



NORTH EAST CHILD POVERTY TRUST 2024 REPORT

Ambitious for our children and young people

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In association with:



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Northumberland
Holiday Provision
...whether it rains or shines!

Northumberland
HAF plus

The North East Child Poverty Trust (NECPT) was registered by the Charity Commission in April 2015 and aims to raise funds for local partnerships to tackle the growing problems of child poverty.

The North East has the second highest levels of child poverty in the United Kingdom.

The context and the challenge

The NECPT has worked in partnership with Northumberland County Council and Leading Link to support the delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food programme, branded in Northumberland as Northumberland Holiday Provision to reflect its wider aims, for over three years.



The Trust has had grant aid of £325,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund for the period 2021 to 2024. The first financial year was a pilot followed by two years to April 2024 when the government's Comprehensive Spending Review allocated over £200M for the period up to March 2025.

This report:

- Highlights the context and the challenge created by the level of child poverty in the region;
- Provides data and analysis from the independent evaluation of the Northumberland programme by Northumbria University's leading academics in the Healthy Living Lab Professor Greta Defeyter and Professor Paul Stretesky;
- Summarises the added value achieved through the Lottery funding via NECPT.

The publication in February 2024 **‘No Time to Wait : An ambitious blueprint for tackling child poverty in the North East’** by the North East Child Poverty Commission, warns that child poverty ‘is not only limiting the life chances and outcomes of tens of thousands of children and families across the North East – and their ability to benefit from everything this part of the world has to offer – it is holding the whole of our region back’.

The report sets out the stark picture of child poverty in the North East. Key points are that:

- Between 2014/15 and 2021/22, the percentage of children living in relative poverty, after housing costs across the North East rose by nine percentage points, from 26% to 35% - the steepest increase experienced by any UK nation or region during that time, with the North East currently having the second highest child poverty rate in the UK.
- The number of children living in families attempting to ‘get by’ on extremely low levels of household incomes has risen by well over 20,000 since 2014/15 - such that one in five (over 100,000) of all babies, children and young people growing up in the North East are now living in deep poverty. This includes the more than one in ten (c.60,000) of all North East children living in very deep poverty.
- Every Local Authority area in the North East has a higher percentage of children living in relative poverty (after housing costs) than the national average although stark inequalities exist within the North East at a ward level.

In late March 2024, the DWP published the annual Households Below Average Income (HBAI) data for 2022/23 – from which national and regional child poverty figures are taken. These figures indicate that child poverty across the UK rose to 4.3 million (30%), up 100,000 on the year before – and up from 3.6 million in 2010/11. There was a particularly worrying, if unsurprising, increase in the number of children living in food insecure households (up 700,000 on the year before, to 2.4 million children) – and the number of children living in ‘absolute poverty’ (the Government’s preferred measure) rose by 300,000 on 2021/22.

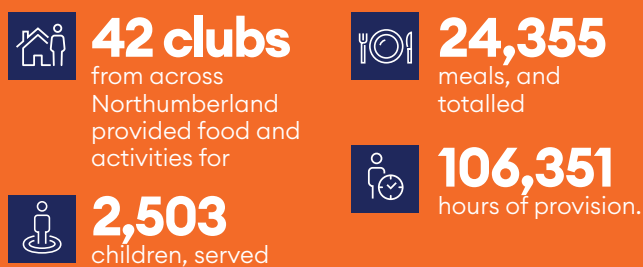
Undoubtedly the situation is deteriorating and the enormity of the challenge is rising. Mitigation measures such as the Northumberland Holiday Provision are not a complete answer but they are a significant contributor to improved personal, family and social outcomes as the evidence in this evaluation report demonstrates.



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 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:



The Family and Teenage offer, supported by:



Desktop analysis of management information showed a continued high demand and uptake of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme in 2023, with:



The Family and Teenage offer, supported by:



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 from 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.



Chapter 1: HAF in Northumberland

To avoid duplication and repetition, a summary of prior research findings will not be presented in this research report (see HAF 2022 report for a full literature review). 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). 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 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 closed 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.

Chapter 3: Parent Survey Findings

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.

