

Cabinet

15 March 2022

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills – Councillor Dr K Sandhu

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Chief Partnerships Officer/Director of Education and Skills

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2022: Acceptance of Grant

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 in two or more electoral wards in the City.

Executive Summary:

The Government's Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) is an enrichment programme for disadvantaged children which includes the provision of healthy food. The programme is primarily for pupils of statutory school age, who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. Initially the programme was funded for the 2021/22 financial year only; and operated through the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays. The delivery details were set out in the Cabinet report of 9 March 2021 and the Council report of 16 March 2021.

The Government has confirmed that the Programme will be extended to the end of March 2025. Coventry has received an allocation of £1,514,770 for the financial year 2022/23, subject to meeting the conditions of the grant determination letter. It is anticipated that funding will be at an equivalent level for 2023/24 and 2024/25. This report sets out the intended approach for delivering HAF in 2022/23 and reports on 2021 activity.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the acceptance of the Department for Education Holiday Activity and Food Programme grant allocation, of up to £1,514,770 for the 2022/23 financial year.
- 2) Delegate authority for decisions about the planning and delivery of the Holiday Activity and Food programme in 2022/23 to the Director of Education and Skills, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills. The City Council will centrally co-ordinate and award monies to relevant organisations to deliver the programme to a high standard.

List of Appendices included

Appendix 1: Summary of Coventry Holiday Activities and Food programme 2021 delivery

Background papers

None

Other useful documents

Cabinet report of 9 March 2021; Council report of 16 March 2021 - Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021: Acceptance of Grant and Proposed Distribution

Department of Education HAF guidance (updated 28 January 2022)

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

HAF Summer of Fun 2021 video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5sk7bSC5ag>

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?

No

Report title: Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2022: Acceptance of grant

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Following the success of the national Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) during the financial year 2021/22, the Government has announced the extension of the programme to March 2025. Details of the programme remain as set out in the Cabinet report of 9 March 2021 and the Council report of 16 March 2021.
- 1.2 The programme will continue to target statutory school age pupils, who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. This means that 13,000 Coventry children will be entitled to access free enrichment activities and healthy food during Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays of the 2022/23 financial year.
- 1.3 Coventry has been awarded an allocation of £1,514,770 for 2022/23. It is anticipated that the allocation for 2023/24 and 2024/25 will be maintained at a similar level. The programme allows for 15% discretionary spend on children who are not within the category of benefits-related free school meals.
- 1.4 The Department for Education's aims for children who attend the provision are to:
 - eat healthily
 - be active
 - take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing along with wider educational attainment
 - be safe and not be socially isolated
 - have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition and
 - be more engaged with school and other local services.
- 1.5 The aims for parent and carers who participate in this programme are to:
 - develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting and
 - be signposted to other information and support (for example: health, employment and education).
- 1.6 Local Authorities are encouraged to work with a wide range of providers in the delivery of the programme, recognising the important role that community and voluntary organisations have played in its success so far.
- 1.7 Attendance on the programme is voluntary. Each eligible school-age child is entitled to access the provision for one week during the Easter and Christmas holiday period and four weeks during the summer. One HAF week is defined as being a total of four, four hourly sessions per week.
- 1.8 Coventry City Council can evidence the success and positive impact of its programme delivery during the 2021/22 financial year, as set out in Appendix 1: Summary of Coventry Holiday Activities and Food programme 2021 delivery. The Coventry HAF Summer of Fun 2021 video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5sk7bSC5aq> evidences that the grant conditions were met through the demonstration of both the wide range of activities delivered across the City summary and the impact from a parent and child perspective.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Coventry City Council could decide not to accept the grant. The consequence would be that without the financial resources, the programme would cease. 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. If this decision was made, it is unlikely that the required infrastructure, coordination, expertise and experience would be procured in readiness for delivery by Easter 2022. The investment of the strong partnership developed between the Council's current HAF Team in leading and co-ordinating the programme with a wide range of delivery partners, would be lost, with potential service disruption. This is not the recommended option.
- 2.3 The City Council accept the grant and continue to co-ordinate the programme centrally. Funding would continue to be awarded via the grant agreement to organisations who are able to deliver the required specification of provision, building on the existing local partnership. This is the recommended option.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 No consultation is required or necessary for the programme. There is strong engagement and collaboration with a wide range of partners across Coventry and there has been significant feedback from families.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 The acceptance of grant monies will be implemented immediately, and plans are already in place for delivery for the Easter 2022 holidays, building on the foundation of 2021 delivery.

