

Thousands of children to benefit from free meals and activities

Disadvantaged children in England will benefit from free healthy meals and enriching activities throughout the summer as part of ambitious plans set out by the Government.

Backed by £9 million, the Government's Holiday Activities and Food programme will support up to 50,000 disadvantaged children across 17 local authority areas and help them to stay healthy and active over the summer.

Ten providers were successful in their bid for the programme, who will be supporting families in need with activities and healthy meals. Activities will include a variety of online and directly delivered physical activities such as dance, Yoga, HIIT and adventure play making the most of their outdoor spaces.

Minister for Children and Families Vicky Ford said:

It is more important than ever before to make sure the needs of the most disadvantaged are at the heart of everything we do. We cannot afford for any of our children to lose out of their education as a result of Covid-19.

Just last week we announced the Covid Summer Food Fund, and a £1 billion Covid catch up fund so that no child is left behind.

On top of this, we are rolling out the £9 million Holiday Activities and Food programme in England, ensuring that thousands of children will be able to benefit from free nutritious food and enriching activities during the summer period.

John Downes, StreetGames North East Area Director and Head of Youth and Sport, said:

StreetGames campaign Fit and Fed has been developed to ensure summer programmes are delivered by trained staff to provide 4 hours of activity and a meal at School Food Standards. Last year Newcastle's Best Summer ever was a success across the city and we hope to build on that success this year. We're delighted to be working alongside Newcastle upon Tyne Council to deliver this year's holiday program which will provide much needed support to children and families who have suffered the full force of lockdown isolation.

This year we hope to engage many children and their families across the city via mixed approach that will flex as social distancing

changes. We will invest in local community organisations to provide support right to the front doors of children through activity packs, weekly activity programmes and food parcels to provide families with food over the summer holiday period. We will also be encouraging activities to take place in open spaces within the community for children and their families to reengage with each other as and when social distancing allows this to take place.

Angela Allen, CEO of Spring North, said:

Blackburn with Darwen has more than 20,000 children living in food poverty so these HAF clubs will provide a vital lifeline for families in the area. In addition to providing a hot meal and snacks, the clubs will facilitate a way for young people across the communities to reconnect in a safe environment and enjoy a range of activities that are fun and help to build their skills including teamwork, cooperation and communication.

We will also be working with a number of parents to support them with life skills activities including cooking clubs, wellbeing support and debt, welfare and employment advice.

We are looking forward to working with our partners and delivering our Get Stuck In clubs during August, providing essential support for our families across Blackburn with Darwen.

Jonathan de Sausmarez, headteacher at Romsey Community School in Hampshire, said:

I am really pleased that the need for vulnerable families to have support and care over the summer holidays has been recognised. We had a very successful programme last year and we have been able to include new venues and introduce new activities. We want to make a real difference and we are very proud to support this much needed project.

The news comes after the Government announced the Covid Summer Food Fund on Tuesday 16 June, which will support children who are eligible for free school meals with a voucher to cover the full six week summer holiday beginning next month, which schools will be able to order before the end of term.

This adds to the wide range of support this government has put in place to support families, not just at school but through the welfare system, in funding for local services, and via a new welfare assistance scheme to help those who are struggling.

The summer 2020 Holiday Activities and Food programme builds on the success of last year and is reaching disadvantaged children in more areas across

England. Each organisation will deliver at least four weeks of free activities and healthy food during July and August 2020. All the successful co-ordinators have confirmed that their programmes will adhere to relevant government public health advice and are committed to providing free food and activities for as many disadvantaged children as possible.

The 10 co-ordinators receiving a share of the £9 million across 17 local authorities are:

- StreetGames (Newcastle, North East region)
- Gateshead Council (Gateshead – North East region)
- Edsential (Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Wirral – North West region)
- Spring North (Blackburn with Darwen – North West)
- Leeds Community Foundation (Leeds and Bradford – Yorkshire & the Humber region)
- Voluntary Action Sheffield (Sheffield – Yorkshire & the Humber region)
- Suffolk County Council (Suffolk – East of England region)
- Mayor's Fund for London (Lambeth and Southwark – London)
- Tower Hamlets Local Authority (Tower Hamlets – London)
- The Romsey School (Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight – South East region)