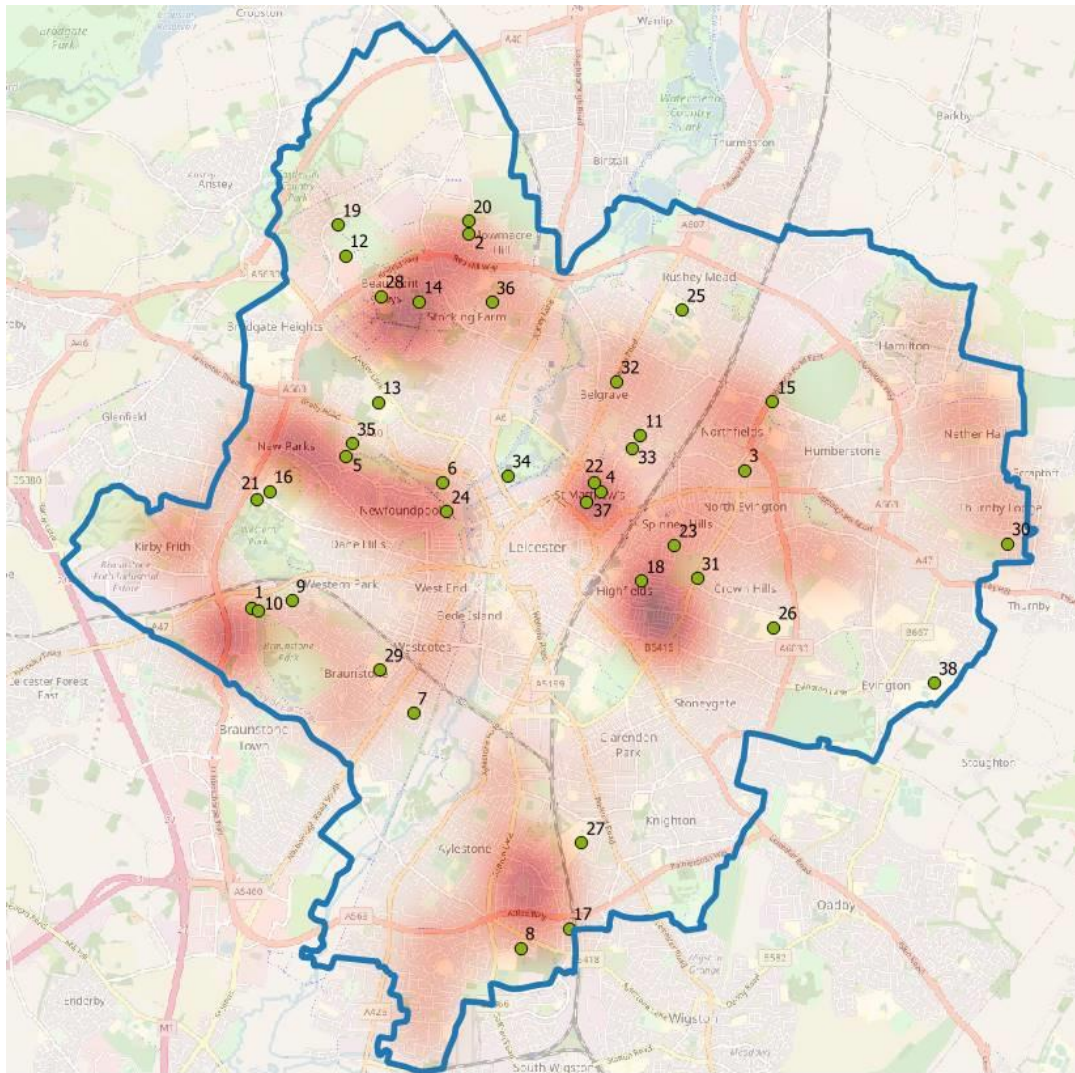
We are carefully monitoring the registrations coming in for summer as we expect there may be some reluctance to book places due to Covid.

We have decided to keep registrations open throughout the summer in order to maximise take up. Registration for each scheme is being closed the Tuesday before each new week commences, in

order that we have a short time to process and check eligibility and then give the providers their lists for the coming week.

There is some flexibility to register directly with community providers as they know their families and can inform us of vulnerabilities that will fall into the 15% flexibility we have for the use of this funding.

We have analysed the geographical spread of provision over the summer and are pleased that we have managed to secure provision in more areas of need than we could over Easter. The map below shows the distribution of provision (numbers correlate to providers on the table above).



Appendix

Reaching People's Easter delivery report



Holiday activities and food program

Holiday activities and food programme Leicester—Easter 2021



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Programme overview

A statement from one of the delivery project organisers sets the context for the Leicester’s holiday activities and food programme (HAF) over Easter 2021:

"For the past three years each holiday we have provided a school holiday meal to the most vulnerable children in our community. Each year we have struggled to get the necessary funding to deliver this. It was refreshing this year, when our community is at its most vulnerable after a year of local lockdown, that we were able to provide this service. The fact the funding was guaranteed made a huge difference to our organisation and helped us to plan. It was also massively reassuring to our community to know that the food would be available to them when the schools are shut."

—The What Cabin with St Matthews Big Local

This, broadly, was the experience of all the 14 delivery organisations that delivered the HAF programme in early April 2021. Thanks to the partner organisations, the co-ordination by Leicester City Council and Reaching People, the financial support from the Department for Education and donations from FareShare Midlands, Samworth Brothers and other local companies and supporters, community organisations were able to make a significant difference to the lives of disadvantaged children and families.

The delivery organisations serve diverse communities in different ways. Some are primarily adventure playgrounds or activity clubs, who added food to the service they deliver. Others are primarily emergency food providers, who added activities to their offer.

The purpose of this report is to record what the Leicester HAF delivery organisations did over Easter 2021, how they coped with the challenges and what lessons they learned that might shape the way they deliver the programme during the summer holidays of 2021.

First, we look at what was delivered and how families responded.

