

Cabinet
Council

09 March 2021
16 March 2021

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills - Councillor K Maton

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Education and Skills

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021: Acceptance of Grant and Proposed Distribution

Is this a key decision?

Yes - the proposals involve financial implications in excess of £1m per annum and are likely to have a significant impact on residents or businesses two or more electoral wards in the City.

Executive Summary:

The government have extended their Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021 to deliver free activities and food during school holidays nationwide for pupils who are entitled to benefits-related free school meals. The programme was previously in a pilot phase and delivered in 17 Local Authority area (not including Coventry).

Coventry has a provisional allocation of £1.5M which will be dependent on demonstrating delivery plans for the programme and eventual delivery. The programme recognises that approaches will need to be adapted where there are COVID restrictions in place.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is requested to recommend that Council:

- 1) Approve receipt of the grant allocation of up to £1.5M dependent on level of delivery
- 2) Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, following consultation with the Director of Education and Skills to deliver the programme. The City Council will centrally co-ordinate and will award monies to relevant organisations to deliver the programme.

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- 1) Approve receipt of the grant allocation of up to £1.5M dependent on level of delivery

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List of Appendices included:

None

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-2021>

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1k4Fgy6yclq-xpfMKR9AbAu2c4928eQE4>

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

Yes – 16 March 2021

Report title: Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021: Acceptance of grant and proposed distribution

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Since the COVID 19 pandemic began free school meals have been funded during holiday periods (with the exception of October half term). In most cases this has been through the provision of vouchers totalling £15 per child per week, funded via the DfE initially, and more recently the COVID winter grant. FSM numbers in the city have risen significantly during that time period equating to 10,500 (19% of pupil population) at the start of the pandemic to an estimated 12,500 (22% of pupil population) in January 21.
- 1.2 The current forecast suggests we will be able to use the COVID Winter grant for delivery of vouchers to children eligible for benefits related FSM over the Easter period. This will be dependent on issuing vouchers prior to the 31st March 2021 to be used over the Easter period. This activity is separate to the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme.
- 1.3 The Government announced in November that they were making £220M available nationally to expand the (HAF) programme across the whole of England in 2021. The programme has existed since 2018 on a much smaller scale (in 2020 it delivered to 50,000 children and young people) and is to provide healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children.
- 1.4 The HAF programme is not a direct replacement for current arrangements. It offers more in terms of activities for disadvantaged children and young people, but it only covers 6 of the 13 holiday weeks, 4 days per week.
- 1.5 The provision is for school age children who receive benefits-related free school meals, and attendance is optional. It is expected that the offer of free holiday club provision is available for all eligible children, but experience from previous schemes suggests that not all eligible children will participate, and the grant resource would not cover the cost if all did. Generally, intelligence gathered from previous programmes suggests attendance of between approximately 40%. Learning suggests that older children have been more difficult to engage in the programme.
- 1.6 As highlighted above, the aim of the programme is to make free places available to children eligible for free school meals for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week, 6 weeks a year. The funding should cover 4 weeks in the summer and a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays.
- 1.7 Although there is local flexibility in terms of how this is delivered, the programme has some clear aims, which are:
 - Healthy eating and greater knowledge of health and nutrition
 - Being more active during the school holidays
 - Taking part in engaging and enriching activities (with a focus on resilience, wellbeing, and wider educational attainment
 - Being safe and not socially isolated
 - Increased engagement with school and other local services
- 1.8 Local Authorities are encouraged to work with a wide range of providers in the delivery of this programme, in recognition of the important role that community and voluntary organisations have played in the delivery of this.

- 1.9 Due to short timescales and uncertainty in relation to COVID 19 restrictions, for the Easter holiday we are proposing food parcel/hampers, activity packs, and online activity sessions for children and young people. We have been working with the Coventry Food Network to deliver this, and we will be submitting a delivery plan to the DfE in line with this. Our ambition will be to reach 25% of benefits eligible FSM pupils.
- 1.10 For the Summer and Christmas holidays we will be mapping out our requirements and engaging with schools, existing providers of holiday care/activities, and other relevant providers to coordinate provision. We are in the process of recruiting a team to deliver this project.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The City Council could decide to not run the programme in Coventry. This would mean there was no resource to support the delivery of food and activities to children and young people eligible for FSMs in the holidays. This is not the recommended option.
- 2.2 The City Council could seek to procure an external organisation to coordinate and deliver the HAF programme. This is not the recommended option due to timescales, and the local partnership that already exists in Coventry to support delivery of this programme.
- 2.3 The City Council accept the grant and co-ordinate the programme centrally. The plan is to award monies via grant agreement to organisations to deliver the provision. This is the recommended option due to short timescales to implement the programme, and recognition of the local partnership that already exists in Coventry to support delivery of this programme. We also hope that this will build on local intelligence and support for disadvantaged children and families to ensure we can embed an offer through this programme or other funding streams in the future.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 No consultation has been undertaken. A wider engagement exercise will need to take place with organisations that already deliver or may in the future be able to deliver holiday provision for the Summer and Christmas provision.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 The acceptance of grant monies will be implemented immediately.
- 4.2 Interim arrangements will be in place for the Easter holiday following approval of the delivery plan via the Department for Education. This work is already ongoing. Recruitment to posts is already underway and we are engaging with possible providers in relation to Summer and Christmas provision.

