

Feast of Fun 2019 Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

Background

There have been growing concerns about childhood hunger during school holidays in the UK. The Feast of Fun programme in Middlesbrough and in Redcar & Cleveland aims to alleviate some of the challenges faced by local families during the school holidays. This report documents the evaluation of the Feast of Fun programme delivered at 39 venues by 29 groups across Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland during the 2019 summer holidays.

The evaluation aimed to document the programme provided by Feast of Fun, to explore the challenges face by local families during the summer holidays, and the benefits of participation in the Feast of Fun programme. We asked every group to fill out an evaluation form as well as conducted impromptu interviews with 14 parents and grandparents, 24 children, and 7 volunteers.

The key findings of the evaluation are:

- There is a clear need for holiday provision in Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland
- There are additional challenges, as well as childhood hunger, that families face during the school holidays
- There are significant benefits for children and the whole family from Feast of Fun activities
- The community nature of Feast of Fun holiday clubs is a key factor to their success
- The Feast of Fun programme represents excellent value for money
- There is potential for future growth of Feast of Fun

The Challenges Families Face & The Need for Holiday Provision

The evaluation shows that there is a need for holiday provision in Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland. Parents, volunteers and group leaders all reported there was a real need for the provision offered by Feast of Fun. This was also supported by the increase in the number of children, young people and adults who engaged with our 2019 programme compared to 2018. Last year 974 children and 415 adults took part in Feast of Fun, while this year we had 1,315 children, 506 young people, and 467 adults.

Some of the financial challenges families face during the school holidays are: feeding children who would otherwise receive free school meals, finding cost-effective activities to occupy the children, and even cost-effective childcare for working parents. Not only is this a financial burden, but parents and grandparents reported they felt more isolated during the summer holidays and found that trying to find free or low-cost ways to entertain children was an added source of stress for them.

The Benefits for Children, Young People & Families from Feast of Fun

The results suggest that there are many ways that children, young people, and adults benefited from being a part of Feast of Fun. Families reported that receiving meals for the whole family reduced the extra financial burden they feel during school holidays. The Feast of Fun programme also provided children and parents opportunities to get out of the house and spend time in a safe environment. Parents mentioned that they valued being able to talk to other parents and volunteers at Feast of

Fun programmes, which helps to reduce potential isolation and loneliness. The sense of community felt at Feast of Fun also had a positive effect on particularly older volunteers who could also face similar circumstances of isolation and loneliness.

The Feast of Fun programme also provided children, young people, and families with new and exciting opportunities to learn and experience things they wouldn't have had access to. We were able to facilitate this through partnerships with local businesses and organisations that provided their support free or at cost to the programme. There were day trips to the North York Moors National Park Centre at Danby, RSPB Saltholme, Bowes Museum, Teesside University, Teesside Wildlife Trust, Kirkleatham Museum, and the Wensleydale Railway. The National Literacy Trust provided over 2,000 free books and comics for children and young people. The North East Charity Kids Kabin led workshops in woodwork and pottery. Cooking experiences were provided by Quorn Foods. Healthier fun and nutrition workshops were provided by two local chefs from Middlesbrough Environment City. The grant funding provided to groups also allowed them to bring in organisations to run workshops including music, drumming, performing arts, pottery, woodworking, dance, sport, fitness, yoga, animal experiences and author/storyteller experiences. All of these enrichment opportunities helped children and young people from low-income families enjoy experiences and activities they wouldn't otherwise be able to access.

The Community Nature of Feast of Fun Holiday Clubs

A key benefit of the Feast of Fun programme is the fact that it's rooted in local communities, which makes it accessible for local families. All of the groups involved in delivering the programme are embedded within their community as well as being made up of staff and volunteers from that community. Feast of Fun is clearly provided by the community, for the community. This aspect of the programme not only brings people together but also strengthens local relationships, gives people a shared sense of purpose, and builds stronger, more cohesive communities.

Value for Money

The Feast of Fun programme represents extraordinary value for money. Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland spent £30,080 in grants to Feast of Fun groups and direct delivery costs, but the total value of the programme delivered is over £124,700. The added value came from staff and volunteer time from Feast of Fun groups, financial and in-kind donations raised by local groups, and partnerships between the Feast of Fun programme and local organisations and businesses. These costs do not include the staff time given by Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland in supporting and developing the Feast of Fun programme.

The Potential for Future Growth of Feast of Fun

The majority of existing Feast of Fun groups reported that they hope to work with more families in the future. This growth in capacity will need to be both in terms of the numbers of children attending the clubs, and the number of sessions provided. The key limiting factor is that groups are run mainly by volunteers, further support with staffing and volunteers will be necessary. There is also clearly a need to increase in the number of Feast of Fun groups delivering the programme, particularly in areas where the levels of Free School Meals are very high. New churches, community groups and schools will need to be identified to grow provision. Currently Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland provide all the development support for Feast of Fun. If holiday provision is to grow, additional resources for staffing to provide this development and support for local groups will be required. It is important that as capacity in the programme grows, the local nature of Feast of Fun and its ethos is not lost, as this is a key strength of the programme.