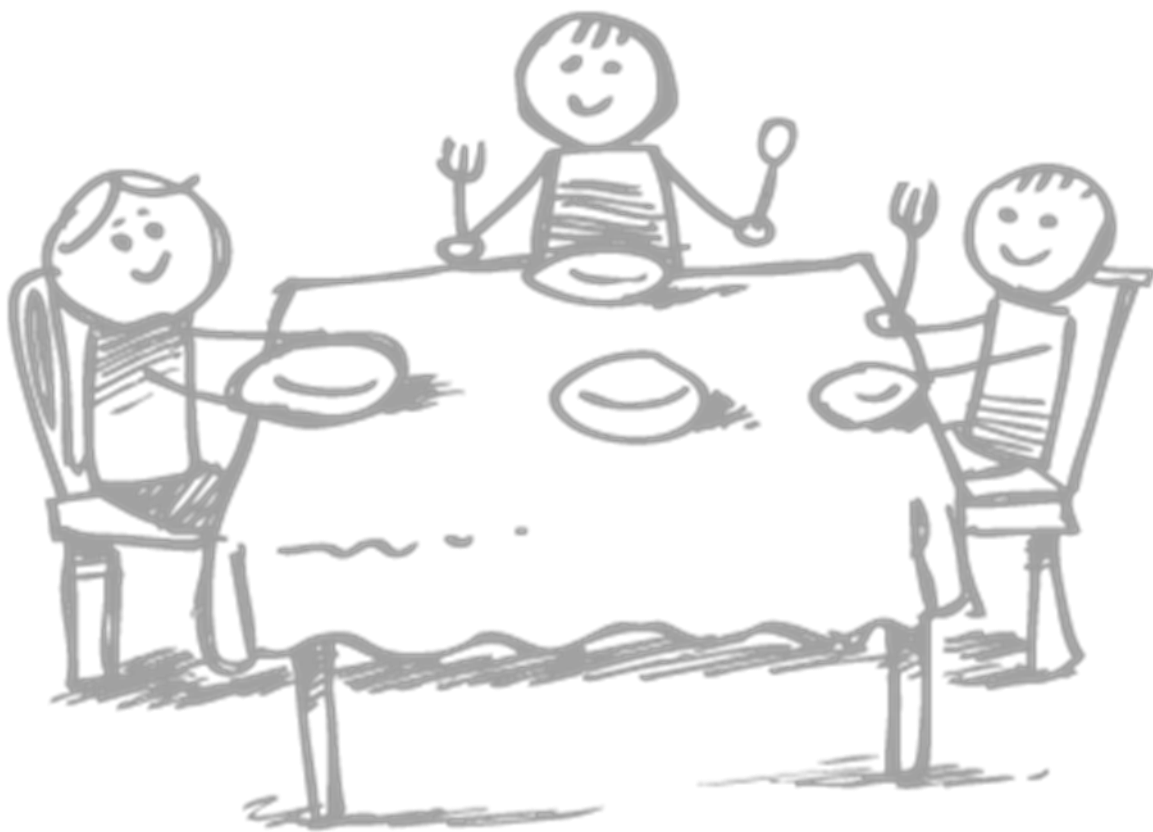




**Northumbria
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NEWCASTLE



An Evaluation of Northumberland County Council's Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) 2023



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Executive Summary

The Healthy Living Lab was commissioned by Leading Link to evaluate Northumberland Council's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme in 2022 and 2023, through the administration of a large-scale parent survey and a large-scale holiday club leader survey. This report mainly comprises the data from the 2023 HAF evaluation. However, where possible, the research team have also presented comparisons between data outcomes from the 2022 HAF evaluation and the 2023 HAF evaluation for both a) a parent/caregiver's survey and b) a HAF club leader survey.

The 2022 HAF evaluation, conducted by the Healthy Living Lab, revealed: 42 clubs from across Northumberland provided food and activities for 2,503 children, served 24,355 meals, and totalled 106,351 hours of provision. The Family and Teenage offer, supported by 14 partner organisations, engaged with 2,160 children and young people and a further 1,374 adults, and totalled 9,953 hours of activities.

Desktop analysis of management information showed a continued high demand and uptake of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme in 2023, with 178 clubs from across Northumberland providing food and activities for 5264 children, serving 27130 meals, and totalling 108520 hours of provision. The Family and Teenage offer, supported by 31 partner organisations, engaged with 2170 children and young people and a further 2101 adults, and totalled 17152 hours of activities.

Clubs were run by a mixture of community organisations, leisure centres, youth services, children's services, schools, with a 16 % increase in the number of schools engaging with the programme, and a 25 % increase in SEND provision between 2022 and 2023. Clubs delivered a wide range of physical activities and enrichment activities, food, trips, and summer camps for children and young people. The increase in SEND provision is important in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion but has cost and resource implications in terms of delivery at the local level.

As in 2022, parents struggled to find affordable childcare across the summer school holiday.

However, unlike HAF 2022 there was no significant correlation between time a child spent at HAF and parent's perceptions concerning the difficulty in finding affordable childcare. In 2023, compared to 2022, there was a significant increase in parental wellbeing suggesting that HAF 2023 is starting to drive notable change in terms of supporting parental wellbeing over the summer school holiday.

Overall, the level of household food insecurity has increased from 31% in 2022 to 39% in 2023. This mirrors similar findings reported by the Healthy Living Lab from Birmingham Council and suggests that whilst HAF acts as an important safety net for children's dietary intake, the current HAF model likely only has a small affect on household food insecurity. Unlike HAF 2022, HAF 2023 is a good vehicle to increase children's engagement in physical activity. Notably, physical activity increased across all groups, suggesting that additional opportunities for children to engage in physical activity

have been incorporated into HAF 2023. This is important as research studies have shown that improved dietary intake, alongside increased physical activity are effective methods for reducing childhood obesity. The parent survey showed an increase in the percentage of parents who thought HAF improved their child's school readiness and a significant increase in the percentage of parents who thought that HAF improved their child's wellbeing. In terms of the food served at HAF clubs, there was a notable increase in satisfaction between 2022 and 2023, with 75% of parents judging the food served as nutritious; and 70% of parents reporting that their child enjoyed the food served at HAF clubs.

The HAF club leader survey showed that 86% of HAF clubs were prepared to deliver the HAF programme. Clubs targeted a wide range of children and young people with a notable increase in the number of clubs targeting looked after children. Incorporating physical activity sessions was most prevalent in primary school aged children (delivering 10 sessions or more). There were also changes in how clubs sourced food with a move away for a central catering service provided by Leading Link to clubs sourcing food from local supermarkets and/or arranging their own external caterers. As in 2022, food waste was minimal.

In conclusion, as was the case in 2022, the HAF summer programme in Northumberland was well-received and highly valued by parents and local organisations involved in HAF delivery, with overall parent satisfaction remaining high.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the North East Child Poverty Trust and Northumberland County Council for funding this research, and Leading Link for providing management information and for facilitating the distribution of the surveys. We would also like to thank all the parents and holiday club leaders who completed the surveys.

1. Chapter 1: HAF in Northumberland

For a review of the existing HAF literature, the findings, and recommendations of the Northumberland HAF 2022 Evaluation, please see Appendix 1. To avoid duplication and repetition this information will not be re-presented in this research report. However, a notable omission in the published HAF literature is that very few councils from across England have conducted robust impact evaluations of HAF, and hardly any councils have conducted large scale impact evaluations that have analysed quantitative data, collected from parents and HAF club leader's surveys across successive years of HAF delivery. Collecting this evidence, across successive years, will inform Northumberland County Council, and other organisations, about the impact that HAF is having on children, young people, and parents/carers, and HAF club leaders, across time. Importantly, by using the same surveys as in 2022, the research team were able to a) evaluate the HAF 2023 programme and b) to conduct cross-sectional analyses, across time to identify potential changes regarding the implementation, delivery, uptake, reach and impact of HAF in Northumberland.

1.1. Impact Evaluation

To evaluate the impact of HAF in Northumberland for 2023, the research team used the same parental and HAF club leader survey as used in the Northumberland HAF evaluation in 2022 (for further information on the development of this survey, please see the Northumberland HAF Evaluation report of 2022, Appendix 1). The parent survey was distributed to all parents/caregivers with children attending HAF and HAF Plus in Northumberland in 2023. The HAF club leader survey was distributed to all organisations delivering HAF for Northumberland County Council in 2023.

1.1.1. Overall approach, Aims, Objectives and Research Questions.

Our approach was shaped by the Healthy Living Lab's extensive experience in this area. The Healthy Living Lab has already successfully used all these measures in peer-reviewed published papers on this topic and in the 2022 Northumberland County Council's HAF evaluation. Hence, we felt confident that such an approach would maximise responses over the short fieldwork period and allow us to a) evaluate the HAF programme for 2023 and b) to compare the data for 2023 to the data collected in 2022.

1.1.2. Aims and Objectives:

The overarching aim of this research study is to explore the impact of HAF in Northumberland in 2023. The first objective of this study is to analyse quantitative data from the 2023 parental survey and data from the 2023 HAF club leader survey regarding the impact of HAF on a number of outcomes. The second objective of this study is to compare the data, where appropriate, across HAF delivered in 2022 and 2023.

1.2. Research Questions:

The following research questions were addressed:

- What was the impact of HAF attendance on children's and young people's health and wellbeing?
- What was the impact of HAF on parent's/caregiver's health and wellbeing?
- What are the HAF club leaders' views on the perceived effectiveness of HAF?
- Are there any significant differences between 2022 and 2023 regarding the above questions?

Chapter 2. Methods

The impact evaluation consisted of a parental survey and a HAF club leader survey. Both surveys opened in September 2023 and closed at the end of October 2023. All participants were recruited online. The HAF Northumberland sampling frame consisted of all parents/caregivers whose child(ren) attended a HAF funded holiday club in 2023, in Northumberland and who shared their email address /contact details with Leading Link. An email was sent to all parents/carers in the sampling frame asking them to participate in the research. That email contained a link to the survey. A total of **N=385 parents/carers** whose child/children attended HAF/HAF Plus in Northumberland agreed to participate in the research and completed the survey. It is important to point out that, unlike the parent/carer survey administered in 2022, in 2023 all HAF parents/carers who filled out and returned the survey answered all survey questions. Parents and carers who completed the HAF survey were given a chance to win a one of six £50 Love2Shop vouchers as a token of appreciation for their time. Once the surveys had closed, the data were downloaded, coded, cleaned, and merged into a single file for reporting purposes.

2.1. Parent/caregiver's Survey

The parent survey collected data on the following outcomes:

- Household food security was measured using the US Department of Agriculture "FS Scale" for a 30-day reference period (USDA Economic Research Services, 2020), recently validated by the UK Department of Work and Pensions for use in the Family Resources Survey (Department for Work and Pensions, 2021).
- Parental Stress was measured using a Global Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983)
- Childcare
- Children's Physical Activity
- Safety
- Anti-social behaviour
- Social Isolation

- Activities
- School Readiness
- Confidence
- Aspirations
- Registration/booking
- Food Provision

2.2. HAF club Leader survey

An online HAF survey link was sent to all HAF club leaders participating in HAF in Northumberland.

The survey opened at the beginning of September 2023 and closes at the end of October 2023. The survey asked questions on:

- How well prepared were you to deliver HAF in Northumberland?
- How subscribed was your holiday club?
- Who did your club target?
- How do parent's/carers register?
- Where did you source your food?
- Quality of food provision Food waste
- Number of cooking sessions
- Number of physical activity sessions

2.3 Ethics

Full ethical approval for this research programme was obtained from the Faculty of Health and Life Science at Northumbria University (Number 33684). The Healthy Living Lab worked in partnership with Leading Link to ensure that all ethical protocols were followed, and all data protocols complied with GDPR. A Participant Involvement and Engagement group supported the research through all stages of the programme from conception to dissemination of findings. All organisations participating in HAF Northumberland were fully aware of their role in the evaluation.

3.1. Parent/caregiver Survey

The data from the parent survey are presented according to group; a) parent/caregiver survey data collected in 2022 and b) parent/caregiver survey data collected in 2023. As clearly shown in Figure 1, there is a notable decrease in the percentage of minority ethnic groups parents who completed the survey in 2023 compared to 2022. We recommend that Leading Northumberland County Council refer to their management data to explore whether this reflects any notable demographic changes in registration and uptake of the HAF programme in Northumberland or whether it is simply that fewer ethnic minorities completed the HAF parent/caregiver survey in 2023 compared to 2022.

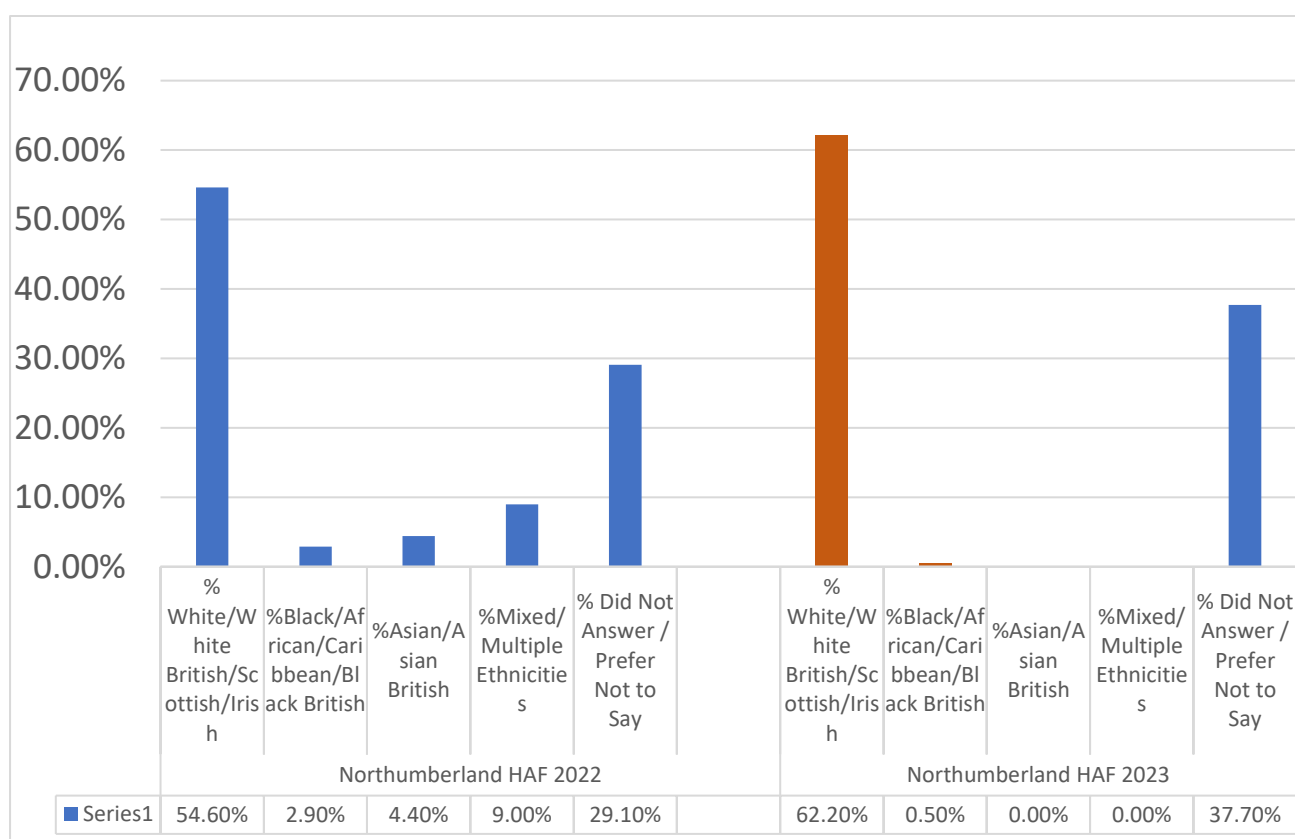


Figure 1. Comparison of Racial/Ethnic Status of Parents/Caregiver's in 2022 & 2023

The research team also explored the percentage of parents, who completed the survey, whose children were eligible for Free School Meals (see Figure 2). As shown in Figure 2, fewer parents whose children were eligible and registered for Free School Meals completed the survey in 2023 compared to 2022. Whether these demographic differences are an artefact of sampling/respondents to the survey or whether there is an actual decrease in the number of FSM registered children and young people attending HAF falls outside of the remit of this evaluation but warrant further exploration by Leading Link and Northumberland County Council. Of course, it may reflect a strategic

approach in terms of opening the HAF programme to a wider group of children and young people beyond those registered for Free School Meals.

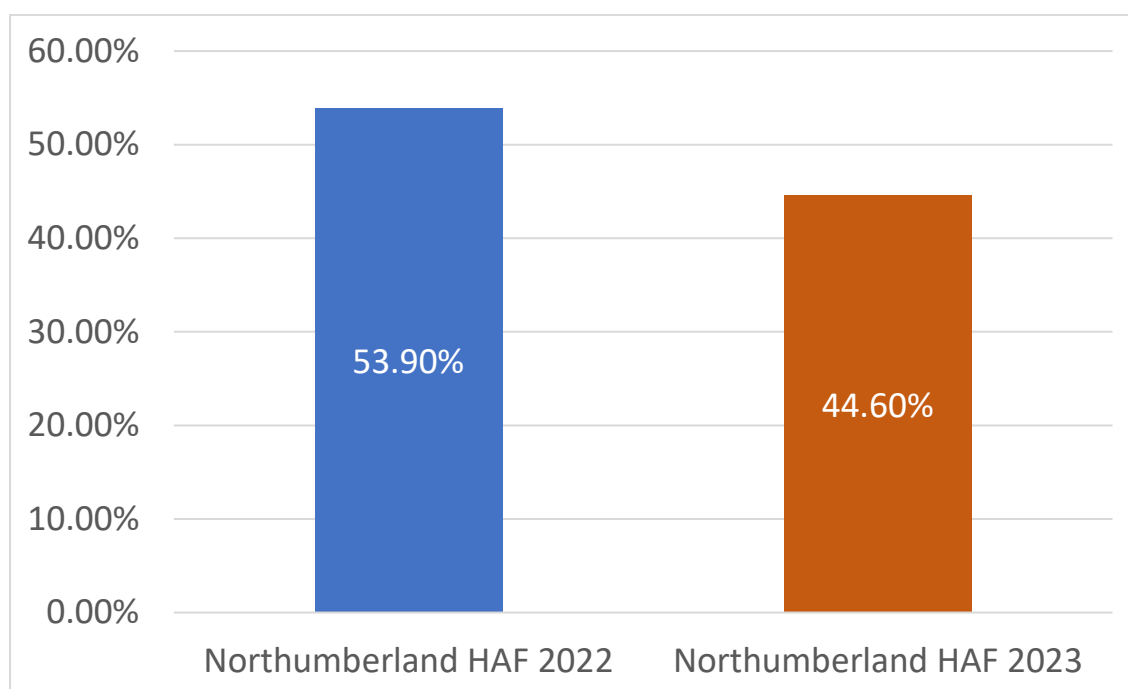


Figure 2. Percentage of Parents of HAF Attendees Eligible for Free School Meals in 2022 & 2023

Finally, as shown in Figure 3, a greater percentage of parents were not in full time employment in 2023 compared to 2022. The differences in the demographic composition of the parent/caregiver samples between 2022 and 2023 suggests that the findings reported in this report need to be treated with a degree of caution. However, as in many cross-sectional research studies, the demographics of the population participating in HAF vary from year to year.

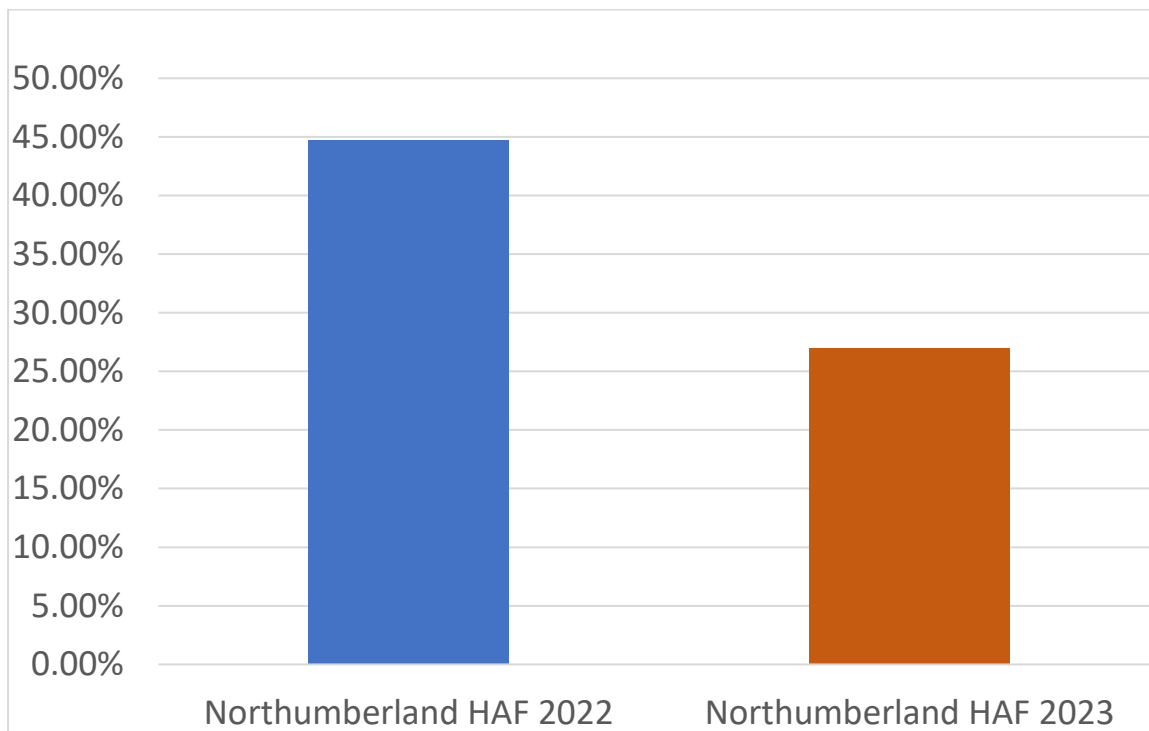


Figure 3. Percentage of Parents in Employment in 2022 & 2023

In turning to explore the impact of HAF on other outcome measures, there are clear indications that the level of need for families has increased between 2022 and 2023.

3.1. Childcare

The parent/carer survey asked parents about how easy it was on a scale of 0 (not at all difficult) to 10 (extremely difficult) to find affordable childcare during the summer holiday 2023 and compared these findings to data collected in 2022. As shown in Figure 4, parents across all groups and years struggled to find affordable childcare, with a slight increase in the difficulty of finding childcare, across all groups, in 2023 compared to 2022. Unlike the findings reported in the HAF 2022 evaluation that showed that the more time children spend at HAF during the summer the less likely parents/caregivers are to say that finding affordable childcare is difficult ($r=0.12$, $p < 0.05$), there was no significant correlation between time spent in HAF and the difficulty in finding affordable childcare in 2023. However, similar to 2022 where 32.5% of parents find it very hard to find affordable childcare, analysis showed that in 2023, 37% of parents find it very hard to find affordable childcare during the school holidays.

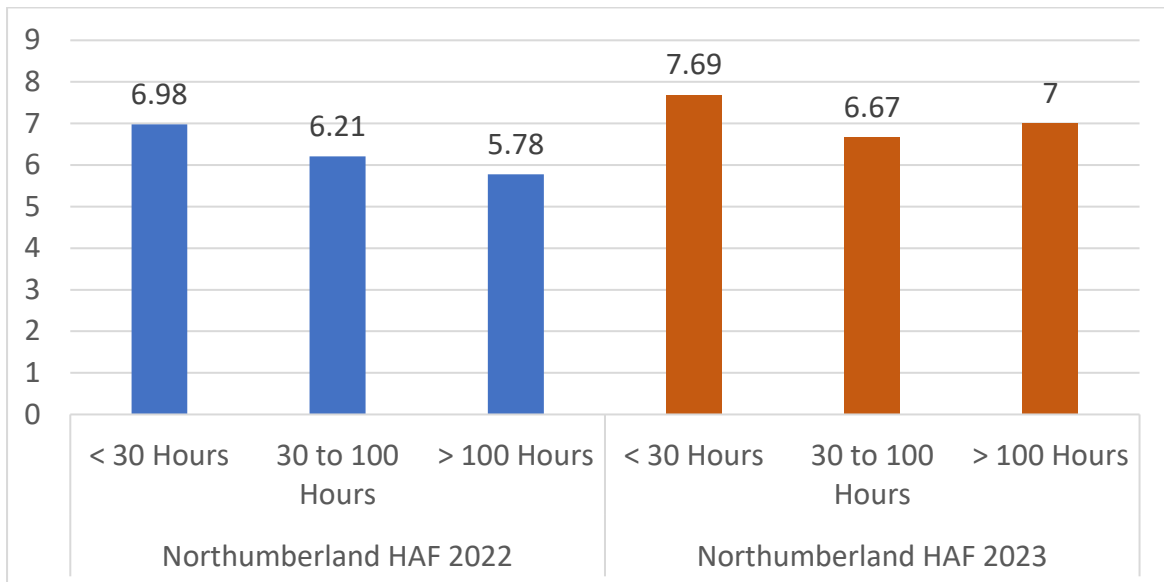


Figure 4: Difficulty in Finding Affordable Childcare by Hours Spent in HAF in 2022 & 2023.

3.1.1 Parental Well-being

Parental wellbeing (stress) was measured using a Global Measure of Perceived Stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein (1983), with a score of 0 being low well-being and a score of 40 being high well-being. As shown in Figure 5, there was a notable increase in wellbeing scores (reduced parental stress) between 2022 and 2023 for parents whose children attended HAF clubs for 30-100 hours across the summer school holidays ($t(795) = 6.4, p < 0.05$); whilst there were no differences across years for the other groups. An overall comparison across all groups in 2022 and 2023 showed that in 2022 nearly 20% of HAF parents/caregivers report they have a relatively high levels of well-being, with the average HAF parent/caregiver having a well-being score of 24.5. This increased slightly, but not significantly to 23% parents reporting high levels of well-being, with an average well-being score of 25.7.