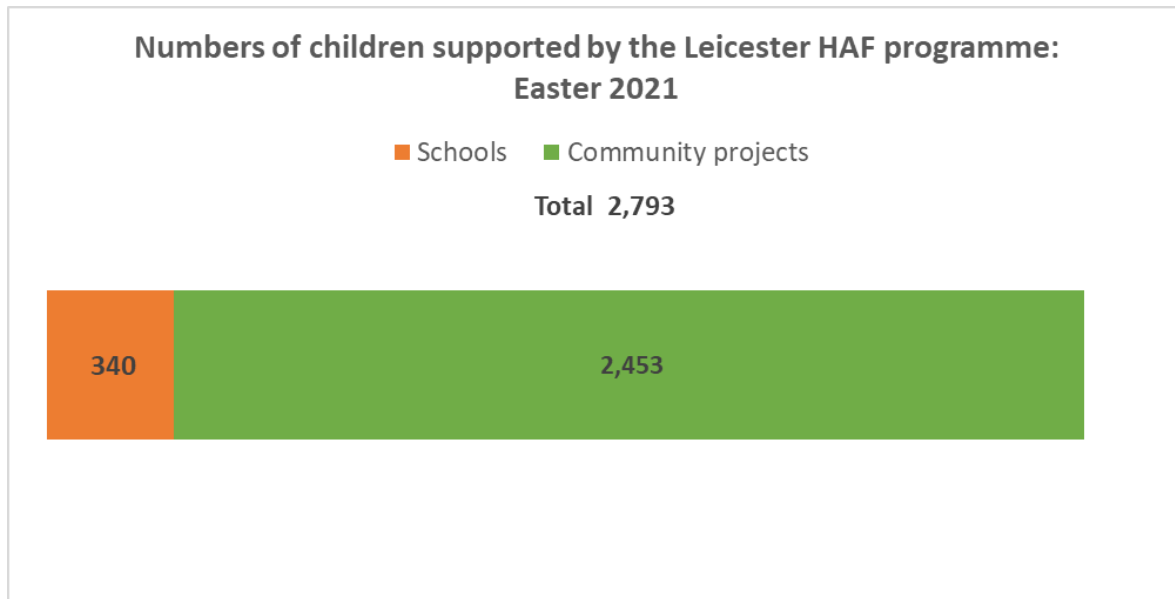
Data and pictures

Measuring achievements

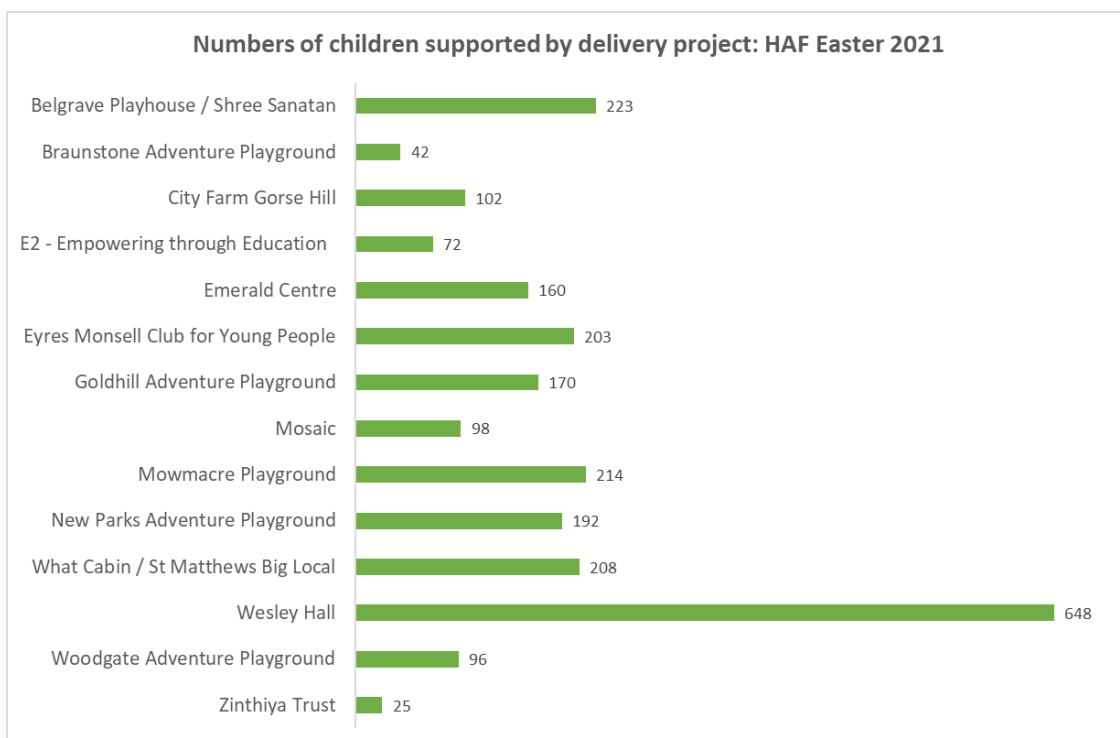
The achievements of the Easter HAF programme are best illustrated by the experiences of the families and the projects themselves—which make up the main sections of this report. To set the scene, this section gives a brief outline of relevant numerical data.

The community-based delivery projects connected to Reaching People delivered the HAF programme to 2,453 children in the city. In addition, a smaller number of children, 340, benefited from a school-based service provided by partners working with Leicester City Council. This report will concentrate on the service delivered by the community projects, while referring occasionally for