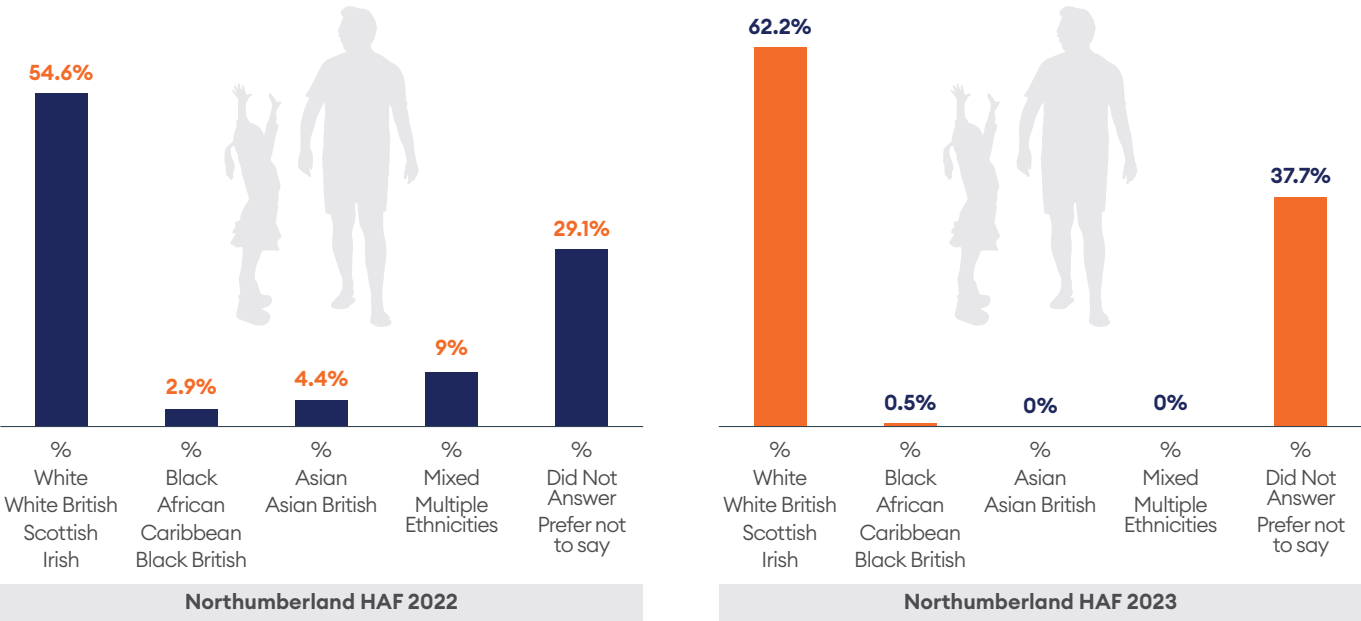


Figure 1. Comparison of Racial/Ethnic Status of Parents/Caregiver's in 2022 & 2023

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.

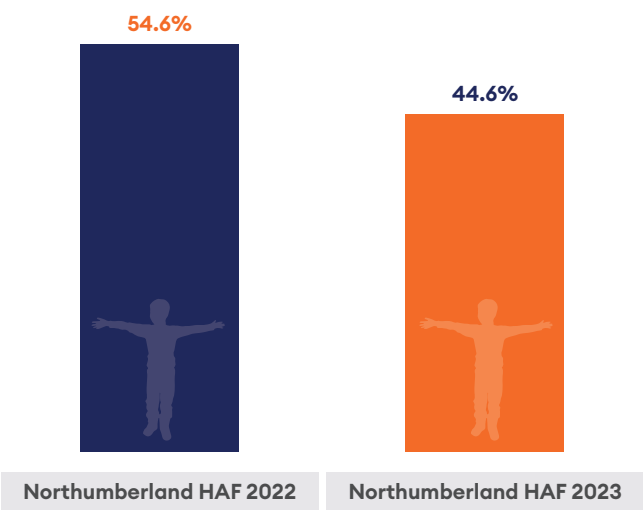


Figure 2. Percentage of Parents of HAF Attendees Eligible for Free School Meals in 2022 & 2023

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.

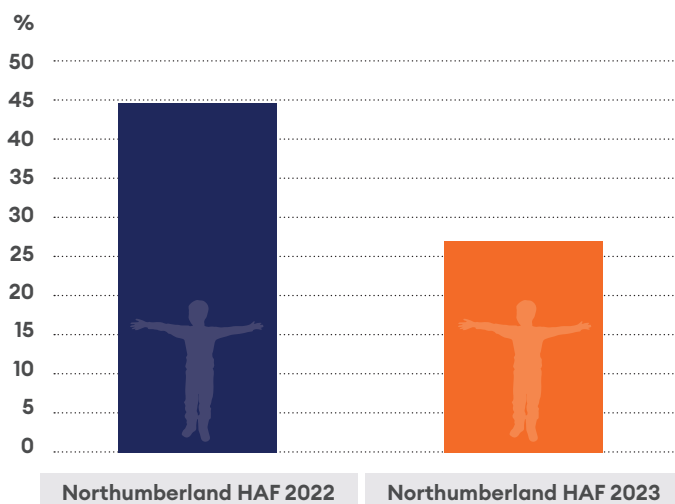


Figure 3. Percentage of Parents in Employment in 2022 & 2023

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.

3.1.1 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 found it very hard to find affordable childcare, analysis showed that in 2023, 37% of parents found it very hard to find affordable childcare during the school holidays.

