

Press release: Free meals and activities for 50,000 children over 2019 summer holidays

Around 50,000 disadvantaged children will be offered free meals and activities over the upcoming summer holidays, funded by £9.1 million from the Department for Education.

The scheme follows a successful £2 million programme in the summer of 2018, which saw charities and community groups provide meals and activities such as football, play sessions and cooking classes for more than 18,000 children across the country.

To build on that, ministers have more than quadrupled the funding ahead of summer 2019 so that even more disadvantaged children can benefit.

Nadhim Zahawi, Minister for Children and Families, said:

School holidays should be a chance for children to have fun experiences and make lasting memories – and no child should miss out on that. That’s why we have quadrupled funding for free summer holiday clubs this year, with the aim of reaching around 50,000 of the most disadvantaged children across the country.

Yes, these clubs will ensure children get a nutritious meal – but they will also offer the chance to socialise with friends and take part in activities such as sports and healthy cooking classes, to keep pupils active and involved in their communities throughout the six-week break from school.

The 2019 programme will help the Department for Education continue to research how it can best support children eligible for free school meals during the holidays, testing a new model in which local co-ordinators oversee and fund clubs in their areas.

The 11 co-ordinators receiving a share of the £9.1 million are:

- StreetGames (Newcastle, North East region)
- Edsential (Chester and Cheshire West, North West region)
- Transforming Lives for Good (Bradford, Yorkshire & the Humber region)
- Happy Healthy Holidays consortium (Birmingham, West Midlands region)
- Barnardo’s (Leicestershire, East Midlands region)
- Suffolk County Council (East of England region)
- Family Action (Croydon, London region)
- The Romsey School (Hampshire, South East region)

- Plymouth County Council (South West region)
- Gateshead Council (North East region)
- Leeds Community Foundation (Yorkshire & the Humber region)

David White, StreetGames Fit and Fed Campaign Director, said:

Since 2016, StreetGames has led the Fit and Fed campaign to reclaim the holidays for those children and young people at risk of holiday hunger, inactivity, and loneliness. In 2018 we worked with the Department for Education to successfully establish 14 clusters of free-to-access holiday activity programmes across England, and we are delighted to be collaborating again, along with our partners at Newcastle City Council to develop a comprehensive programme across Newcastle-upon-Tyne. We have already engaged more than 100 schools, sports clubs, and community groups across the city.

Kate Hainsworth, Chief Executive of Leeds Community Foundation, said:

Leeds Community Foundation is delighted to build on the work we have been delivering in the city over the past year with our valued partners: Leeds City Council, StreetGames, FareShare, Rethinking Food and the amazing third sector groups here in Leeds.

This funding not only builds community capacity but also extends this valuable resource into schools and council one-stop hubs to ensure even more children and families access healthy activities and food in the long holidays. We have already seen the significant impact that investing in Healthy Holidays can make here in our city and are keen to grow that further.

Councillor Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich and Communities at Suffolk County Council, said:

It's fantastic that we have been successful in our bid for a holiday activities project from the Department for Education. The summer can often be a challenging time for families as they try to find activities to keep children occupied, happy and healthy. Evidence suggests that attending out-of-school activities can have a positive impact on children's educational, health and well-being outcomes.

David Holmes CBE, Chief Executive of Family Action, said:

Family Action and our partner organisation, Croydon Council, are delighted to be part of this important new programme. Together we

have a clear and ambitious vision that this funding will provide a step-change in holiday provision in the borough. The programme will not only provide healthy food and activities to thousands of children over the summer holidays, but will also create a blueprint for local holiday activities and food provision for the future.

Steve Oversby, Barnardo's East Regional Director, said:

Barnardo's believes all children have a right to a happy and healthy life. We're proud to be working with the Department for Education, our innovation partners Leicestershire County Council and local providers to give Leicestershire children fantastic opportunities through the holiday activities and food programme.

The co-ordination role will be undertaken by a wide range of organisations, including a school, local authorities, community foundations and charities, all working with a range of local providers to ensure the clubs reach the children who need them most.

Activities on offer this year will include a range of sports, healthy cooking classes for children and their parents or carers, as well as targeted support for the most vulnerable families who may already be working with social services.

This announcement builds on a government investment of up to £26 million in the National School Breakfast Programme, delivered by the charity Family Action in partnership with Magic Breakfast. This is helping to set up or improve more than 1,700 breakfast clubs in schools in the most disadvantaged areas, ensuring thousands more pupils have a healthy start to their day.