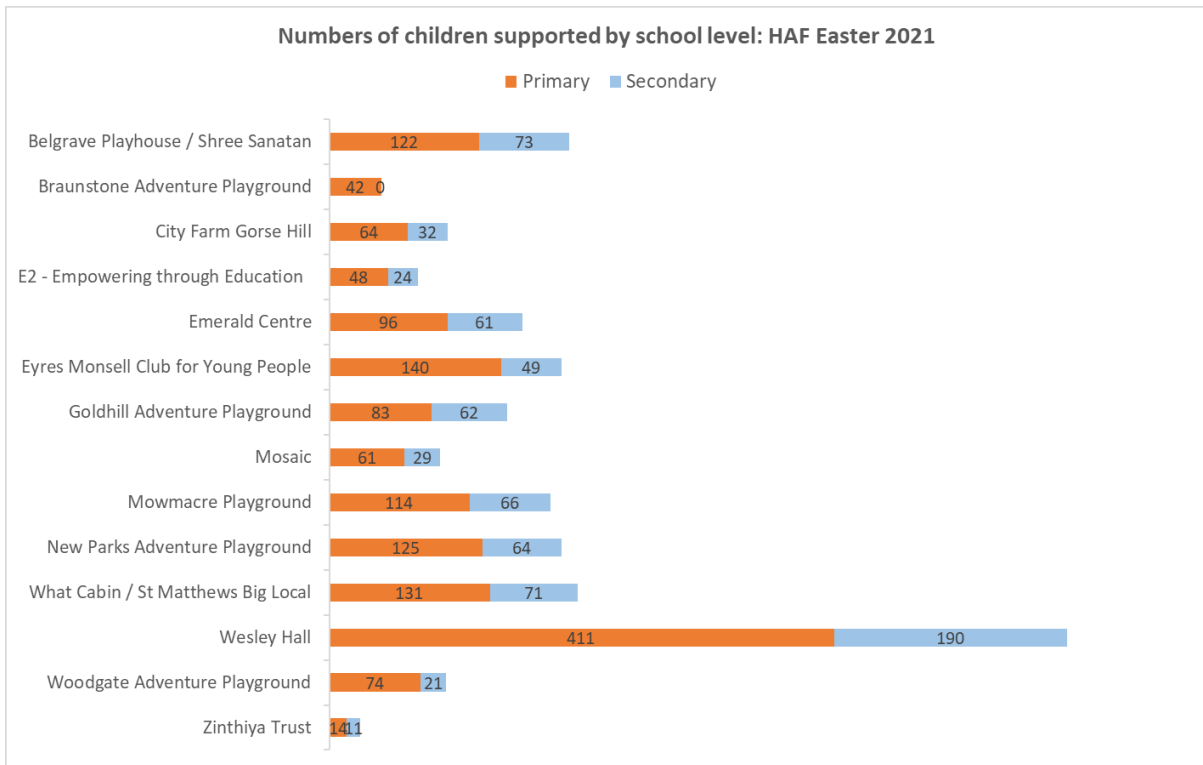
comparison with the seven school-based projects. The figures are collated by Leicester City Council, supplied by individual projects.



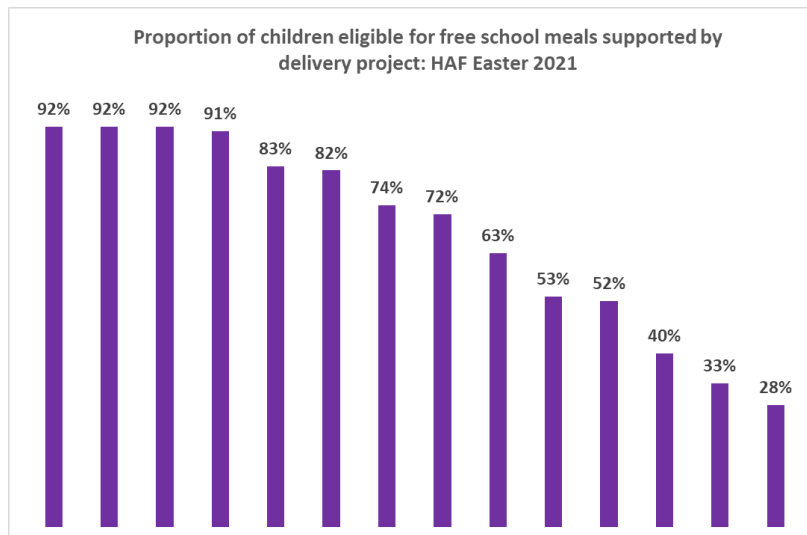
The community delivery projects fell into two broad categories. Some were primarily play-based or youth organisations that added food to their provision. Others were primarily emergency food organisations that added activities to their offer. As the chart below shows, and as might be expected, more children were provided for by the food organisations, with Wesley Hall meeting the needs of 648 children and Belgrave Playhouse / Shree Sanatan supplying 223. Even so, some play and youth organisations also coped with high demand, with Mowmacre Playground and Eyres Monsell Club for Young People each providing for more than 200 children over the two-week period. For comparison, the highest number provided for by a school-based project was 63.



Breakdown by school level shows a significantly larger number of children attending primary school, 1,525, than attending secondary school, 753. Some 46 pre-reception age children and 129 children of unknown age are excluded from the chart below.