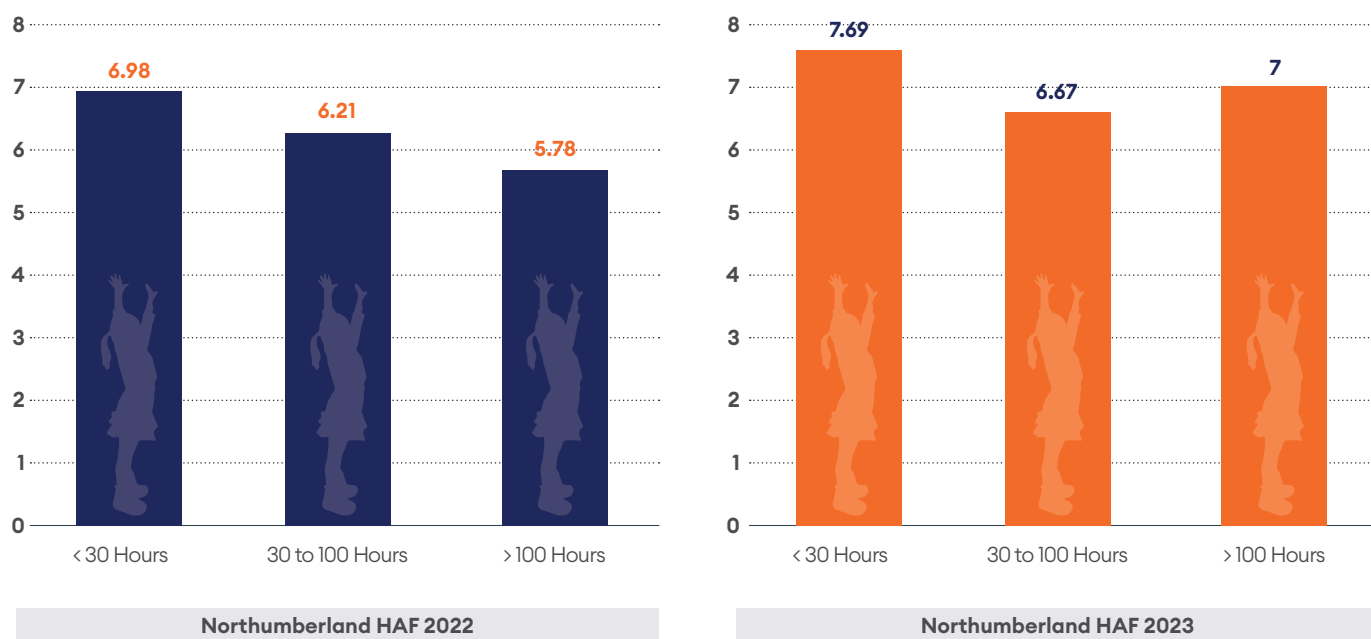


Figure 4: Difficulty in Finding Affordable Childcare by Hours Spent in HAF in 2022 & 2023.

3.1.2 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 significant 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.

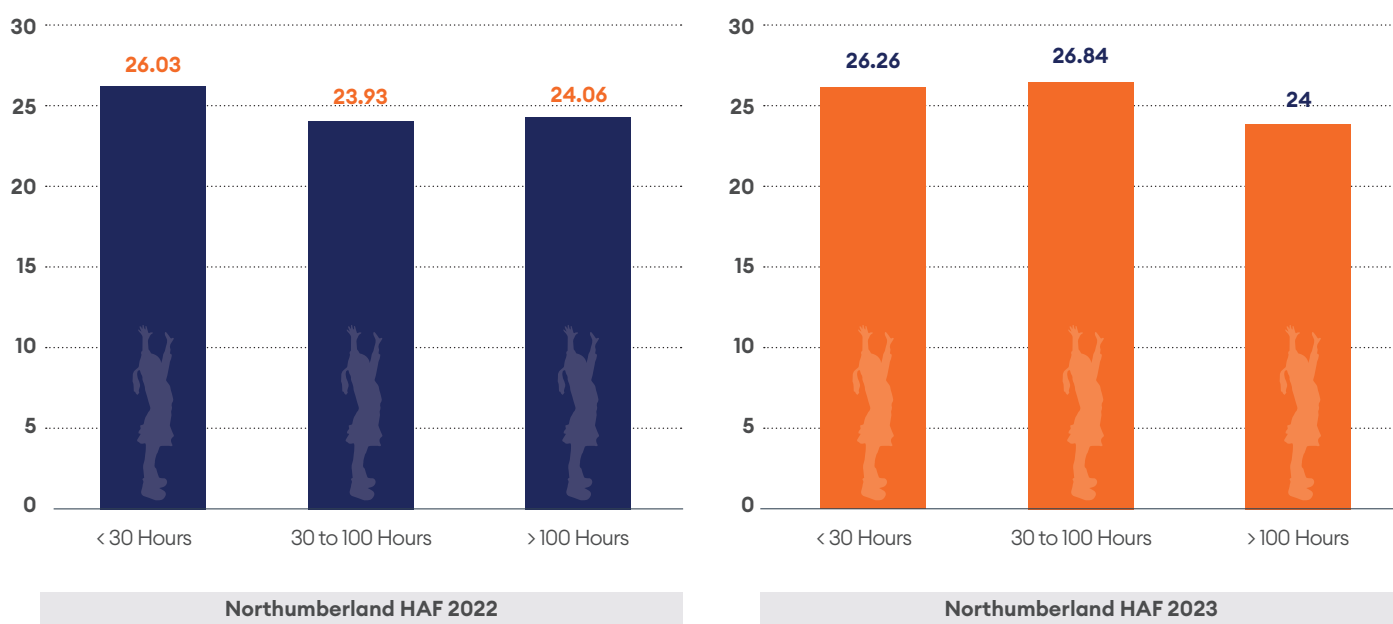


Figure 5. Mean Perceived Parental Wellbeing Scores (0= low stress) by Hours Spent at HAF in 2022 & 2023.

3.1.3 Household 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 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).

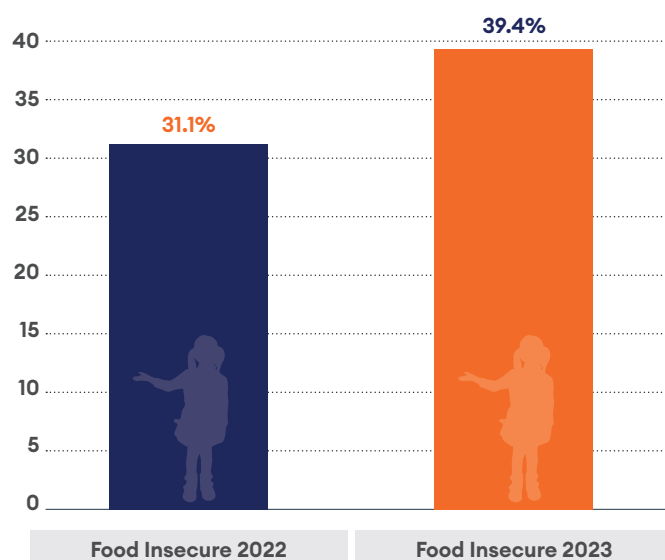


Figure 6. Percentage of HAF Households that are Food Insecure in 2022 & 2023.