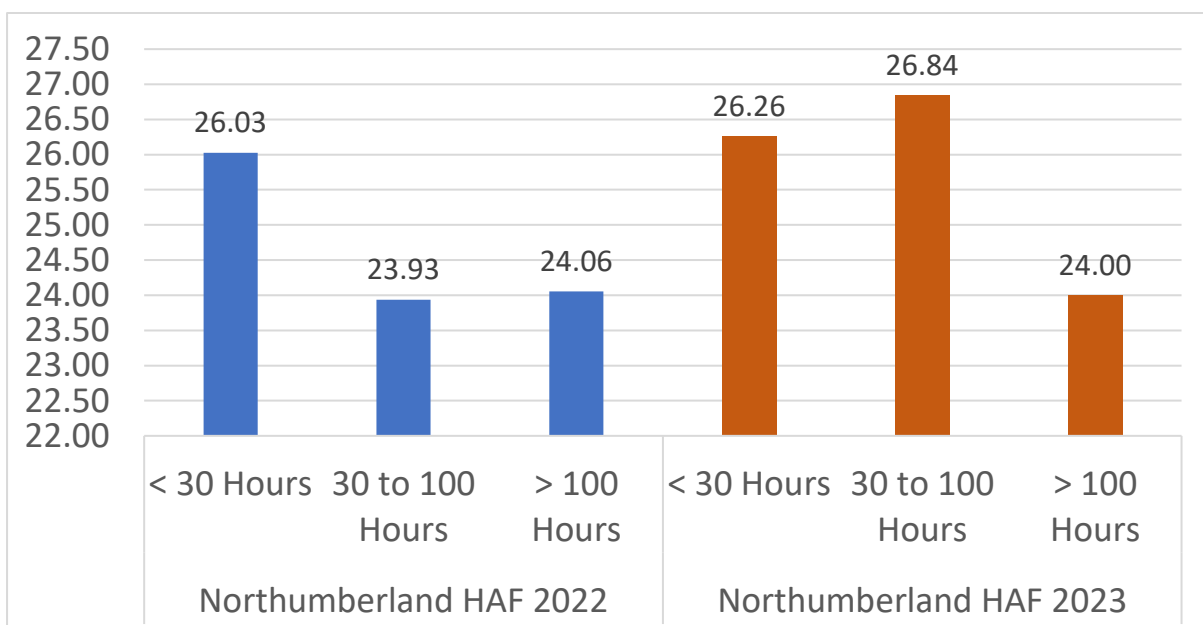


Figure 5. Mean Perceived Parental Wellbeing Scores (0= low stress) by Hours Spent at HAF in 2022 & 2023.

3.1.3 Food Insecurity

Given that a key aim of HAF is the provision of at least one healthy meal to children during the school holiday, accompanied by the recent data demonstrating increasing levels of food insecurity in the UK, the research team measured household food security using the Six-item US Household Food Security Survey Module. The recent cost of living and the rapid increase in food prices that have contributed to a nationwide increase in the number of households experiencing food insecurity. Hence, we analysed the level of household food insecurity of parents, across 2022 and 2023 (figure 6) and free school meal eligibility and by hours spent in HAF in 2022 and 2023 (figure 7).

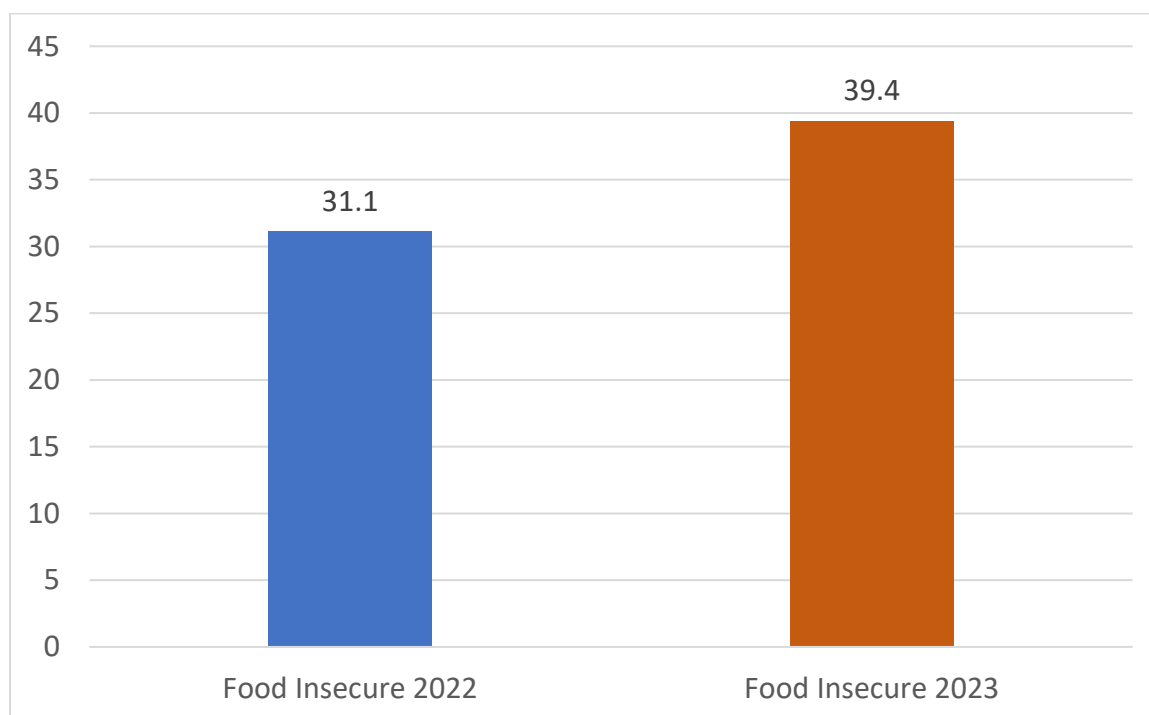


Figure 6. Percentage of HAF Households that are Food Insecure in 2022 & 2023.

The data presented in figure 6 clearly show a significant increase in household food insecurity ($t(795) = 8.9, p < 0.05$) between 2023 and 2022. In terms of an increase in household food insecurity, the data shows that a large percentage of HAF attendees, approximately 40%, come from food insecure households. This finding of an increase in household food insecurity across years is mirrored in figure 7 that shows that household food insecurity is most pronounced in families accessing HAF for more than 100 hours; especially in 2023. So, whilst the data regarding the parents whose children are registered for Free School Meals has decreased between 2022 and 2023 for the group accessing over 100 hours of HAF; the level of household food insecurity data clearly shows that HAF is attracting families in need. This may reflect a national growing trend for a growing

number of families, not eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), to experience household food insecurity, or a strategic decision to deliver HAF to more families than those in receipt of FSM.

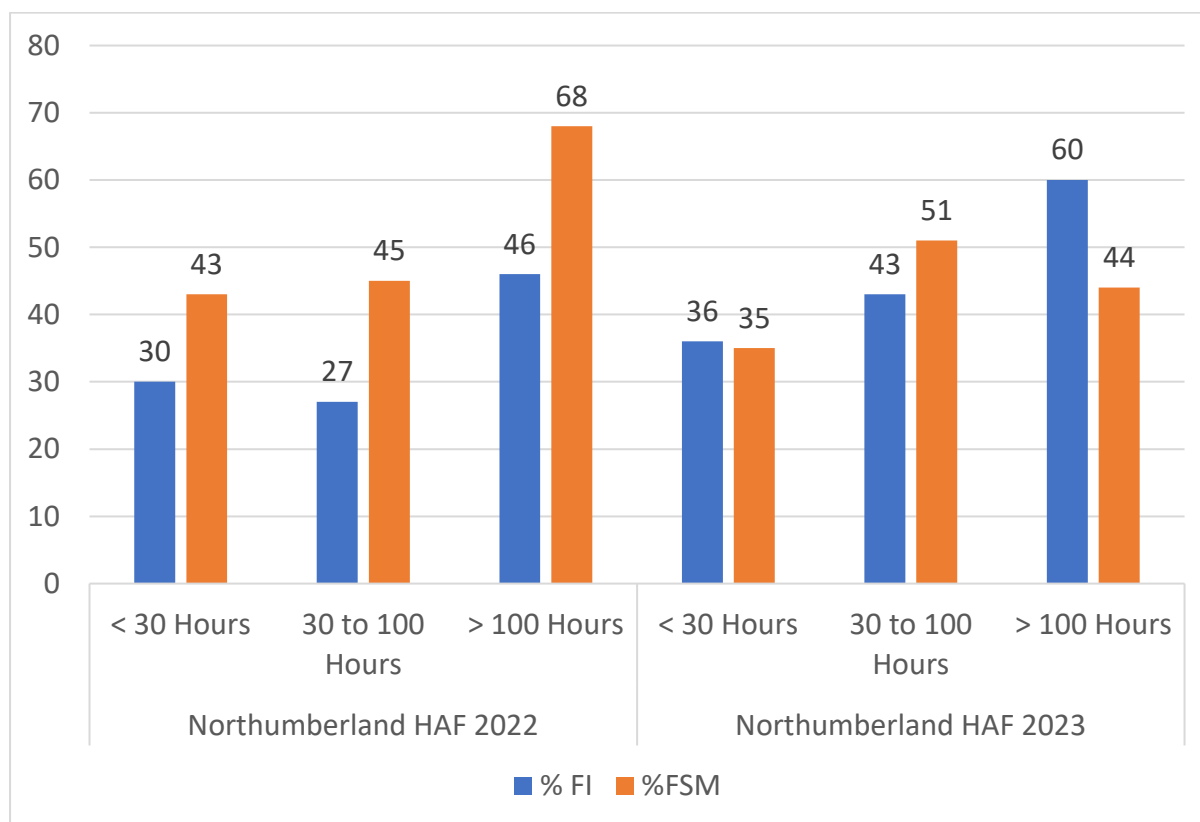


Figure 7. Percentage of Food Insecure and in Receipt of FSM by Hours Spent at HAF in 2022 / 2023

3.1.4 Physical Activity

The World Health Organisation (2020) defines physical activity as any bodily movement that requires energy expenditure including walking, running, and playing sports. The Chief Medical Officers (2019) recommend participating in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity every day. This can improve muscular and cardiorespiratory fitness and improve bone and functional health (World Health Organisation, 2020). Whereas, inactive behaviours, also referred to as sedentary behaviours, are defined by the Chief Medical Officers (2019) as undertaking little movement or activity and using little energy above what is used at rest. Given the range in opening times of clubs the researchers used the CMO recommendation of 60 minutes participation in MVPA per day for a minimum of 4 days per week, with a full explanation of MVPA provided to parents.

As shown in figure 8, there was a significant increase in children’s engagement in physical activity for the 30-100 hours group ($t(795) = 9.2, P < 0.05$) and unlike in 2022 where there was a negative correlation between the time spent in HAF and the number of hours children engaged in MVPA, in 2023 there was no significant correlation between groups and time spent in HAF.

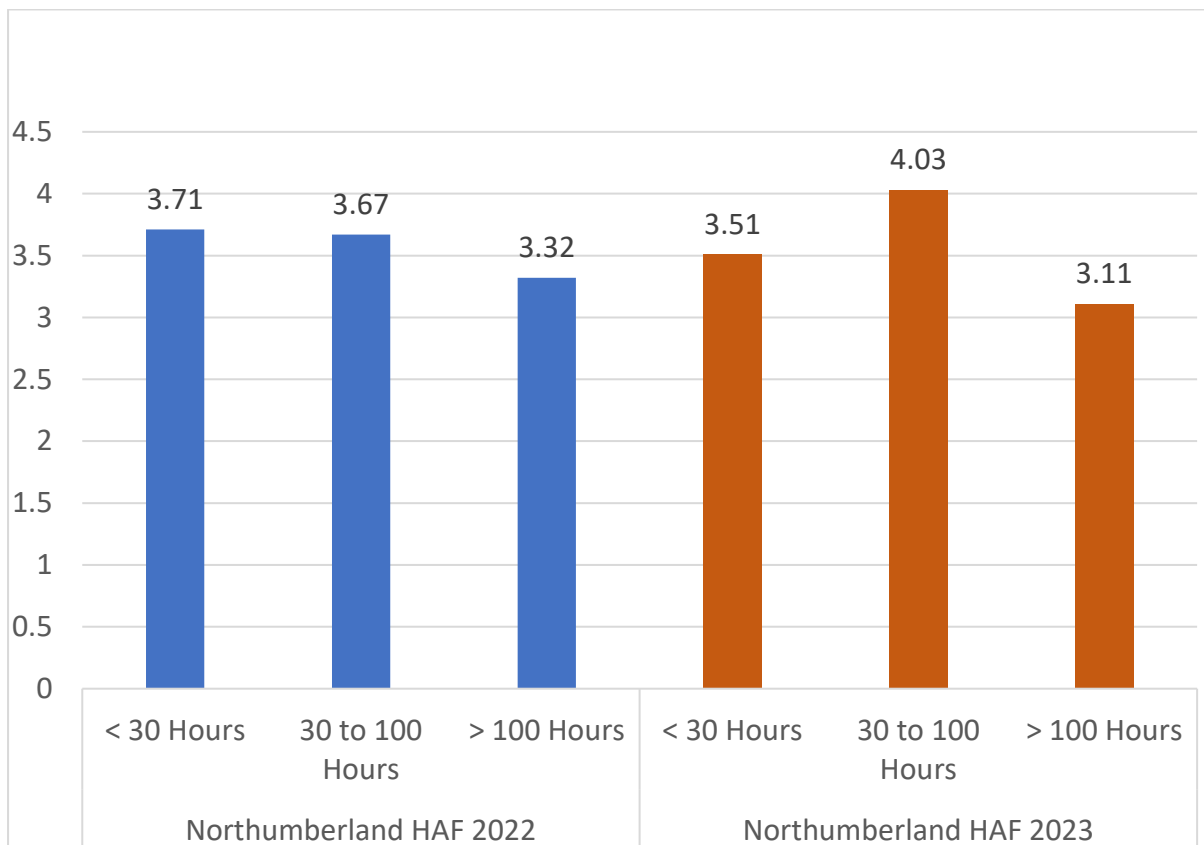


Figure 8. Mean Number of Weeks of Physical Activity During the 6 Week Summer Holiday by Hours Spent at HAF in 2022 & 2023.

3.1.5 Safety

In 2022, 89.2% of parents strongly agreed that their children were safe whilst attending HAF clubs. Analysis of the data showed no significant change in this percentage, with 91% of parents reporting that their children were safe whilst attending HAF clubs.

3.1.6 Anti-Social Behaviour

Some of the early research by the Healthy Living Lab showed that parents thought that holiday clubs kept children from participating in anti-social behaviour during the school holidays (Defeyter et al., 2015, 2018; Mann, 2019; Shinwell, 2019). These findings were replicated in the Northumberland HAF evaluation in 2022, with nearly 80% of parents strongly agreeing or agreeing that HAF kept their children from participating in anti-social behaviour. For 2023, these data remained constant with nearly 81% of parents strongly or agreeing that HAF kept their children from participating in anti-social behaviour.

3.1.7 Social Isolation, Aspirations, Confidence and School Readiness

We measured social isolation, confidence, and school readiness by considering those parents who either strongly agreed or agreed with these statements. We did not include parents who neither agreed nor disagreed with these statements. As clearly shown in figure 9, parental agreement for statements of whether HAF prevents social isolation, raises aspirations, boosts confidence has remained constant but with a significant increase between 2022 and 2023 in terms of improving school readiness ($t(795) = 5.6, p < 0.05$). We were unable to measure children's self-esteem due to a data reporting error from the online survey platform.



Figure 9. Percentage of Parents that Agree HAF Prevents Social Isolation, Raises Aspirations, Boosts Confidence and Improves School Readiness in 2022 & 2023

3.1.8 Children's Wellbeing

In addition to the above factors, the research team explored parents' perceptions about the social and psychological benefits for children afforded by attending HAF. The findings showed a significant increase in the percentage of parents (from 71% in 2022 to 95% in 2023) who strongly agreed/agreed that HAF attendance improved their child's mental wellbeing. Likewise, the majority of parents (a rise from 89% in 2022 to 96% in 2023) reported that HAF provided opportunities for children and young people to engage in enriching activities that supported their general wellbeing.

3.1.9 Food Served at HAF

We collected parent's views on the food served at HAF club to compare to the findings in 2022 that showed that only 64% of parents thought the food was nutritious and only 59% of parents thought their children enjoyed the food served at HAF. In 2023, the findings are far more promising, with 75% of parents reporting that the food served at HAF was nutritious, 70% of parents reporting that their children enjoyed the food served at HAF, and 65% of parents reporting that their children had tried new foods whilst at HAF. There were no significant differences, between 2022 and 2023 for the other measures. As in 2023, parents report a lack of hands of cooking activities, and no significant change in the number of parents reporting that their child's knowledge and confidence in preparing foods increased.

	% Agree
Club served nutritious food	75
My child(ren) enjoyed club food	70
Child(ren) tried new foods at club	65
Child(ren) ate wider variety of foods at club	41
Club met food and dietary requirements	72
Opportunities at club for hands on food activities	36
Club improved child(ren) knowledge & confidence to prepare food	30

3.1.10 Overall Parent Satisfaction

We measured overall parental satisfaction in three different ways. Firstly, we measured how satisfied parents were with the HAF club their child attended. Secondly, we measured how satisfied parents were with the HAF co-ordinating team, and finally we measured the likelihood of parents registering their children for HAF in 2024. Similar to the findings reported in the 2022 HAF report, in 2023, 90% of parents were either extremely or satisfied with their children's HAF club. There was an increase in parents' satisfaction with the HAF Co-ordinator Team, from 93% to 97%; and a marked increase, from 82% in 2022 to 98% in 2023, in the number of parents highly likely or likely to send their children to HAF in 2024.

3.2. Summary of Parent Survey Findings

The data clearly show that from 2022 to 2023 clearly shows that household food insecurity increased. This aligns to a national trend and demonstrates that HAF continues to serve families in need. As in 2022, parents struggled to find affordable childcare across the summer school holidays. However, unlike in 2022, there was no significant correlation between time spent in HAF and the difficulty parents experienced in finding affordable childcare. Interestingly, there was a significant improvement in parental and child well-being, suggesting that HAF has improved its offer in terms of supporting parents, children, and young people. Also, unlike in 2002 the 2023 findings showed no significant correlation between the time spent at HAF and children's and young people's engagement in physical activity, suggesting that the recommendations regarding increasing the number and level of physical activity sessions have been implemented and are having a positive effect. There were no significant changes in terms of parents' perceptions regarding safety and anti-social behaviours, but across both years parents' perceptions were very positive and close to ceiling. Importantly, there was a significant improvement in parents' perceptions regarding school readiness. This is an important finding and suggests that HAF may support children in their return to school following the long school summer holiday. It also suggests that, in the future, HAF may be a good framework to address persistent absenteeism. Finally, there was a notable increase in parent's overall satisfaction with the HAF programme in Northumberland and an increase in the number of parents who stated that they would register their child for HAF in 2024.

Chapter 4: Holiday Club Leader Survey Findings

4.1 Preparedness of Holiday Clubs

Firstly, we asked how prepared club leaders (n =54) were for Summer 2023 delivery of HAF. The findings (see Table 2) showed that in 2023 approximately 86% of clubs were either very prepared or somewhat prepared to deliver summer provision; a 4% decrease on data reported in the 2022 evaluation.

Table 2: Club Preparedness (%) to Deliver HAF in 2002 and 2023

	2022	2023
Unprepared	4.76%	0%
Neither prepared/nor unprepared	4.76%	2.4%
Somewhat prepared	19.05%	9.5%
Very prepared	71.43%	76.7%

4.1.1 Target Population

Next, we explored the population that clubs targeted. In terms of the target population, the majority of clubs aimed to serve a wide range of children. Encouragingly, clubs aimed to target their provision to accommodate a wide range of children (see Figures 10 and 11). Figure 10 shows the data collected in HAF 2022 Evaluation report and figure 11 shows the data collected in 2023.

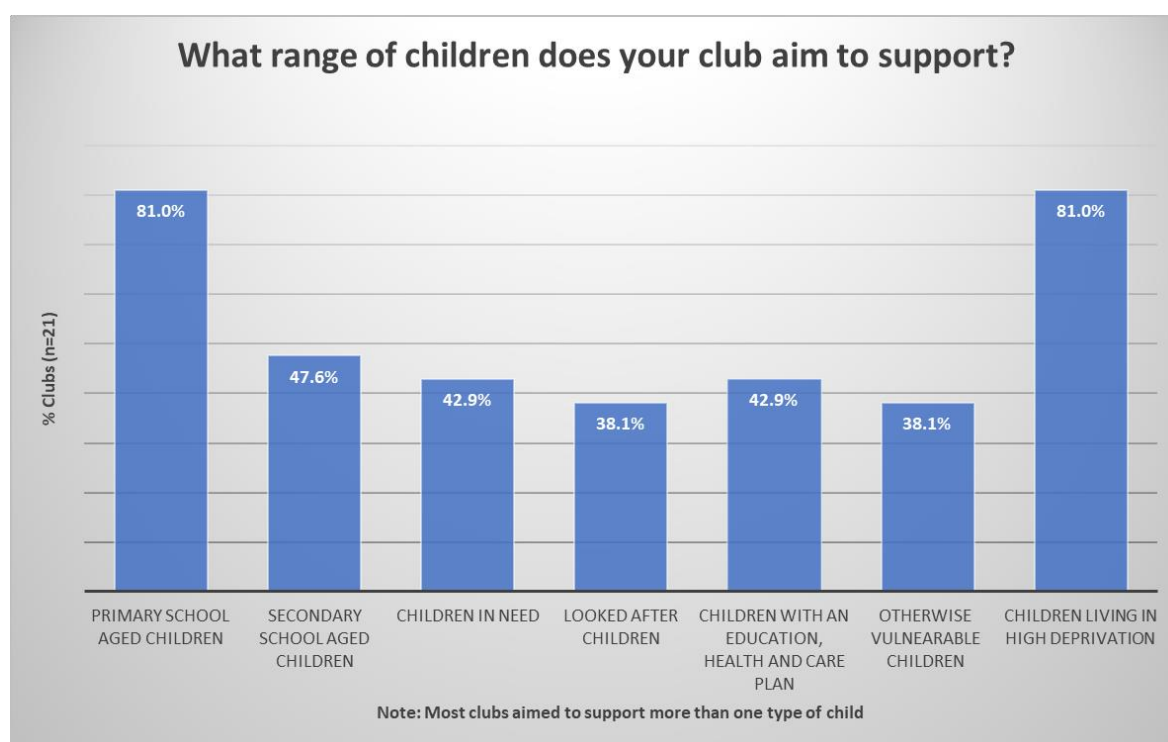


Figure 10. Range of children and young people targeted by holiday clubs in 2022.

Comparing across the figures 10 and 11, it is apparent that the HAF clubs involved in the HAF delivery in 2023 are targeting a different range of children and young people compared to 2022. This suggests that are parent survey data are not an artefact of sampling bur rather represent a change in

the range of children and young people HAF clubs targeted between 2022 and 2023. There was a significant increase, between 2022 and 2023, in terms of HAF clubs targeting looked after children, with a significant decrease in targeting primary school children and children living in high deprivation.

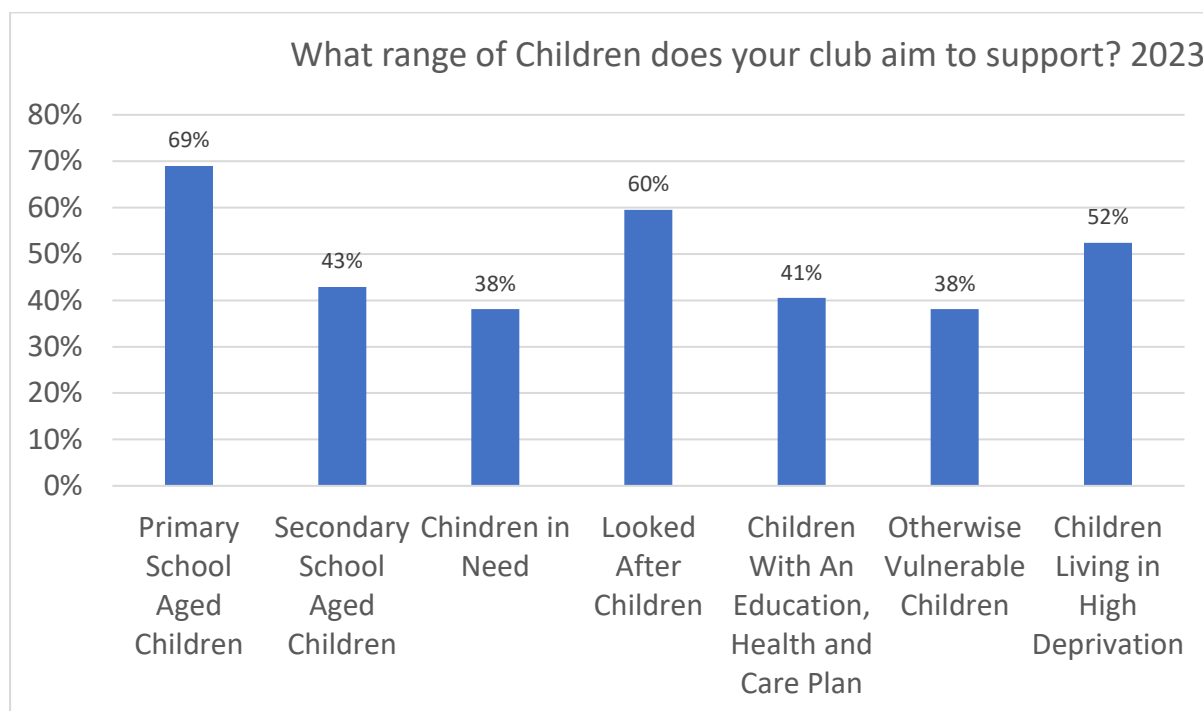


Figure 11. Range of children and young people targeted by holiday clubs in 2023.