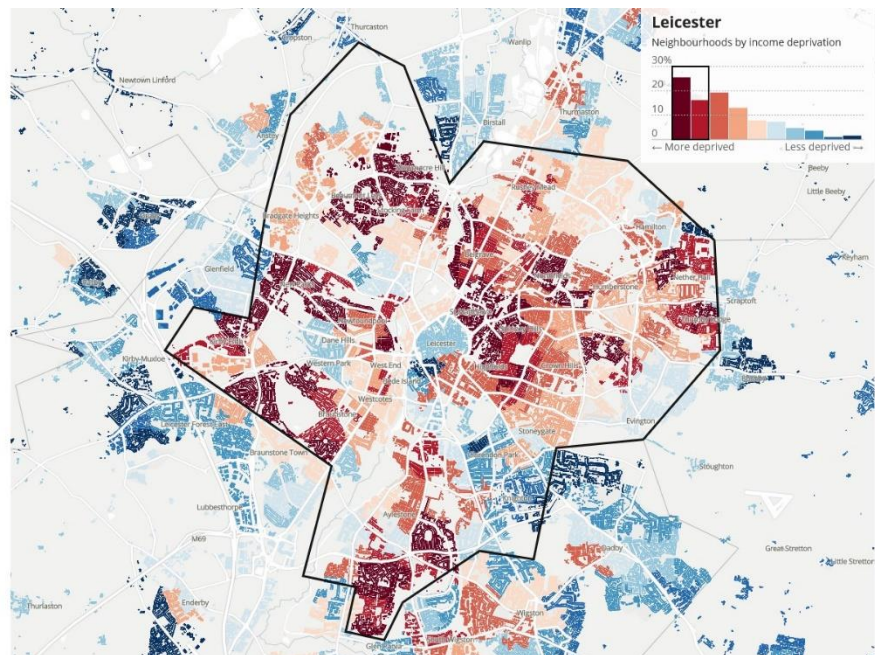


Of the children supported by community projects, more than 1,400 (57 per cent) were known to the council as being eligible for free school meals (FSM). An unknown number of other families are likely to be eligible but not registered due to lack of knowledge, unfamiliarity with the process or language or other barriers. Others will not qualify under the current criteria, but are known by projects to be experiencing financial hardship. The proportion eligible for FSM was not evenly spread across the projects, with a range from over 90 per cent (four projects) to 40 per cent or less (three projects). The chart below shows the range across the delivery projects, ranked in order of the proportion of children provided for who were eligible for FSM. Names of projects have been removed to avoid the risk of unintentional identification.



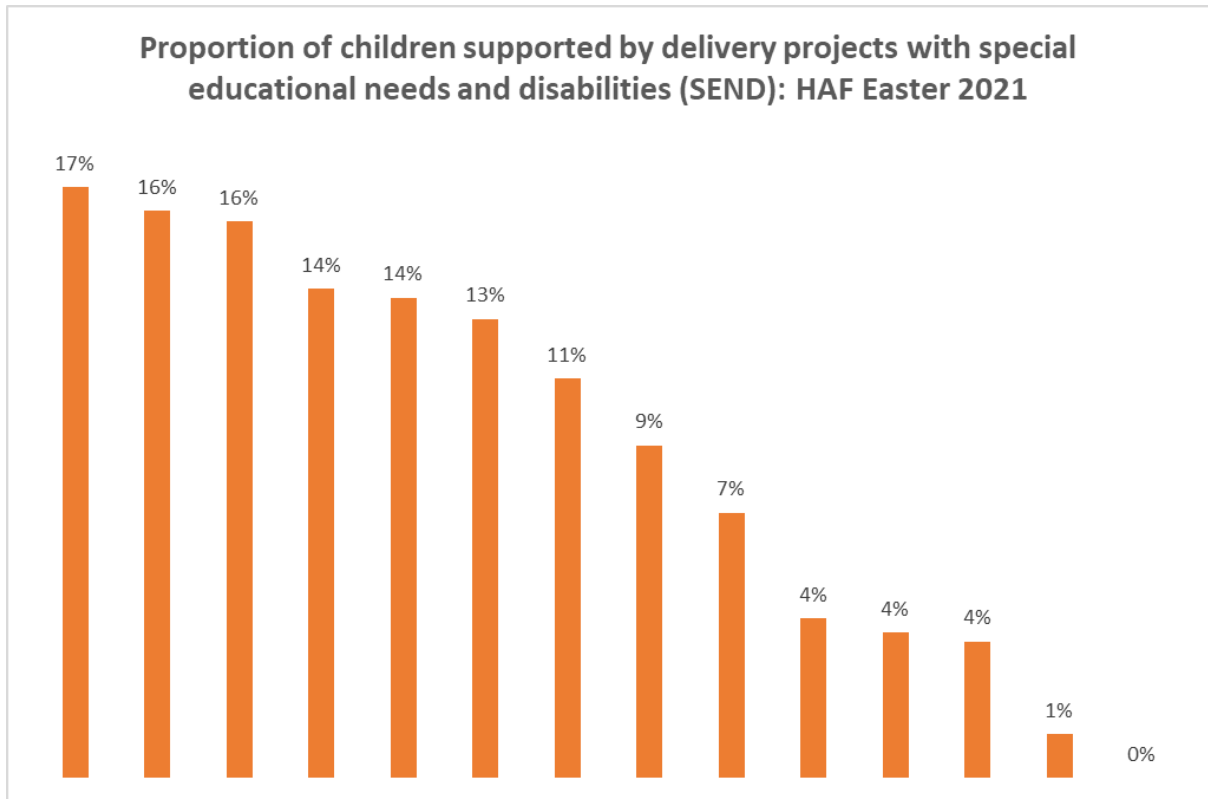
The six projects providing for children at an FSM-eligibility rate of more than 80 per cent supported a total of 647 children. It is likely that the lower rates of eligibility were among projects which accepted a relatively large proportion of registrations on the day and which were used by families who struggled with the digital technology or language skills which are necessary for FSM registration. These numbers are significant because the Department for Education-funded programme was intended to be targeted at FSM-eligible children, with a lee-way of just 15 per cent. This posed problems for community-based projects which have an inclusive, open-access approach and are committed to reducing, not increasing, stigma within their communities. Although the play and activity provision was open, inclusive and not-targeted by design, the projects are located among some of the most income-deprived neighbourhoods in England.

Of the 192 neighbourhoods in Leicester, 80 were among the 20 percent **most income-deprived** in England. This is shown in the first two bars in the chart on the top right in red.



Screenshot visualisation from ONS: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/dvc1371/#/E06000016>

It was also possible to cross-reference children supported by the community-based HAF projects with those parents/carers self-identified having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Although the HAF delivery projects were not set up as specialist provision, they nevertheless supported a considerable proportion of children with special needs and disabilities. Again, the range across projects was marked, going from one project with zero to five with SEND rates above 14 per cent. In one well-established project 17 per cent of the children supported had special educational needs or disabilities.



Families and responses

Immediate feedback gathered by projects revealed how much families valued the services. The following snapshots are examples of many similar responses across the city.

“We were so appreciative of the food and activity packs. The activities definitely helped my little ones when they were feeling bored.”

“Hi, I would like to provide a feedback in regards of Easter holiday hunger bag and kids activity pack. Both of them were amazing! In regards of hunger bag - there was everything what we needed. Activities packs was absolutely brilliant and suitable for kids age! Kids were extremely happy and loved the time of independent craft and sport challenges between them. Thank you for the support for our family!”