5. Comments from the Director of Finance and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1 Financial implications

The indicative maximum allocation available is £150,700 for the current financial year and £1,347,890 for 21/22 financial year. The Payments will be made by DfE at various milestones throughout the year including receipt of delivery plans, and report back on actual activity and expenditure.

The funding is for the provision of free holiday club places (90% of the funding) in the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays, and for Local Authority coordination costs (10%

of the funding). We are recruiting to a small team to support the delivery of the programme within the 10% allocation.

The DfE have confirmed that at this stage they are not looking to recoup funding if attendance/take-up in Easter is lower than anticipated as a result of COVID restrictions.

The funding is intended for revenue purposes, and although it can be used to purchase equipment for the programme, if this meets HAF criteria for classification as capital expenditure, the amount you spend on this should be limited to 2% of your overall programme expenditure.

Funding can be used to support a comprehensive, inclusive and accessible offer, e.g. setting up new provision where needed, paying for additional staff to expand existing provision or to meet additional needs, etc. Funding can also be used to support quality improvement, e.g. money to bring in activity providers such as sports coaches; money to establish partnerships with catering organisations.

As highlighted above the grant indicates that this should be available to all eligible children and young people, but the allocations are based on take up rates from pilot programmes which are significantly lower than this. We will need to manage this position and continue to liaise with the DfE in relation to take up. In the worst-case high levels of indicative take up may mean that provision needs to be scaled later in the year.

5.2 Legal implications

By section 31(3) and 31(4) of the Local Government Act 2003 (Power to pay grant) the Department for Education has made grant provision available to enable local authorities to provide to school age children who are eligible for free school meals, healthy meals and enrichment activities during the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods free of charge. The Departments Guidance “The Holiday Activities and Food Programme” sets out the conditions upon which the grant has been made available and with which the local authority must comply. To include reference to specific legal powers or criteria and appropriate legislation and, if required, details of what legally needs to be achieved in order to satisfy the proposals.

6. Other implications

Any other specific implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan (www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/)?

This programme aligns with the council plan, and can contribute towards the following aims:

- Improving educational outcomes by working with schools to continue to improve standards,
- Improving health and wellbeing by: helping children and young people lead healthier lifestyles including better mental health; keeping children and young people safe from harm; providing early intervention for families who need it; enabling people to exercise choice and control in their daily lives; reducing health inequalities: giving our children the best start in life;

6.2 How is risk being managed?

There are a number of risks associated with delivery of programme.

We need to ensure that we safeguard children and young people. This means that it is important that holiday provision is properly registered (OFSTED if appropriate) and staff have appropriate qualifications and employment checks in place (e.g. DBS). Part of our mitigation is to use organisations that are already established to support children and young people.

The HAF programme is not a replacement of the arrangements that we have had in place for FSMs over the last year. The grant monies awarded will not be sufficient to support all children and young people in the city with food during the holidays. Through communication we will need to manage this and ensure that parents and carers are clear on the scope of this programme.

Continuing COVID 19 restrictions could impact on what we are able to offer, and take-up of that offer. The DfE have adjusted their expectations for Easter to recognise this and have indicated that required flexibility will need to continue. In the process of awarding funding we will need to balance this risk to ensure that providers have the confidence to create and build on existing provision.

The Steering Group will establish a risk and issue management approach, detailing a level of risk and issue tolerance, a threshold after which any risks to the delivery of the project or issues precipitating a significant change of approach will be reported to the Steering Group for consideration and options for mitigation/response. Risks and Issues of a lower impact will be mitigated and responded to within the day to day activity of the project team, recorded in the Project risk log.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

We will be recruiting to 3 posts on a fixed term basis to coordinate and support delivery of the programme.

6.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

As part of the programme we will need to consider how to ensure provision is accessible and engaging for all eligible children and young people (including those with a special educational need and disability, and older children). We will have due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act in coordination and delivery of the programme.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

We will be looking to work with partner organisations in the delivery of this programme, including the establishment of a steering board to oversee. The DfE recommend the following organisations are represented on the steering board: local police and other uniform services, public health officials, school leaders, youth services, social services, charities and the voluntary sector.

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