4.1.2 Activities

Most clubs offered a range of physical activities and enrichment activities to children. However, as shown in Table 3, the majority of physical activity sessions are provided for primary school children and far fewer for secondary school aged children.

Table 3. Number of physical activity sessions offered to primary, and secondary school aged children and parents/carers in 2022 and in 2023.

	0 Sessions	1 to 10 sessions	More than 10 sessions
Primary School Children 2022	4.80%	85.7%	9.5%
Primary School Children 2023	3.2%	68%	28.8%
Secondary School Children 2022	12.5%	81.3%	6.3%
Secondary School Children 2023	8.0%	89%	3%
Parents/carers 2022	81.0%	18.2%	0%
Parents/carers 2023	85%	10%	5%

4.1.3 Nutritional Education Sessions

In comparing the data on clubs delivering 1-10 nutritional educational sessions in 2022 to 2023; the data showed a marked increase for delivering more than 10 sessions to primary school children but a slight decrease in delivery more than 10 sessions to secondary school children. The number of sessions delivered to parents/carers remained the same across years. In 2023, most clubs (89%) offered 1-10 or more sessions, to primary school children and 64% of clubs offered 1-10 or more sessions to secondary school children.

4.1.4. Food & Meals Served

The focus on sustainability and investment in the local economy etc. was explored by asking club leaders about where they sourced food (see Figure 12) and food waste.

There is a noticeable shift to sourcing food from local supermarkets (32% in 2022 versus 50% in 2023), a shift from central meal provision organised by Leading Link (19% in 2022 to 10% in 2023), and a greater use of food sources from a catering company organised by individual holiday clubs (24% in 2022 to 28% in 2023).

Table 4. Number of cooking/nutritional education sessions offered to primary school aged children, secondary school aged children and parents/carers (Summer 2022 and 2023)

	0 Sessions	1 to 10 Sessions	More Than 10 Sessions
Primary School Children 2022	16.7%	77.80%	5.60%
Primary School Children 2023	11.2%	74.3%	14.5%
Secondary School Children 2022	35.70%	57.10%	7.10%
Secondary School Children 2023	36.2%	60.0%	3.8%
Parents/carers 2022	100%	0%	0%
Parents/carers 2023	100%	0%	0%

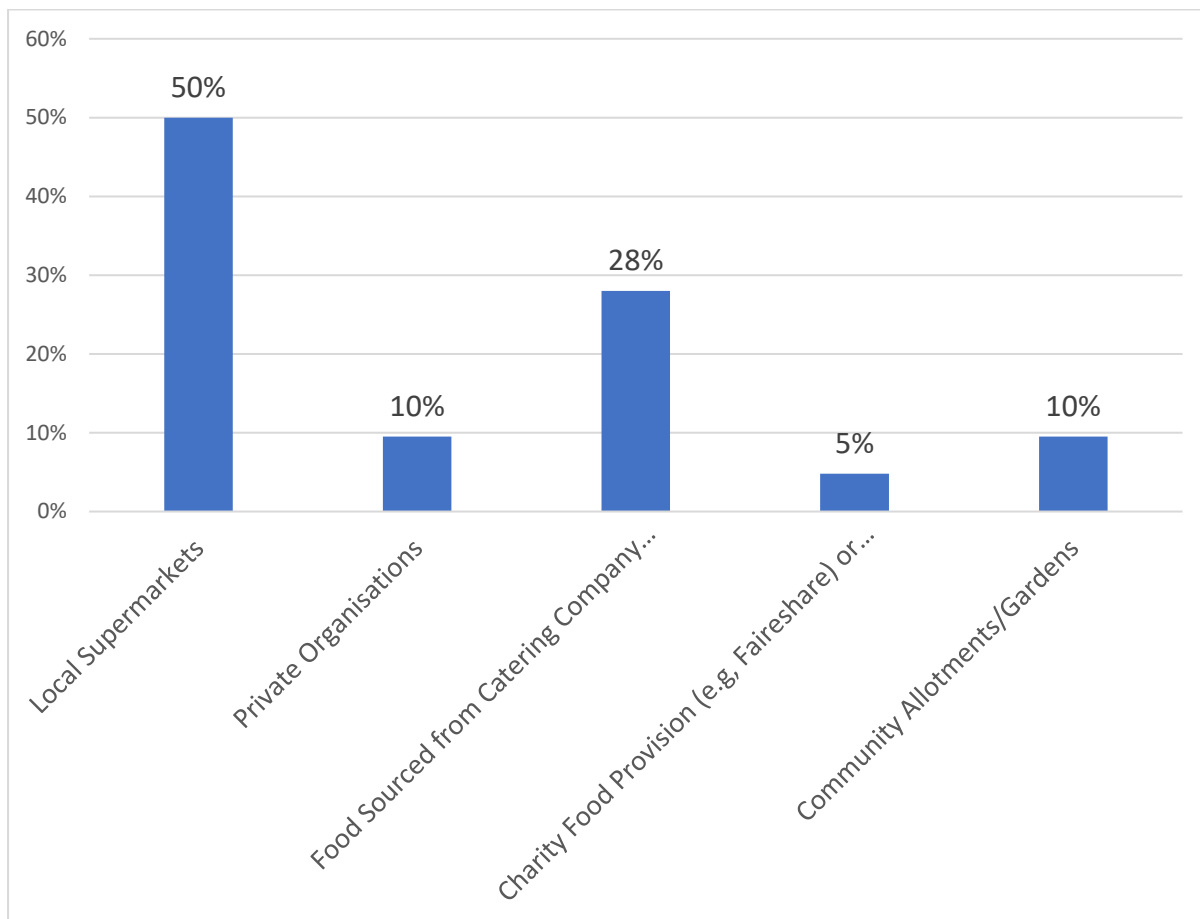


Figure 12. Where Clubs Sourced their Food in 2023

4.1. 5. Quality of Food Served

Holiday club leaders were asked to rate the quality of the meals served on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent). The overall median score was 8, with the majority of clubs scoring their food provision as good or excellent (Figure 13). These findings remain consistent with the findings reported in 2022, suggesting that the changes in sourcing food have not impacted on perceived food quality. There were no significant differences across food source and food quality. The change between 2022 and 2023 is likely due to less food being sourced from Leading Link and more food being sourced at the local club level.

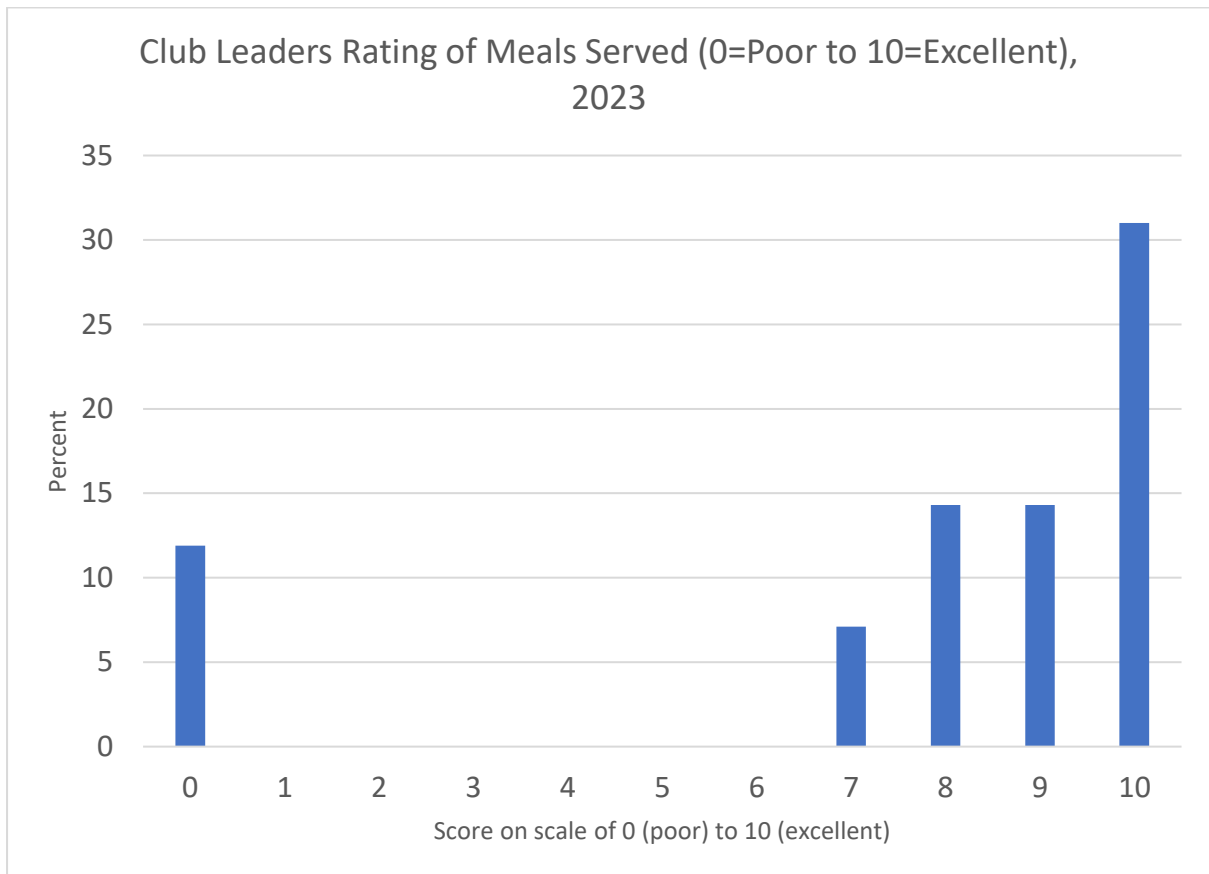


Figure 13. Quality of Meals Served

4.1.6. Food Waste

In our 2022 evaluation we highlighted how managing varying attendance patterns and ‘no shows’ can prove complex in terms of meal provision, with 24% of clubs reporting that they had no waste, and 76% of clubs reporting a little waste. This pattern of results was significantly different in 2023 with 29% of clubs reporting that they had no waste and 45% of clubs reporting that they had a little waste (see figure 14).

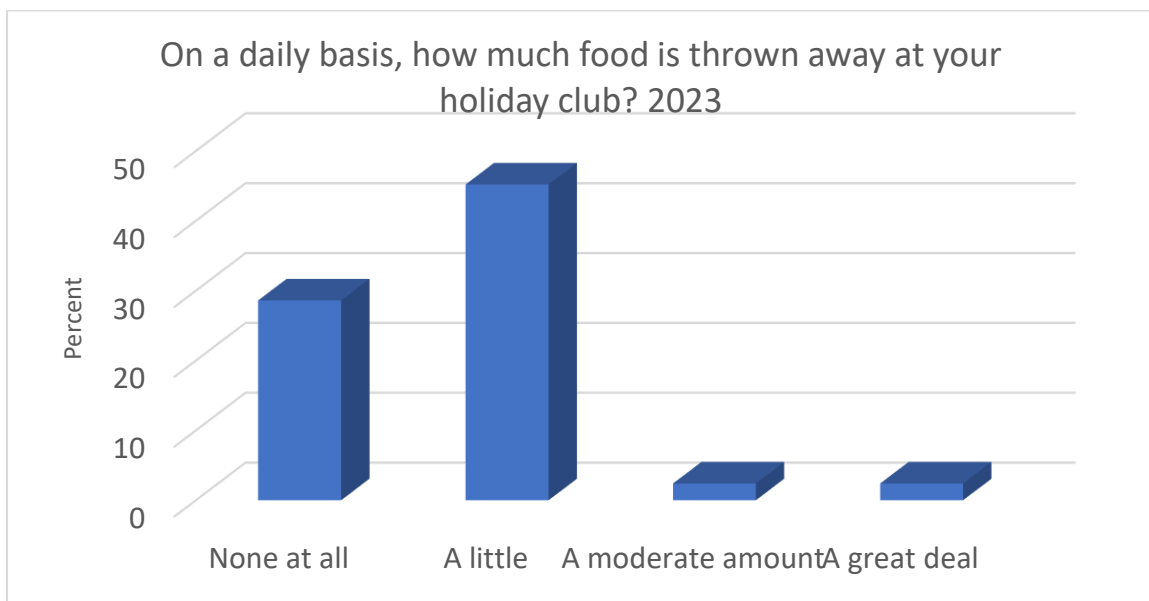
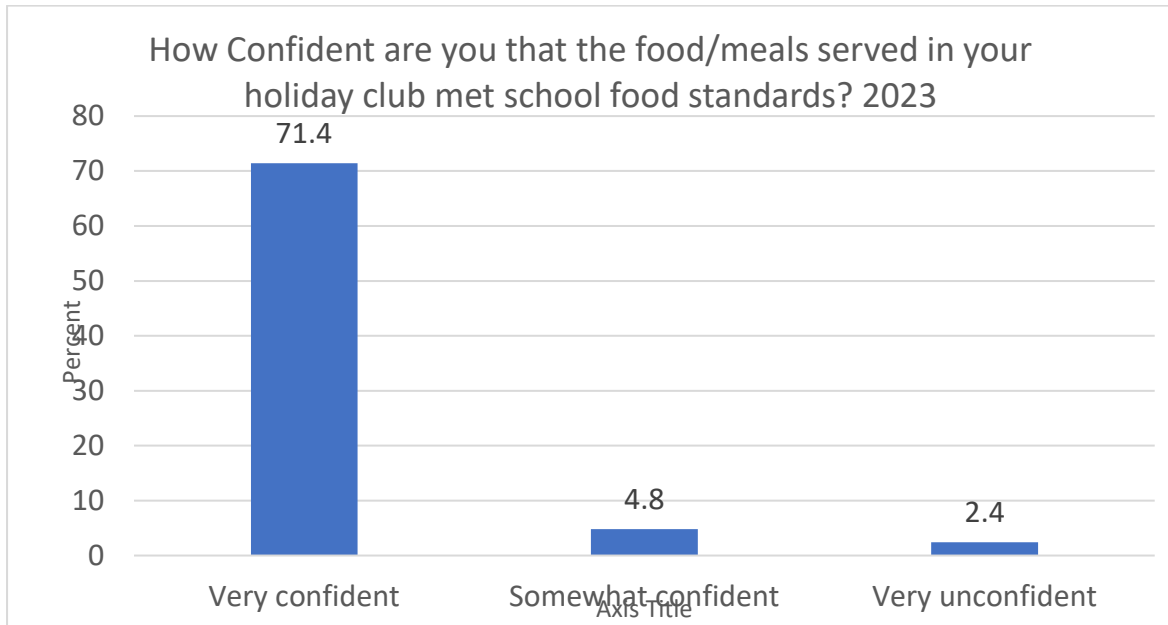


Figure 14. Holiday Club Leaders Perceptions About Food Waste

4.1.7. School Food Standards

In addition to asking holiday club leads about quality and waste, we surveyed their opinions on how confident they were that the meals served at HAF met school food standards. Over 70% of club leads were very confident that the food served adhered to school food standards (figure 15).



Chapter 5. Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Delivery

Overall, Leading Link were very effective in engaging local organisations to deliver HAF in Northumberland in 2023 to over 5263 children across 178 clubs across Northumberland. The teenage offer (HAF Plus) supported by 31 organisations, engaged 2179 young people and a further 2101 adults, delivering a total of 17152 hours of activities. Notably there was a 16% increase in the number of schools engaging with the programme and a 25% increase in SEND provision between 2022 and 2023. There was also a notable increase in the number of activity hours offered to young people and adults, demonstrating that across HAF Plus, this offer is starting to gain real traction.

The research team merged data files across years to enable a comparison between HAF Northumberland 2022 and HAF Northumberland 2023. Our data from the parent's survey clearly demonstrate, that for 2023, HAF Northumberland is reaching some of the most deprived families in Northumberland, as evidenced by the percentage of families experiencing food insecurity, and the percentage of parents not in full time employment, although the data on the percentage of children eligible for free school meals is not so convincing. As in 2022, parents struggled to find affordable childcare.

It is important to note that the high level of household food insecurity found in 2023 is worrying, although similar findings have been found by the Healthy Living Lab in Birmingham in 2023. Perhaps, more importantly, with the high percentage of households currently experiencing medium/high food insecurity it is not particularly surprising that one meal per child per day does not significantly affect food insecurity at the household level. If one meal per child, per day, alleviated household food insecurity then no household whose children received means tested free schools would be in household food insecurity. National data clearly show that this is not the case. We propose that when household food insecurity is at a low level, the addition of one meal per child, whether through free school meals or HAF provision, makes a significant difference in whether the household experiences food insecurity. However, when the level of food insecurity is medium/high, the addition of one meal per child is not enough to tip households from being food insecure to being food secure, whether the meal is provided at school or HAF. So, under conditions where the majority of households face medium/ high levels of food insecurity, HAF (like free school meals) supports families by ensuring that children receive a minimum of at least one nutritionally balanced meal per day during the school holiday period. In other words, HAF acts as a nutritional safety net for children and young people across the summer.

Unlike HAF delivery during Covid lockdowns where cold food provision was a viable option, the current cost of living crisis suggests that there may be a need to provide hot food options for children, particularly when households are experiencing so called, 'fuel poverty'. Furthermore, given the high level of household food insecurity in the Northumberland sample, clubs should try to

provide more than one meal per day, either a breakfast, tea, or healthy snacks, and/or take-home food. Furthermore, as only approximately 4% of households experiencing food insecurity visit a food bank, the Council should explore ways of supporting families attending HAF in the immediate term (i.e. food provision), but also longer-term strategies (e.g. an embedded member of council staff to provide support in terms of housing, benefit claims, debt advice). Such interventions should be carefully planned by working with communities to reduce stigma.

However, HAF Northumberland, is not solely a child feeding programme. Indeed, some of the biggest impacts on children and parents were found in terms of a) increased physical activity in children and young people, b) raising children's aspirations, c) boosting children's confidence, d) reducing anti-social behaviours, e) reducing social isolation, f) increasing school readiness and g) improving mental wellbeing in parents and children. Clearly, HAF Northumberland offers a wide range of activities that drive positive outcomes for both parents and children.

The Holiday clubs, run mainly through voluntary and community organisations were well prepared to deliver HAF Northumberland. Clubs targeted a wide range of children and young people with a notable uplift in targeting looked after children. Incorporating activity sessions was more prominent in primary-aged school children, and care needs to be taken to ensure that young people have the same opportunities. The move to sourcing food locally is good in terms of reducing carbon miles, and as in the 2022 evaluation food waste was minimal.

All the key recommendations in this report result from the research findings of the current evaluation and the evaluation undertaken in 2022, in combination with the HAF Plus Design Sprint workshops that involved young people from Northumberland. There may be additional learning by participating organisations and evaluations that are not captured in this evaluation. The key recommendations of this report for the future delivery of HAF in Northumberland include:

- Ensure that an appropriate process is in place to record reasons for non-attendance, in the case of 'no shows' and for parents/young people who decided to no longer participate in the programme. This feedback will improve the quality-of-service provision, identify possible barriers, and will help to identify patterns that may inform future policy and practice.
- Carefully consider the DfE's recommendations about booking systems and methods for HAF registration, and checks on FSM eligibility.
- Where additional funding is used to support HAF delivery, clearly state the amount of this funding in reporting structures and reports.
- Continue with the youth leadership model as a means of driving youth participation in HAF to promote, and underpin, a solid youth framework across the county.

- Continue with a community targeting approach to prevent stigma and drive positive outcomes at all levels by exploring how HAF could integrate with other county-wide programmes (e.g. parent cooking sessions, food advertising, school-based programmes etc.).
- During periods of high levels of food insecurity, consider providing children and young people with additional food to ensure their dietary requirements are met and consider how to further work in partnership with schools and other local agencies to support household income across Northumberland.

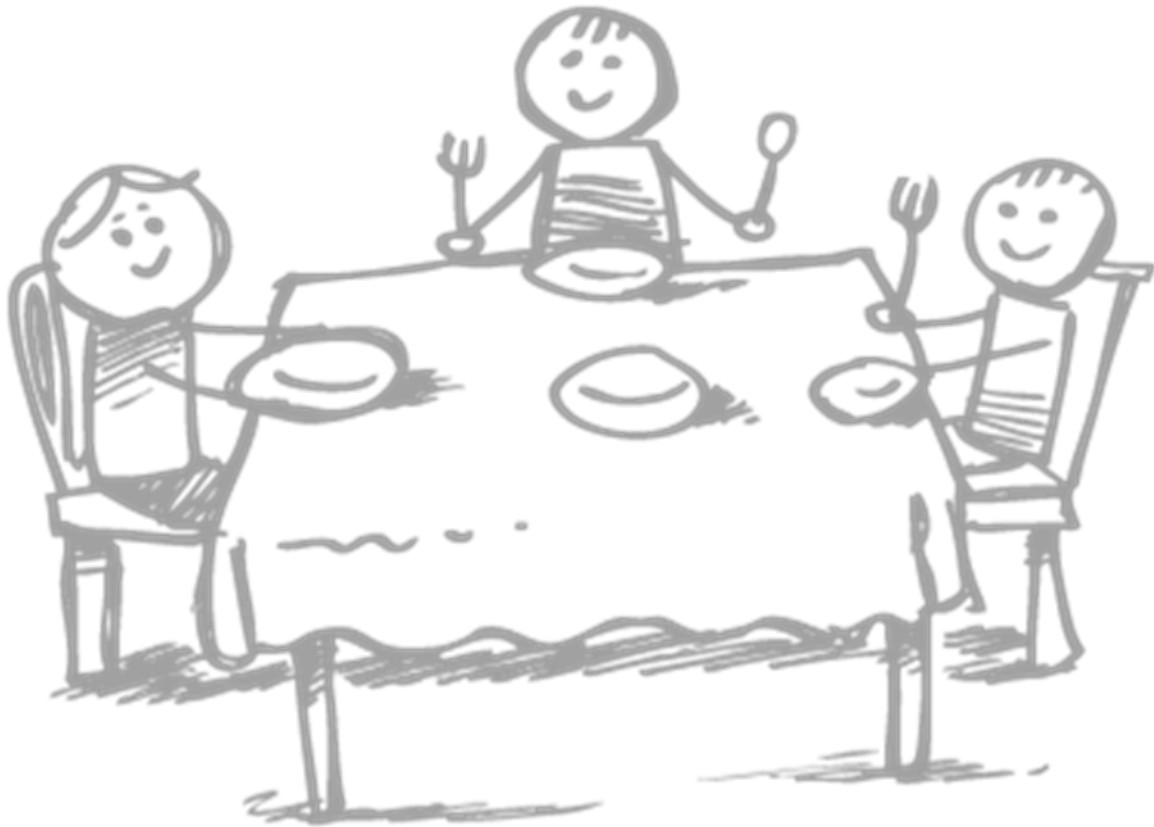
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Chapter 6: Appendices

6.1. Appendix 1 Evaluation of HAF Northumberland 2022

An Evaluation of Northumberland's HAF Summer Programme 2022



January 2022

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NEWCASTLE



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Executive Summary

The Healthy Living Lab was commissioned by Leading Link to evaluate Northumberland's Summer Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme. The HAF programme aims to address holiday hunger, inactivity, social isolation, childcare needs, learning and school readiness among some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Northumberland.

Desktop analysis of management information showed a high demand and uptake of HAF in Northumberland, with 2,503 children's places, serving 24,355 meals and 106,351 hours of provision across the summer. The Family and Teenage offer engaged 2160 children and young people and a further 1,374 adults and totalled 9,953 hours of activities in the most deprived neighbourhoods across Northumberland.

There was clear evidence that HAF in Northumberland delivered a range of positive outcomes for children, parents/carers, and local communities. Parents in the HAF sample did not experience the same level of difficulty in finding affordable childcare as parents in the Non HAF sample. Furthermore, as one might expect, the more often children attended HAF, the less difficulty parents encountered in accessing affordable childcare. Although parent wellbeing did not correlate with time children spent at HAF, the wellbeing of HAF parents was significantly better than Non HAF parents. However, overall parental wellbeing was low, and this finding suggests that more work is required through HAF, or associated programmes, to address this issue. In terms of children's physical activity (MVPA), HAF parents reported that their children engaged in less physical activity compared to parents in the control group, and there was a negative correlation between number of hours attending HAF and amount of physical activity.

A key aim of HAF is to support children's dietary intake by providing a minimum of one meal for each day of attendance. Analysis showed that HAF households experiences less food insecurity than the Non HAF group, although this needs to be treated with a degree of caution due to demographic differences between the sample groups. Overall, parents highly rated the HAF programme in Northumberland. Nearly 90% of HAF parents thought their children were safe whilst attending HAF and approximately 80% parents thought that HAF kept their children from engaging in anti-social behaviours. In addition, parents thought that HAF supported improvements in their children's mental and physical wellbeing and played a key role in reducing social isolation across the school holidays. In terms of psychological wellbeing, parents reported that HAF boosted their children's self-esteem, confidence, and improved 'school readiness'.

Although parents thought that the food served in holiday clubs adhered to nutritional standards, far fewer parents thought that their children enjoyed the food served. Additionally, a relatively low percentage of parents thought that their children had the opportunity to engage in hands on cooking sessions. Together, these findings suggest that further work is required in this area; although the research team note the changes to the HAF DfE's (2023) guidance.

The findings from the Holiday Club Leader Survey also confirmed the value of HAF. Analysis showed that 90% of club leaders self-rated that they were very prepared or somewhat prepared to deliver HAF. It was particularly encouraging to see clubs targeting a wide range of children with an aim of ensuring an inclusive programme of delivery. The majority of clubs aimed to offer between 1-10 sessions of activities, and there was a good offer across both primary and secondary. This last finding is quite different to the national trend, in which most HAF programmes are heavily attended by primary school aged children. Furthermore, nearly 80% of clubs offered nutritional sessions for children and young people; an increase in the percentage offered nationally. The majority of food served at clubs was sourced from local supermarkets and catering companies. Club sourced food was rated higher than the food service organised by Leading Link. However, regardless of food

sourcing, the quality of the food served at HAF was rated good or excellent. Approximately 76% of club leaders reported some food waste, with approximately 23% of club leaders reporting no food waste at all.