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 reaching 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.

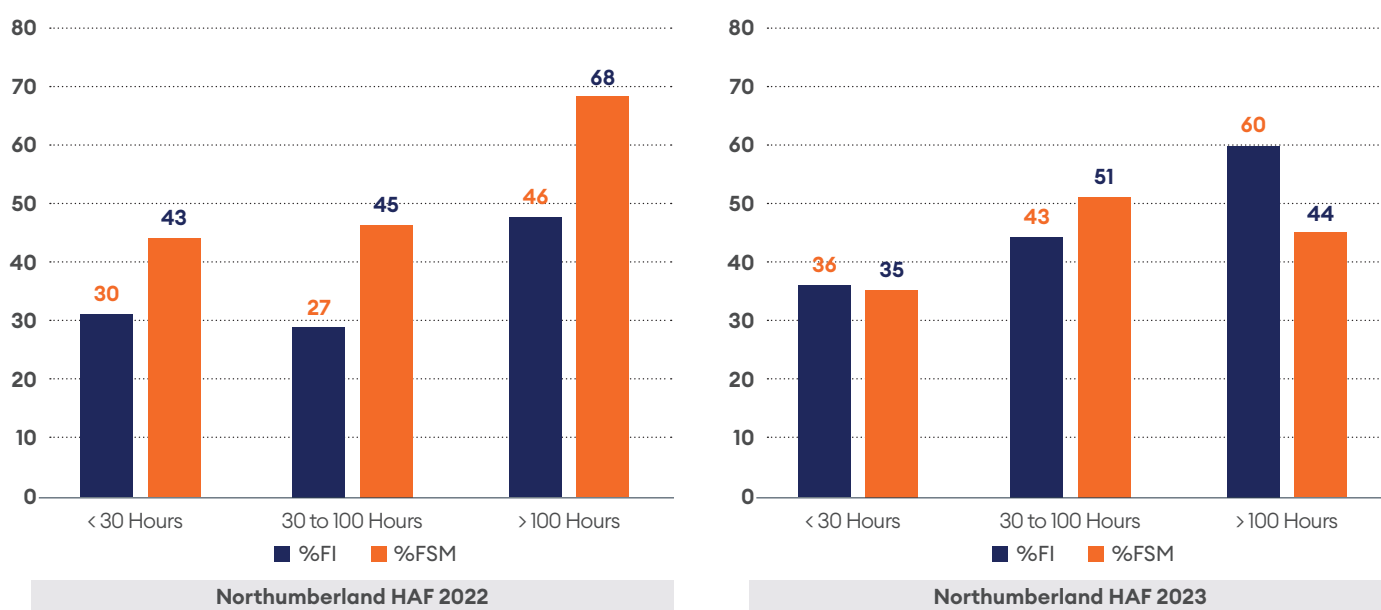


Figure 7. Percentage of Food Insecure and in Receipt of FSM by Hours Spent at HAF in 2022 / 2023

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.