“Firstly I just want to say thank you for providing my family and children with the hunger and activities bags over the Easter break. They were amazing and meant that we were able to relax and actually enjoy our Easter break together without worrying about what meals we would be able to afford. The activity packs were brilliant and the children had hours of fun, again something that I wouldn't have been able to provide alone! So thank you so much for making our Easter a lot less stressful for me and much more enjoyable for us all as a family.”

—Eyres Monsell Club for Young People

“Many of the families who came are on very low incomes and some have lost their jobs during the pandemic so have struggled to put food that is healthy and wholesome on table for their children. This service has provided them with food that will help their children to maintain a healthy diet and they are very grateful to us.”

—Sanatan Belgrave Playhouse

“With five children it is always a challenge to make ends meet. I would never let my children go hungry, but sometimes it is difficult to pay all my other bills and my shopping bill as well.”

“The food parcels really help especially this year when the kids have been home a lot. They like the food provided as it's similar to what they get at school and familiar to them. The activity packs were great too, there was such a lot in them, and it kept them entertained for ages.”

—The What Cabin with St Matthews Big Local



Volunteers supporting the HAF programme at Eyres Monsell Club for Young People.



Activity pack provided by Sanatan Belgrave Playhouse.



Activity pack provided by St Matthews Big Local and What Cabin.

Despite supporting over 200 children during each of the two weeks, Sanatan Belgrave Playhouse succeeded in avoiding long queues, partly because they had planned ahead and switched venue to one larger and more practical than their usual base. They noted good co-operation within the communities, with “volunteers carrying heavy bags to our cars or even home delivered to a couple living nearby”.

“The activity packs were great as they had a book inside to help with reading and then there were toys and fun things to play with like a wind up chick and crayons and making your own Easter basket.”

—Sanatan Belgrave Playhouse

A project in Braunstone helped a family of a couple with five children aged between 4 and 11. They came to the UK as asylum seekers and the children had attended the project before the pandemic, integrating well. But then the impact of Covid laid bare the difficulties of being in an unfamiliar country without extended family support.

“When we first met the family, Dad was working full time but as the lockdown happened he was furloughed. This put a massive strain on finances at home and, of course, they have no other family support in this country.

Mum has been massively struggling with home schooling as the language barrier has been hard for her, so she has really appreciated the help we have been able to provide for her family. Over time her confidence talking to us has really improved and that’s helped with her English. Dad has now returned to work full-time and children have all gone back to school. She says the food we have provided has been a great help. It has helped stretch out their meals providing most of the staples they have needed, including plenty of fresh fruit and veg.

We have also been told that children in some families wouldn’t have received Easter eggs and the activity packs provided were a god-send.”

—Braunstone Adventure Playground

In many cases, the HAF programme added to existing services provided by projects, themselves tailored to the needs of the local community.

“Alongside the free food market we offer twice a week, parents were happy to receive help towards the food bill. Many of our families live with grandparents and some grandparents have their grandchildren in foster care. This helps with household bills as they share costs but most families have said that they are grateful for the work Goldhill puts into help deliver this kind of service”

—Goldhill Adventure Playground

“Mum commented on how happy she was to collect the food bags and activity bags as she struggled to feed her three children balanced meals during school holidays. She also does not have the spare money to provide activities, so the children were happy to get the activity packs. One of her children commented that ‘this was his best day ever’ because he received an activity pack, an Easter egg and a new coat, which we were also giving out.”

—Woodgate Adventure Playground



Children enjoying their pack lunches at Braunstone Adventure Playground.



Food provided at Goldhill Adventure Playground.

Flexibility within the programme was valued by families, especially by those that did not meet the criteria of other emergency food providers.

“Some families are struggling but do not meet the free school meal entitlement threshold. They are the families that are being missed and really need help and support, which we were able to provide.

A lady asked if we could help her as she was struggling for food and finding it difficult as she did not meet the criteria at other food banks. She felt embarrassed to ask without the added embarrassment of being turned away. Her neighbour told her about us.”

—New Parks Adventure Playground

Inevitably, in areas of high deprivation the main focus was on food. But families also emphasised how the activity packs had helped other aspects of their children’s wellbeing, individually and together.

“One of the parents mentioned that it helped her daughter mentally as she was busy with the activity packs for two weeks.

Another parent said that activity packs have helped their family in a way that their children work together with their siblings. Activity packs has helped the family to come together and be creative.”

—Wesley Hall

For some projects, activities and exploration spilled over into food preparation. New experiences and ingredients were the focus of informal healthy eating education.

“A few parents also mentioned about the fresh cheese and onion sandwiches, which their children loved. Some had never tasted the cheese and onion sandwiches before. It was something that they really enjoyed and tried to make at home with the bread we had given them.

—Wesley Hall

We had some vegetables donated by Oakland International—kale, broccoli and fresh herbs to give out. But some of the parents did not know the vegetables and how to cook them. As a team we explained what they can make and how they could use them, as part of educating families about healthy eating. Also when we gave out Weetabix, families were not aware about it, so we have to tell them the combination of fruits with Weetabix.

—Wesley Hall



Activity pack provided by New Parks Adventure Playground.



Families being served at Wesley Hall.

Not all projects were able to offer activities. Covid restrictions, and limited time and materials, made it unfeasible for some. Others improvised and innovated in difficult circumstances, devising ways to engage children.

“With being outside we did have to rethink everything again. We provided activity packs in folders with children’s names on them that they could use each day. We went back to tradition and made simple Easter things which the children loved. Also, we did team games which went down very well, socially distanced as much as possible. The outdoor physical activities were a hit especially the hula hoop and basketball.

—Braunstone Adventure Playground

“During the Easter holidays, we used money from our reserves to fund two-hour youth activity sessions every day for the two-week period. Our sessions were very well attended, with most days being at full capacity.

Due to Covid, we are only able to allow 15 young people per session, but are hoping that this will increase in the near future. We encouraged the young people to get involved and help us to create the food bags, which they enjoyed. We also did lots of fun activities such as making our own rockets, decorating boiled eggs for a competition, playing on Fortnite and Roblox, participating in group games such as SPLAT and wink murder, taking part in lots of craft activities, holding an ‘E2’s got talent’ and cook and eat. Outside activities included decorating a wall with chalk, and many more fun and engaging activities.