Together the findings from both the parent and holiday club leader survey demonstrate an excellent HAF offer in Northumberland. Whilst it is encouraging to see the relatively good uptake by secondary school age pupils, it is important for the council to ensure that this is proportional to the number of children and young people in receipt of means-tested free school meals as currently HAF is a programme that is mainly targeted towards free school meal children and young people. Of course, balancing the offer based on local community assets can be challenging. It is also important to consider HAF access at the individual level. Based on the data in the surveys, the majority of children only access 1-10 physical activity sessions across the six-week summer school holiday. This level of access falls short of the Government's physical activity guidelines and may be why HAF parents reported that HAF attendance negatively correlated with the amount of physical activity. The council and HAF coordinator may wish to seek ways of working with the local community to increase the HAF offer/uptake in terms of physical activity, either directly through HAF or through working with other programmes and organisations.

In conclusion, the HAF Summer programme in Northumberland is very well-received and valued by parents and local organisations involved in HAF delivery. Importantly, the quantitative analyses included in this report demonstrates large scale positive outcomes for children and young people attending HAF. We understand that the HAF programme is also delivered during the Easter and Christmas school holidays but HAF delivery during these periods are not included within the scope of this report.

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Chapter 1: Review of Existing literature on HAF and holiday clubs in the UK

Chapter 1 will present a collation of peer-reviewed articles and the 'grey' literature on the implementation and impact of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme with reference to the wider context under which HAF currently operates. The review will begin by providing contextual information in relation to poverty in the UK and examine the need for HAF. This review will then explore the current literature on the implementation and delivery of holiday clubs in deprived communities across the UK and conclude by discussing peer-reviewed studies on the impact of HAF/holiday club attendance for children, their families, and communities.

1.1 The need for Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)

1.1.1 Background:

In the UK, approximately 4.3 million children are living in poverty. Evidence published by the Food Foundation (2017) suggests that the UK leads all of Europe (by a significant margin) when it comes to childhood hunger (see also (Lambie-Mumford & Sims, 2018). Nearly one in ten UK children face severe food insecurity, a term that is often used technically and summarised numerically to measure the availability and accessibility of adequate food, which is more than double the rate in most other European countries such as Italy, Portugal, Greece, Slovenia, Spain, Hungary and Latvia (The Food Foundation, 2017, p. 4). Furthermore, the level of food insecurity in the UK has also worsened in recent years, particularly following the outbreak of COVID in 2019 (Loopstra, 2020; Loopstra et al., 2019), with 41% of children eligible for free school meals (FSM) experiencing some level of food insecurity during the coronavirus pandemic lockdown (Goudie & McIntyre, 2021). Children have also experienced disruption to their education and social environment with numerous reports showing an increase in poor dietary habits, poor mental health and wellbeing and a reduction in physical activity (Bates et al., 2020; Brooks et al., 2020; Defeyter et al., 2020; James et al., 2021; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). There is emerging evidence that suggests that inequality has widened even further as a result of the Covid pandemic, with the financial situation of almost 4.7 million households deteriorating (Collard et al., 2021) and modelling data suggesting that the position of many households is going to deteriorate even further in 2022.

Within the context of UK childhood hunger, the problem of "holiday hunger" has recently gained attention among politicians, the media and the public. The phrase holiday hunger has been used extensively by the British media (e.g., "Holiday hunger should be the shame of this government and it isn't" - *The Guardian* (Foster, 2018); "They hadn't eaten all day: food banks tackle holiday hunger" - *The Guardian* (Perraudin, 2018) "Emma Thompson: my fight to end Easter holiday hunger for 4m British schoolchildren" - *The Times* (Griffiths, 2019); "Nearly four in five teachers say holiday hunger is failing to improve" - *Independent* (Osborne, 2018); "School holiday hunger: Parents 'living on cereal', says MP" - *The BBC* (2019). Despite the widespread use of this term, it is not always clear what it means. In our book, titled "Holiday hunger in the UK", we define holiday hunger "as a situation that occurs when economically disadvantaged households with school-aged children experience food insecurity during the school holidays (Long et al., 2022)

Holiday clubs, managed by local organisations, are a response to holiday hunger in the UK (Mann et al., 2018). In 2017, the All-Party-Parliamentary Group on School Food asked the Healthy Living Lab to map holiday provision across the UK to gain an understanding of what was being done about holiday hunger at the local level. The researchers found hundreds of holiday clubs had been established across England and many existed to provide support to children living in disadvantaged areas (Mann et al., 2018). Until recently, holiday clubs were largely viewed as spaces for feeding children during the summer (Mann et al., 2018). Emerging research shows, however, that these clubs offer

communities a means to organise and provide a variety of material goods, services and information to children, caregivers, parents, volunteers, and staff (Stretesky, Defeyter, Long, Sattar, et al., 2020).

Research shows that holiday clubs provide children with a safe place to be physically active during the summer (Mann, 2019; Shinwell, 2019; Shinwell et al., 2021). Holiday clubs may prepare pupils for return to school, aid parents with childcare so that they can continue to work in paid employment during the school holidays, increase the wellbeing of children and parents and provide communities with the opportunity of improving dietary intake (Crilley, 2021; Defeyter et al., 2015a, 2019; Holley & Mason, 2019; Long, Stretesky, et al., 2020; Mann et al., 2020; Morgan, McConnon, et al., 2019a; Shinwell, 2019; Shinwell et al., 2021; Stretesky, Defeyter, Long, Ritchie, et al., 2020; Stretesky, Defeyter, Long, Sattar, et al., 2020). Holiday clubs have even been found to signpost parents to resources and other community services, such as healthcare, financial services, and housing advice (Long et al., 2022; Mann, 2019; Shinwell, 2019; Stretesky, Defeyter, Long, Sattar, et al., 2020). In short, it is clear that holiday clubs do more than simply feed children.

More recently, the Department for Education (DfE) recognised the need for holiday provision to provide children with access to activities and nutritious food and funded several pilot Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) projects, commencing in 2018. This involved local authorities recruiting community organisations to deliver free, healthy food and activities for children during the school summer holidays. Following an evaluation of a number of HAF pilot projects, the DfE announced an expansion of the HAF programme across all 151 higher-tier Local Authorities in England in 2021, at a cost of approximately £220M p.a. (Department for Education, 2021a). The four main aims of HAF are 1) to improve the nutrition of children who are eligible for benefits-related FSM, in the holidays, 2) To increase healthy behaviours (e.g., participation in physical and enriching activities), 3) To improve school readiness, and 4) To improve parent's confidence and behaviour around purchasing and preparing healthy meals on a sustainable basis (Department for Education, 2021a). The HAF programme is free for children who receive benefits-related free school meals. Whereas any children not eligible for and in receipt of means-tested free school meals can also attend but they should pay to do so, or their places paid for by alternative funding. Local authorities can either coordinate their local HAF programme themselves or work with another organisation to coordinate the provision on their behalf (Department for Education, 2021a). Notably, HAF 2021 was larger in terms of funding and scope to prior HAF programmes and included some new programme outcomes; including engaging families in nutritional education, budgeting, providing better referral systems to other services, and offering increased flexibility in the funding terms for Local Authorities to provide HAF for a week during the Easter and Christmas holidays.

1.2 Household Food Insecurity and Dietary Intake

In the UK the terms “food insecurity”, “food poverty” and “hunger” are often used interchangeably to describe those who meet the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations definition of food insecurity, defined as: “the inability to acquire or consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so” (FAO, 2015, p. 53). The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) further categorises food insecurity as mild, moderate or severe (FAO, 2015). Those suffering mild food insecurity worry about their ability to obtain food, moderate food insecurity occurs when people start compromising on the quality and variety of food they eat and reduce the quantity of food they consume, and severe food insecurity occurs when people experience hunger (FAO, 2015). Current estimates from the FAO suggest that 10.4% of the UK population, some 8.4m people over the age of 15 years, live in moderately or severely food insecure households, with approximately half experiencing the most severe form of food insecurity, and 20% living in homes that lack the funds to purchase food. Furthermore, one in five children under the age of 15 years are estimated to live in households where there isn't enough

money to buy food, with 4% of UK children not eating three meals a day (Pereira et al., 2017). Furthermore, the level of food insecurity in the UK has worsened in recent years (Loopstra, Reeves & Tarasuk, 2019; Loopstra, 2020), with 41% of children eligible for FSM experiencing some level of food insecurity during the coronavirus lockdown (Goudie & McIntyre, 2021). A more detailed discussion on this topic in relation to HAF can be found in Long, Defeyter & Stretesky (2022).

Dowler et al., (2001) identified three main factors that influence food (in)security status: (i) affordability of food and sufficient income to purchase food; (ii) accessibility of shops to buy a range of food at a reasonable price; and (iii) knowledge of food and food skills. Because low-income households spend a greater proportion of their income on food compared to better off families, the price of food has a significant impact on low-income families' food purchasing abilities. An analysis of the cost of complying with the UK Government's food-based guidelines contained in the Eatwell Guide indicated that low-income families would need to spend nearly three quarters of their income on food (Scott et al., 2018). Whilst low-income families considered a healthy diet was important, and 60% of parents and carers indicated that they would change their children's diets and buy more fruit and vegetables, their lack of income meant they were unable to do so.

Likewise, analysis of data contained in the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (2020) found that consumption of fruit and vegetables was below the 5-A-Day recommendation in all groups and oily fish consumption was well below the recommendation. Furthermore, intakes of free sugars exceeded recommendations in all age groups and only 4% children met recommended fibre intake. These findings broadly align with prior results of this survey, but it is important to note that the survey was not administered at the height of lockdown and other surveys report a deterioration in children's dietary intake, especially children in low-income households (e.g. (James et al., 2021).

Recent research conducted in Northern Ireland suggests that household food insecurity may be a dynamic process and that people may move in, out and along the continuum of household food insecurity (Shinwell et al., 2021). For some families, experiencing household food insecurity may be cyclical, for example towards the end of the month when money is low, whilst for others, a shock to their income such as losing their job, increased energy prices, or a relationship breakdown may result in experiencing episodes of food insecurity. A range of tactics are adopted by people to cope with having insufficient money for food. This includes, at the most basic level, shopping in multiple stores for food to take advantage of special offers to make money go further and eating food of poorer nutritional value. However, as the level of food insecurity becomes more severe, tactics change to seeking (and reciprocating) support from friends and family, to cutting down food portion sizes and parents and carers often, and children occasionally, skipping meals altogether (Gooseman et al., 2019b; Shinwell & Defeyter, 2021). However, the strategy of last resort used by many facing household food insecurity is to seek support from a food bank (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2015; Shinwell & Defeyter, 2021).

1.3 Holiday Hunger

There is evidence of low-income families being at risk of experiencing holiday hunger in the UK. Oral evidence presented to the APPG on Hunger in 2017, showed that during the summer, food shopping bills of parents whose children receive free school meals increase by an average of £30-40 per week and that parents will often compromise on the quality of food they eat, will eat their children's leftovers and skip meals in order to cope with the extra pressure of the summer break (Andrew Forsey, 2017). This evidence reflects earlier research which highlighted that during the school holidays food shopping bills increased and parents compromised on the quality of food they bought, relying on offers in supermarkets to feed their children which often meant buying food of a lower nutritional quality (Defeyter et al., 2015a; Gill & Sharma, 2004). However, it is not only children who are eligible for FSM that are at risk of experiencing holiday food insecurity, the oral evidence to the APPG on Hunger highlighted that up to 2 million children from families whose parents "work for their poverty" may also be going hungry in the holidays (Forsey, 2017).

The risk of low-income families experiencing food insecurity during the school holidays was further reinforced by a pilot study by (Long et al., 2017). Using the six-item food insecurity questionnaire, developed in the USA, to identify households experiencing food insecurity, this research examined the food (in)security status of parents (N=38) attending holiday provision clubs alongside their children in Wales. The findings established that 58% (N=22) of parents identified as food secure, 18% (N=7) as food insecure without hunger and 24% (N=9) as food insecure with hunger (Long et al., 2017). All parents, from both food secure and food insecure households, agreed that they spend more on food during the summer holidays than during term time and some parents reported that without a summer holiday club, they would not have been able to afford to buy food during the summer. Importantly, the researchers found that holiday clubs disproportionately help food insecure households and attenuate food insecurity for these families.

Similarly, more than 90% of parents (N=72), in a mixed methods study examining the experiences of food insecure families in London, reported that in the previous year, they had worried about having enough money for food and had run out of food (Harvey, 2016). Parents also reported that they could not afford to buy healthy food for their children and had reduced their food intake and had skipped meals so that their children could eat. Nonetheless, despite parents' best efforts to protect their children from food insecurity, in qualitative interviews conducted with children (N=19) in the same study, children indicated that they were aware that there was not enough money for food at home and that they had gone to bed hungry. Children also reported that they were more likely to miss meals during the weekends and holidays when school meals and after school clubs were not available. Furthermore, teachers in the UK have also reported that they are aware that low-income families struggle during the summer holidays. In a survey conducted by the NUT teaching union, more than half of the 619 respondents said there were children in their school who did not get enough to eat during the summer holidays and the number of children who were affected was increasing (National Union of Teachers, 2017).

1.4 Health and Wellbeing of Children and Parents

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, signatory states are required to ensure a standard of living of every child that is adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, 2003). Nevertheless, a recent review of food insecurity in advanced capitalist nations shows that it is widely recognised that insufficient household income is associated with negative outcomes for children and adults across all domains including mental and physical health, life expectancy, social wellbeing, cognition, and educational attainment (Long et al., 2020).

A survey conducted by the Royal College of Paediatricians and Child Health (RCPCH) and Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), highlighted that 99.6% of paediatricians (N=265) considered poverty contributes to the ill health of a child (RCPCH & CPAG, 2017). Moreover, families living in poverty have insufficient income to obtain a healthy diet. Nutritionally poor food tends to be cheaper and have higher fat and / or sugar content than more healthy food items. It is, therefore, unsurprising that there is a greater prevalence of overweight and obese children in the poorest families (Donkin & Marmot, 2016). Using data from the Millennium Cohort Study, (Goisis et al., 2015) examined longitudinal data of children aged 5 years and 11 years (N=9,384). Their findings illustrate that the prevalence of obesity is considerably higher amongst poorer children than their more affluent peers. While there was no evidence of an association between household income and weight of the child at age 5 years, there were emerging inequalities by age 11 years, and a poor diet and lack of physical activity are contributing risk factors (Goisis et al., 2015). Moreover, high levels of obesity in children are associated with poorer health outcomes in adulthood; obesity and being overweight are linked to a wide range of diseases including diabetes, asthma, hypertension, cancer, heart disease and stroke (Marmot, 2010; Public Health England, 2015). Finally, a recent study published in the BMJ (Open) shows an increase in infant mortality with body weight status. However, this sustained and unprecedented rise in infant mortality in England from 2014-2017 has not been experienced evenly

across the population. In the most deprived local authorities, the previously declining trend in infant mortality reversed and mortality rose, leading to an additional 24 infant deaths per 100,000 live births per year, relative to the previous trend (Taylor-Robinson et al., 2019a). The findings suggest that about a third of the increases in infant mortality between 2014 and 2017 may be attributed to rising child poverty, equivalent to an extra 172 infant deaths (Taylor-Robinson et al., 2019b).

Whilst growing up in poverty can have a negative impact on a child's physical and mental health, there exists an association between household income and children's outcomes in terms of cognitive, social, and emotional behavioural development (Cooper & Stewart, 2017). Moreover, a qualitative study conducted with children living in poverty in the UK illustrated that a limited household income restricts children's access to services and opportunities, and these have a wider impact on their social relations (Ridge, 2002). Children find it difficult to form friendships and fear social exclusion as they are unable to share similar experiences with their friendship groups. (Ridge, 2013) further argues that childhood is becoming increasingly commodified and the participation of children in social activities and clubs is controlled by the cost of the activities and other factors including access and transport. Children living in poverty are often confined to their neighbourhoods which frequently lack adequate and affordable resources and opportunities to be able to socialise with their friends. Thus, according to Ridge (2002,2013) poverty is a localised experience and children from disadvantaged families are restricted to what is available within their neighbourhood.

1.5 Poverty, Food Insecurity and Educational Attainment

As discussed above, children growing up in low-income households are likely to have a poor diet and are more likely to be overweight or obese with associated poorer health outcomes both physically, mentally, and socially compared to their more affluent peers. Research has investigated the effect of living in food insecure households on the educational attainment and social and emotional well-being of children. (Johnson & Markowitz, 2018) analysed data on the results of 3,700 children's reading and maths skills using tests specially designed for the Early Childhood Longitudinal-Birth (ECLS-B) study and teachers' analysis of children's social and emotional well-being. Data on parental levels of household food insecurity were collected at three time points (when children were aged nine months, when they were two years of age and when they started kindergarten) using the USA Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM). The authors found that children who experienced food insecurity performed less well both academically, socially, and emotionally than children who were food secure. Furthermore, children who experienced repeated episodes of household food insecurity, and the greater the frequency of exposure to household food insecurity, the less well children performed in tests.

Using data on children in receipt of FSM as a proxy for disadvantage, data from National Pupil Database (NPD) which contains data on children's performance in tests and teacher assessments when they start school, at Key Stages 1 and 2 and GCSE exam results, researchers found that by the time children reach the age of 16 years, children who were in receipt of free school meals were 24.3 months behind children who did not (Andrews et al., 2017). More recent analysis of the data in the NPD and FSM recipient status suggests that at the current rate of progress, it will take more than 500 years to narrow the gap in attainment between children from different socio-economic backgrounds (Hutchinson et al., 2019).

1.6 Childcare

An additional challenge for families during the school holidays is childcare provision. A survey of leaders of holiday clubs, located in deprived communities across the UK (N=325), illustrated that along with the need for food provision, childcare provision and a safe place for children to play formed the top three needs for their communities during the school holidays (Mann, 2019). The Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities in England and Wales to ensure sufficient childcare is available for parents with children up to the age of 14 years. Nevertheless, a recent survey carried out by Family Childcare Trust (2019) illustrated that there is a lack of affordable holiday clubs and shortages of childcare across some regions of the UK. The most notable gaps in provision are for

children aged 12 years or over, for families living in rural areas and for children with special education needs and disabilities (Cottell et al., 2019). The need for childcare provision during the school holidays was further highlighted in a survey of head teachers of primary and secondary schools in England: 39% (N=424) of head teachers stated that parents and carers require access to holiday clubs to support their working and caring commitments during the school holidays (Diss & Jarvie, 2016). Yet, despite the perceived need for holiday provision, only 29% (N=315) of schools offer additional provision during the school holidays with head teachers citing funding and lack of staffing capacity as the main barriers to providing holiday provision for families (Diss & Jarvie, 2016). The challenge of sourcing adequate and affordable childcare provision during the school holidays has been highlighted by a survey conducted by CPAG in Scotland (2015). The survey of parents (N=223) living in Glasgow cited the high cost of childcare provision as one of the main challenges of the school holidays, with many out of school providers oversubscribed or unavailable across all regions of the city (Butcher, 2015). Moreover, a recent investigation by a joint Department for Work and Pensions and Education Select Committee of the House of Commons into poverty during the school summer holiday period heard evidence from parents who said that the requirement to pay child care costs up front and then claim them back through Universal Credit prevented them from being able to work during the summer holiday period and the absence of FSM meant they relied on food aid from food banks to feed their children during the summer holidays (House of Commons, 2019).

A survey commissioned by the Family and Childcare Trust highlighted that families adopt a number of approaches to address their childcare needs in the school holidays, which include: using formal childcare provided by local authorities and the private sector; using informal holiday camps and activities; adopting shift parenting by using the annual leave of both parents to cover holidays; using informal care provided by extended families and friends; and committing to term time only work (Cottell & Fiaferana, 2018). Moreover, while childcare is a constant challenge for some families, the length of the school summer holiday creates a significant challenge for families to be able to source affordable and consistent childcare, which in turn creates additional financial and emotional pressures for families.

1.7 The benefits of HAF/Holiday Clubs

The previous section discussed several factors regarding the need for HAF during the school holidays. In this section, studies focussing on the multi-faceted benefits of participating in holiday clubs will be discussed. A number of studies have shown that the provision of food at holiday clubs has the potential to make a difference to family food and finances by alleviating financial strains on household budgets (Defeyter et al., 2015a; Graham et al., 2016; Morgan, Melendez-Torres, et al., 2019; Shinwell & Defeyter, 2021; Stretesky, Defeyter, Long, Ritchie, et al., 2020). Other studies have shown, holiday provision has the potential to reduce the risk of families experiencing household food insecurity, which has been discussed earlier in this literature review (Holley et al., 2019; Long et al., 2018), and improving children's dietary intake (Crilley et al., 2022; Mann, 2019; Shinwell, 2019). In addition, holiday provision offers numerous additional resources that improve the wellbeing for parents, children, volunteers, and staff (Defeyter et al., 2018b; Stretesky, Defeyter, Long, Sattar, et al., 2020). A summary of peer-reviewed research on the impact of attendance at holiday provision in the UK can be found in Appendix 1.

In addition to the published academic literature on holiday provision, there are several third sector reports that focus on various outcomes for families and the communities in which these clubs operate. Many of these case studies feature in *Holiday Hunger in the UK: Local Responses to Childhood Food Insecurity* (Long, Defeyter & Stretesky, 2022). Details of example holiday programmes, abstracts of research and policy papers can be found in *Holiday Programmes: Activity and Food at* <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/takeontomorrow/it-is-time/holiday-activity-and-food-programmes>. Further details on how holiday clubs have adjusted their mode of delivery as a result of Covid social distancing rules are emerging in the literature (Bayes et al., 2021; Long, Defeyter & Stretesky, 2022), as are a number of case studies detailing approaches to holiday provision during

Covid by the Governments of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland (Long, Defeyter & Stretesky, 2022). Finally, little is known about the modes of delivering nutritional education within HAF (Round et al., 2021.) and whilst many HAF clubs adhere to School Food Standards, further work is required to satisfy age-appropriate nutritional standards (Vitale, Crossland, Shinwell, Stretesky, Defeyter & Brownlee, 2023).

Chapter 2: HAF in Northumberland

Northumberland County Council commissioned Leading Link as the co-ordinating organisation and commissioned the Healthy Living Lab, at Northumbria University to conduct an evaluation of Northumberland's HAF programme. Forty-two clubs from across Northumberland provided food and activities for 2,503 children, served 24,355 meals, and totalled 106,351 hours of provision. The Family and Teenage offer, supported by 14 partner organisations, engaged with 2160 children and young people and a further 1374 adults, and totalled 9,953 hours of activities. Additional financial support from the North East Child Poverty Trust was used to build local capacity with 3,200 hours of young leader engagement focused on implementation of HAF. This activity was evaluated by Leading Link and falls outside the scope of the current report.

Conducting an impact evaluation of HAF delivery in Northumberland is essential as the national HAF programme began operating at scale in 2021 and little is known about how the programme is being delivered on the ground and the impact it is having at a local level, especially within rural local authorities. This is important because for interventions to be effective, they must be successfully implemented and normalised into routine practice (Murray et al., 2010). Furthermore, little is known about the impact of HAF on factors such as food insecurity, childcare, parent and child wellbeing etc. To date most surveys evaluating the impact of HAF have lacked a counterfactual group and/or not used standardised measures or have not considered HAF "dosage" in terms of the effect of frequency of attendance on outcome measures. Collecting this evidence will inform Northumberland County Council, and other organisations, about the impact that HAF is having on children, young people, and parents/carers who engage with HAF. Importantly, conducting the same survey in 2023 will enable the research team to analyse potential changes in outcomes.

2.1 Impact Evaluation

To evaluate the impact of HAF in Northumberland the research team designed two online parent surveys, co-produced in consultation with a Participant Involvement and Engagement Steering Group, to compare HAF attendees to non-HAF attendees. One parent survey was distributed to parents/caregivers with children attending HAF in Northumberland and one parent survey was distributed to parents/caregivers with children who did not attend HAF. The Healthy Living Lab, at Northumbria University, paid of the survey of the control group of parents.

This design allowed the research team to allocate parent/caregivers into one of two groups according to: a) whether one child or more attended HAF in Northumberland, b) whether one or more children attended no form of holiday provision or childcare outside of the home. To reduce contamination across groups, and to ensure that parents were allocated to the correct group, a series of specific screening questions were employed.

In addition to evaluating differences between HAF and non-HAF attendees/families, the present evaluation also accounts for dose (i.e., the number of hours children attended HAF). Assessing dose is important in shaping policy and mechanism of delivery at a national and local level. That is, it may be the case that some children or youth only attended one day of HAF while others attended multiple days over the course of the summer holiday. Accounting for variation in dose helps provide additional data on the impact of HAF attendance.

Both sets of parent surveys (HAF and non-HAF) asked the same set of questions, except that the parents with children attending HAF in Northumberland were asked additional questions to evaluate their unique experience of HAF. Across all participant groups, parents were asked to focus on one child within the family, determined by asking parents to focus on their eldest child between 5-to 16-

years of age (who attended HAF or not; respective of sample). Participants with children attending HAF were sampled through HAF parent/caregiver email addresses provided when registering for HAF, with reminders sent out to parents via Leading Link. The comparator group was recruited through Prolific, an online survey platform frequently used by social science researchers. Given the Healthy Living Lab's past experience in evaluating holiday programmes, we were aware that a large proportion of HAF programmes target provision to areas of deprivation rather than targeting solely on the basis of means-tested FSM. Thus, the Prolific sample was selected to be representative of those living in deprived areas England. For economic and demographic comparisons between the two groups described above see Table 2 showing similar levels of economic deprivation, yet some important demographic differences.

2.2 Overall Approach, Aims, Objectives and Research Questions

Our approach to this evaluation took into account five key considerations (see below).

