

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday 7 March 2023

REPORT TITLE:	WORKING GROUP FINAL REPORT : THE PROVISION OF FOOD & ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN IN SCHOOL HOLIDAYS DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

A report was presented to the Children, Young People and Education Committee during the COVID 19 pandemic it was agreed that a working group be established as recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee. The report explained that the Policy and Resources Committee agreed a proposal for a project co-ordinated on behalf of the Council by local charity Neo Community, working in partnership with schools and local community-based feeding groups and organisations, to provide food and activities to children eligible for Free School Meals over the school holidays. This built upon learning from the operation of the Edsential Holiday Activity Fund over the summer, providing for adaptation of a successful model of delivery.

A recommendation arising from the December 2020 report, was that the Children, Young People and Education Committee establish a Working Group with key partners to explore options in relation to supporting children with free school meals in the medium to longer term. The purpose of this report is to provide the final recommendations of the Working Group.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough and is not a key decision.

The report contributes to the Wirral Plan 2021 – 2026 in supporting the priority of ‘Brighter Futures’

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to:

1. acknowledge and support the work as reported to the Holiday Activity Fund working group undertaken by Edsential and Wirral Council;
2. note and support the work undertaken to include children who are not entitled to free school meals and the long term planning to continue with this; and
3. agree that the ongoing work of the HAF programme be reported to members on a regular basis.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 The Covid 19 crisis highlighted the need for children to be able to access food and support activities during school holidays. Ongoing work with Edsential has ensured that the Holiday Activity Fund has continued.
- 1.2 Ongoing work within the Council in relation to the cost of living crisis, and the 'breaking the cycle' project has meant that children and families who traditionally receive free school meals continue to be supported.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The option to continue with the working group was considered, however, as the group was established as a direct response to the COVID -19 pandemic at a time whereby the country was in lockdown, it was felt that the situation had progressed, and work is being captured by other projects and organisations.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In 2020, The Policy and Resources Committee agreed a proposal for a project co-ordinated by local charity Neo Community (on behalf of Wirral Council) working in partnership with schools and local community-based feeding groups and organisations, to provide food and activities to children eligible for Free School Meals over the Christmas 2020, February half term 2021 and Easter Holidays 2021. This built upon learning from the operation of the Edsential Holiday Activity Fund over the summer, providing for adaptation of a successful model of delivery.
- 3.2 On 27 October 2021, the government announced a 3-year funding settlement of over £200 million each year for the HAF programme. The first year of this funding settlement was 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 is the second year of the funding settlement. Overall, local authorities are expected to offer the equivalent of 6 weeks' holiday provision to eligible children.
- 3.3 Since 2020, Edsential have coordinated the HAF programme and built upon work that has been undertaken by Neo community organisation. The working group met to consider the work undertaken and the impact on the community.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Funding for the HAF programme is secured from Government Grants to cover the provision of free holiday places and coordination of the programme locally.
- 4.2 The spend proposed is consistent with the terms of each grant.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The spend proposed is consistent with the terms of each grant.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 Oversight of the project is with Edsential.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 Risks associated with the project include gaps in provision in delivery of the project. This has been identified and ongoing work is being undertaken to address this.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 The design of the project reflects learning from previous delivery (including feedback from groups and organisations engaged) and engagement with those partners engaged in the Humanitarian Cell Food Sub- Group.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

This report has no impact on equalities.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Food has been sourced locally where it has been practical and cost effective to do so.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Investing in children's futures supports the community through quality efficient education provision, enhancing life chances for children, families and the wider community.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Working Group Final Report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Guidance: Holiday activities and food programme 2023

The Provision of Food & Activities for Children in School Holidays During the Covid-19 Pandemic, Policy and Resources Committee, 11 November 2020.

Covid Winter Grant Scheme – Draft Guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities, Department for Work & Pensions.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with e) any other functions comprised in partnership arrangements with other bodies connected with the delivery of services for children, young people and families.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People and Education Committee	January 2021
Children, Young People and Education Committee	1 December 2020
Policy & Resources Committee	11 November 2020