All the young people who attended our sessions over the two weeks requested all-day youth sessions with a minimum of four hours. We have trialled this in the past, and the sessions were very well attended. Our young people have also asked for more outdoor activities during the summer, by which time we will have access to our new piece of land.

We also have access to DMU’s football facility in Beaumont Leys. Football and outdoor sports are a big interest with the young people we work with. Not only have we been delivering youth support groups, we have also been delivering PSHE sessions. Topics we cover include knife crime, bullying, body image, drugs and alcohol, gangs and county lines, healthy eating and any other topics we deem relevant for that session.”

—E2 - Empowering through Education

“We provided an opportunity for children to create a design at home that we then laser cut into perspex and made a “night light” with their artwork. We had been running the project online for a regular client group, there were six children from the HAF programme involved.”

—Mowmacre Playground



Children at Mowmacre with their artistic creations.



Lightbox created at Mowmacre.



Food provided by Mosaic.

Nicola Bassindale from Leicester City Council visiting Zinthyia Trust.



Not all activities were face-to-face.

We had online classes for children like rock painting, Mehndi classes, art and craft on Zoom.

—Wesley Hall

Activity-wise, we have spoken to the young people and have now purchased more outdoor activities such as a table tennis table and pool table. Arts and crafts was a big hit and we would hope to be able to get people in such as the puppets and animals as the children love this.

--Braunstone Adventure Playground

Projects listed some of the reasons why people came to the programme, giving some of the background to the circumstances, and their reaction to the help they received.

“Covid, low income, fostering children. A parent in 70s and shielding on low income, struggling whilst mum was in hospital long term. Mum with disabilities who had been told she may never work. Many receiving free school meals.

Parent who was struggling following an operation who had been referred to nephrologist with further health issues.

Two foster parents were really surprised with how friendly the support was and also hadn't been made aware that the HAF project was continuing for two weeks.

A couple of parents said they felt comfortable with coming to us because they didn't feel judged, which was really encouraging.”

—Emerald Centre

“Reasons: low wages, furlough, unemployed, shielding, less hours, maternity leave, asylum seekers, immigration status still not confirmed so they didn't have any recourse to public funds.

They all were appreciative of what was provided, and on our social media page we had some amazing comments.”

--Wesley Hall

Beaumont Leys is unfortunately an area which faces poverty. We have supported hundreds of families with our emergency food scheme since the start of Covid. Therefore we were not surprised by the amount of residents that needed support in the local community with the HAF programme. A lot of the people we supported with the programme are on benefits, furlough, or have been made redundant. We are aware that many residents in the area have lost their jobs in the past year, from the massive impact that Covid has had on businesses.

—E2 - Empowering through Education

Low income and food poverty was a theme for almost all of our clients. We didn't get much feedback on Covid related stories other than those about losing jobs. Everyone was very appreciative.

—Mowmacre Playground

Many of the families are suffering hardship due to furlough, zero hour contracts, redundancy and waiting for universal credit.

—Woodgate Adventure Playground



Activity packs provided by the Emerald Centre.

E2 volunteers creating activity packs.



Packed lunches provided by Gorse Hill City Farm.

Extra support

Community-based projects try to help families according to their particular needs and circumstances. They also try to provide lasting solutions, not just temporary stop-gaps. For many of the projects across Leicester, that meant supplying additional information about services and support agencies that might help. Most projects provided leaflets through the bags they distributed. And although staff and volunteers at the projects are not specialist advisers, they did what they could to tailor advice to individual families.

“A parent with four children commented that her kids eat her out of house and home. The extra food was a blessing as some weeks she would miss paying a bill to make sure the kids had food. We gave out Energywise leaflets and we also arranged a telephone appointment with the Saffron Resource Centre advice worker to help her with the extra for gas and electric and a benefit check to see if there was any other benefits she was not claiming. She had been on furlough and her husband was going back to work as soon as he was able to find a job.”

—Goldhill Adventure Playground

“Support information was given out in the bags, including the Energywise project leaflet. We also spoke to families about signing up to our pantry, where they can purchase food items at low cost.”

—Eyres Monsell Club for Young People

“Support information of further services printed and Energywise information given. Moneywise information available. Referrals made to clothing bank scheme.”

—Mosaic Roots

Some families had special needs, which projects were able to adapt to, often using resources from other donors.

“We provided food bags and activity packs for the young people that attend our Youth Support Groups. All our attendees have additional needs. We catered to these needs by giving specific coloured activity packs, which many of the young people required. One of our young people in particular, suffers with anxiety and did not wish to take a food bag home as he felt embarrassed. In order to encourage him to take the food home, we allowed him to choose his colour of activity pack.”

—E2 - Empowering through Education

“We had some nappies that were donated by Giving World, so we had given them out to children with learning difficulties and to the ones in need.”

—Wesley Hall

“One of our parents was deaf and we were able to communicate with her as one of our workers could sign with her.”

—Woodgate Adventure Playground

“We had a child who required a gluten/dairy free diet so we ensured he was able to have food which reflected this, including gluten free bread and wraps, together with a gluten/dairy free Easter egg in his activity bag. His mum was very surprised that we had ensured that he wouldn’t miss out on the food provided and very happy that he had received an egg too.”

—Emerald Centre

Help with languages was important in some communities.

We signposted to Leicester Foodbank plus, particularly translations in Gujarati and Urdu, general support information, Energywise project with translation into Gujarati and Urdu. We also made a referral to a mental health service, the Adhar Project.

--Emerald Centre

Getting the admin right

As the feedback reported in the previous sections shows, the two weeks of HAF over Easter were highly valued by families across Leicester. The projects delivering the service were aware that it was in part a trial run for the much longer programme in the summer. Reaching People arranged evaluation meetings and feedback sheets so that projects could not only test out what worked for them, but also share their ideas and learning with other projects.

To prepare to run the programme the partner organisations and delivery projects had to determine the range and extent of their offer, settle venues, dates and times, co-ordinate staff and volunteers, publicise the service to eligible families, devise a system for registering children, draw up a budget, distribute and set up invoicing and accounting systems for grant funds from the source—as well as all the technical and logistic set-up to make the activities and food distribution a success.