1. The need for a sampling approach that allows us to explore the diversity of delivery partners/venues and factors that may affect delivery.
2. The need for an approach that provides Northumberland County Council and Leading Link with confidence that responses will be maximised over the short fieldwork period.
2. The need for an approach that can be flexed to changing requirements during the evaluation period.
3. The need to assess the impact of HAF in Northumberland via a matched parental survey.
4. The need to analyse the effect of HAF dosage on specific outcome measures.
5. The need to use robust methods, whilst minimising participant fatigue.

Our approach was also shaped by the Healthy Living Lab's extensive experience in this area. In terms of this evaluation, the research team decided to develop a parental survey that compared attendees to a matched group of parents using no club/childcare over the summer holiday period. Where possible, parent questionnaires used standardised measures (e.g., the complete 6-item USDA measure of food security, the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, the Global Perceived Stress Questionnaire). The Healthy Living Lab has already successfully used all these measures in peer-reviewed published papers on this topic. Ideally, we would have liked to have collected pre-and post-intervention data for all parent groups, but this was not possible due to short timescales regarding the start of this research project. However, as this is a cross-sectional, longitudinal study, we will be able to compare the findings cited in this report with the findings from HAF delivery in 2023.

2.3 Aims and Objectives:

The overarching aim of this research study is to explore the impact of HAF in Northumberland. The first objective of the study is to analyse quantitative data from two parent surveys and one holiday club leader survey regarding the impact of HAF on a number of outcome measures.

2.4 Research Questions:

The following research questions were addressed:

- What was the impact of HAF attendance on children's and young people's health and wellbeing?
- What was the impact of HAF on parents/caregiver's health and wellbeing?

- What are the holiday club leaders' views on the perceived effectiveness of the HAF programme?
- What are the key factors to be considered for successful future HAF delivery in Northumberland?

2.5 Methods

The impact evaluation consisted of a parental survey to compare HAF attendees to a matched, counterfactual group. One group was parents whose children attended HAF in Northumberland, while the counterfactual group were parents who did not access any childcare provision during the summer holiday 2022. Both surveys were opened in September 2022 and closed at the end of October 2022. The survey for the HAF Northumberland sample also collected data on dose (number of hours attending club across the summer) and additional outcome measures. The research team either used standardised measures or measures that the research team have used in the past and have published in peer-reviewed journals. The parent survey collected data on the following outcomes:

- Household food security was measured using the US Department of Agriculture "FS Scale" for a 30-day reference period (USDA Economic Research Services, 2020), recently validated by the UK Department of Work and Pensions for use in the Family Resources Survey (Department for Work and Pensions, 2021).
- Parental Stress was measured using a Global Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983)
- Childcare
- Children's Physical Activity

HAF Northumberland Parent Survey Only:

- Safety
- Anti-social behaviour
- Social Isolation
- Activities
- School Readiness
- Confidence
- Aspirations
- Registration/booking
- Food Provision

2.5.1 Holiday Club Leader Survey:

At the beginning of September 2021, an online holiday club leader survey link was sent to all holiday club leaders participating in HAF in Northumberland. The survey was closed at the end of October 2022. The survey asked questions on:

- How well prepared were you to deliver HAF in Northumberland?
- How subscribed was your holiday club?
- Who did your club target?
- How do parent's/carers register?
- Where did you source your food?
- Quality of food provision

- Food waste
- Number of cooking sessions
- Number of physical activity sessions

2.5.2 Ethics

Full ethical approval for this research programme was obtained from the Faculty of Health and Life Science at Northumbria University (Number 33684). The Healthy Living Lab worked in partnership with Leading Link to ensure that all ethical protocols were followed, and all data protocols complied with GDPR. A Participant Involvement and Engagement group supported the research through all stages of the programme from conception to dissemination of findings. All organisations participating in HAF Northumberland were fully aware of their role in the evaluation.

2.5.3 Methods

The combined parents sample consisted of **N = 894 participants**. All participants were recruited online. The HAF Northumberland sampling frame consists of all parents/caregivers whose child(ren) attended a HAF funded holiday club in Northumberland and who shared their email address /contact details with Leading Link. An email was sent to all parents/carers in the sampling frame asking them to participate in the research. That email contained a link to the survey. A total of **N=412 parents** whose child/children attended HAF in Northumberland agreed to participate in the research and completed the survey. It is important to point out that not all HAF parents/carers who filled out and returned the survey answered all survey questions. Thus, the statistical summaries for the HAF Northumberland sample are based only on items that participants answered. Descriptions of survey items presented in this report for the HAF parents/carers are therefore dependent on the number of parents/carers who responded to that item and range between N=266 to N=412. The Prolific sample was also recruited online and consisted of **N=482 parents/carers whose children did not attend HAF or any other childcare** during the school summer holiday. Parents and carers who completed the HAF survey were given a chance to win an Amazon gift voucher as a token of appreciation for their time. Prolific participants were compensated £7.50 per hour for their time. Figure 1 (below) presents the demographic composition of each sample. Once all data were collected from the HAF and Prolific sample the data were coded, cleaned and merged into a single file for reporting purposes.

3.1 Parent Survey

The data from the parent survey are presented according to relevant participant group. Firstly, a comparison of group demographics between HAF attendees and non-attendees showed that there were differences in samples for employment; with the Non HAF group having higher levels of unemployment than the Northumberland HAF group (difference in proportions, $p < 0.05$). There was also a significant difference in terms of ethnicity, with Northumberland HAF having a larger ethnic minority compared to the Non HAF group (difference in proportions, $p < 0.05$). In terms of FSM eligibility and level of parent education, the groups were comparable (see Table 2)

Table 2. Demographics for HAF and Non HAF Parent Samples

	HAF	Non HAF
Unemployment	19.3	27.1
Free School Meals	51.2	48.2
University/College Degree	22.9	79.3
Ethnic Minority	76.7	15.3

3.1.1 Childcare

The parent/carer survey asked parents about how easy it was on a scale of 0 (not at all difficult) to 10 (extremely difficult) to find affordable childcare during the summer holiday 2022. As shown in Figure 1 parents across all groups struggle to find affordable childcare. However, parents whose children attend HAF perceive finding affordable childcare to be significantly less difficult than the comparator (no HAF) group ($t(795)=1.71$, $p < 0.01$).

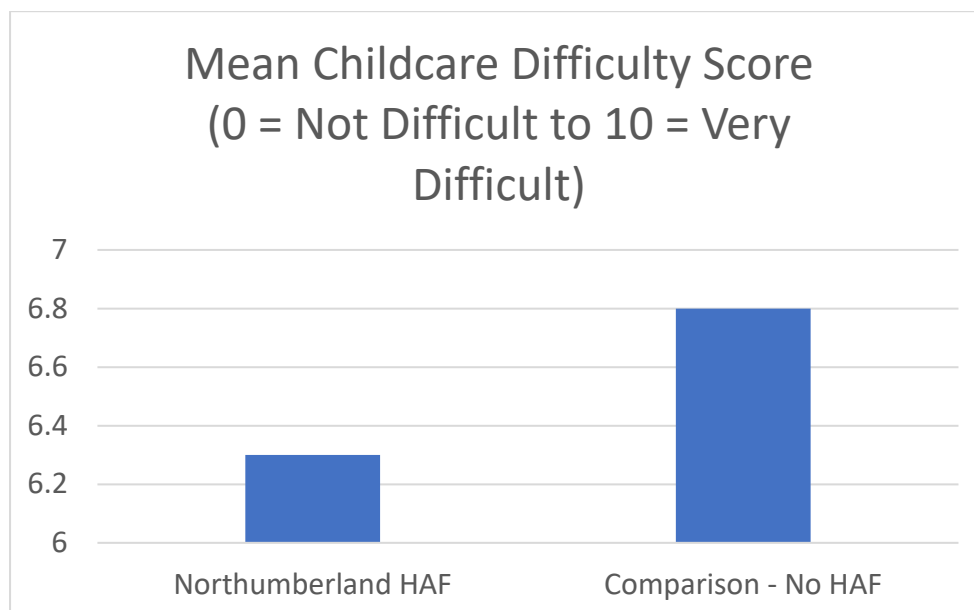


Figure 1. Perceived Difficulty in Finding Childcare: HAF versus No HAF (n=796)

However, whilst parents in the HAF group (Mean = 6.3) reported finding childcare easier compared to the control group (Mean = 6.8), it is important to acknowledge that 32.5% of HAF parents/caregivers in the sample report that they find it very hard to find affordable childcare during the school holidays. The average HAF parent/caregiver in the sample scores finding affordable childcare a 6.3 on a 10-point scale, where 0 = 'not difficult at all' to 10 = 'very difficult' (Figure 2).

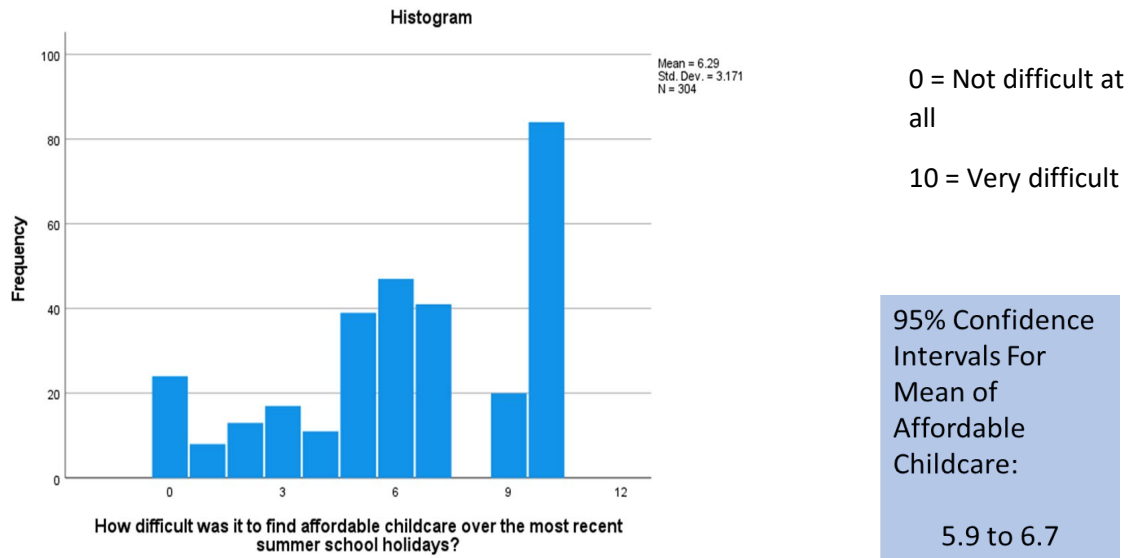


Figure 2. Distribution of Parent’s Perceptions of Affordable Childcare (n=304)

The results show that although there is no significant difference between categories of time spent at HAF (Pearson Chi-Square =8.7(4) p = 0.07), the more time children spend at HAF during the summer, the less likely parents/caregivers are to say that finding affordable childcare is difficult. Correlation between hours and childcare is (r=-0.12, p <0.05) (Figure 3)

Perceptions of Difficulty Obtaining Childcare by Hours Spent in Northumberland HAF

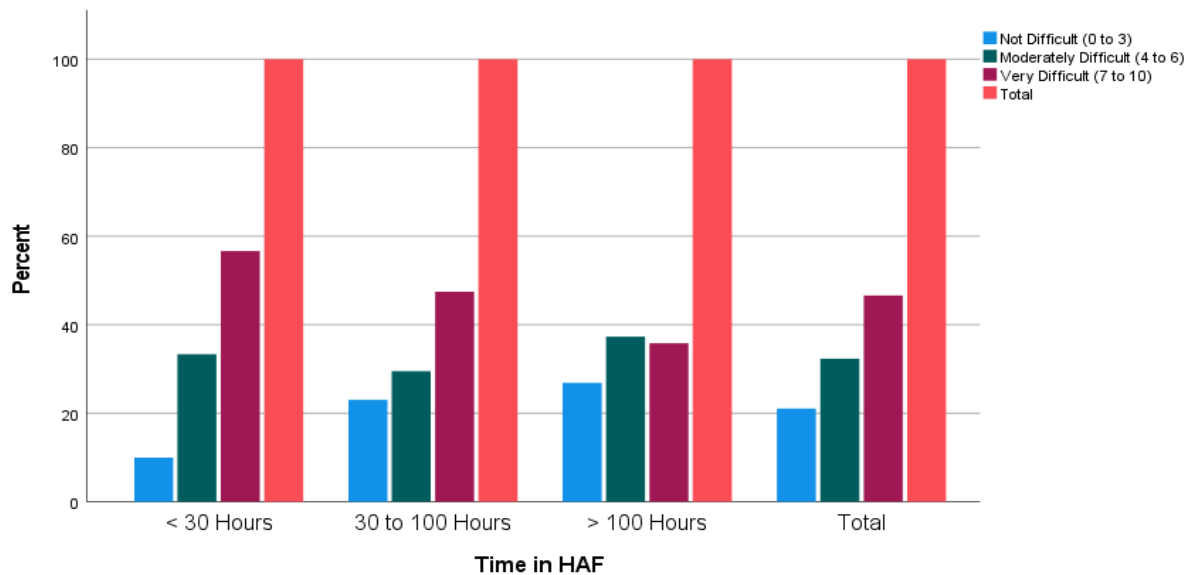


Figure 3. Time Spent in HAF and Parent’s Perception of the Difficulty in Finding Childcare

3.1.2 Parental Wellbeing

Parental stress was measured using a Global Measure of Perceived Stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein (1983). Nearly 20% (19.8%) of HAF parents/caregivers report that they have a relatively high levels of well-being, with the average HAF parent/caregiver having a well-being score of 24.5 (Figure 4).

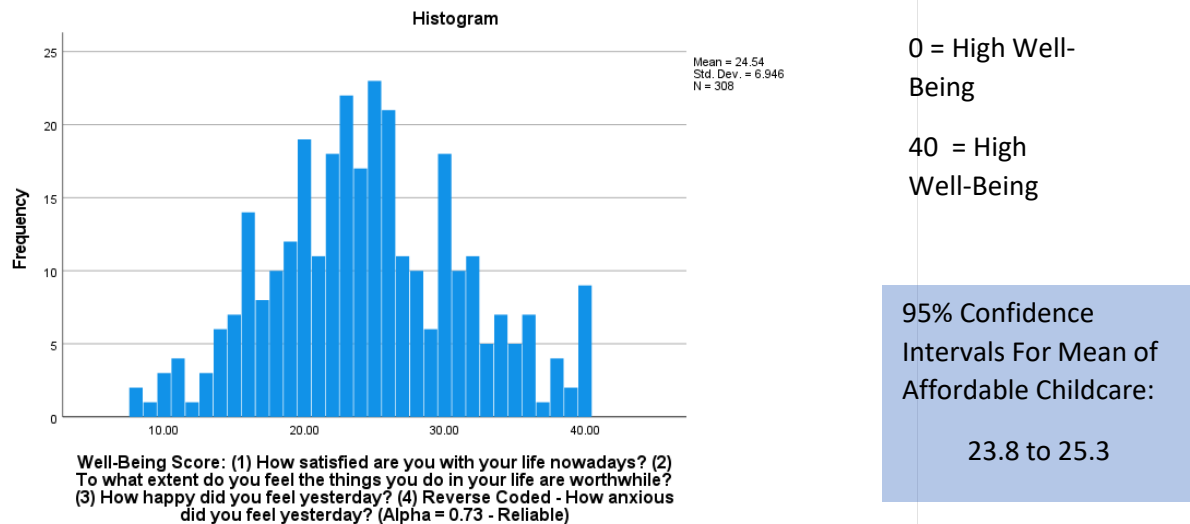


Figure 4. Distribution of Parental Well-being (n=308).

Parent well-being and time children spent in HAF are unlikely to be related in the population ($r=0.07$, $p=0.23$). Pearson Chi-Square showed no differences between time categories (Chi-Square = 6.1(4), $p=0.20$), (Figure 5)

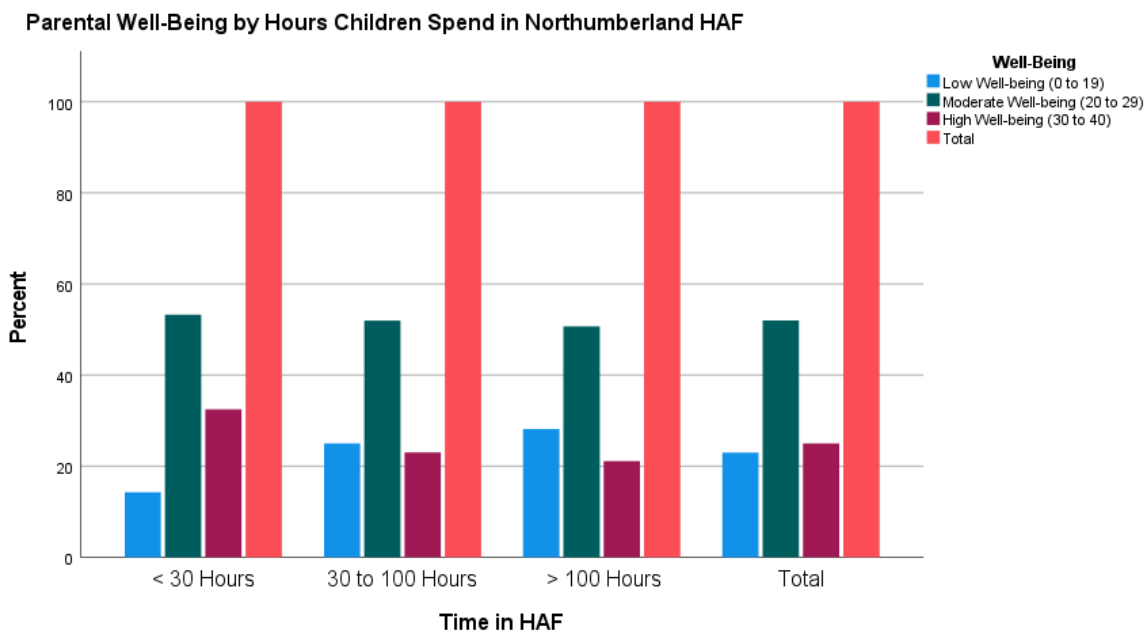


Figure 5. Parental Well-being According to Hours Children Spend at HAF

However, the wellbeing of HAF parents/caregivers was significantly better than the No HAF sample ($t(790)=6.67, p < 0.01$).

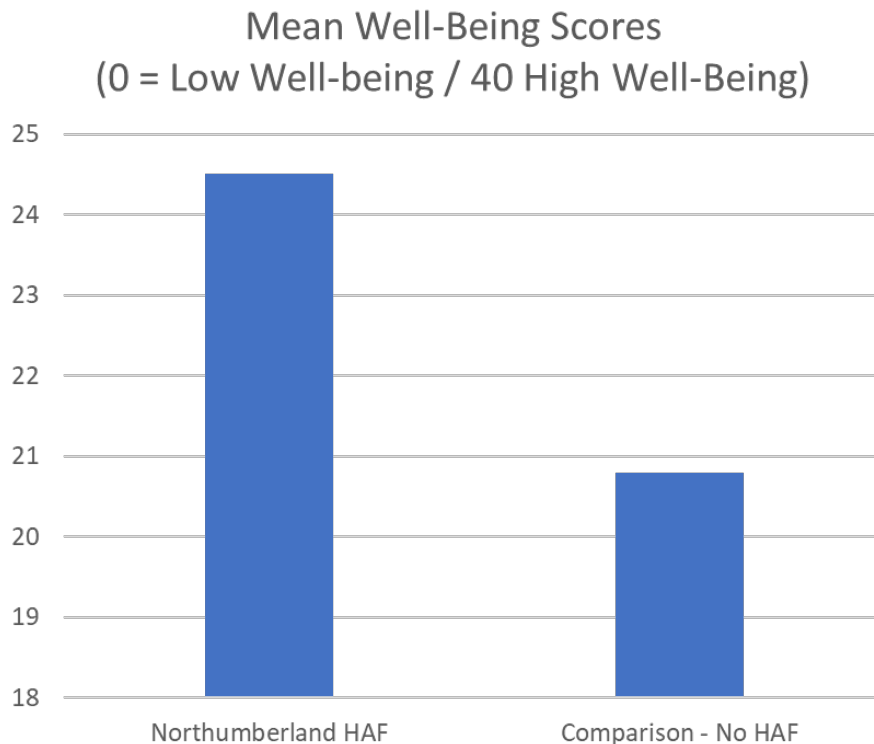


Figure 6. Parental Well-being: HAF versus No HAF group

3.1.3 Children's Physical Activity

The World Health Organisation (2020) defines physical activity as any bodily movement that requires energy expenditure including walking, running, and playing sports. The Chief Medical Officers (2019) recommend participating in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity every day. This can improve muscular and cardiorespiratory fitness and improve bone and functional health (World Health Organisation, 2020). Whereas, inactive behaviours, also referred to as sedentary behaviours, are defined by the Chief Medical Officers (2019) as undertaking little movement or activity and using little energy above what is used at rest. Given the range in opening times of clubs the researchers used the CMO recommendation of 60 minutes participation in MVPA per day for a minimum of 4 days per week, with a full explanation of MVPA provided to parents. Nearly 24% (23.8%) of HAF parents/caregivers report their eldest child spent 6 weeks engaging physical activity at least 4 times per week for at least 60 minutes each time during the summer school holiday. The average HAF parent/caregiver reported that their eldest child (who attended HAF) engaged in physical activity an average of 3.5 weeks during the summer school holiday (Figure 7).

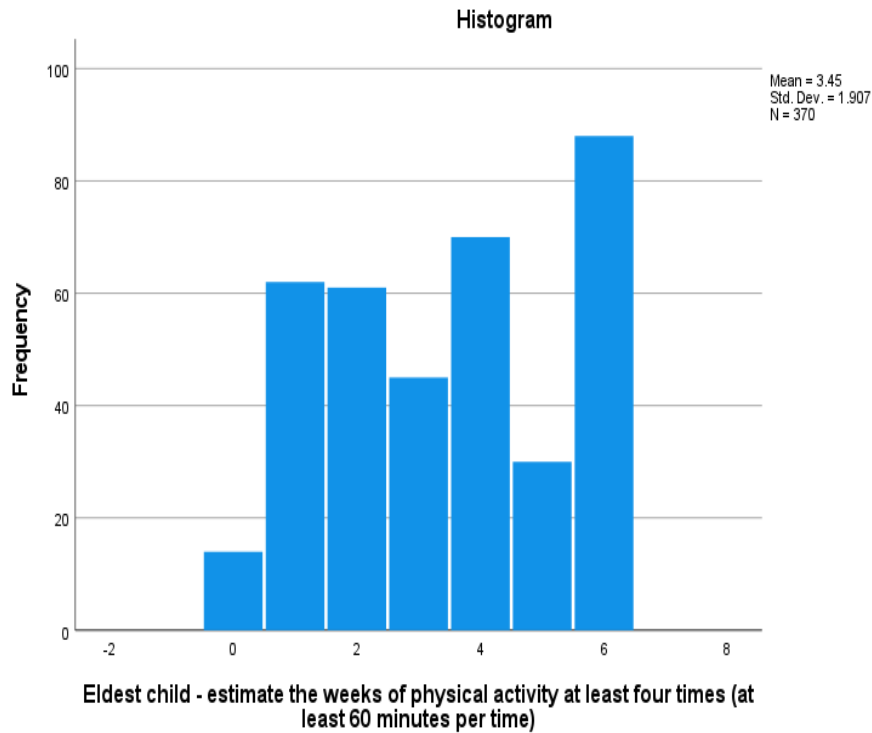


Figure 7. Distribution of Parent's Perception of Eldest Child's Among of Physical Activity (n=370).

HAF parents/carers report that their children engaged in significantly less physical activity compared to the Non HAF parents (t(850)= 3.5, p < 0.01).

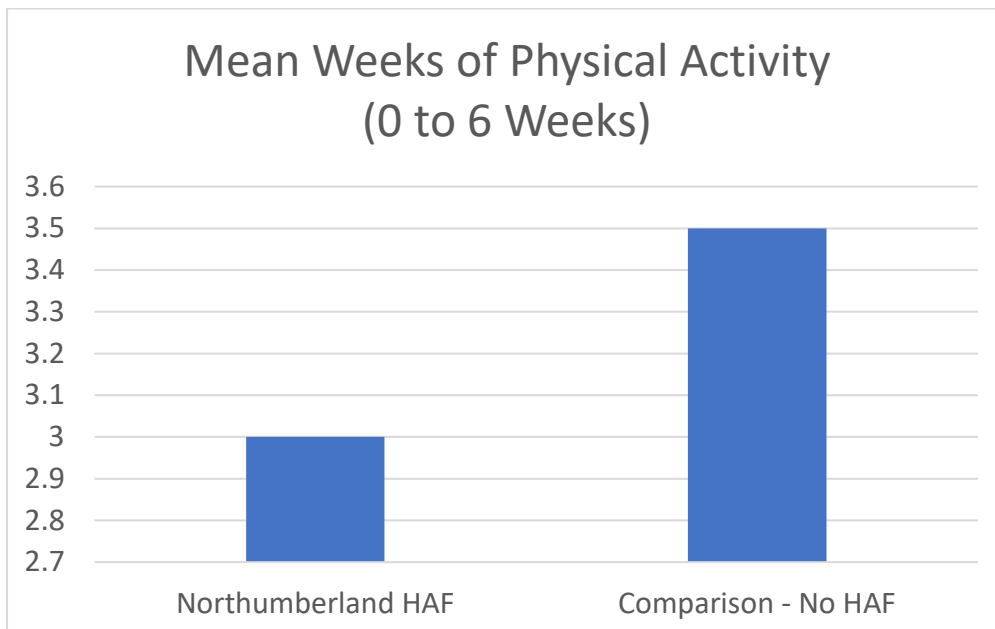


Figure 8. The Amount of Physical Activity in HAF versus Non-HAF groups

Figure 7 clearly shows a significant negative correlation between the number of hours attending and the number of weeks that children were engaged in Moderate Vigorous Physical Activity ($r=-10$, $p = 0.01$). In other words, the more time children spend at HAF during the summer, the fewer weeks parents/carers report that they engaged in physical activity.