5. Comments from the Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1 Financial implications

The indicative maximum allocation available is £1,514,770 for 2022/23 financial year (a similar level to financial year 2021/22). The payments will be made by the DfE at various milestones throughout the year including receipt of delivery plans and reports 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). A small team has been recruited to support the delivery of the programme within the 10% allocation.

The Department for Education will pay Coventry City Council up to 80% of the total 2022/2023 allocation in April 2022, following receipt of a prescribed report by 1 March 2022. The report will set out the detail of the programme activity including the number of children it aims to reach during 2022/23. The balance of 20% will be settled in April 2023 subject to the submission of a satisfactory report to the DfE by 15 February 2023, setting out the actual number of children who accessed the programmes. There is a small risk that funds would be withheld if the programme is not delivered. However, this risk is mitigated because Coventry's delivery plans are based on the scheme guidance and robust risk management arrangements are in place (see section 6.2).

Coventry City Council must provide an annual report on the Coventry HAF programme to the DfE by 30 June 2023. The report will include information about performance including numbers of beneficiaries and analysis according to participation of primary-age children,

secondary-age children and children with special educational needs and disabilities as set out in the “Annual Report” section of the programme guidance.

5.2 Legal implications

5.2.1 The Council has no specific statutory duty to deliver holiday-based food and activity for families.

5.2.2 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 Grant Determination sets out the conditions upon which the grant has been made available and to which the local authority must comply.

5.2.3 Law and Governance support the recommendations outlined in this report and will support the process, ensuring the interest of the Council are protected.

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 the programme.

To ensure that participating children and young people are safeguarded, only holiday provision that is approved (for example, registered as a provider with Ofsted) will be commissioned. Many of the organisations have developed a strong track record of working positively with children, families and schools across the City building a positive reputation based on trust. Checks will be in place to ensure that staff have appropriate qualifications, and that employment and safe recruitment checks are in place e.g. DBS.

The HAF programme is not a replacement for the previous arrangements in place for pupils for the provision of Free School Meals over 2021/22 year. The grant monies awarded is not sufficient to fully support all eligible children and young people in the city with the provision of food throughout the holidays. In order to manage this expectation, the scope of the HAF programme will be clearly communicated to parents and carers.

The HAF Steering Group has established a risk and issue management approach. If a risk exceeds the threshold of tolerance and threatens the delivery of the project or signals a significant change of approach is required, it will be escalated to the HAF Steering Group

for consideration and options for mitigation/response determined. Risks and issues of a lower impact will be mitigated and responded to within the day-to-day activity of the project team and will be recorded in the project risk log.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The programme is co-ordinated by a small team within Education and Skills (3 FTE).

6.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

As an intrinsic part of the programme, consideration is given to ensuring provision is accessible and engaging for all eligible children and young people (including those with a special educational need and disability, and older children). The programme has due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act in both the 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?

The Council will continue to work with a wide range of partner organisations in the delivery of this programme, ensuring partners are proportionately represented on the HAF steering group to oversee the implementation. In forming the HAF steering group, the Council has taken full account of the DfE recommendations on composition by including the following partners: local police and other uniform services; public health; school leaders; youth services; social services; charities and the voluntary sector. Membership of the steering groups is reviewed annually.

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This report is published on the council's website: www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings

Appendix 1 – Summary of Holiday Activities and Food 2021 delivery

Purpose

The primary purpose of this Cabinet report relates to acceptance of the HAF grant. This appendix provides a summary of 2021 delivery. Please view the Summer of Fun 2021 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5sk7bSC5ag>) for a broader understanding of the Coventry HAF programme.