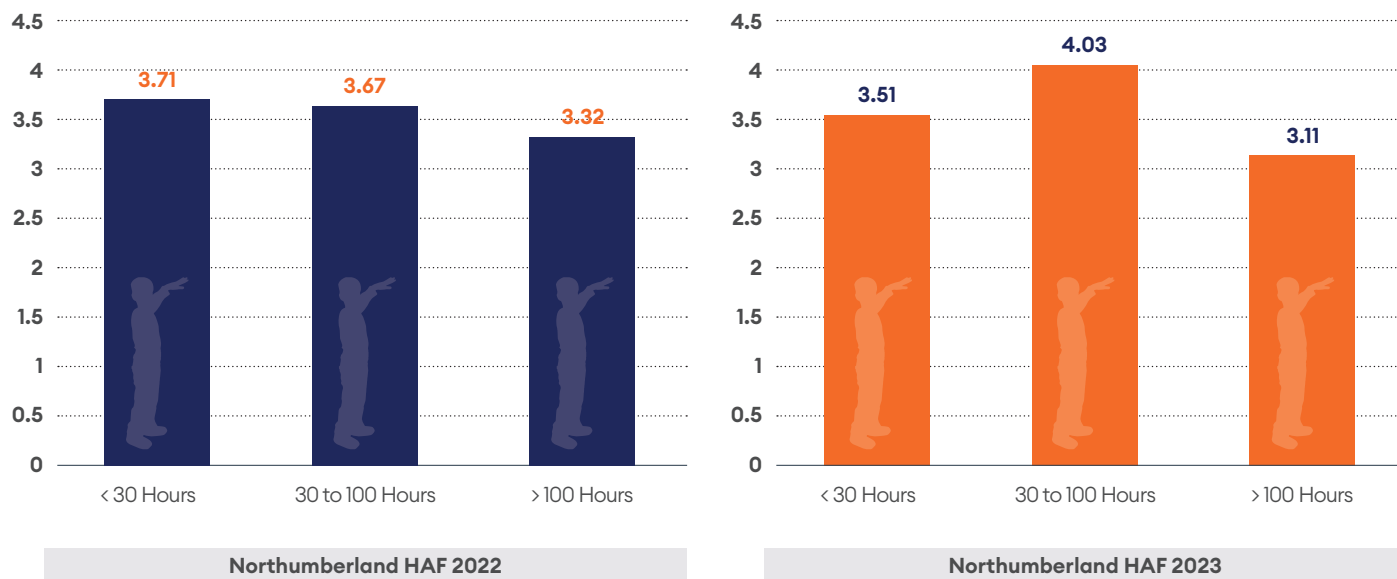


Figure 8. Mean Number of Weeks of Physical Activity During the 6 Week Summer Holiday by Hours Spent at HAF in 2022 & 2023.

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.

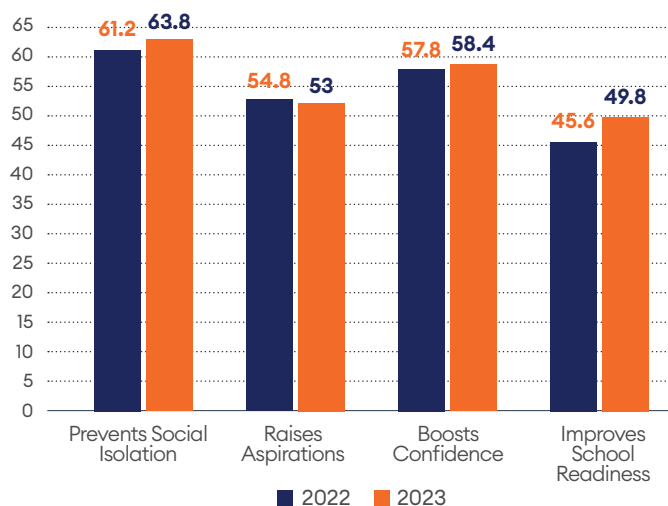


Figure 9. Percentage of Parents that Agree HAF Prevents Social Isolation, Raises Aspirations, Boosts Confidence and Improves School Readiness in 2022 & 2023

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 though 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% or 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.

Table 1. Parental perceptions of the food served, and nutrition related activities at HAF clubs.

	% 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 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 2022 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 2022 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 (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.

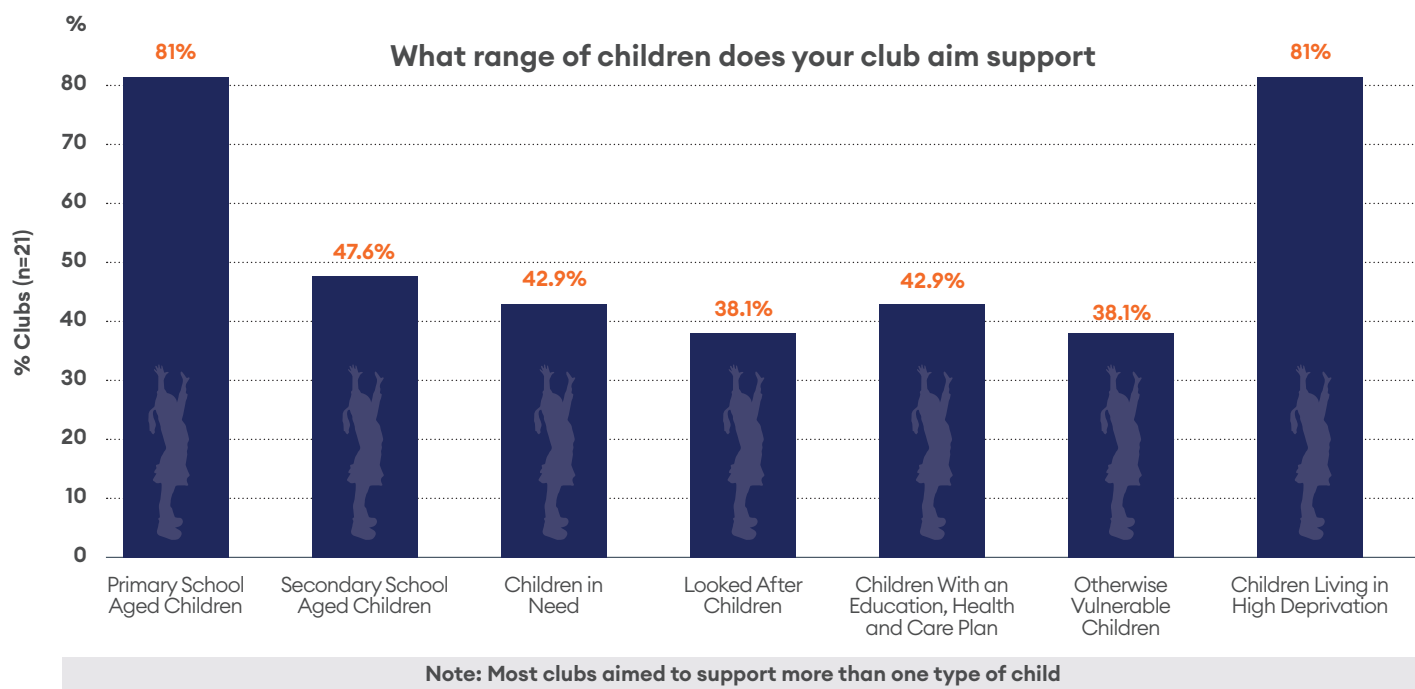


Figure 10. Range of children and young people targeted by holiday clubs in 2022.