All this needed to happen while operating within the requirements of the grant funding, all policy and practice guidelines from privacy to child protection and within the currently prevailing pandemic restrictions. And it needed to happen in a very short time While the possibilities had been known for months, from the time that the money was finally approved, there was just a fortnight to make it all

happen. “It’s all very seat of the pants”, said the Reaching People chief executive in that final week of March.

In an online planning meeting at 4 pm on Thursday 25 March 2021, days before the Easter holidays began, a short-lived spanner was thrown into the works. One adventure playground reported to the group that a Leicester City Council contact told them they were limited to 15 people at the project. With 12 staff and nearly 80 children already booked on to the scheme, this seemed likely to throw that project’s plans into disarray, along with those of other projects that intended to run activities. It took a flurry of phone calls to determine that the message was an error, due to a mix-up about the nature of the adventure playground.

A major focus of concern during the planning was registration. Families who might be eligible were being asked to go to the council’s website and enter their details on an online form. This would check eligibility, in terms of being already registered for free school meals. It would also produce a list of families booked onto the scheme, which delivery project organisers could use to verify arrivals at the specified hours of the project. Each project published its opening hours, and families booked onto their nearest or most convenient.

Project organisers knew there would be difficulties for some families in need of the service. Some would not have the necessary device, data credit, skills or language ability to navigate the online registration process. Some would turn up on the day, without prior registration, possibly in large numbers. Some would be entitled to free school meals, but would not have applied.

The city council was aware of these difficulties, and had tried to reduce their impact. The Department for Education, the main grant funder, agreed to permit up to 15 per cent of grant funds to be spent on families not registered for free school meals, provided that they lived in an area with high levels of deprivation. That gave projects some leeway.

Nevertheless, the registration process did throw up the expected challenges, and some unexpected ones.

“Signing people up that turned up on the day took a lot of staff time and many of the parents have issues with their digital skills so were not able to do the online version of the form. Some parents have issues with reading and writing and needed assistance with that as well.”

—E2 - Empowering through Education

“Parents were having problems completing the forms, with the postcode format not recognised after inputting it a number of ways. Some did not know whether their application had been successful as received no confirmation. Some were unaware that they could collect both weeks. Some registered to collect for the second week as did not know they were entitled and told to collect on a date that had already passed.”

—New Parks Adventure Playground

“We had a few families who registered and didn’t collect. When contacted they said they were unsure if they were accepted onto the scheme. They were awaiting a confirmation email from the council, which obviously didn’t come. This was new to us too, so we weren’t sure if any confirmation/ acceptance emails would have been sent out.”

—Eyres Monsell Club for Young People

Some projects made specific recommendations based on their experiences.

“We felt that with a longer lead in time we need early online registration open and that referrals should only be met by this method. We had a lot of parents just turn up on the day after seeing people queuing for food. We were not able to verify if their children were on free school meals or even if they had the children they told us.

The online form should be easier. The ‘add child’ button confused parents. Maybe the first question should be ‘How many children do you have on free school meals?’ this could then populate boxes dependent on the number of children.

The system of issuing a voucher for people to return worked well for us. If the online registration worked a bit better, we could issue a voucher for each day of the school holiday and know how many we can cater for.”

—The What Cabin with St Matthews Big Local

“The spreadsheet, whilst helpful, contained a great deal of information we really didn’t need, so we did cut and paste where we could to make it more user friendly. We did however find that we had great difficulty saving the spreadsheet data with the software we had and had to save it to an older excel version because it wouldn’t open up on some of our laptops.

A suggestion we discussed was that it would be far more useful to have children’s ages and separate columns for male/female/not identified so we could total up the children according to age and sex more easily. I think maybe it was unnecessary for us to have each individual child’s name – again just a suggestion for next time?

Do we really need each individual referral form? We did print these off but found the spreadsheet easy enough to refer to.

We found that the question asked to parents about ‘dietary requirements’ is not a recognised term with the majority of the clients who attended. They didn’t recognise ‘vegetarian’ as a specific category within this, and hence left that

question blank and yet on the day around 70 per cent were vegetarian. Perhaps in the future, the question could be rephrased as 'vegetarian diet' or 'meat' diet."

—Emerald Centre

As expected, many projects spent a lot of time registering families on the day.

"The sign-up system meant we were signing many individuals up on the day and this took two volunteers to ensure a smooth process. If these referral forms could be given to local foodbanks and schools prior to the session, this would make it smoother. Many parents commented that they had given up signing up online as the process had 'cut them out' of the system."

—Mosaic Roots Foodbank

For another project, sign-up on the day seemed never-ending, with a queue running for two hours. "Some families were down for one child, but actually had two", said one.

Some delivery projects see themselves as open access for their communities, and turning away people in need jars with their fundamental principles. But in an area with high levels of deprivation, people are inclined to join any queue they see forming and word quickly passes around that emergency food support is on offer. This made it very difficult for projects to check eligibility and maintain their open, community-based ethos.

One project felt let down by the programme's publicity within local schools. They had prepared for 600 people, but actually responded to just over half that number. Many parents were not aware that it ran for two weeks.

These experiences exposed an underlying tension within the whole HAF programme. Funded by the Department for Education, it had a focus on healthy eating and activities. But eligibility was free school meals, as if it were primarily, or even solely, a way of feeding hungry children. Project staff and volunteers were left to explain the programme and resolve tensions and misapprehensions to people in need, including some who struggled with English language skills.

The central organisation at Reaching People would be unable to help resolve confusion around who was on the list, since registration data was shared only between local projects and the council. Exactly what data would be collected about registrants was being carefully determined using best data protection practice. For instance, no ethnicity data was being collected because it wasn't being used for the project. Information about food allergies, in contrast, was relevant so was being collected.

Food successes and challenges

Using surplus food sources, including FareShare Midlands, and other donated food, was an obvious choice for many of our projects. But by its nature, surplus food cannot easily be specified in advance and what arrives may not suit users' needs or tastes. Over a longer programme it can be possible to communicate preferences and options and mismatches could be quickly put right. But with a two-

week operation there was not time to fine-tune the systems. There was a particular challenge with surplus fresh fruit and vegetables.