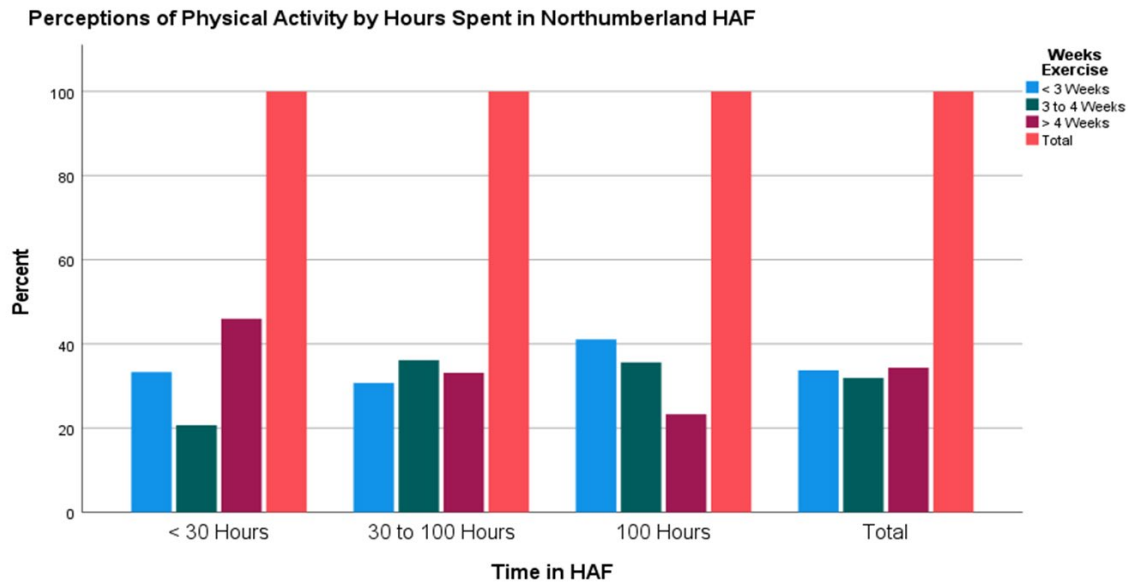
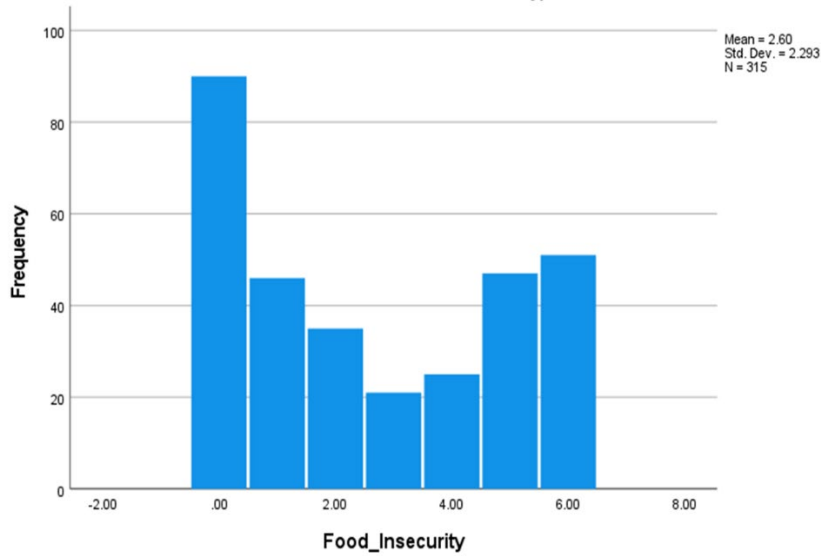


Figure 7. Time Spent at HAF and Physical Activity (MVPA) ($n=326$).

3.1.4 Food Security

Given that a key aim of HAF is the provision of at least one healthy meal to children during the school holiday, accompanied by the recent data demonstrating increasing levels of food insecurity in the UK, the research team measured household food security using the Six-item US Household Food Security Survey Module. Analysis showed that households in the HAF Northumberland group experienced less food insecurity compared to the counterfactual group who didn't attend club but this difference was not significant ($t(795)=0.94$, $p=0.17$) (see Figure 7). Nearly 24% of parents/carers report that their households are food insecure, with the average HAF household being 'moderately food insecure' (i.e. they score 2-4 points on the 6 item HFSSM) (Figure 6).

Histogram: Household Food Security Survey Module: Six-Item Short Form (0 No Food Insecurity to 6 High Food Insecurity)



No Food Insecurity = 0 to 1;
 Moderate Food Insecurity = 2 to 4;
 High Food Insecurity = 5 to 6

95% Confidence Intervals For Mean Food Insecurity Score:
 2.3 to 2.9

Figure 6. Distribution of Food Insecurity Scores (n=315).

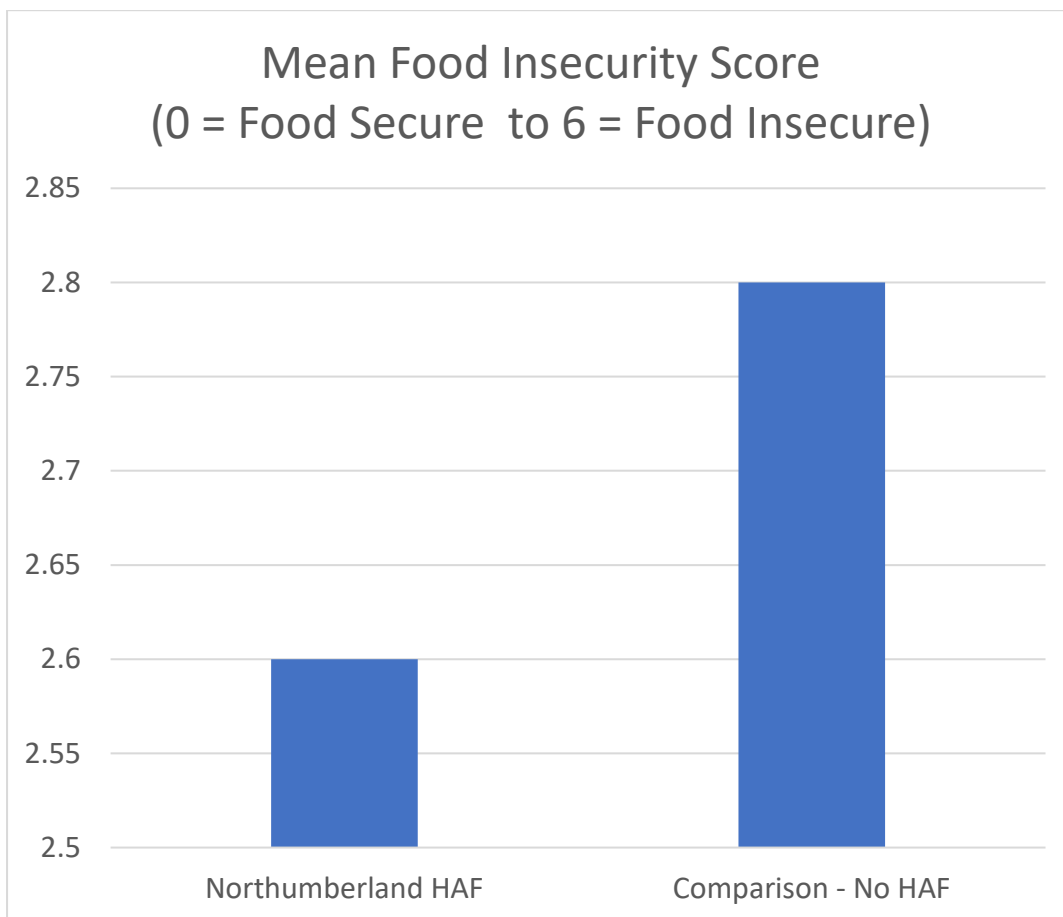


Figure 7. Food Insecurity: HAF versus No HAF

3.1.5 HAF Northumberland Additional Parents Questions

The HAF survey contained additional questions to gather parent’s views on the holiday club(s) that their child/children attended. Where a family had multiple children attending HAF, and the questions asked about individual child characteristics or outcomes, we asked parents to focus on their eldest child. As the number of parent responses varied according to question, we report the sample size for each outcome.

3.1.6. Parents Perceptions about Registering a Child/children for HAF.

Firstly, we were interested in finding out how parents had heard about HAF (Figure 8)

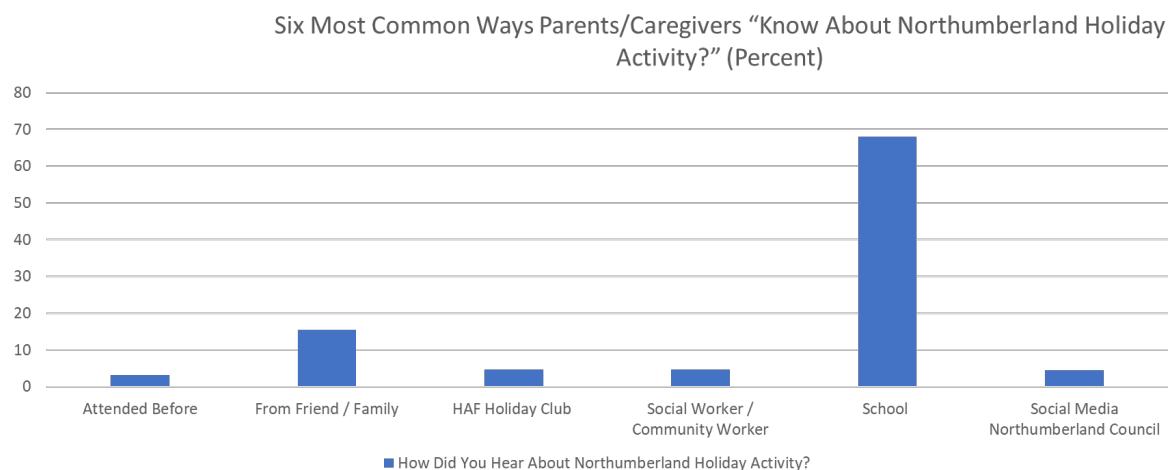
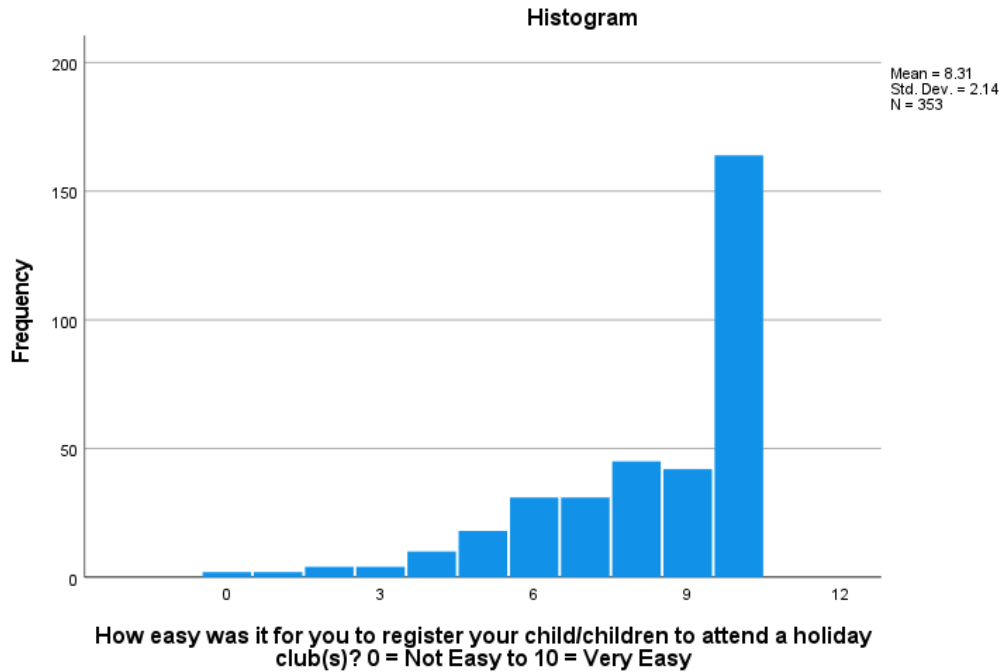


Figure 8. Where Did you Hear About HAF? 9n=412)

As clearly shown in Figure 8, the majority (nearly 70%) of parent’s heard about HAF through school, suggesting that schools in Northumberland are good at referring families to HAF provision. Secondly, we were interested in how easy it was for parents to register for HAF. Regardless of registration route, most parents reported that the registration process was easy, with only a very small percentage of parents finding it difficult (Figure 9).



Scale 0-10, with 0= 'Not easy at all' and 10 = 'very easy'

Figure 9. Ease of registering for HAF.

3.1.7 Food

Although prior research has shown that parents perceptions about whether food adheres to the School Food Standards may be problematic, we wanted to collect parent's views on the food served at club as HAF affords the opportunity of improving dietary intake, increasing the range of food consumed, and opportunities for children to be engaged in hands on food preparation. To measure these outcomes, we asked parents to agree or disagree with the following statements in Table 3.

Table 3. Parent/caregiver perceptions about food at HAF

	Frequency	% Agree
Club served nutritious food	265	64.3
My child(ren) enjoyed club food	244	59.2
Child(ren) tried new foods at club	176	54.3
Child(ren) ate wider variety of foods at club	177	43
Club met food and dietary requirements	231	71.3
Opportunities at club for hands on food activities	112	34.5
Club improved child(ren) knowledge & confidence to prepare food	92	28.3

n=412; missing cases = 87

Interestingly, only 64% of parents thought the food was nutritious and only 59% of parents thought their children enjoyed the food served at holiday clubs. It is also important to note the holiday clubs self-reported more favourable ratings of the food they served at clubs but note the difference in the categories in the table above. It should also be noted that research studies have shown differences in people’s perceptions of what counts as ‘nutritious food’, and this perception may not always correlate with School Food Standards. A relatively low percentage of parents thought that their children had sufficient opportunity to engage in hands on cooking practices.

First, maintaining the current investment in staff development programmes means that the investment remains in the local community and increases the knowledge and skills of holiday club staff, and this knowledge may be transferred to the wider community. Secondly, where clubs use local food businesses to provide food, there may also be knowledge mobilisation into local businesses, which may improve the quality of the food offer outside of HAF Northumberland. Finally, the above data suggest that further work is required to change families’ perceptions, attitudes and behaviours towards food, perhaps through an increased engagement in hands on cooking activities.

3.1.8 Safety

A number of prior, peer-reviewed studies by the Healthy Living identified that children felt safe at holiday clubs (see Figure 10). In the present study, the researchers extended this original finding by comparing the percentage of parents who agreed that their children were safe while attending HAF Northumberland compared to their local neighbourhood. The results clearly show that 89.2% parents strongly agree that their children are safe whilst attending HAF clubs versus 63.9% strongly agreeing that their children are safe in their immediate neighbourhood.

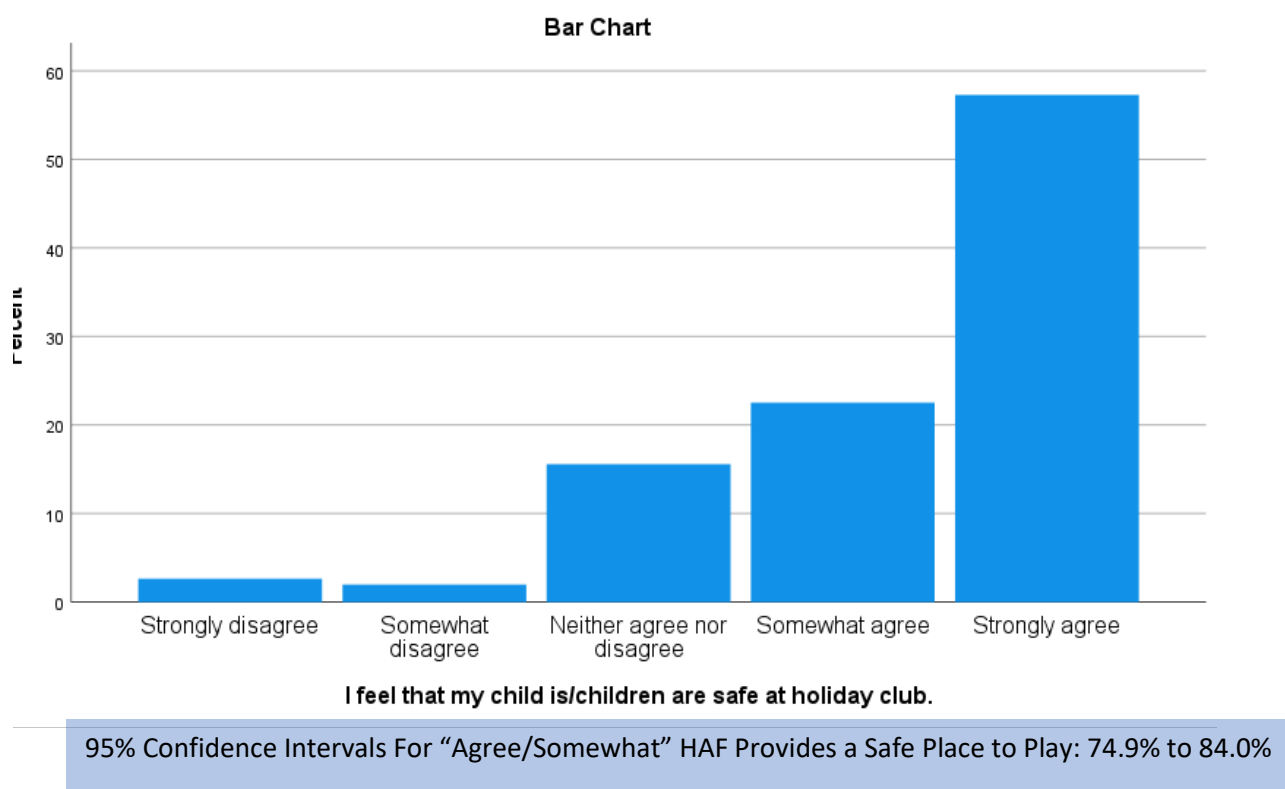


Figure 10. Perceived safety during summer at HAF clubs.

However, perceptions of safety and time children spent in HAF are unlikely to be related in this population (Figure 11). This is most likely the result of parent’s perceptions about neighbourhood safety being relatively high (0.8 on a -2 to +2 scale).

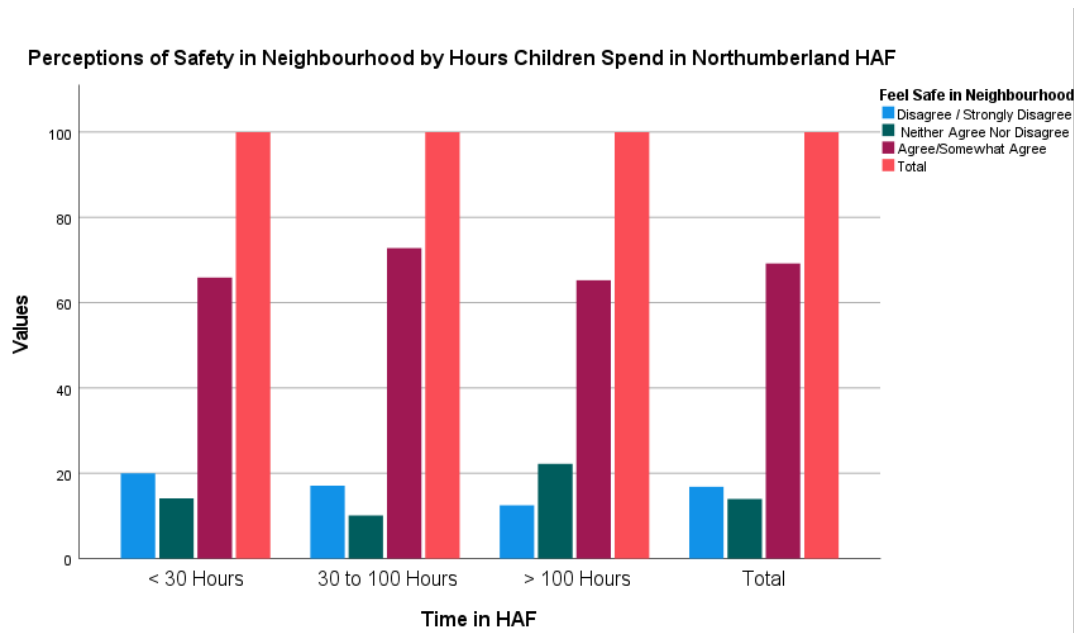


Figure 11. Parents Perception in terms of Neighbourhood Safety (n=331).

In comparing neighbourhood safety between the HAF and no HAF group, it is clear that parent/carers perceive Northumberland to be a safer place to live compared to parents in the control group ($t(798)=-3.8, p= 0.01$).

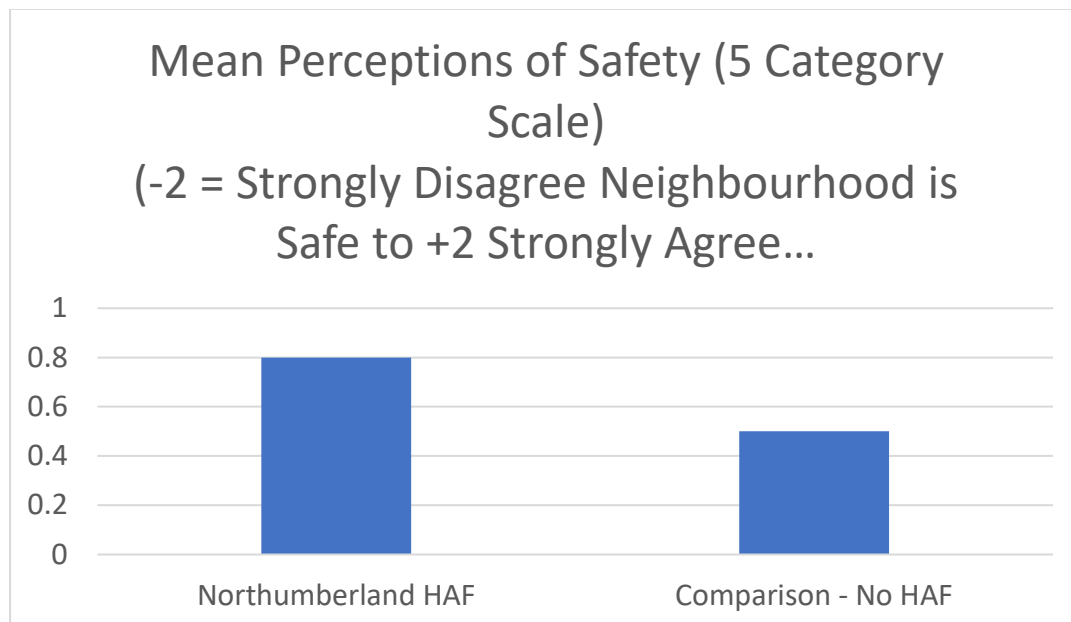
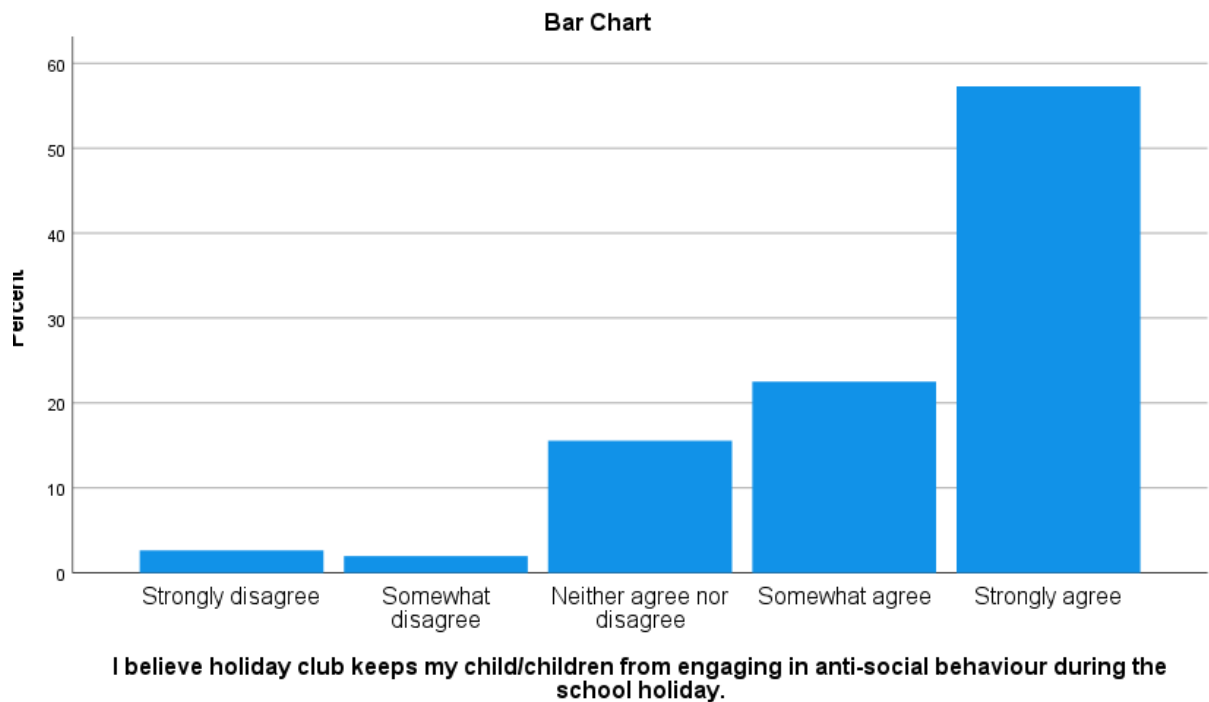


Figure 12. Neighbourhood Safety: HAF versus No HAF.