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 the parent survey data are not an artefact of sampling but 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.

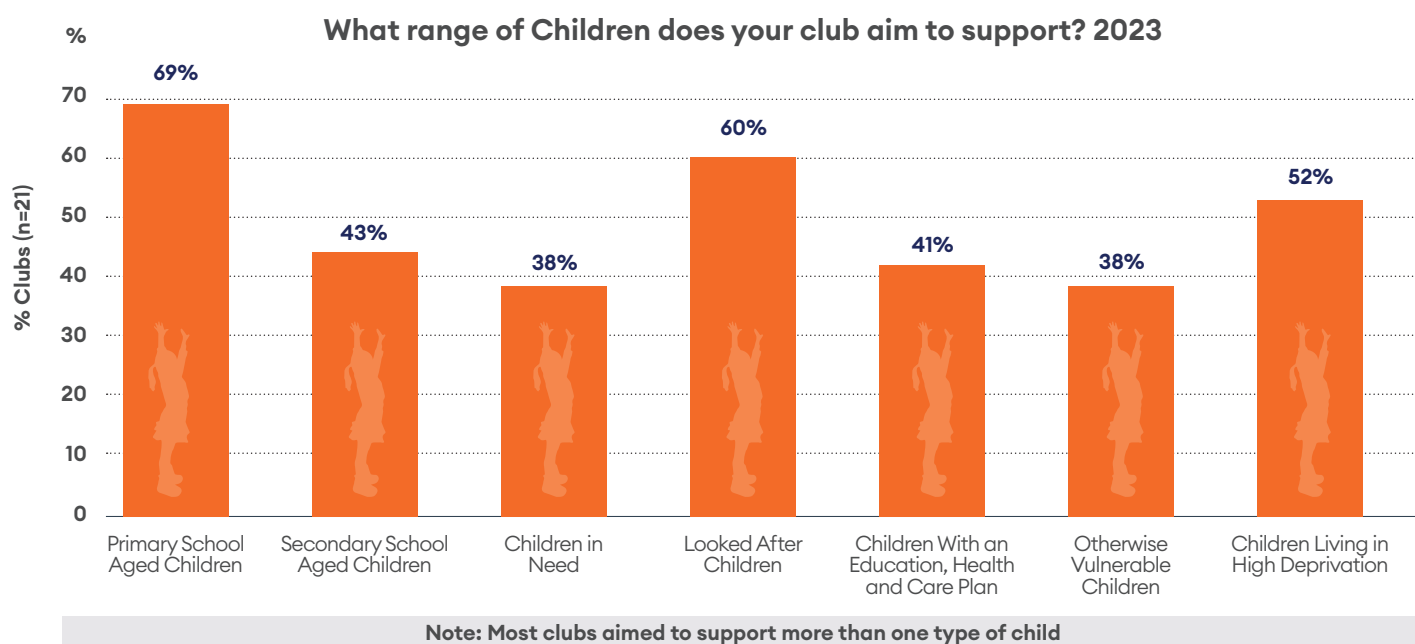


Figure 11. Range of children and young people targeted by holiday clubs in 2023.

4.1.2 Activities

In 2023, for primary school children there was a marked increase in clubs offering more than 10 PA sessions between 2022 and 2023. For secondary school pupils there was an increase in the number of clubs offering 1 to 10 sessions but a decline in the number of clubs offering more than 10 sessions.

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	4.8%	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%	89%	3%
Parents/carers 2022	81%	18.2%	0%
Parents/carers 2023	85%	10%	5%

4.1.3 Nutritional Education Sessions

In comparing the data on clubs delivering 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.

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%	77.8%	5.6%
Primary School Children 2023	11.2%	74.3%	14.5%
Secondary School Children 2022	35.7%	57.1%	7.1%
Secondary School Children 2023	36.2%	60%	3.8%
Parents/carers 2022	100%	0%	0%
Parents/carers 2023	100%	0%	0%

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).

