

## **North East Child Poverty Trust end of project report to National Lottery Community Fund**

### **Project Reference: 2016054**

#### **Introduction and Overview**

This note provides an overview of the detailed results of the NECPT three-year funding from NLCF. The items described below provide detail. They are:

- NECPT 2024 Report which incorporates the independent evaluation by Northumbria University of Northumberland Holiday Provision under the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme funded via the Department for Education.  
[NECPT-Report\\_2024.pdf \(nechildpovertytrust.org.uk\)](https://nechildpovertytrust.org.uk/NECPT-Report_2024.pdf)
- An impact report which highlights activities throughout the project and uses the outcome criteria established by the National Youth Agency (NYA) to demonstrate the basis of the Young Leaders programme.
- A video which gives an overview of the NECPT/Leading Link/Northumberland County Council partnership.

The programme was built around the delivery of HAF across the 3 financial years 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24. The first year was a DfE funded pilot year before the Comprehensive Spending Review initiated the formal HAF programme across local authorities. The grant to NECPT covered only Northumberland in year 1 and extended activity to other parts of the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) area in years 2 and 3, concluding in April 2024.

The NECPT/Leading Link/Northumberland County Council partnership is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding which specifies the responsibilities of the partners. It identifies the risk assessment, health and safety, safeguarding and DBS responsibilities. These are used to cascade to the local partners responsible for delivery. Recently Thriving Together, the Northumberland VCSE representative body, has established a Children and Young Peoples' Network bringing together the third sector organisations with CYP commitments, and this is chaired by Leading Link.

#### **Summary of Added Value gained from the NLCF grant**

Page 22 of the NECPT 2024 report summarises the added value achieved through the grant aid in particular:

- Enabling a flexible approach to provision encouraging innovation in developing community resources.
- Developing local partnerships with anchor organisations ensuring that a place-based approach has greater impact because of enhanced local knowledge.
- Allowing more inclusive approaches to move beyond the original 4X4X4 construct of HAF in terms of hours per day, days per week and weeks per summer provision.
- Support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities has expanded – in year 1 there were 332 SEND children engaged and by year 3 this had quadrupled to 1391.

As a result of these and other gains, DfE formal HAF guidance has recognised the need for SEND best practice, flexible use of funds and the importance of capacity building. DfE has also had at

its request case study material. In addition, the Levelling Up Department has engaged with Leading Link's work in the Hirst area of Ashington.

Three initiatives gave particular added value:

- The growth of Leading Link's Young Leaders Programme was able to expand 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 and evaluation and review skills. These so called 'soft skills' enhance personal capability and were put to great use in support of delivery of holiday camps and after school clubs, including in the wider NTCA area. The YL programme now has over 140 participants and helps embed sustainability of activity across local areas.
- A programme known as 'HAF plus' was developed in partnership between DfE, Northumbria University and Leading Link, Northumberland County Council plus Gateshead Council, The Mayor of London's Fund and Birmingham Council/Street Games through a range of events involving 500 young people. The focus was on design of programmes by young people and negotiation of possible future support from business representatives. This activity culminated in a conference held in February 2024 at the Baltic in Gateshead and organised and managed by Leading Link Young Leaders. This will be followed up through future collaborations.
- The establishment of a 'family offer' to engage parents and carers as well as children and young people in shared activity. This has emphasised the importance of community support for activity and is critical to building cross generational relationships in neighbourhoods.

Based on the research carried out by the Northumbria University Healthy Living Lab (2023), Professor Greta Defeyter and colleagues have calculated the social return on investment (SROI) of the HAF programme is ten times its input cost.

## Impact and Learning

The Northumbria University evaluation (pages 4 ff of the NECPT 2024 Report) is based on parent/carers and provider surveys so represents an extensive data set. The executive summary highlights the very rapid year on year growth of participants, ie users and providers, as well as the increase in hours of provision. Of particular importance is the qualitative feedback demonstrating positive outcomes for children and young people in health and wellbeing (including parents and carers), confidence levels among children and young people as well as impact on social isolation, anti-social behaviour and school readiness. The information on physical activity and its benefits is an important indicator of the need for a comprehensive approach to the offers in the HAF arrangements. The data also demonstrates an increase in household food insecurity, reflecting inflation pressures but also reinforcing the importance of quality food offerings as part of the HAF programme.

In February 2024 the North East Child Poverty Commission (NECPC) published '**No time to wait: an ambitious blueprint for tackling child poverty in the North East**'. Included in the report was an assessment of the contribution the HAF programme makes to tackling child poverty, including recording feedback from parents/carers in the consultation programme NECPC held. The feedback showed strong support for HAF, reinforcing the evaluation findings in the Northumbria University report. The NECPC report recommended widening the reach of the HAF programme 'so that access to structured, safe and enriching activities and healthy food' could be enhanced. The report also noted 'the large number of community organizations that now help to deliver the scheme.'

([https://nechildpoverty.org.uk/content/images/uploads/No\\_time\\_to\\_wait\\_full\\_report.pdf](https://nechildpoverty.org.uk/content/images/uploads/No_time_to_wait_full_report.pdf))

The impact report highlights the focus on engagement and involvement of children and young people, especially in the teen years through the Young Leaders programme, as well as the importance of user involvement in programme design and the direct benefits which flow from that.

## **Dissemination of Results**

NECPT has distributed the 2024 report via a range of methods:

- Over 1450 have viewed the report on LinkedIn and that has been followed by further promotion when our website refresh was completed in early June (with due regard to election restrictions).
- Local authorities, North East Combined Authority and other partners have received copies and further promotion has been done via VONNE and North East Child Poverty TComission.
- Individual trustees have circulated the report in their own networks for example to local government and social housing organisations.

Parents/carers and providers are being sent a link to the report when registering for 2024 Summer holiday provision.

## **Key conclusions**

The following points can hopefully be reviewed by policy makers at national, regional and local levels to develop the HAF programme further when the next Comprehensive Spending Review takes place:

- The HAF programme delivery model needs to emphasise integration with a wider range of anti-poverty strategies, including ensuring that services work together on delivery. The delivery model also needs to embed the 'HAF plus' principles of engaging users in co-design wherever possible.
- Working to develop a community- based and led approach takes time and can only be achieved by developing strong relationships with people and organisations to build trust. That requires clarity about vision and values and clear commitment and communication. Understanding the needs of schools and other participating organisations is vital.
- There needs to be a focus on transformation not simply an approach emphasising a project-based ethic. That will require recognition that everyone in the community has something to offer and enhancing capacity and capability by supporting training, further developing the Young Leaders initiative. Ensuring that physical assets created can be shared and controlled locally is also important.
- Underpinning the asset- based approach is the involvement of local schools, community-based organisations and local networks and the local authorities. All these stakeholders can share a commitment to partnership working and benefit from outcomes which strengthen relationships and harness additional resources.

- Keeping a focus on engagement with families will help sustain the asset- based approach by developing of new ways of engaging communities, being visible in communities, listening to and acting on local concerns.
- Evaluation of activity needs to go beyond traditional concepts of 'success' and needs to focus on subsequent changes for children and families embedding learning, change and development. The Northumbria University model of evaluation does this. Northumbria's approach to calculating SROI could also be adopted as a standard approach to evaluating economic benefits.

These elements will help create the conditions for sustainable local change.

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