3.1.9 Anti-social Behaviour

Some of the early research by the Healthy Living Lab showed that parents thought that holiday clubs kept children from participating in anti-social behaviour during the school holidays (Defeyter et al., 2015a, 2018a; Mann, 2019; Shinwell, 2019). These findings were replicated in the current study, with nearly 80% of parents strongly agreeing or agreeing that HAF kept their children from participating in anti-social behaviour (See Figure 13).



95% Confidence Intervals For "Agree/Somewhat" Prevents Anti-Social Behaviour: 85.4% to 92.2%

Figure 13. Distribution of Perceptions of Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour (n=302).

3.1.10 Childrens Wellbeing

In addition to the above factors, the research team explored parents' perceptions about the social and psychological benefits for children afforded by attending HAF. 71% of parents strongly agreed/agreed that HAF attendance improved their child's mental wellbeing.

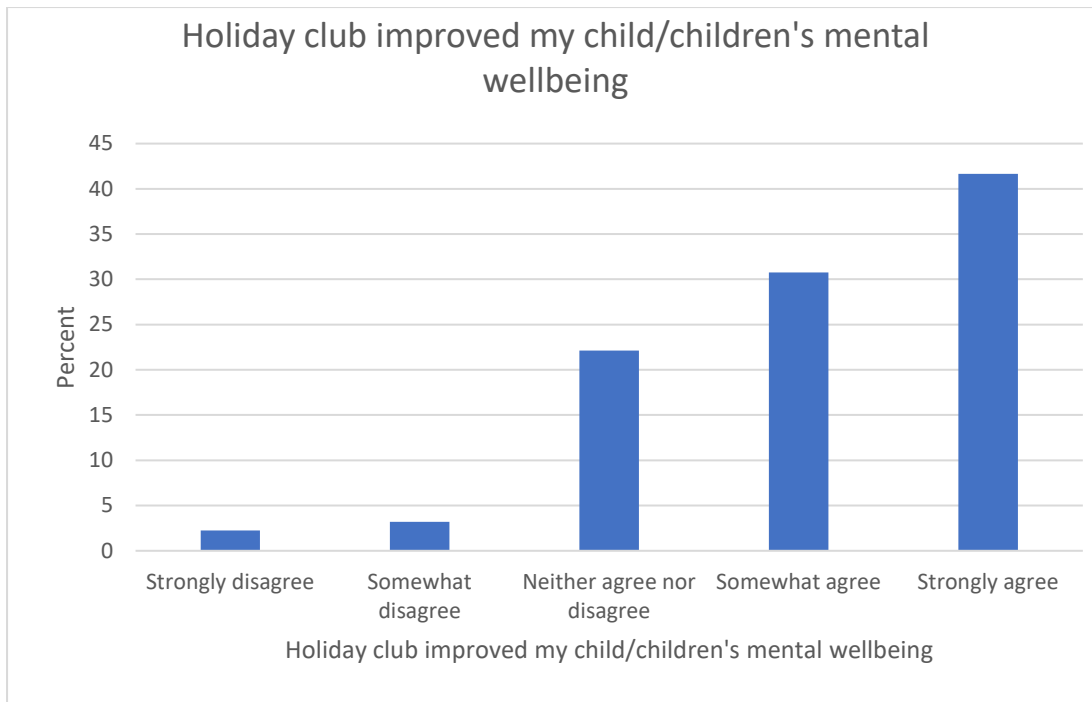


Figure 14. Parent/carers Perceptions of Childrens Mental Wellbeing (n=400).

Parents/carers also reported that HAF provided opportunities for children to participate in enriching activities that supported their general wellbeing (Figure 15).

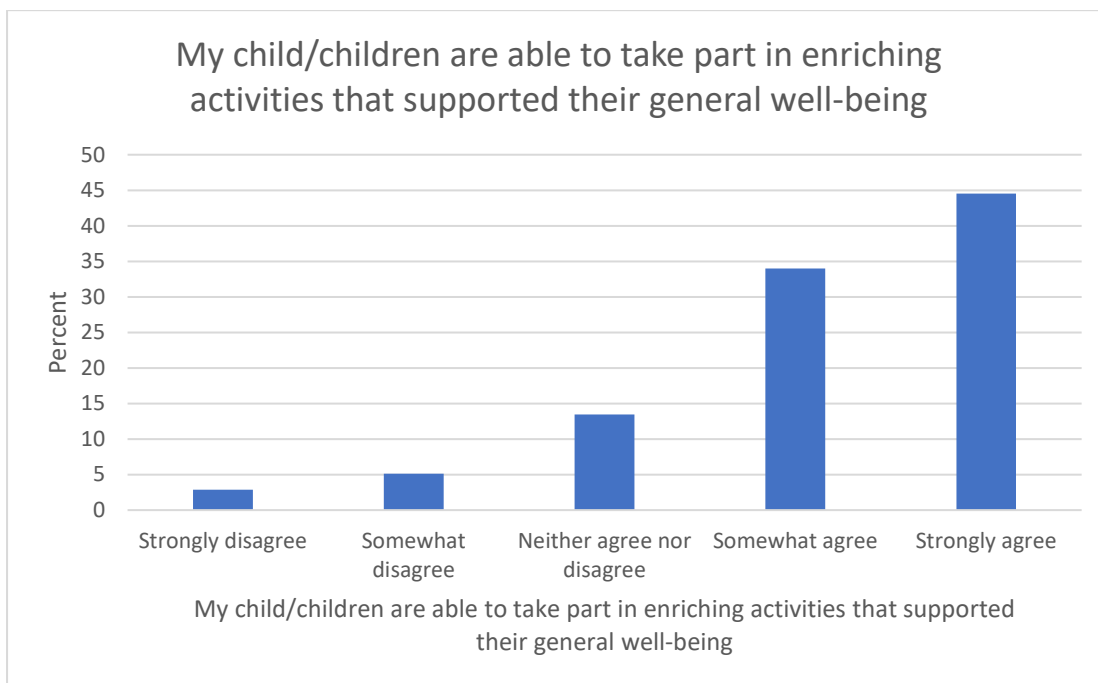


Figure 15. Parent's Perception on Their Children's Participation in Enriching Activities (n=400)

3.1.11. Children's Social Isolation

Nearly 80% of parents said that HAF provided a safe environment in which to meet friends, and make new friends and thus, reduced social isolation.

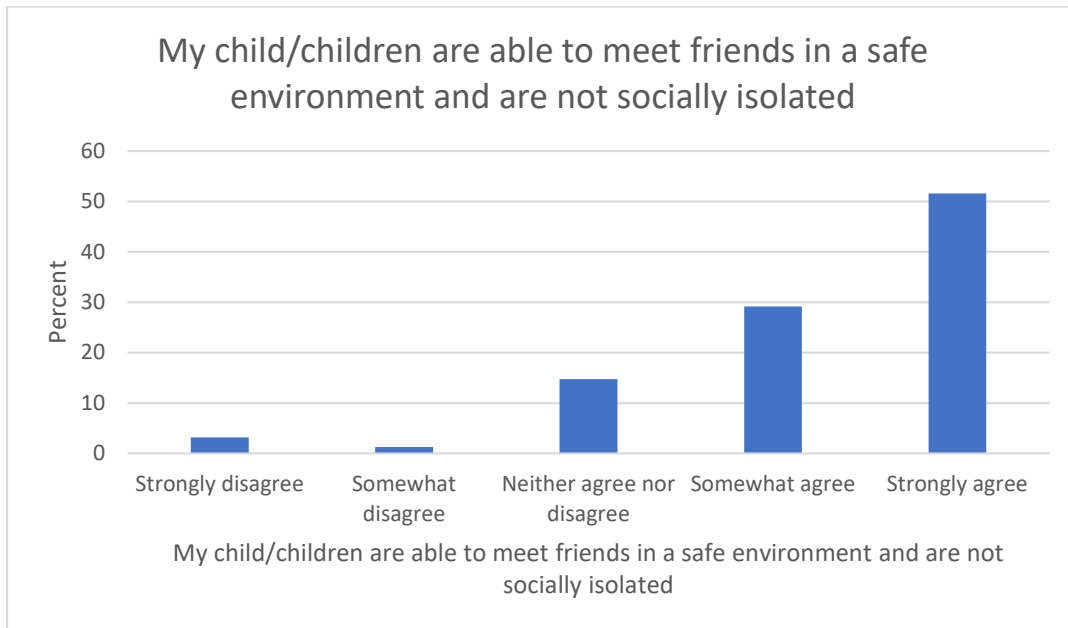


Figure 16. Parent/Carers Perceptions About HAF Reducing Social Isolation (n=400).

Parents also reported that HAF boosted their child's self-esteem and confidence (Figures 17 & 18; respectively).

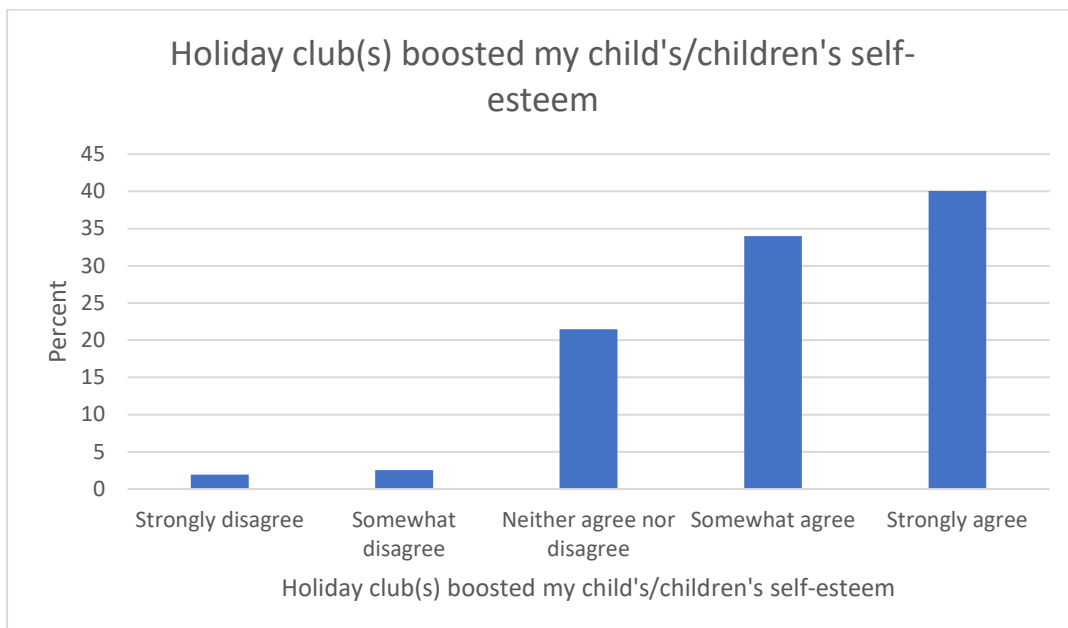


Figure 17. Parent's Perceptions on Whether HAF Boosts Children's Self-Esteem (n=400).

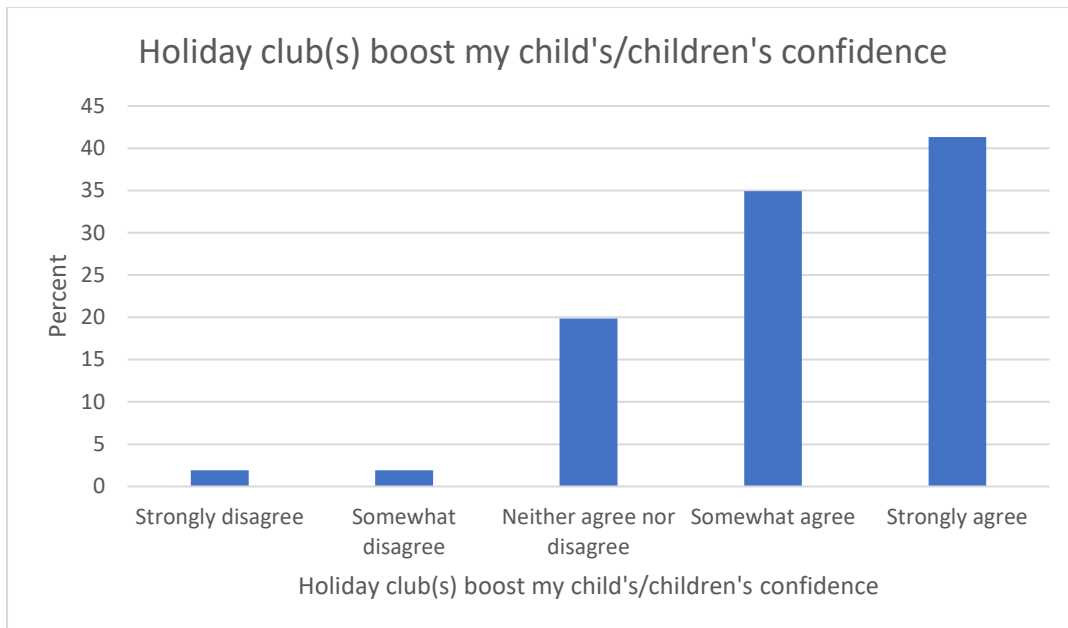


Figure 18. Parent's Perceptions on Whether HAF Boosts Children's Confidence (n=400)

In exploring parents' perceptions on whether HAF had supported children's school readiness, defined as 'being ready to return to school in September', nearly 60% of parents thought that HAF attendance had helped children in terms of being 'school ready'.

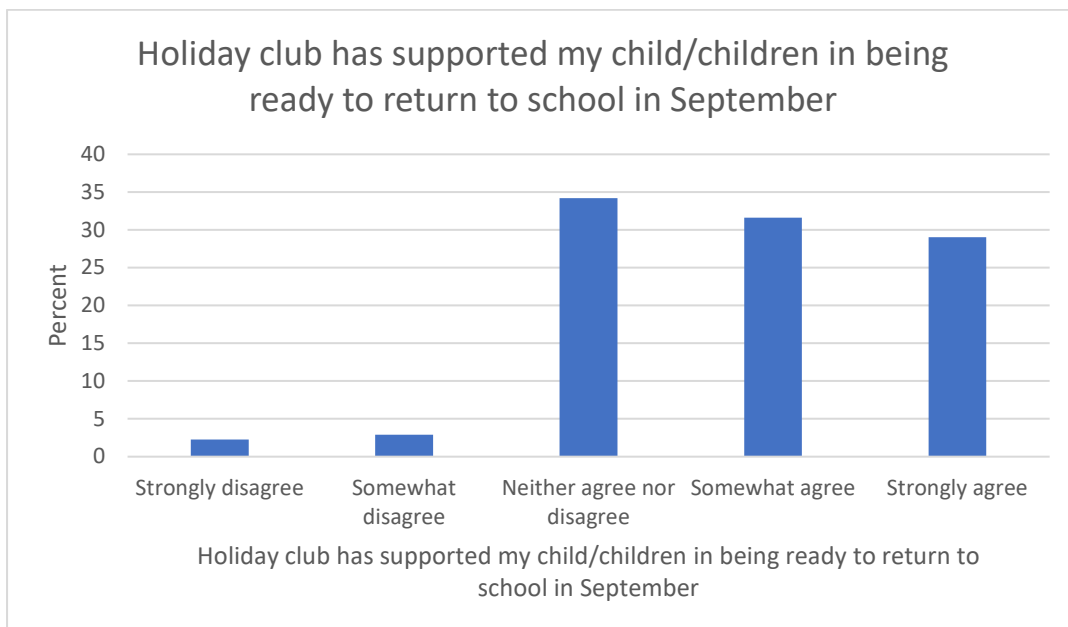


Figure 19. Parent's Perception on HAF and School Readiness.

3.1.12 Overall parent satisfaction

Lastly, we examined overall parent satisfaction of parents whose children attended HAF. We measure this in three different ways. Firstly, we measured how satisfied parents were with the holiday club their children attended. Secondly, we measured how satisfied parents were with the HAF co-ordinating team, and finally we measured the likelihood of parents registering their children for HAF in 2023.

As shown in Figure 20, the vast majority of parents/carers were either extremely or somewhat satisfied with their children's holiday club. We found somewhat similar results for parents' satisfaction with the HAF Co-ordinator Team (Figure 21). Finally, as show in Figure 22, the majority of parents are highly likely or likely to send their children to HAF in 2023. Cumulatively these findings suggest that HAF in Northumberland is very well received by parents and caregivers.

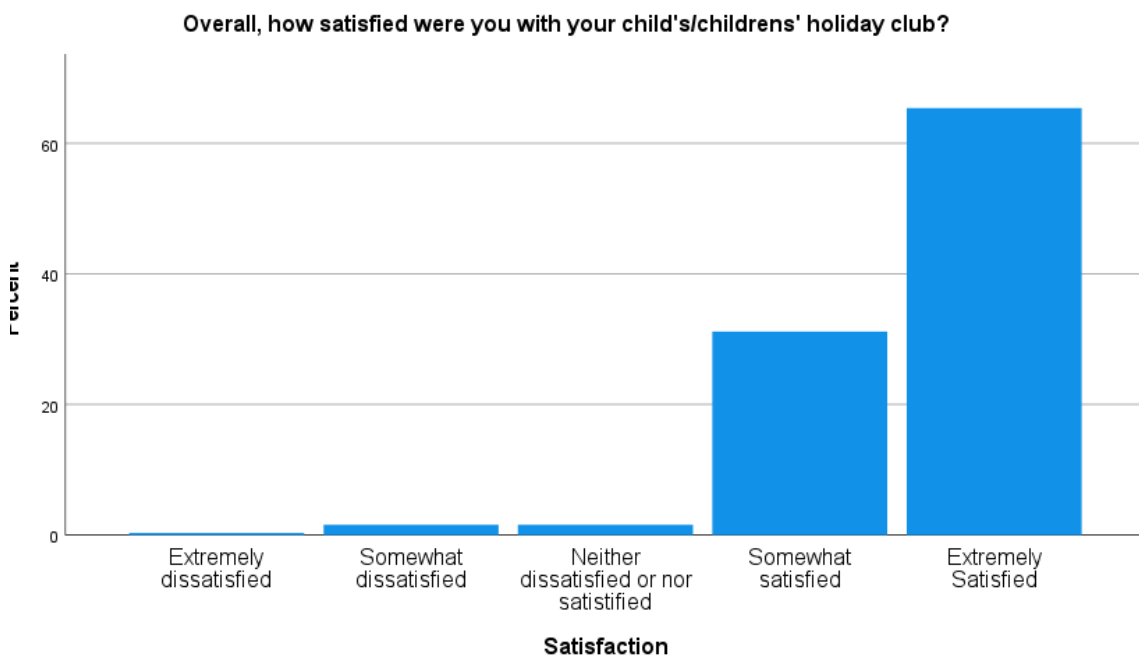


Figure 20. Parent's Satisfaction with Their Child's Holiday Club

Overall, how satisfied are with the Northumberland Holiday Activity Provision Team's co-ordination of their holiday provision programme?

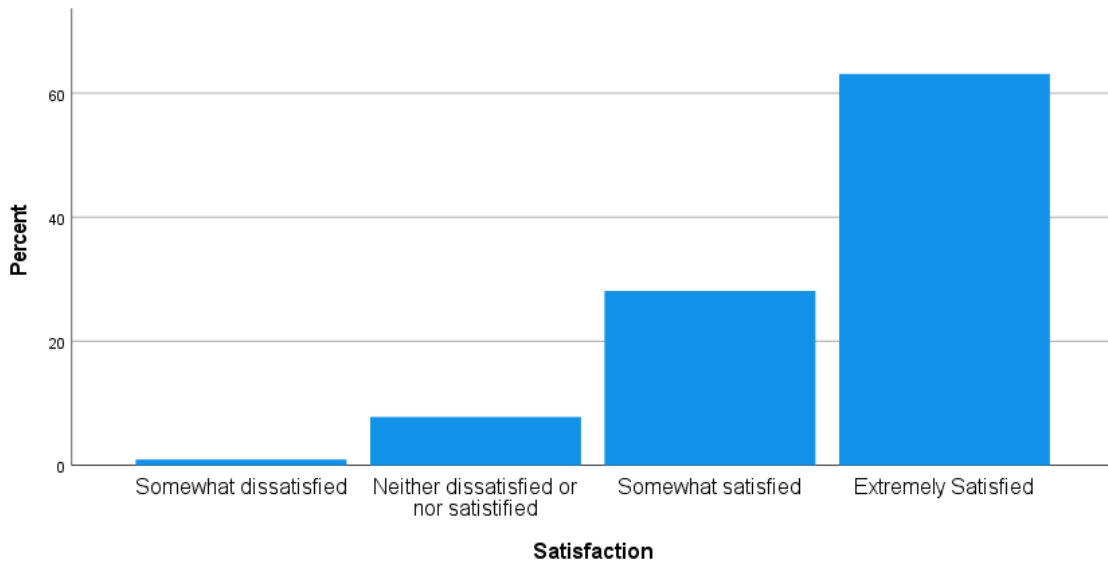


Figure 21. Parent's Satisfaction with The HAF Co-ordination Team

If the government funded holiday clubs next year, the likelihood of my child/children attending is:

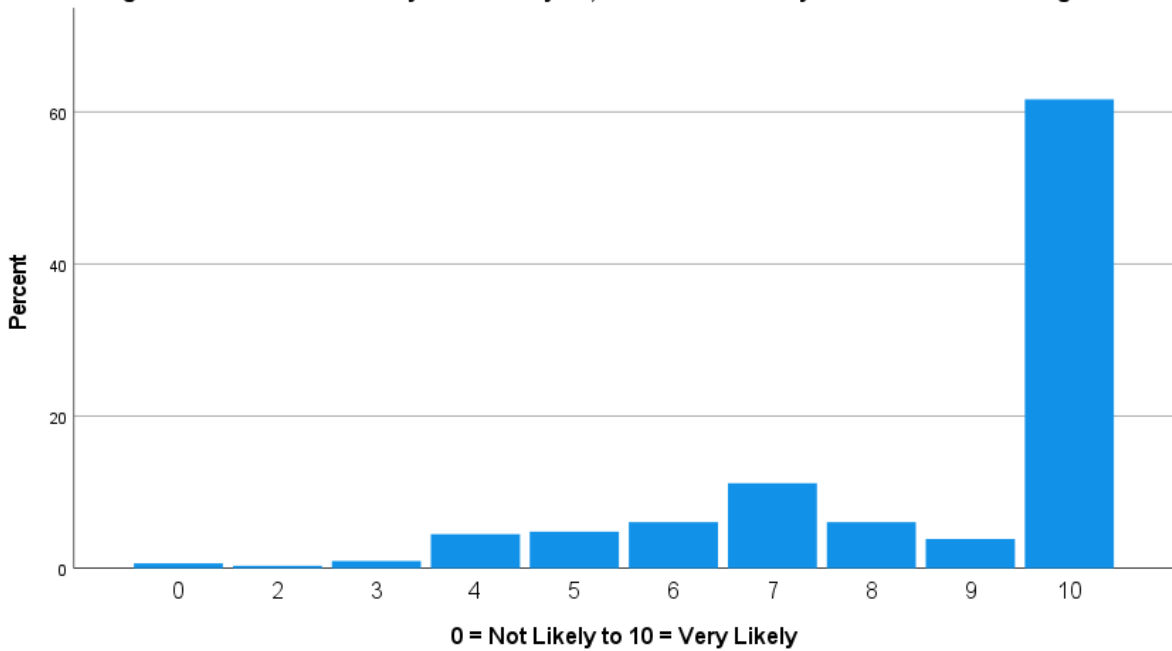


Figure 22. The Likelihood That Parent's will Register Their Child for HAF 2023.

4.1.Preparedness

Twenty-one holiday club leads completed the online holiday club leader survey. Firstly, we asked how prepared club leaders were for delivery in 2022. The findings from the holiday club leader survey showed that nearly approximately 90% of clubs were either very prepared or somewhat prepared to deliver summer provision (see Figure 23).

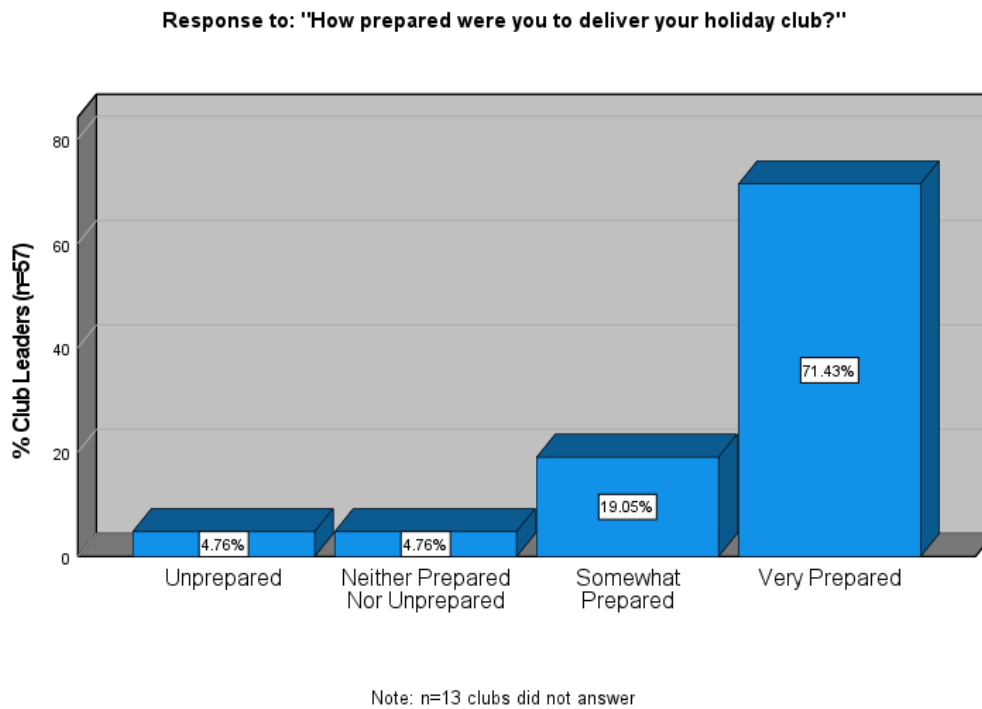


Figure 23. How prepared holiday clubs were to deliver HAF in Summer 2022.