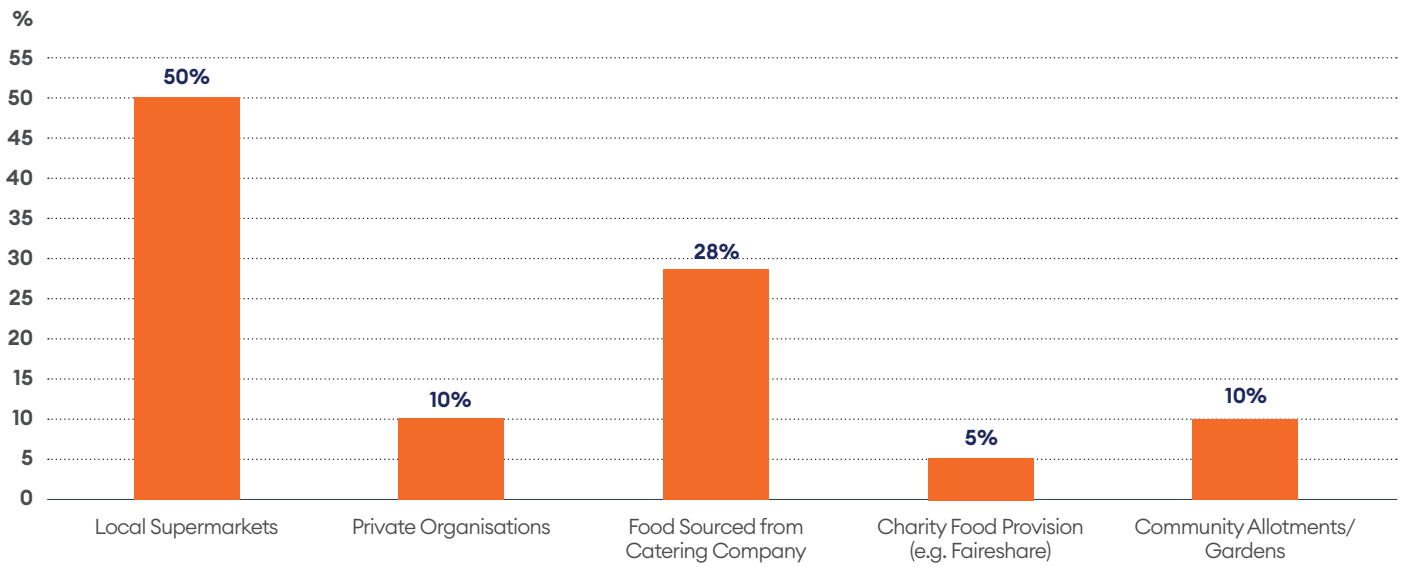


Figure 12. Where Clubs Sourced their Food in 2023

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.

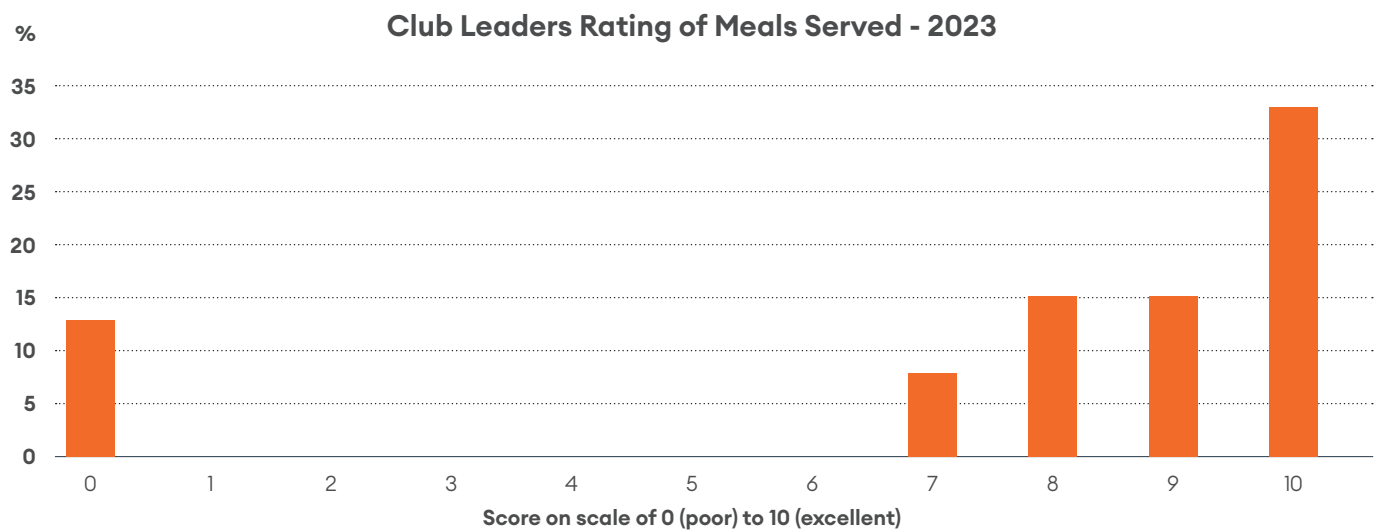


Figure 13. Quality of Meals Served



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).

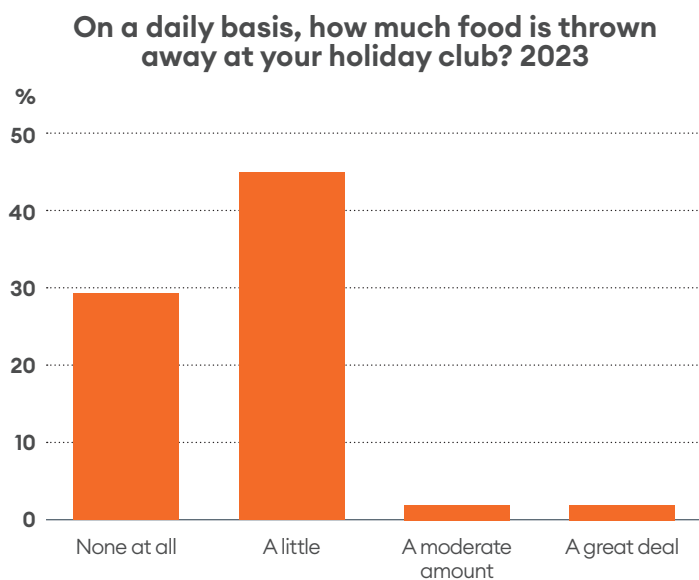


Figure 14. Holiday Club Leaders Perceptions About Food Waste



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).