Principles

The HAF multi-agency steering group agreed the following principles for the Coventry HAF programme, linking with the DfE objectives. These are:

- Positive, memorable and happy holiday experiences that demonstrate the value of every person
- Impacts that last beyond the holidays and experiences that reach parents and families through children and young people
- Building on, and enabling, trusted relationships and Coventry strengths
- Collaboration and partnership across a wide range of organisations and engaging with children, young people and families throughout
- Joined-up locality offer - particularly in areas of higher deprivation
- Tailored approaches for primary and secondary ages with a key focus on children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Joining-up with school summer and education recovery programmes
- Continuous learning and improvement, including learning across Coventry, West Midlands and nationally
- Coventry HAF as a part of a joined-up offer for Coventry lower-income families

Positives

Coventry has made a good start to delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food programme. With a short lead time, probably Coventry's most comprehensive and diverse range of holiday activities, experiences and clubs ever, have been available to lower-income families. Clubs, activities and experiences have been available across Coventry, with more of these focussed in areas of higher numbers of HAF-eligible children and young people.

In our survey of HAF Christmas delivery, of the 280 respondents, 93% said that they would recommend HAF activities to others, indicating a very high level of satisfaction. The Christmas HAF programme benefitted approximately 2,150 eligible children (plus an estimated 2,000 family members). The summer HAF programme benefitted approximately 2,000 eligible children with approximately 100,000 hours of delivery. At Easter, the focus was on food parcels (with a total of 16 breakfasts in each) and activity packs. These food parcels benefitted approximately 2,600 children and there was positive feedback from families on these. Coventry Food Bank (Feed the Hungry UK) co-ordinated these arrangements together with the Coventry Food network.

The 2021 HAF delivery has enabled children and young people to participate in a wide range of activities, with a sample of these being: music, DJ, crafts (print making, clay), video production, sports activities and games, cooking and food preparation, team games, day trips, story-time, food nutrition, gardening, ice-skating, sports matches, pantomime, outdoor adventure, nature-based arts and crafts, drama, team-building, public speaking, transport innovation engagement sessions, dance, smoothie bikes, yoga, photography, circus skills and many more activities.

At Christmas, 85% of clubs provided hot food at every session (15% cold food at these other sessions) and 100% provided hot food at most sessions. Children have benefitted from nutritional food as part of the activities and experiences, with approximately 25,000 meals in the summer. This is in addition to food parcels for families at Easter and 950 cook-at-home packs (including

ingredients and recipes). Feedback ratings of 3.9/5 for contents of the pack and 3.8/5 for recipes in the pack.

The above has been delivered through a strong partnership approach in line with our One Coventry values and approach. A total of 58 organisations have been funded to deliver HAF including: community and faith organisations, schools, youth organisations, creative organisations, sports and leisure organisations and universities. Over 50 other organisations, businesses and services have also been involved in the HAF programme.

The programme has received positive comments from DfE and Childcare Works (who provide support to the national HAF programme) representatives.

Challenges

A key challenge in 2021 was the context of Covid-19 during 2021. For example, Easter HAF delivery needed to be through food parcels and activity packs, rather than face-to-face delivery of activities, experiences and clubs. Leading up to the school summer holidays, Covid-19 rates increased, and many children were isolating through being close-contacts. Just prior to the school Christmas holidays, Omicron rates started to accelerate rapidly. For example, at Christmas, many families booked, but then did not attend. Irrespective of Covid-19, this a factor when activities are available for free.

Key priorities and developments for 2022 and beyond

Key priorities for 2022 and beyond include the following:

- **Developing a consistent HAF offer for children and families.** A key focus on 2021 (and for Easter 2022) delivery has been on testing out different activities, experiences and providers. Based on factors including take-up rates, costs and quality a consistent programme can start to be developed, whilst recognising opportunities for different types of activities according to different school holidays and seasons.
- **Developing stronger partnerships between schools and providers.** Schools have promoted HAF, with several projects taking place on school sites. However, challenges with Covid-19 and capacity have meant that schools have needed to focus on term-time delivery. Good steps are being taken to increase collaboration with models of activities being delivered jointly by school staff and external providers.
- **Increasing participation and reach of HAF.** As noted earlier, Covid-19 meant that take-up was less than it would have been in a non-Covid-19 context. The programme was also new, and it was initially unclear whether funding would be continued beyond 2021/22. With this national commitment to funding for the next three years and easing of Covid-19 challenges it is anticipated that participation will increase significantly throughout 2022 including the proportion, and numbers, of secondary-age children.
- **Developing HAF as a broader offer to lower-income families.** This priority includes ensuring that HAF is not seen as a stand-alone programme, but as children are registered for Free School Meals, they are introduced to the HAF offer as well.