4.1.1. Range of Children Targetted.

The research team were also interested in the range of children targeted. Although management information data, accompanied by targeting deprived wards and neighbourhoods, suggested significant reach, it is important to measure targeting at the local club level. In terms of the target population, the majority of clubs aimed to serve a wide range of children. Encouragingly, clubs aimed to target their provision to accommodate a wide range of children (see Figure 24).

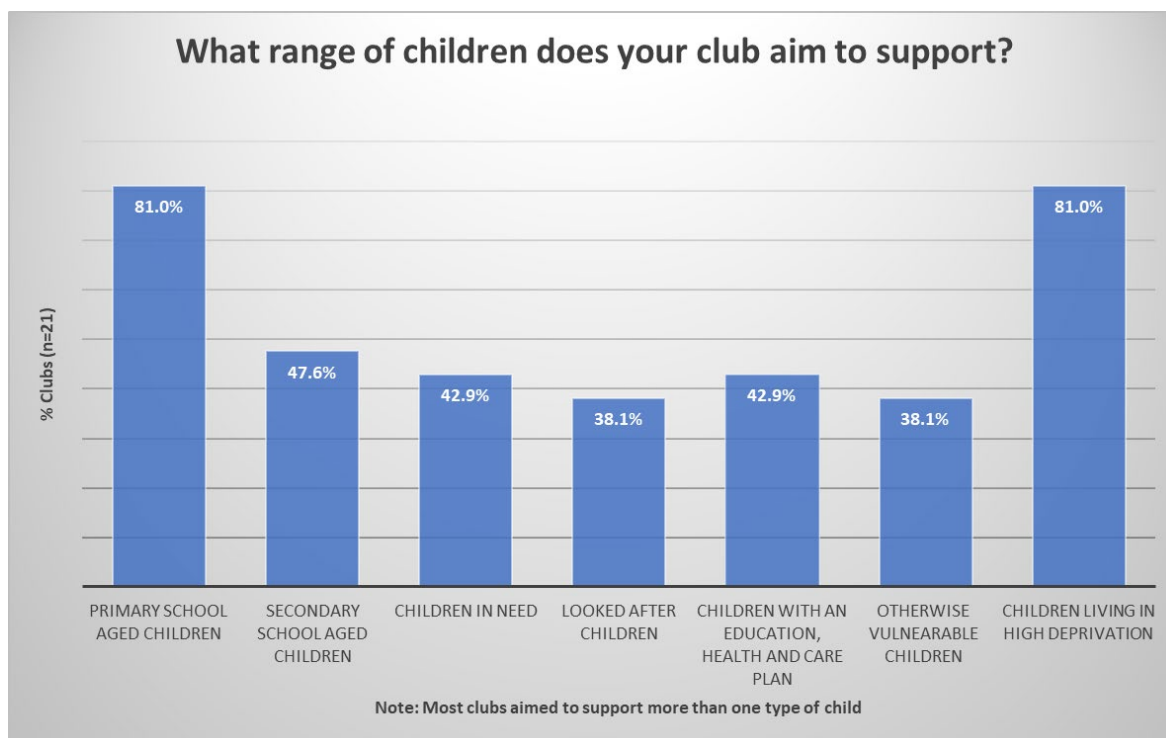


Figure 24. Range of children targeted by holiday clubs.

4.1.2 Activities:

Most clubs offered a range of physical activities and enrichment activities to children, with a number of clubs offering sessions to both children and parents (see Table 4).

Table 4. Number of Physical Activities sessions offered to primary school aged children, secondary school aged children and parents/carers.

	0 Sessions	1 to 10 Sessions	More Than 10 Sessions
Primary School Children	4.80%	85.7%	9.5%
Secondary School Children	12.5%	81.3%	6.3%
Parents/carers	81.0%	18.2%	0.0%

n=21 clubs

4.1.3 Nutritional Education Sessions.

The number of nutritional education sessions was slightly lower compared to other activities offered. Most clubs (78%) offered 1-10 sessions to primary school children and 57% offering 1- 10 sessions to secondary school children across the summer school holiday period (see Table 5).

Table 5. Number of cooking/nutritional education sessions offered to primary school children, secondary school children and parents/carers

	0 Sessions	1 to 10 Sessions	More Than 10 Sessions
Primary School Children	16.70%	77.80%	5.60%
Secondary School Children	35.70%	57.10%	7.10%
Parents/carers	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%

n =18 clubs

4.1.4 Food & Meals Served:

The focus on sustainability and investment in the local economy etc. was explored by asking club leaders about where they sourced food (see Figure 25) and food waste. The majority of clubs sourced food from local supermarkets (32%), followed by food sourced from catering company organised by the club (24%), although it should be noted that some clubs sourced food from multiple sources. The reliance on surplus food via charitable donations was relatively small (14%), and most likely attributed to HAF funding.

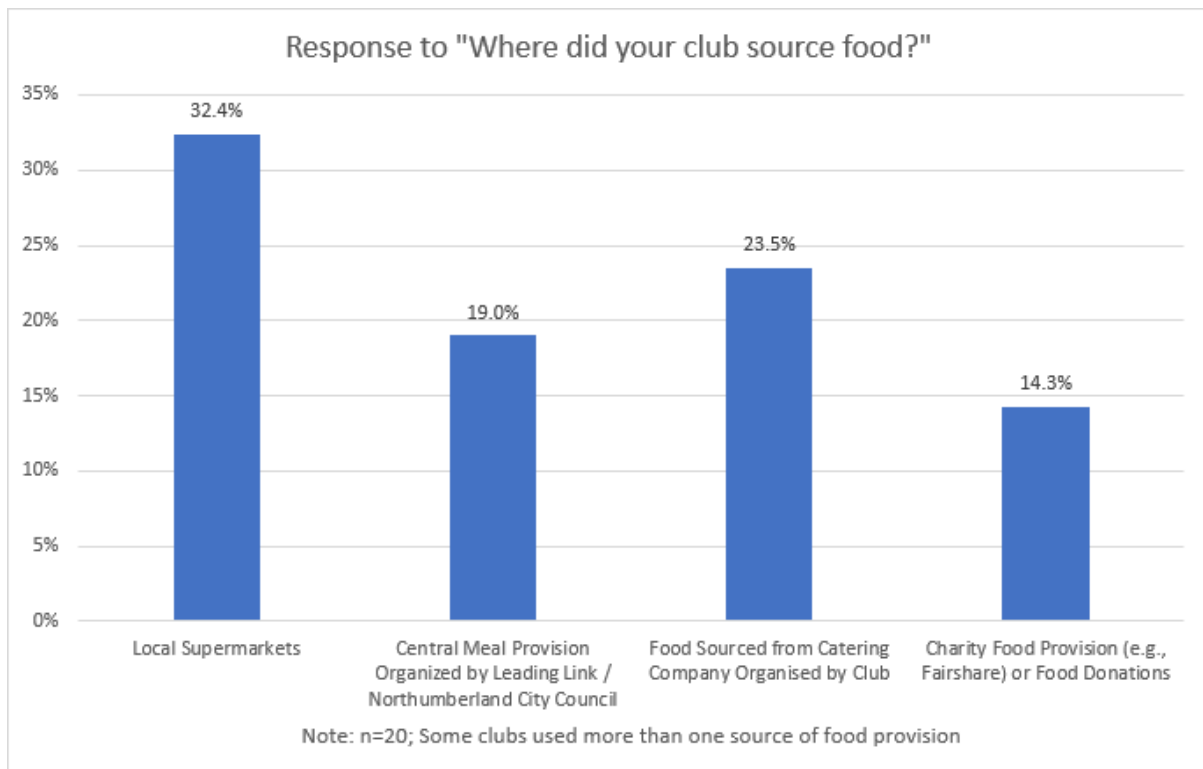
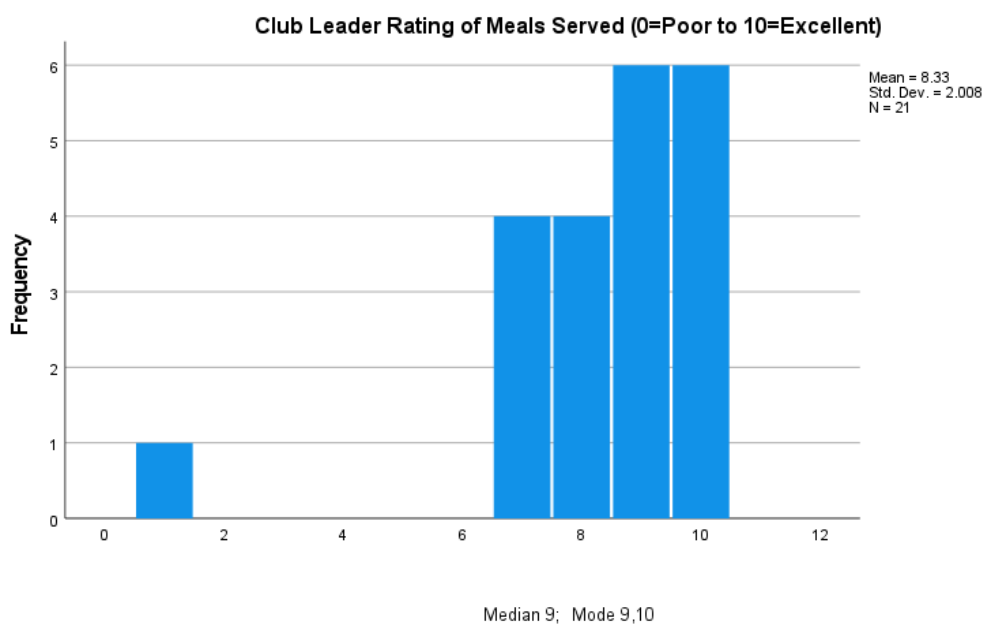


Figure 25. Where Clubs Sourced Their Food

Club leaders were asked to rate the quality of the meals served on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent). The overall median score was 9, with the majority of clubs scoring their food provision as good or excellent (Figure 26). In addition, we separated club leaders' ratings according to on-site versus central meal provision (see Figure 27). We purposefully asked club leaders to provide a rating of meals served, rather than asking club leaders to rate meals in terms of adherence to School Food Standards, as our prior research on holiday clubs has demonstrated that club leaders often rate the food offer as excellent, even in cases where the food does not fully adhere to School Food Standards. A good understanding of School Food Standards requires considerable knowledge and expertise, as demonstrated by school caterers employing nutritionists and dieticians to develop menus that adhere to School Food Standards. Holiday club staff are expected to carry out numerous roles, ranging from administration, child safeguarding, providing physical and enrichment activities, and many more. Of course, using this type of rating system does not imply whether meals met School Food Standards.



Rating from 1 (Poor) to 10 (Excellent).

Figure 26. Club Leaders Rating of Meals Served at HAF.

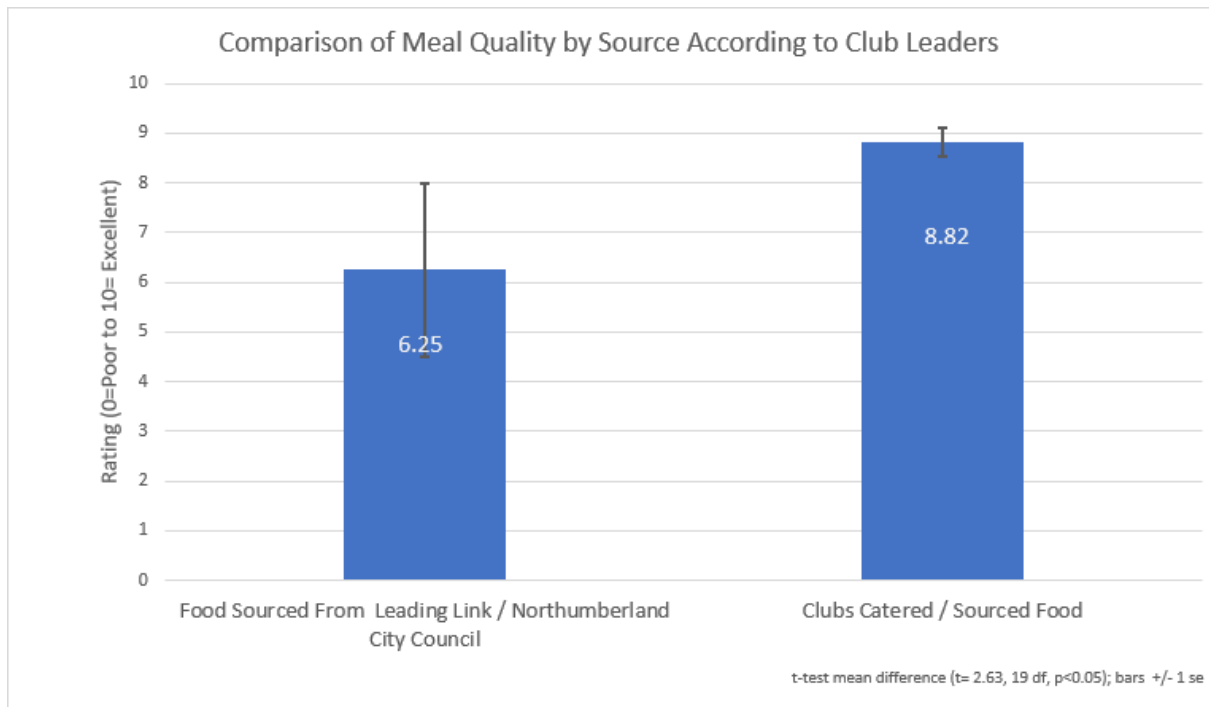


Figure 27. Club Leaders Ratings of Food According to Source

4.1.5 Wasted Food:

Managing varying attendance patterns, and the number of meals required on a daily basis can prove complicated even with an effective booking system. The findings (see Figure 28) showed that the majority of clubs only threw away a small amount of food, with 24% of clubs throwing no food away at all.

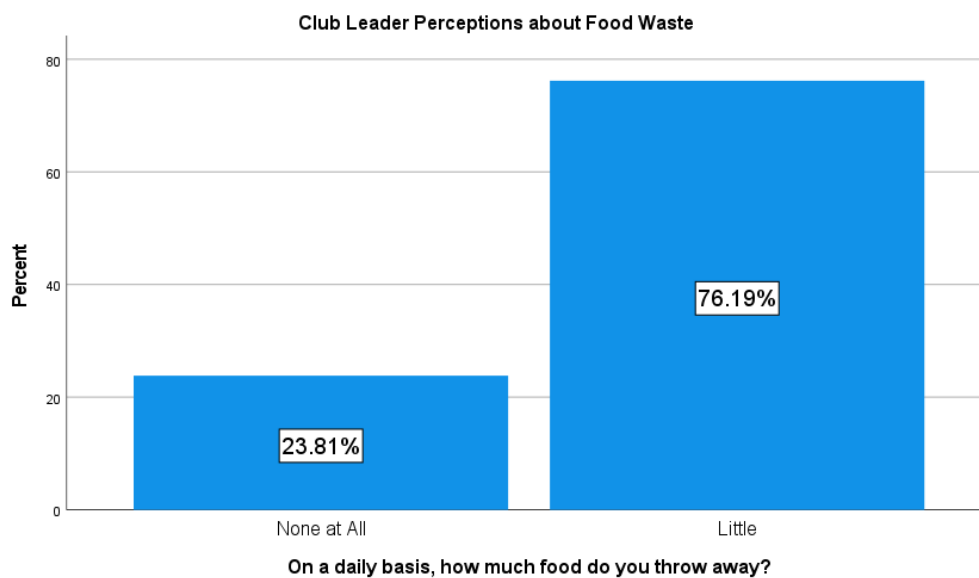


Figure 28. Food wastage at the club level

Overall, the strategic management and co-ordination of HAF by Leading Link was excellent and provides Northumberland County Council with a solid foundation on which to build future HAF delivery. Schools played an important referral route to the HAF programmes, and this partnership with schools should be commended. Importantly, HAF delivered significant, positive outcomes across a wide range of factors, including childcare, food security, health and wellbeing, school readiness, anti-social behaviour, and many more at individual, community, and county level.

All the key recommendations in this report result from the research findings of the current evaluation. There may be additional learning by participating organisations that is not captured in this evaluation (i.e., through management data reported to the DfE). The key recommendations of this report for the future delivery of HAF include:

- Continue with a community targeting approach to prevent stigma and drive positive outcomes at all levels.
- Continue to build on the excellent school partnerships.
- Ensure that food, whether hot or cold, continues to adhere to School Food Standards. We did not specifically test this in the current evaluation.
- Continue with a multi-channel marketing approach as this appears to be highly effective.
- Although DfE (2023) guidance has changed, continue with nutritional education sessions as they will drive long term change in dietary habits.
- Establish a HAF specific public involvement and engagement group for adults and a separate group for young people to ensure that the voice of the service user is heard and acted upon.
- Ensure that parent's have good oversight of their child's engagement in HAF through a clear communications plan.

The following paragraphs elaborate on 3 key recommendations.

5.1 Physical Activity

The results regarding the amount of parent reported physical activity for children attending HAF is an area that needs addressing. It is notable that analysis of the data found a difference between groups, with the Non HAF group engaging in more physical activity compared to the HAF group, but also that as HAF attendance increased, physical activity decreased. We suggest a review of the actual delivery at the club level to ensure a) the appropriate type of activities is being delivered (i.e MVPA), as not all physical activities fall into this category. Secondly, we suggest that if such activities are being delivered, then this is clearly communicated to parents, as there is a possibility that parents were simply unaware of the amount of physical activity that their children engaged in during HAF. However, even if this is the case, the current level of physical activity sessions delivered by the holiday clubs themselves falls short of the recommended guidelines for the 6-week school summer holiday.

5.2 Ensure Primary and Secondary Samples are Representative of the Population

It is good to see a good level of HAF provision for secondary school aged young children, but as the number of young people attending HAF increases, the council needs to ensure a good distribution across both primary and secondary so that it reflects the proportion of primary and secondary children within the county. Where possible, it is important to provide families with equity in terms of being able to access a HAF club, with a similar level of provision in terms of opening times and activities; although the research team acknowledges that provision is often based on an asset-based approach.

5.3 Enrichment Activities and Nutritional Education

The range of enrichment and cultural activities were excellent overall and wide ranging in nature. This good practice should continue, and the council may wish to consider how HAF could be used to secure existing relationships with local businesses, museums, and other cultural and leisure venues, and to develop new partnerships. Although the overall enrichment activities were excellent, the provision of nutritional education was excellent and above the national average for nutritional education sessions within HAF, as evidenced in the holiday club survey, there appears to be some difference between parent's views and that of the club leaders; specifically, around physical activities and nutritional education (hands on cooking). We strongly suggest that clubs should continue to deliver these activities. However, we suggest that a) the coordinator reviews current delivery and explores facilitators and barriers to participation and delivery, and b) considers how to communicate the activities children engage with to parents.

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Appendix 1: A summary of the academic publications on HAF and holiday programmes

Table 1. Summary of peer-reviewed research on the impact of attendance at holiday provision in the UK

Author, year	Aim of study	Sample	Data collection	Context	Key findings
Defeyter et al., (2015)	To determine the impacts of holiday breakfast club participation and investigate potential areas for future development	Children: <i>N=17</i> ; Parents/ Carers: <i>N=18</i> ; and Holiday club staff: <i>N=15</i>	Semi-structured interviews	North West England and Northern Ireland	A need for holiday food provision and revealed a multitude of nutritional, social, and financial benefits for those who accessed holiday breakfast clubs.
Graham et al. (2016)	To examine the views of holiday club staff on the need for and benefits of holiday food provision and potential areas for development	Holiday club staff: <i>N=14</i>	Semi-structured interviews	Wales and South of England	Families were perceived to be facing food insecurity and isolation during the school holidays. Holiday clubs are a valuable source of support for children and adults providing food, activities, and learning experiences. Highlighted areas for improvement in delivery of provision.
Shinwell & Defeyter (2017)	To investigate whether summer learning loss in word reading and spelling occurs in primary school aged children living in areas of high deprivation in England and	Children: <i>N = 77</i>	WRAT 4	England and Scotland	Performance in spelling declined when children returned to school after the summer holiday. However, after seven weeks of learning children caught up and exceeded levels achieved in spelling prior

Author, year	Aim of study	Sample	Data collection	Context	Key findings
	Scotland				to the summer break. Learning loss did not occur in relation to word reading.
Long et al., (2018)	To investigate if holiday clubs have the potential to reduce food insecurity among households in the UK.	Parents/carers: <i>N</i> =38	Self-completing survey	Wales, South of England and Scotland	42% (16 out of 38 respondents) of children come from households defined as “food insecure” and 24% (9 out of 38 respondents) come from households that are “food insecure with hunger.” Holiday clubs can play an important role in mitigating household food insecurity.
Mann et al. (2018)	To investigate whether holiday clubs are serving the most deprived communities in England and Wales	Holiday club staff: <i>N</i> = 428	Self-completing online survey	England and Wales	Holiday clubs are likely to be located in deprived areas where there are a high percentage of minority ethnic residents, low average income, high levels of childhood deprivation and unemployed single parent households
Defeyter et al (2019).	Policy paper on the government removing inequalities in children’s access to holiday clubs.	<i>N/A</i>		UK	Policy recommendations that the root cause of poverty should be addressed but that in the interim, holiday provision should be universal and available during all school summer holidays and not just

Author, year	Aim of study	Sample	Data collection	Context	Key findings
Gooseman, Defeyter, & Graham, (2019)	To investigate the existence, impact and potential solutions of holiday hunger	Primary school staff: <i>N=12</i>	Semi-structured interviews	North East England	during the summer break. Year-round hardship as well as holiday hunger exists. The study identified a need for a multi-agency approach to address the complex needs and provide support to families.
Holley et al., (2019)	To examine what opportunities are provided by community holiday sports clubs which include free food and challenges of delivering food provision.	Holiday hub leaders: <i>N=15</i>	Focus groups x 2	UK	Benefits of holiday clubs include alleviation of food insecurity; promoting engagement; encouraging healthy eating habits; promote positive behaviour. Hub leaders highlighted challenges with delivering food provision.
Morgan, McConnon, et al., (2019)	To examine opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity and explore delivery processes in school-based holiday clubs.	Child survey: <i>N=196</i> Parent/carer survey: <i>N=84</i> Child focus groups: <i>N=74</i>	Mixed methods	Wales	Holiday clubs provide opportunities for healthy eating: children consume fewer sugary snacks, fewer sugary drinks and more fruit and vegetables compared to a non-club day.

Author, year	Aim of study	Sample	Data collection	Context	Key findings
		Parent focus groups: <i>N=69</i> Staff/volunteer interviews: <i>N=32</i>			
Stretesky et al., n.d.)	To determine the range of resources offered by holiday clubs	Staff: <i>N=35</i> ; Volunteers: <i>N=29</i> ; Parents: <i>N=77</i> ; Children: <i>N=220</i>	Semi- structured interviews and focus groups (children)	North East England	Holiday clubs deliver a range of anti- poverty resources and services, and these are linked to the staff networks and partnerships at the holiday clubs.
Stretesky et al (2020).	To investigate if there is an association between summer food insecurity and parental stress.	Parents: <i>N = 252</i>	Self - completing questionnaire	North East England	Parental experience of holiday hunger is associated with high levels of parental stress, intrusive thoughts and avoidance behaviours.
Bayes et al (2021).	To investigate how holiday club leaders adapted their food provision and food related enrichment activities during the first UK Covid-19 pandemic	Holiday club staff: <i>N =</i> <i>25</i>	Semi- structured interviews	England and Wales	Holiday clubs introduced new ways of working to ensure that food insecure households with children were able to access support including food aid & enrichment activities during the first

Author, year	Aim of study	Sample	Data collection	Context	Key findings
	lockdown during summer 2020.				Covid-19 national lockdown in summer 2020.
Long et al (2020).	To provide an overview of literature relating to food insecurity in advanced capitalist nations.	N/A	Literature review		Governments in advanced capitalist states are more likely to favour a neoliberalist approach to food insecurity with food aid-based solutions led by not-for-profit and charitable organisations.
Defeyter et al. (2020)	Feeding children during the Covid-19 pandemic	N/A	Policy & practice review	UK	Parents of children who normally receive free school meals experienced difficulties in accessing and using food vouchers to the value of £15 per child which were introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic.
Mann et al (2020).	To investigate the views of senior stakeholders regarding the need for and barriers to effective holiday provision.	Senior stakeholders: <i>N</i> = 15	Semi structured interviews	England	Cuts to welfare provision are impacting on family budgets and driving the need for holiday provision. Multiple barriers inhibit the successful delivery of holiday provision which to a large extent, depends on using existing networks of community-based organisations.
Shinwell, Finlay	To investigate the views of	Children: <i>N</i> = 34	Semi-	Northern Ireland	Children were aware of the driving factors

Author, year	Aim of study	Sample	Data collection	Context	Key findings
& Defeyter (2021)	children and young people regarding holiday club programmes in Northern Ireland		structured interviews		behind holiday provision including poverty and food insecurity but did not feel stigmatised by attending holiday clubs and welcomed the inclusive approach of holiday provision as a way of meeting and making new friends out with their normal friendship groups.
Mann et al. (2021).	To investigate how holiday club leaders in London source and buy food to be served in holiday club settings	Holiday club leaders: <i>N</i> = 53	Self - completion online survey	London	Holiday club leaders face significant challenges sourcing and buying food, using multiple strategies and tactics to enable them to serve healthy meals to child holiday club attendees, Clubs rely heavily on donations from surplus food charities.
Long et al (2021)	To investigate the relationship between child holiday club attendance and parental mental wellbeing	Parents/carers: <i>N</i> = 133	Self- completion questionnaire	North East England	Holiday club attendance reduces social isolation for families and promotes the development of relationships between parents and children