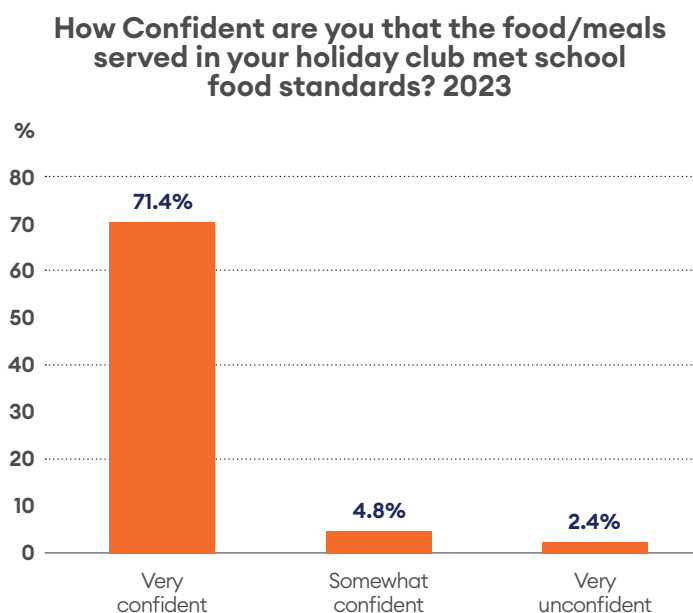


Figure 15. Meeting school food standards.

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 household food insecurity, and the percentage of parents not in full time employment. 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. 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 mitigate food insecurity at the household level. If one meal per child, per day, alleviated the current high levels of 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 Plus 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.

Chapter 6: References

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Added value through Lottery funding



The National Lottery Community Fund resources have enabled NECPT to enhance the holiday provision offer in a number of ways:

NECPT has fulfilled an important enabling role securing additional partnership funding to develop impactful discretionary HAF provision - recognised by DfE, and also provided the capacity to build an expanding workforce of young leaders. This opportunity is essential for young people's life and work experience, but also for HAF delivery capacity in a rural setting.

Facilitating sharing of learning across the region is key to addressing long term challenges facing families and children, by collaborating more we have a louder regional and national voice to ensure children and young people, and real working solutions to well documented challenges are front and centre of policy and investment.

Emma Richardson, Senior Manager Specialist Services, Northumberland County Council

- The additional support has allowed a more flexible approach to provision encouraging and enabling different choices to be made to helping develop community resources, additional training opportunities and to support the transport and communication challenges of rural areas. Additional staff and equipment resources have meant extra activity has been enabled. There has been a focus on enrichment activities and wellbeing as key outcomes of the programme;
- The development of local partnerships and relationships has been enhanced. Anchor organisations are critical to ensuring a place-based approach is more effective because of local knowledge and expertise. Leading Link has been able to ensure strong performance by provider organisations and assurance on quality outcomes;
- The programme has developed more inclusive approaches moving beyond the original 4 hours per day, 4 days per week and 4 weeks per summer break to experiment with family offers, pop-up and other innovative approaches as well as providing activities in more school holidays;

- Support for children and young people with special needs has been increased and, for example 1:1 mentoring has been possible in some areas. The number of children and young people with special needs taking part have increased over the last 3 years. In 2021 there were 332 SEND children and young people attending holiday provision. In 2022 that number was 883 and by 2023 the number had grown to 1391.
- In years 2 and 3 it has been possible to extend Leading Link's activities to other areas of the North of Tyne Combined Authority through collaboration with schools in Wallsend and Walkergate. The development of Leading Link's Young Leaders programme in these areas supported after school provision and youth engagement as well as roles for volunteers in local holiday provision delivery;



- Investment in Leading Link's Young Leaders' programme has expanded with funding for learning and development through residential courses aiming to support personal and team development; gain skills and experience through practical exercises as well as developing monitoring, evaluation and review skills. The number of participants has grown to over 120 and Young Leaders from different areas have worked and bonded together. Leading Link is now developing a further dimension with a 'future proof' activity designed to support participants in the programme into the world of work. An intensive training and development programme will also aim to secure accreditation recognition to reinforce those opportunities;
- The 'HAF plus' has developed because of the additional resources with additional programmes and, in particular, has focussed on teenager led initiatives. A collaboration across different parts of the country, facilitated by Professor Defeyter, engaged 500 teenagers and culminated in a national event with the



development of the so-called 'teen sprint' with young people designing programmes and discussing and debating issues with government officials and representatives of business. That gave power to the youth voice and was followed up by a conference in Gateshead led by Leading Link, Gateshead's 'brighter futures' team, the Mayor's Fund for London and the Birmingham HAF initiative with Street Games collaborating to give young people the opportunity to lead change.

In summer 2023, 7 HAF Plus camps engaged:



289

young people for

1,890

provision days

In Winter 2023-24 6 HAF Plus camps involved:



184

young people in

541

provision days

- A clearer link to the 'levelling up' strategy has been possible by seeing greater integration of the holiday provision programme with other local initiatives promoting community regeneration and anti-poverty actions based on the importance of place-based approaches, community engagement and capacity building. For example, in the Hirst Ward in Ashington, supported by funding from the government's Levelling Up Department, Leading Link worked with local residents, volunteers, teenagers and Young Leaders to explore ways to access locally developed support, services and activities.

These are tangible results of the Lottery's investment and we aim to expand on these to further the Lottery's strategy to support communities to build from their strengths and enable children and young people to thrive.

NORTH EAST CHILD POVERTY TRUST 2024 REPORT

NORTH EAST
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