“Our children were delighted with the Samworth’s packed lunch which we would definitely do again in the summer, but the food from FareShare just wasn’t fit for purpose and we would rethink using them again.”

—Braunstone Adventure Playground

“We received vegetables from FareShare that was meant to last us a few days. Unfortunately, when it came to giving the vegetables out in the food bags, it wasn’t safe to do so. The peppers in particular were growing mould and going white. We understand that FareShare rely heavily on volunteers and were trying to manage a large number of deliveries at the same time. But we had to throw a proportion of the delivery away, wasting what could have been ideal fresh food for our families. In the summer, we would look at sourcing fruit and veg from an external provider, unless FareShare could deliver fresh items to us each day.”

—Eyres Monsell Club for Young People

Another project also found FareShare fresh produce unusably past its best, and bought in fresh fruit and potatoes instead. Yet another had struggled with fresh produce, decided to go to a local cash and carry food supplier . “They delivered fresh fruit the day before, which lasted a whole week”. There was a lot of interest when one of the projects said that they had decided not to source surplus food at all, but to shop at a local Bestway cash and carry. “Creating an account takes time, but then they will deliver to you”.

One delivery project struggled with the combination of surplus tinned and ambient food delivered by FareShare Midlands, again due to the hit-and-miss nature of the surplus food system. It reported having lots of tins of tuna but not the bulk, such as bread or pasta, to go with it. There was a mismatch of items to make a parcel to hand out. Having food measured and delivered in kilograms rather than by unit, made planning for certain number of food bags difficult. Delivering pasta in kilo bags makes sense for distributors, but not for those splitting into usable parcels for a child.

Planning for the summer

Much of the feedback and lessons learned described in earlier sections of this report will help determine the delivery of the summer HAF programme.

Here are some of the main lines that emerged from the feedback sheets and the evaluation meeting. There are differences in experiences and not all points are valid for all projects.

Admin and funding

1. Projects want more confidence in the numbers and names of children to make sure no one misses out and there is no surplus or deficit of activity packs or food or anything else.

2. Projects are encouraged to stick to their mission, and not attempt to meet needs they do not have capacity for. They need to be able to redirect families to other sources of help, including emergency food.
3. Projects should in any case have ways of making referrals to organisations such as Energywise, Moneywise Plus and other local support and advice agencies.
4. Projects cannot be double-funded through Leicester City Council. HAF grant funding is for something other than what they would have been doing anyway.
5. Delivery projects are very dependent on volunteers, some solely operating with volunteers. Would be useful to have some allocation for a paid project worker.
6. Paperwork needs to be done but if it can be reduced as much as possible that would be great too.
7. Needs liaison with local schools, to avoid duplication and get the most out of the provision, including food and kitchens as well as activities.
8. Some projects may not be able to meet the operating criteria, particularly the four-hours-a-day requirement.
9. Perhaps need to look at advance publicity and communication, so parents know of the provision, and how many weeks it lasts. Avoid no-shows.
10. Need ways of managing tension created by tight eligibility criteria alongside open access provision, to maintain ethos and avoid stigma.
11. Registration should recognise that some children are quite mobile across the city – being cared for by extended family, in split families or visiting relatives or friends. So not all will choose provision near term-time home address or school.

Food

12. There is a balance to be struck about using surplus food sources, including FareShare Midlands. Do projects avoid waste and control costs better by buying locally?
13. If sourcing locally, who are the best local suppliers? Can more use be made of Leicester's Company Shop?
14. Chillers may be needed during the summer, to preserve fresh food for longer. How practical is this for projects?
15. Ongoing challenge to meet different families' food preferences. Tastes and circumstances vary.
16. Packed lunches for those who attend might be better than take-away bags. But need to manage the eligibility question to avoid stigmatising.

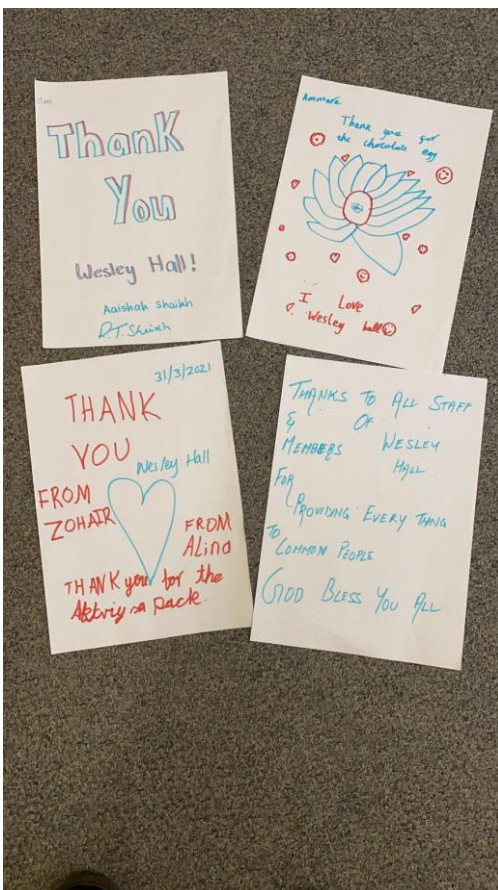
Activities

17. Some projects that did only activity bags at Easter are considering face-to-face sessions in the summer.
18. Also some requests from families for outdoor items in the packs, such as skipping ropes.
19. Some projects that already provided activities want to do more outdoor, field games etc.

- 20. Workshops for balloon making or circus activities would be good, maybe even a talent competition.
- 21. Could Reaching People organise external coaches or specialist workshop leaders, timetabled across projects. Might help projects offer something different from what they are currently funded for.
- 22. The summer may be a logistical nightmare, especially for smaller projects. How can it be made to work with limited space for activities and yet a large food demand?

Thanks and acknowledgments

Reaching People would like to thank all the delivery projects, the food providers, Peter White - our report writer, and the Council for the very rapid response and creative solutions where so many children and their families were supported through community provision this Easter holiday.



Thank you cards written by children at Wesley Hall.



Certificate for Easter HAF volunteers.

